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The party system consequences of Chile's "binomial" (two-member-district) legislative electoral formula have been the subject of much debate. For some analysts, the binomial system limits party system fractionalization and encourages centripetal competition, enhancing the prospects for democratic stability. Others emphasize elements of continuity within the country's historic multiparty system and contend that the electoral formula may prove destabilizing. This article, arguing that limited electoral reform has limited party system consequences, provides comparative empirical measures showing that neither the degree of party system fractionalization nor the competitive dynamic of the party system has been substantially transformed. However, the binomial formula does increase the incentives for coalition formation and maintenance. The article concludes that the ultimate consequences of electoral reform depend on whether these new incentives for coalition formation can overcome the elements of continuity within the party system in the long term.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE CHILEAN PARTY SYSTEM On the Transformational Effects of Electoral Reform

PETER SIAVELIS
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During the 1980s and 1990s, many of the world's democracies have experienced an erosion of public confidence in democratic institutions and electoral processes. Notably, these crises have occurred not only in new and fragile democracies where they have come to be expected but also in democracies with impressive records of longevity. In countries as diverse as

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systems may encourage party system integration in the formative stages of party system evolution, within the context of a well-entrenched party system, electoral reform can have unanticipated consequences.

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