# Electoral Reform Under Limited Party Competition: The Adoption of Proportional Representation in Latin America

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**Abstract**

The adoption of proportional representation in Western Europe has been portrayed as either a defensive or offensive competition strategy used by established parties to deal with the rise of new parties under majoritarian electoral rules. Neither explanation accounts for PR reform in other regions of the world where the change took place in the absence of increased party competition. Analyzing the history of electoral reform in Latin America, we argue that in a context of limited party competition, the initial adoption of PR was part of a strategy of controlled political liberalization initiated by authoritarian rulers. Subdividing this general reasoning, we show that PR reform followed different paths depending on the nature of the authoritarian regime and the events that called into question the existing majoritarian electoral system. We support this argument with a comparative historical analysis of cases within and across each route to reform.

**Key words:** Proportional representation, electoral reform, Western Europe, Latin America, authoritarian regimes, party competition

A large part of the recent research agenda on electoral reform has been devoted to elucidating the historical determinants of the shift from majoritarian to proportional electoral systems in Western Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to this literature, the adoption of proportional representation (PR) took place as a defensive move by established parties to limit the political influence of emerging socialist parties or as an offensive strategy by the same parties to reduce the vote–seat distortions that affected them in multiparty competitions under majoritarian electoral rules. Neither explanation accounts for the historical conditions that led to the initial adoption of PR in other regions of the world, where the reform was devised and enacted in the absence of increased party competition.

Analyzing the history of electoral reform in Latin America, we argue that in a context of limited party competition the initial adoption of PR was part of a strategy of controlled political liberalization initiated by authoritarian rulers. Within this general outline, however, the dynamics of electoral change and the objectives of reformers varied depending on the nature of the authoritarian regime and the events that called into question the existing majoritarian electoral system. Based on these variables, we show that PR was promoted either by a dissident faction of the incumbent party to compete more effectively against the official leadership, by the old ruling party or a new reformist party to broaden support for the regime, or by military rulers to weaken a majority party whose policies they opposed. We support this argument with a comparative historical analysis of cases within and across each route to reform.

We start by analyzing the logic and assumptions of the predominant explanations for the shift to proportional electoral rules in Western Europe. We then show the particular

features of PR reform in Latin America. In a third section we analyze the general logic of reform and the three main paths to PR adoption in this region. A brief conclusion follows.

**The adoption of PR in Western Europe: Theoretical and empirical issues**

Eleven Western European countries shifted from majoritarian to PR electoral systems between 1900 and 1921.[1] The trend started with Belgium in 1899, Finland in 1907, and Sweden in 1909, followed by eight countries that adopted PR in the aftermath of the First World War (Caramani 2000). This period coincided with the expansion of male suffrage in several countries, the emergence of socialist parties, and the decision of trade unions to support working-class political platforms and candidates.

Based on these facts, the standard explanation of PR reform, initially proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and Rokkan (1970), was that the expansion of male suffrage incorporated new voters, particularly from the working class, who in turn supported new parties that challenged the political and economic platforms of established parties.[2] In this scenario, established parties decided to protect their position against the rising popularity of socialist parties by introducing PR.[3] This explanation was later generalized and specified by Boix (1999; 2010), who argues that PR was adopted in a changing electoral arena as a result of the threat that emerging socialist parties posed to established parties when the latter had relatively balanced electoral support and were unable to join forces.

Subsequent research has cast doubt on the "socialist threat" hypothesis as a single or main causal explanation of reform. Rokkan himself thought (1970, 157) that it did not apply to countries such as Denmark, Switzerland, or Belgium, where the drive to reform was not so much the electoral threat posed by socialist parties as the desire of reformers to protect minorities in a heterogeneous society.[4] Some authors agree on the existence of

a "second" route to PR, though not on Rokkan's explanation of it. According to Calvo (2009, 256), in the absence of an electoral threat from socialist parties, reform is explained by the strategic interest of established parties in reducing the vote–seat distortions that affected them when new parties entered the electoral arena and the territorial distribution of the vote was asymmetric. More generally, Andrews and Jackman (2005, 71) reject the socialist threat theory because of its implausible assumption that the old parties had sufficient information to act preemptively and shift to PR to minimize their seat losses. They claim that if we take uncertainty seriously, strategic politicians should have supported PR only when the seats-to-votes ratio of their party decreased under a majoritarian electoral system, regardless of whether this party was new or old, conservative or socialist.

In spite of considerable debate about their scope and use, the socialist (electoral) threat and the seats–votes disproportionality theories are by now the main established explanations for the adoption of PR in Western Europe.[5] A relevant question, then, is whether these theories can shed light on electoral reform in other regions of the world. PR has spread across many countries over time, and it has become the favorite choice for new democracies (see Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2005). Yet in many of these cases the institutional transformation does not seem to be explainable by either the socialist threat or distortions in the seats-to-votes ratio of the main parties. The adoption of PR in Latin America illustrates this point well.

Most countries in Latin America, in a trend that seemed to follow their European predecessors, shifted from majoritarian to PR electoral rules between 1910 and 1950. This wave of reforms is, however, unrelated to the threat of socialism. In countries that held relatively competitive elections, such as Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, socialist

parties did emerge and compete against traditional parties during the first decades of the twentieth century. They also managed to capture a portion of the electorate from established parties (particularly Liberal ones) in the most urbanized districts. Yet the socialists lacked the capacity to challenge these parties because their electoral support was small and their representation in parliament (if any) was meager.[6]

The disproportionality between seats and votes cannot explain PR reform either. This bias occurs when the sudden fragmentation of political competition under a majoritarian electoral system puts some of the preexisting parties at a competitive disadvantage. If these parties have a majority or plurality in parliament, they are likely to vote for a shift to PR to restore the previous equilibrium. In Latin America, however, in most countries where legislative elections were held before the adoption of PR, only one or two parties dominated the electoral arena. Chile was the only country that had true multiparty competition (see Gamboa and Morales 2016). But this fragmented competition lasted for more than two decades before PR was adopted, so the rise of new parties can hardly be associated with the reform.

From the perspective of the socialist threat and the seats–votes disproportionality theories, the adoption of PR in Latin America appears puzzling. Electoral reform took place after authoritarian periods without elections or with elections designed to favor the ruling party. Moreover, most reformers in this region established PR from a dominant position that they did not expect to lose in the near future. Why would these actors establish an electoral system that is supposed to improve the condition of minority or declining parties? Before we propose an answer to this question, we need to delve more deeply into the conditions under which PR was adopted in Latin America.

**Features of PR reform in Latin America**

Similar to the situation in Western Europe, most Latin American countries experimented with various mechanisms intended to attenuate—without eliminating—the winner-take-all effect of majoritarian formulas before shifting to PR. Whenever elections were held, the typical formula was plurality rule in multi-member districts with a "limited vote," "cumulative vote," or "incomplete list".[7] Only a few countries had indirect elections or employed majority runoff formulas.

The trend toward PR started with Costa Rica in 1913, followed by Uruguay in 1917, Panama in 1925, and Chile in the same year.[8] By 1977, just before the expansion of electoral democracy in Latin America, fifteen out of eighteen countries had adopted proportional formulas. The few countries that had not adopted PR to that point have done so since. By 2000, no country in Latin America was electing members of the lower or single chamber of the legislature by a purely majoritarian system. Table 1 shows the year of PR adoption by country and the electoral system in place before reform.

**[Table 1 about here]**

Although the details and content of reform varied from country to country, there were common starting points. Three main features characterized the political environments in which PR was adopted in Latin America: the preexistence of universal (or quasi-universal) male suffrage, limited electoral competition, and presidential systems.

*Preexistence of universal (or quasi-universal) male suffrage*

According to Rokkan (1970, 157) the expansion of male suffrage was the crucial event that upset the institutional equilibrium of majoritarian electoral systems in Western Europe. This reform led to the incorporation of new voters, who in turn decided to cast

their votes for new parties, increasing party competition. Some authors have argued that Rokkan's hypothesis fits the sequence of events that led to the adoption of PR in Latin America (Wills-Otero 2009). There are several reasons, however, why male suffrage expansion is unlikely to explain the emergence and spread of PR reform in this region.

**[Table 2 about here]**

As Table 2 illustrates, one salient feature of PR reform in this region is that it had no apparent causal relationship with the de jure elimination of property or income qualifications for male voting. The initial formal expansion of male suffrage occurred in 13 Latin American countries well in advance of the adoption of PR.[9] On average, PR was established more than 50 years after the adoption of universal or quasi-universal male suffrage.[10] This is too long an interval to suggest a causal link between the two events. In four countries (Bolivia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela) formal male suffrage expansion and PR adoption occurred simultaneously. In these cases, however, it would be more plausible to think that a third variable explained both reforms than assuming that the former caused the latter.[11] Finally, in one case (Colombia) universal male suffrage was adopted after PR.

Another important reason to doubt a causal connection between suffrage expansion and PR reform is that in most countries voting qualifications were rarely enforced as stated in the law and almost never implemented under conditions of meaningful electoral competition. In spite of the early legal adoption of direct, equal, and universal (or quasi-universal) male suffrage, the widespread use of violence and fraud generally discouraged political participation until other reforms granted voters some level of independence. One of these reforms was the secret vote, which is supposed to protect voters from social or political intimidation (see Przeworski 2015). Yet in contrast to Western Europe, where

secret voting was adopted in most countries before universal male suffrage, in Latin America it was established either at the same time or several years later.[12]

*Limited electoral competition*

As we have seen, the main explanations for the introduction of proportionality in Western Europe assume an increasingly competitive electoral environment. The history of PR reform in Latin America does not conform to this pattern. Just as with the expansion of male suffrage, in most cases the adoption of PR occurred in a non-democratic year in which elections were held but competition was severely limited by authoritarian conditions. Table 3 shows whether the political regime was democratic or authoritarian, whether elections were held, and the nature of elections just before the shift from a majoritarian to a proportional electoral system in each country.

**[Table 3 about here]**

Although the vast majority of countries were authoritarian, all but three (Bolivia, Brazil, and Nicaragua) held elections before adopting PR. In nine cases the elections can be classified as hegemonic because only one party was effectively allowed to win representation.[13] In four cases elections were contested but unfair, meaning that the ruling party allowed opposition parties to compete and win representative positions but resorted to fraud or repression to create an uneven field. Only two countries, Chile and Peru, experienced elections that were not only contested but also fair before shifting to PR.

Aggregate data shows that on average, electoral competition did increase after the adoption of PR. Yet it would be wrong to infer from this evidence that incumbents established PR in anticipation of an electoral environment that would become more competitive for reasons beyond their control (see Wills Otero 2009, 36). As we will see

in more detail later, the adoption of PR was itself part of a reform strategy that sought a more or less moderate increase in electoral competition by design. Most reformers in Latin America had the power to decide whether to liberalize the conditions of electoral competition, adopted PR from a dominant position and, when they had a party of their own, kept or improved their electoral advantage after implementing the reform.

**[Table 4 about here]**

Table 4 shows whether the political regime was democratic or authoritarian, whether elections were held, the nature of elections, and the legislative share of the party associated with the reformers in the first election where PR was implemented. Compared to preexisting majoritarian elections, it is clear that even within an authoritarian regime the first PR elections created more beneficial conditions for opposition parties. Only three of these elections were hegemonic, while nine were competitive and six were free and fair. Yet in ten cases the parties associated with the reformers won a majority or more than a majority of seats in the legislature. Of the four cases in which the party of the reformers did not win a majority, in only two (Colombia and Paraguay) did it decline compared to its previous institutional power. Finally, in four cases the reformers had no parties representing them in the first election where PR was implemented.

*Presidential systems*

In order to protect preexisting positions, reformers in Western Europe often decided to moderate the initial impact of proportional formulas by preserving indirect elections, appointment mechanisms, or majoritarian rules for a second chamber. They also resorted to other institutional rules to achieve the same goal, such as creating districts of small magnitude or establishing high legal thresholds. All these strategies are of course

available in parliamentary and presidential regimes alike. The latter, however, have a structural feature, the independent election of the chief of government, which may affect the distribution of legislative seats regardless of the formula for electing legislators.

Presidential elections may "contaminate" legislative elections so that the number of parties winning votes and seats in those elections does not entirely depend on the system for electing legislators (see Cox 1997). In these cases, whether the impact of presidential elections is restrictive depends on the formula to elect the executive and the electoral cycle. Specifically, the multiparty effect of PR may be moderated or even neutralized if plurality rule is used to elect presidents and at least some legislative elections are held concurrently with the presidential election (Shugart 1995). The predominance of presidential regimes in Latin America and the frequency with which they had plurality presidential elections and concurrent electoral cycles before the 1970s suggests that at the time when PR was introduced, the stakes of electoral reform may have in some cases been systematically lower than in Western Europe.[14]

The preceding analysis makes it clear that at a general level most Latin American countries shared similar background conditions before adopting PR and that these conditions were notably different from those prevailing in Western Europe. It also suggests that specific aspects of the cases, such as the nature of the regime that preceded reform or the partisan support that reformers expected after implementing the new electoral rules are relevant for identifying various roads to reform. In the next section, we propose a novel explanation of PR reform in Latin America that takes into account common and specific features of this process across cases.

**Explaining PR reform in contexts of limited party competition**

The shift from majoritarian to proportional electoral rules in Latin America was an essential ingredient of a strategy of controlled political liberalization initiated by authoritarian rulers. These rulers were not always unified actors, and sometimes PR reform was a byproduct of internal divisions within the ruling party. Political liberalization was not an unconstrained choice, as it often occurred in response to growing social and political mobilization against the old regime. In the vast majority of cases, however, the adoption of PR was meant to maintain or create an advantage for the parties or factions that represented the interests of reformers. Only when reformers were able to foresee their lack of partisan support in future elections was their goal purely negative; namely, undermining the position of opponents.

In spite of this general pattern of reform, not all countries shared the same trajectories. We identify three major paths to PR, depending on the nature of the authoritarian regime and the events that called into question the existing majoritarian electoral system. When the preexisting authoritarian regime held regular though unfair elections between a government and a legal opposition party, the reform process was activated by the emergence of a strong dissident faction within the government party. In this context, the challenger faction supported PR to help it compete more effectively against the official leadership. When authoritarian rulers held no, irregular, or one-party elections, the reform took place as a consequence of growing extra-electoral opposition to the old regime or its complete collapse. In this scenario, the old ruling party or a new reformist party adopted PR to signal the transition to a more open regime and broaden support for it. When the authoritarian regime was a military dictatorship without partisan

support, a previous conflict between the military and the majority party prompted reform. Under these circumstances, PR was adopted to weaken the future institutional influence of this party. Table 5 summarizes each path to PR reform in Latin America indicating its antecedent conditions, triggering event, main reformers, reform strategy, and cases.[15]

**[Table 5 about here]**

This framework is constructed on central elements of comparative historical analysis, which highlights the importance of causal configurations and contextualized comparisons in the explanation of an outcome of interest. We have also borrowed from this form of analysis its emphasis on the need to identify the empirical mechanism that connects observed causes to observed outcomes (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Thelen and Mahoney 2015). For the purposes of our work, we argue that the diverse paths to PR reform were determined by the interaction between antecedent political conditions and the particular event that triggered the process in a given country. The event that set the process in motion also sheds light on the point in time under which the status quo was no longer sustainable and the nature of the reform strategy.[16]

To assess the plausibility of the proposed explanation and the mechanisms at work we have selected typical cases within each route to PR (see Gerring 2007; Gerring and Cojocaru 2016). At the same time, these cases will be used to account for the differences across the three paths to reform (Skocpol and Somers 1980). For the first route, we study Colombia and Uruguay; for the second, El Salvador and Bolivia; and for the third, Peru and Argentina. We claim that the countries selected in the first two paths are representative of a larger population of cases in which the identified strategy of reform was the main mechanism explaining the shift to PR.[17] To strengthen our argument, we will examine the conditions under which majoritarian rules were maintained and those

that activated their replacement by proportional rules. Finally, we will also discuss how the path to reform determined the type of PR system adopted.

*PR as a strategy of inter-faction coordination*

Majoritarian electoral rules, such as plurality elections in single or multi-member districts, are supposed to create two strong parties, which in turn have every incentive to keep the electoral system in place to exclude a third competitor (see Duverger 1957). Electoral preferences could change, however, in an asymmetric two-party system where majoritarian electoral rules may put both the opposition party and a dissident faction within the ruling party at a systematic disadvantage. In this context, continuous cycles of elections are likely to create problems of cooperation between, within parties, or both.

When the opposition party has a significant following and is able to mobilize resources, it may resort to political unrest to obtain reforms from the ruling party. Opposition demands for greater participation tend to take the form of calls for more transparent elections and the adoption of electoral rules that secure representation for minorities. In response, the ruling party may introduce mechanisms that moderate the winner-take-all effects of existing majoritarian rules, such as the limited vote or the incomplete list. If the opposition party hopes to increase its electoral support over time, renewed threats of rebellion may be made to induce further reforms. These reforms are unlikely, however, to take place while the ruling party remains relatively unified in its control of state institutions.

The event that may alter the status quo regardless of the strength of the opposition is the emergence of a strong dissident faction within the ruling party. Parties tend to be more unified when they are in opposition than when they are in government, particularly

if they have maintained that position for a long time. Whereas the opposition is forced to keep some unity in order to compete effectively against the incumbent party, the latter is likely to experience divisions over distributive issues. A dissident faction may, for instance, consider that its share of power does not match its actual political strength. A majoritarian electoral system in which the official leadership has predominant influence in candidate selection and distribution of internal power exacerbates the conflict. In this context, a PR formula to allocate legislative seats within and between parties may become attractive to the dissident faction of the government party, whether it remains in the party and obtains a greater share of power or eventually decides to compete against the official leadership as a separate political group.[18]

The dynamics of electoral reform in Uruguay and Colombia illustrate this mechanism well. In both countries two parties were formed in the mid-nineteenth century that competed in regular elections from the beginning of the twentieth century. One of these parties, however, monopolized power through the use of fraud, coercion, and majoritarian electoral rules. Although the capacity of the opposition to disrupt political order induced the ruling party to guarantee a portion of seats to the minority, plurality rule in multi-member districts remained in place while the government managed to keep its factional conflicts within limits. By contrast, the reform took place with the emergence of a strong dissident faction that weakened the capacity of the ruling party to compete as a relatively unified actor in the electoral arena.

The ruling Colorado party in Uruguay shifted from complete to incomplete list plurality in multi-member districts in 1898, allowing the main opposition party, the Nationals (or Blancos) to gain access to a third of the seats in a district if their lists won 25 percent or more of the valid votes cast (Pujol 1996; Faig Garicoitis 1996). Similarly,

Colombian conservatives passed an electoral reform in 1905 replacing the existing bloc vote by limited vote plurality, which allowed the main opposition party, the Liberals, to obtain up to a third of the seats in each district. Both reforms took place immediately after a civil war initiated but not won by the opposition and worked as a concession by the government for the sake of preventing future revolts (see Maiztegui Casas 2013; Mazzuca and Robinson 2009).

In neither case, however, did these reforms provide a permanent solution. Demands by opposition parties for more transparent regulation of the electoral process and the implementation of proportional formulas intensified in Uruguay in the 1910s and in Colombia in the 1920s. In both cases, episodes of political violence between the parties re-emerged in relation to these demands (see Maiztegui Casas 2013; Oquist 1980). This time, however, it was not civil war that upset the status quo in these countries; rather, it was the emergence of a strong factional division within the incumbent party.[19]

The Colorado Party in Uruguay became deeply divided in 1913, when President Jose Batlle y Ordoñez (1911–1915) proposed the adoption of a collegiate executive (*colegiado*) during the debates over the design of a new constitution. Although Batlle's supporters were strong at the time, a dissident faction, the Riveristas or anti-colegialistas, emerged and gained increasing electoral support over time (Fitzgibbon 1952, 618). The Nationals also opposed Batlle's reform and found in the results of the 1916 constituent assembly elections a favorable environment for forging an alliance with the Riveristas for electoral reform.[20] As the Batllista faction failed to obtain a majority in the constituent body, Riveristas and Nationals joined forces to reject the Colegiado and adopt universal male suffrage, secret vote, and proportional representation (Maiztegui Casas 2013, 198).[21] Supporters of Batlle, however, still maintained a comfortable majority in the

legislature and won the 1917 congressional election. To overcome the stalemate, Nationals and Batllistas appointed a new bipartisan commission that agreed on a revised version of the Colegiado in exchange for the secret vote and a d'Hondt formula in districts of medium magnitude (Chasquetti 2003; Buquet and Castellano 1994). The key feature of the electoral system, however, was one that suited the interests of the challenger faction within the incumbent party and the opposition alike: the PR formula would be applied to distribute seats both between and within parties, using the double simultaneous vote system in force since 1910.[22]

A comparable division within the incumbent party facilitated the approval of PR in Colombia. In 1929, the conservative party experienced a deep factional conflict that led to a split between the supporters of Guillermo Valencia and Alfredo Vasquez Cobo as candidates for the 1930 presidential election. This opened the way for a series of congressional alliances between dissident conservatives and the Liberals. The Vasquistas supported the Liberals in approving a certificate of citizenship required to vote, while the Liberals supported the Vasquistas in the election of *designados* (substitutes for the president in the event of his temporary or permanent absence) in October 1929.[23] In addition, in November the Vasquistas voted with the Liberals in support for PR.[24]

One interpretation of this alliance is that Vasquistas were trading PR in exchange for Liberal Party votes in favor of Vasquez Cobos (Mazzuca and Robinson 2008, 313). This view fits the historical records because the Liberals lacked a presidential candidate until very late in the process. However, because it was uncertain whether the Liberals would deliver their votes to Vasquez Cobos, it is likely that dissident conservatives had other motives for supporting the electoral reform.[25] Given the existence of a plurality system with limited vote, two-thirds of the seats in each district would go to the candidates who

received the most votes. With the numerical and institutional dominance of the official leadership, most candidates in most districts would belong to this faction, thus placing the candidates of the dissident group at a great disadvantage.[26] Just as in the case of Uruguay, a PR system applied to the distribution of seats across factional lists could help the dissident faction to compete more effectively against the official leadership.

This was exactly the type of PR adopted by Act 31 in Congress. This law established a Hare proportional formula with largest remainders in districts of medium magnitude with the peculiar feature that it would be implemented to distribute seats between "parties or group lists" that obtained a share of votes above a full quota (Delgado 2002, 105). In other words, the introduction of proportionality was meant to serve not only the interests of the opposition but also those of the challenger faction within the ruling party.

*PR as a strategy to increase regime support*

In a context of growing electoral competition, an incumbent party that achieved a dominant position thanks to majoritarian electoral rules may react defensively if new parties start to capture a significant portion of its vote. In particular, this party may take advantage of its power at the moment and shift to PR to prevent absolute defeat in the future. This logic does not hold under some authoritarian conditions. When there is potential government influence over election results and no established opposition exists, the old ruling party or a new reformist party that is confident about winning future elections may adopt PR to simply coopt opponents and broaden support for the regime.

As students of non-democratic politics have pointed out, authoritarian leaders enhance the survival of the regime when they mimic the formalities of a representative system and allow the opposition to participate in legislative elections (see Ghandi 2008). Yet this

strategy is not likely to work if the incumbent party wins all or almost all legislative seats or if it annuls elections every time electoral support for opposition parties grows. Under these conditions, the opposition may withdraw from participation in elections. The depletion of loyal opposition will, in turn, deprive the regime of any pretense of democratic representation and induce opponents to adopt non-electoral means to achieve power. In this scenario, the ruling party may decide to liberalize electoral contests in a more meaningful way or maintain a highly exclusionary political system.

If the ruling party decides to liberalize, it is likely to adopt a restricted form of PR to convince opposition parties to compete without risking its electoral advantage. However, autocrats may also fail to liberalize in time due to the lack of perfect information about the balance of forces. As a consequence, a new party or coalition with popular support may succeed in overthrowing the old regime by force. In this situation, the triumphant party or coalition is also likely to adopt PR not out of fear of losing future elections but to distinguish themselves from former rulers and broaden support for the new (not necessarily democratic) regime. As when the former ruling party enacted the reform, the type of PR adopted in this context is expected to benefit the largest party by design.

This scenario depicts the first introduction of PR in most countries of Latin America, and the history of electoral reform in El Salvador and Bolivia is representative of the majority of cases included in this path. In contrast to Colombia or Uruguay, neither El Salvador nor Bolivia had in the past developed a tradition of regular electoral contests between a government and a legal opposition party. Majoritarian elections and government control allowed only one party to win or, if more than one party competed, elections were suspended or annulled when an opposition party increased its support above acceptable levels. Whereas in El Salvador the ruling party shifted to PR in the face

of growing political and social opposition to its hegemony, in Bolivia a new revolutionary party that displaced former autocrats from power decided the reform. In both cases, however, PR was part of a strategy of controlled liberalization to increase support for the new regime.

Beginning in the 1950s, authoritarian regimes in El Salvador shifted from personalistic military dictatorships to institutionalized authoritarian regimes holding elections that only the government party was effectively allowed to win. The first of these parties, founded in 1949, was the military-sponsored Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democrática (PRUD), which through the use of a highly majoritarian multi-member district plurality system and government-controlled elections won virtually all seats in the legislative assembly between 1952 and 1960 (see Nohlen 2005). By the late 1950s, however, the status quo had been altered. In 1959, the government of Lemus started to face growing popular mobilization against the regime from students and a newly created party, the leftist Partido Revolucionario de Abril y Mayo (PRAM). In addition, in 1960, the centrist Partido Demócrata Cristiano was formed to oppose the regime (see Bethell 1990, 263).

In this context, and after a series of coups and countercoups, Colonel Julio Rivera took control of the situation and replaced the PRUD by a new military-sponsored party, the Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PCN). Although the PCN was a successor of the PRUD, the strategy did not consist simply of changing the name of the ruling party. After convening a constituent congress in which it won all seats, the PCN enacted a new constitution in 1961 and a new election law in 1963 that established PR for legislative elections for the first time in the country. Historical analyses suggest that the purpose of

this reform was clearly to increase the number of seats for the opposition, especially the moderate opposition, such as the PDC (see White 1973, 198; Bethell 1990, 263-264).

Under the new electoral system, the government party was able to maintain a comfortable legislative majority of 61% while allowing the PDC to win more than 27 percent of the seats in the 1964 election (see Nohlen 2005: 285). The incumbent party advantage was due not only to government control of voting but also to the type of PR adopted: a closed-list Hare formula applied to a very small assembly of 52 members elected in 14 multi-member districts with a low average magnitude of 3.7.

Similar to El Salvador, neither civilian nor military dictatorships in Bolivia managed to form a strong ruling party during the early decades of the twentieth century. The first attempts to form an official party occurred in the 1940s, with the decline of traditional liberal and republican parties and the emergence of new reformist parties that embraced radical ideologies (see Klein 2003, 186). The most important of these parties was the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), founded in 1942. Thanks to the support of the de facto government installed in 1943 and the use of plurality rule with limited vote in multi-member districts, the MNR became the largest party in the 1944 congressional elections, winning 66 of 136 seats (Abecia Valdivieso 1999, 112). However, after a new coup in 1946 organized by forces allied with traditional parties, the MNR was displaced from power and its leaders exiled.

In spite of state repression and electoral fraud, the MNR was not only able to compete in the 1947 and 1949 legislative elections but also to win the 1951 presidential election (Klein 2003, 205). Yet its return to power could only take place by force. The incumbent government asked the military to intervene to annul the 1951 election, suspend Congress,

and outlaw the MNR. In response, the MNR forged an alliance with the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) and organized a revolution that overthrew the de facto government.

Although the MNR did not intend to establish a democracy, it did adopt a series of democratizing measures, such as universal suffrage. In order to differentiate itself from previous authoritarian governments, the new reformist party also pursued a strategy of controlled political liberalization. A key component of this strategy was the adoption of PR to be implemented for the first time in the 1956 congressional elections (García Montero 2002). In this and subsequent elections until its overthrow in 1964 the MNR was able to hold a hegemonic position, always winning more than 75 percent of legislative seats. However, parties that opposed the MNR and had had almost no institutional presence in the past, such as the Falange Socialista Boliviana (FSB), were allowed to compete in all elections and win a minority of legislative seats.

As in the case of El Salvador, the type of PR implemented in Bolivia had the potential to incorporate some opponents into the political system without putting the dominance of the incumbent party at risk. The MNR adopted a PR system with a strong bias in favor of large parties. Although the average district magnitude was medium (7.5), a PR Hare formula was applied to elect a very small assembly of 68 members using a system known as "double quotient" that set a high electoral threshold for minority parties to have access to the distribution of seats.[27] In addition, in 1956 the ruling party replaced the absolute majority rule that had been in force since the nineteenth century to elect presidents with a plurality formula implemented every four years in concurrent congressional elections with a midterm partial renewal. This combination of rules (in addition to the potential use of non-legal resources to create an uneven field) secured the government party a comfortable majority position.

*PR as a strategy to debilitate opponents*

In the general literature on electoral change, it is often assumed that the main actors in this process are parties and party leaders. This assumption is misplaced, however, in some authoritarian contexts. This is particularly the case with many military dictatorships that failed to create a strong government party or forge a stable alliance with preexisting parties. In Latin America, only 29 percent of the military regimes in existence between 1900 and 1990 were able to rely on partisan support to organize their rule (see Negretto 2014). In this situation, when the regime adopted new institutions the military themselves should be considered the main reformers.

The intervention of the military and their influence on the domestic politics of many countries of Latin America is well documented (see Rouquie and Suffern 1998). This influence has been visible when they acted as arbiters in electoral disputes between parties, siding in favor of one against another, or when they intervened to prevent certain parties from taking power. However, they have also had a less noticeable but crucial impact on the development of inter-party competition when they acted as reformers of the rules of the electoral game. This has been the case when military rulers deposed a civilian government but before withdrawing from power implemented electoral or constitutional changes that affected the course of partisan competition in the future.

One of the lasting legacies of military rulers as electoral reformers in some countries has been the introduction of PR. This occurred in countries where the military lacked a party of their own or a reliable partisan ally and majoritarian electoral rules worked systematically in favor of a civilian party whose policies they opposed. In this context, military rulers did not limit themselves to deposing the party from power or annulling the election that its candidates won; they also attempted to reduce its institutional influence

in the future. In this context, the adoption of PR by the military was a strategy intended to debilitate the largest party with the possible additional effect of strengthening minority parties whose programs were closer to or at least not openly against their interests.[28]

Argentina and Peru exemplify this route to PR. Both countries shared a past of military interventions in which military rulers acted as arbiters of partisan competition. Yet unlike some Central American countries, such as El Salvador or Guatemala, the military in Argentina and Peru did not perpetuate themselves in power by creating a successful party of their own, nor did they manage to form a permanent alliance with one of the main parties in the country. In addition, these countries experienced a process of democratization in which majoritarian electoral rules worked in favor of or had the potential to increase the influence of a civilian party whose policies were perceived as harmful to the military.

In the case of Argentina, PR was first introduced as a byproduct of the conflict between the military and the Peronist Party (PP). Elected in 1946, the PP gained almost absolute control of the state between 1948 and 1951, due in part to a plurality incomplete list system for elections, which provided the party with disproportionate institutional power. As several of Peron's policies antagonized the military, they decided to overthrow his government in 1955. The new de facto government abrogated the constitution enacted in 1949 and convened a constituent assembly in 1957 (see Padilla 1986, 583). The military banned the PP and, for the first time, established a system of proportional representation to elect delegates to the convention.

Although the military themselves were active promoters of the adoption of PR for all future elections to prevent the Peronist experience from being repeated, the main opposition parties represented in the 1957 constituent assembly defended the previous

majoritarian system, expecting that they might hold the majority in the future (see Spinelli 2012). Over time, however, the preference of the military prevailed. In a context of permanent conflict between the military and the PP and cycles of democracy and military dictatorship, the same formula that had been designed in 1957 was used to elect deputies in 1963 and 1965. As of 1972, again by the influence of a military dictatorship, PR became a permanent feature of congressional elections in Argentina.

In Peru, a military junta adopted PR in 1962 following a coup aimed at preventing Haya de la Torre of the Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP) from taking power after he won a presidential election by a small margin of votes (see Tuesta Soldevilla 2005). As in Argentina, the shift from majoritarian to proportional electoral rules took place against a background of intense political conflict between the military and a popular party. Although the PAP never reached the level of electoral support and following of the Peronist Party, it had been the largest party in Peru since the mid 1940s. Short of banning the party (something that was attempted before, under the dictatorship of Manuel Odría) it was impossible to prevent the Apristas from having a strong legislative influence.

Peru had had plurality elections with incomplete list before the adoption of PR. Given the instability and intermittent fragmentation of the Peruvian party system, these rules were unlikely to create a hegemonic winner in most districts. However, the election of members of congress concurrently with the election of presidents by a formula close to plurality (33%) made it possible that the party of a popular presidential candidate could potentially win a majority of districts and thus a majority (or something close to a majority) in Congress. To prevent this from happening, the military intervened to annul the 1962 elections and shortly thereafter adopted a PR system to be implemented for the first time in the legislative elections of June 1963 (see Guibert Patiño 2014, 11). In this

election, although the PAP won the largest legislative share with 40 percent of the seats, it was sufficiently short of a majority to be unable to control the assembly.

As in the previous cases we have analyzed, the path to reform and the rationale for change had an impact on the type of PR adopted. If military rulers adopted PR to reduce the power of a popular party they opposed, the new electoral rules should have been relatively inclusive. This is in effect what happened. In the case of Argentina, the first implementation of PR in 1957 was used to elect a 205-member constituent assembly selected by a closed list d'Hondt formula in multi-member districts with an average magnitude of 8.9. In Peru, a closed list PR d'Hondt system was implemented in 1963 for the election of an assembly of 140 legislators (larger than the 2016 Peruvian congress) in multi-member districts with an average magnitude of 5.8.

**Conclusions**

The relationship between electoral systems and party systems is not unidirectional. It is precisely because plurality rule tends to maintain two-party systems and PR multipartism that large or ascending parties are likely to prefer majoritarian electoral systems and small or declining parties tend to support PR formulas. This is the main historical lesson from the adoption of PR in Western Europe. With the extension of suffrage to the male population and the incorporation of new voters, third parties emerged in restrictive electoral systems. In this context, either a re-equilibration occurred and the new parties disappeared, or established parties shifted to PR. In other words, the origins of PR in Western Europe are associated with growing levels of electoral competition.

The adoption of PR in Latin America does not fit this scenario. In the first place, PR reform in this region was not related to the formal extension of suffrage to all or a

majority of males. Although the number of voters tended to naturally increase over time, de jure universal or quasi-universal male suffrage occurred on average many decades before PR adoption. At the same time, although elections were held in most countries before electoral reform, they took place under authoritarian conditions that severely limited partisan competition.

As we have argued, the initial adoption of PR in Latin America was part of a strategy of controlled political liberalization initiated by authoritarian rulers. We have also proposed that within this general framework, specific paths to reform varied depending on the nature of the authoritarian regime and the events that called into question the maintenance of the existing majoritarian electoral system. Using this theoretical perspective, we have shown with comparative historical data that the shift from majoritarian to proportional electoral rules was promoted either by a dissident faction of the incumbent party to compete more effectively against the official leadership, by the old ruling party or a new reformist party to broaden support for the regime, or by military rulers to weaken a majority party whose policies they opposed.

This paper contributes to the comparative literature on electoral reform in several ways. It provides a novel, historically grounded explanation for the emergence of PR in Latin America that could be used to shed light on the adoption of PR in regions outside Western Europe. In addition, although the historical routes to PR in Latin America are different from those followed in Western Europe, a key aspect of the reform is similar. Although PR eventually promoted greater political inclusion in both contexts, the new rules were often introduced by the old elites to maintain power and limit the influence of competitors. The development of a more ambitious theoretical framework able to include

important electoral reforms in established and new democracies is badly needed in comparative electoral research. This article is, we hope, a contribution toward that goal.

**Table 1**
**PR in Latin America: Year of Adoption and Previous Electoral Formula**

| Country | Year of PR adoption | Previous Electoral Formula and Year of Adoption |
|---|---|---|
| Argentina | 1957 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Incomplete List (1912) |
| Bolivia | 1956 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Limited Vote (1924) |
| Brazil | 1932* | Multi-Member District Plurality, Cumulative Vote (1904) |
| Chile | 1925 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Cumulative Vote (1874) |
| Colombia | 1929 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Limited Vote (1905) |
| Costa Rica | 1913** | Indirect elections (1893) |
| Dominican Republic | 1962 | Mixed-Member Majoritarian (1924) |
| Ecuador | 1945 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Limited Vote (1932) |
| El Salvador | 1963 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Complete List (1952) |
| Guatemala | 1946 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Bloc Vote (1879) |
| Honduras | 1957 | Majority Runoff, Second Round Plurality (1937) |
| Mexico | 1977*** | Plurality, with limited rep. for minorities (1963) |
| Nicaragua | 1984 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Incomplete List (1957) |
| Panama | 1925 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Limited Vote (1918) |
| Paraguay | 1990 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Incomplete List (1916) |
| Peru | 1962 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Incomplete List (1931) |
| Uruguay | 1917 | Multi-Member District Plurality, Incomplete List (1898) |
| Venezuela | 1946 | Indirect elections (1893) |

**Source:** Authors, based on Colomer (2004), Golder (2003), Nohlen (2005), Wills-Otero and Perez-Liñan (2005), and various country sources

* PR Hare in multi-member districts with a distribution of remainders among individual candidates by plurality rule (Nicolau 2012).

** PR Hare applied to districts that elected 3 or more legislators; plurality for districts of lower magnitude (Lehoucq and Molina 2002). Most candidates elected in districts of magnitude greater than 3.

*** Mixed-Member majoritarian system, with PR Hare for 100 out 400 legislators (Molinar Horcasitas and Weldon 2001).

**Table 2**
**De Jure Male Suffrage Expansion and PR in Latin America**

| Country | Male Suffrage Expansion* | PR Adoption | Years difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Argentina | 1857 | 1957 | 100 |
| Bolivia | 1956 | 1956 | 0 |
| Brazil | 1891 | 1932 | 41 |
| Chile | 1888 | 1925 | 37 |
| Colombia | 1936 | 1929 | -5 |
| Costa Rica | 1913 | 1913 | 0 |
| Dom. Rep. | 1865 | 1962 | 97 |
| Ecuador | 1861 | 1945 | 84 |
| El Salvador | 1883 | 1963 | 80 |
| Guatemala | 1879 | 1946 | 67 |
| Honduras | 1894 | 1957 | 63 |
| Mexico | 1857 | 1977 | 120 |
| Nicaragua | 1893 | 1984 | 91 |
| Panama | 1904 | 1925 | 21 |
| Paraguay | 1870 | 1990 | 120 |
| Peru | 1931 | 1962 | 32 |
| Uruguay | 1917 | 1917 | 0 |
| Venezuela | 1946 | 1946 | 0 |
| **Average** | | | **52.7** |

**Source:** Authors, based on Colomer (2004), Nohlen (2005), and various country sources.

* Formal elimination of property, income, or tax qualifications for male voting at national level.

## Table 3
## Political Regime and Elections Before the Adoption of PR

| Country | Political Regime* | Election ** | Election Type*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Argentina | Authoritarian (1951-1955) | Yes (1954) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Bolivia | Authoritarian (1952-1956) | No | NA |
| Brazil | Authoritarian (1930-1932) | No | NA |
| Chile | Democratic (1920-1924) | Yes (1924) | Free and Fair (3) |
| Colombia | Authoritarian (1926-1930) | Yes (1929) | Competitive (1) |
| Costa Rica | Authoritarian (1910-1914) | Yes (1912) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Dom. Rep. | Authoritarian (1957-1961) | Yes (1957) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Ecuador | Authoritarian (1944-1945) | Yes (1945) | Competitive (2) |
| El Salvador | Authoritarian (1956-1961) | Yes (1961) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Guatemala | Authoritarian (1931-1944) | Yes (1944) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Honduras | Authoritarian (1954-1956) | Yes (1956) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Mexico | Authoritarian (1970-1976) | Yes (1976) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Nicaragua | Authoritarian (1979-1984) | No | NA |
| Panama | Authoritarian (1920-1924) | Yes (1924) | Hegemonic (1) |
| Paraguay | Authoritarian (1983-1989) | Yes (1989) | Competitive (2) |
| Peru | Democratic (1956-1962) | Yes (1956) | Free and Fair (3) |
| Uruguay | Authoritarian (1915-1918) | Yes (1916) | Competitive (2) |
| Venezuela | Authoritarian (1941-1945) | Yes (1944) | Hegemonic (1) |

**Source:** Authors, based on Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2005) and Howard and Roesler (2006) for the coding of political regimes and elections, and Nohlen (2005), Latin American Statistics UCSD (http://libraries.ucsd.edu/collections/about/collections-of-distinction/latin-american-elections-statistics), and various country sources for the existence of elections and composition of parliament.

* Political Regime: Authoritarian or democratic nature of the regime that preceded the adoption of PR. Period starts at the beginning of an executive term and ends with the termination of that term or with a change in the nature of the regime.

** Election: Parliamentary or Constituent Assembly election that preceded the adoption of PR.

*** Election Type:

(1) Elections in which only one party is effectively allowed to win representation. Operationalized as elections in which the government party wins at least 75% of parliamentary or constituent assembly seats.
(2) Elections in which voters can vote for opposition parties and the latter win legislative positions but rulers use coercive and unfair means to ensure their electoral and institutional predominance. Operationalized as elections in which the government party wins less than 75% of parliamentary or constituent assembly seats.
(3) Elections in which voters face multiple options on ballots and incumbents do not abuse government power to prevent or reduce opposition victory.

## Table 4
## Political Regime, Elections, and Partisan Position of Reformers After PR

| Country | Political Regime* | Election ** | Election Type*** | Reformers' Seat Share**** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Argentina | Democratic (1958-1961) | Yes (1958) | Free and Fair (3) | No partisan support |
| Bolivia | Authoritarian (1956-1963) | Yes (1956) | Hegemonic (1) | 0.90 (+0.71) |
| Brazil | Authoritarian (1933-1937) | Yes (1933) | Competitive (2) | 0.69 (+0.69) (a) |
| Chile | Authoritarian (1932-1933) | Yes (1932) | Competitive (2) | 0.19 (+0.01) |
| Colombia | Authoritarian (1930-1934) | Yes (1931) | Competitive (2) | 0.49 (-0.22) |
| Costa Rica | Authoritarian (1913-1916) | Yes (1914) | Competitive (2) | 0.50 (-0.45) |
| Dom. Rep. | Authoritarian (1962-1965) | Yes (1962) | Competitive (2) | 0.27 (+0.27) |
| Ecuador | Authoritarian (1946-1947) | Yes (1946) | Competitive (2) | No partisan support |
| El Salvador | Authoritarian (1962-1967) | Yes (1964) | Competitive (2) | 0.61 (-0.39) |
| Guatemala | Democratic (1950-1953) | Yes (1950) | Free and Fair (3) | 0.71 (-0.06) |
| Honduras | Democratic (1957-1962) | Yes (1957) | Free and Fair (3) | No partisan support |
| Mexico | Authoritarian (1976-1982) | Yes (1979) | Competitive (2) | 0.74 (-0.08) |
| Nicaragua | Democratic (1984-1990) | Yes (1984) | Free and Fair (3) | 0.63 (+0.63) |
| Panama | Authoritarian (1928-1932) | Yes (1928) | Hegemonic (1) | 0. 82 (+0.01) |
| Paraguay | Authoritarian (1993-1998) | Yes (1993) | Competitive (2) | 0.47 (-0.20) |
| Peru | Democratic (1963-1967) | Yes (1963) | Free and Fair (3) | No partisan support |
| Uruguay | Democratic (1919-1923) | Yes (1919) | Free and Fair (3) | 0.52 (+0.02) |
| Venezuela | Authoritarian (1945-1948) | Yes (1946) | Hegemonic (1) | 0.78 (+0.64) |

**Source:** Same as Table 3.

(a) No national parties. Percentage of seats of Vargas' supporters in the 1933 constituent assembly.

* Political Regime: Authoritarian or democratic nature of the regime at the time when PR was first implemented. Period starts at the beginning of an executive term and ends with the termination of that term or a change in the nature of the regime.

** Election: Parliamentary or Constituent Assembly election in which PR was first implemented.

*** Election Type:

(1) Elections in which only one party is effectively allowed to win representation. Operationalized as elections in which the government party wins at least 75% of parliamentary or constituent assembly seats.
(2) Elections in which voters can vote for opposition parties and the latter win legislative positions but rulers use coercive and unfair means to ensure their electoral and institutional predominance. Operationalized as elections in which the government party wins less than 75% of parliamentary or constituent assembly seats.
(3) Elections in which voters face multiple options on ballots and incumbents do not abuse government power to prevent or reduce opposition victory.

**** Reformers' Seat Share: percentage of legislative seats of the party associated with the reformers in the first election using PR. Difference in seat share compared to the last election before reform is indicated in parenthesis.

**Table 5**
**Paths to PR Reform in Latin America**

| Antecedent Conditions | Triggering event | Main Reformer | Reform strategy | Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Authoritarian regime with regular though unfair elections between an organized ruling party and a legal opposition party | Emergence of strong dissident faction within the ruling party | Dissident faction of the ruling party | Compete more effectively against official leadership | Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Uruguay |
| Authoritarian regime with no, irregular, or one-party elections | Legitimacy crisis due to growing extra-electoral opposition or collapse due to revolution or death of dictator | Ruling party or new reformist party | Increase regime support | Bolivia, Brazil(*), Dom. Rep.(*), Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Venezuela |
| Unstable democracy with military intervention as a regulating force of electoral competition | Conflict between military and majority party | Military rulers without (or weak) partisan support | Weaken majority party | Argentina, Peru |

(*) Cases sharing antecedent conditions, triggering event, and reform strategy, but with variation in the identity of reformers. A provisional de facto government adopted PR in Brazil and the Dominican Republic.

**Endnotes**

[1] We define PR reform as a shift from any system in which the single seat or the majority of the seats in the districts are allocated to the candidates or the lists with most votes to another in which a mathematical formula (as opposed to a fixed, pre-determined distribution between majority and minority lists or candidates) is used to allocate most seats in proportion to votes in districts with a magnitude greater than one.

[2] We leave aside non-political explanations, such as that of Cusack, Iversen, and Soskice (2007), which have been refuted by recent qualitative and statistical analyses (Kreuzer 2009; Mares and Leemann 2014).

[3] In a different rendering of PR reform, however, Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 32) postulate a convergence of interests between incumbents and challengers.

[4] An interesting attempt to preserve the generality of the "socialist threat" theory and also apply it to these cases has been made by Ahmed, who proposes reinterpreting the threat that workers' parties posed to established parties as an existential and not simply an electoral threat. See Ahmed (2013, 22-24).

[5] For recent restatements of the main debates in this research agenda, see Rodden (2009) and Mares and Leeman (2014).

[6] Even in Chile, where the socialists were better organized and politically stronger than in other countries, they never reached more than two percent of the national vote during the years that preceded the adoption of PR. See Nohlen (2005, Vol. 2, 269).

[7] For a description of these systems, see Caramani (2000, 31).

[8]According to Wills-Otero and Perez Liñan (2005), Cuba was the first country to adopt PR in the Americas, in 1908.

[9] In Western Europe, the average temporal distance between formal male suffrage expansion and PR adoption (35 years) also calls into question their relationship in several cases. Perhaps the reason why the claim has not been challenged is that in eight of the eighteen countries in this region (usually the most intensively studied, such as Belgium or Sweden) universal male suffrage was implemented either at the same time or few years before shifting to PR. See Caramani (2000) and Nohlen (2005).

[10] Literacy restrictions remained in some countries well after the elimination of property or income qualifications. On male suffrage in Latin America, see Posada Carbó (1996).

[11] Wills-Otero (2009) finds a strong statistical correlation between male suffrage expansion and PR adoption. This is probably due to the fact that she operationalized suffrage expansion as a binary indicator "coded 1 both in and after the adoption of universal male suffrage and 0 for all other years"(p. 42). This operationalization inflates the impact of suffrage expansion in those cases in which formal male suffrage expansion (the measure used by Wills-Otero) and PR reform occurred the same year. However, if there is a connection between these variables one should expect some lag between the legal expansion of suffrage and a change in the pattern of party competition that induces PR reform. If both reforms take place simultaneously, it is unlikely that suffrage expansion affected the adoption of PR.

[12] Whereas in Western Europe secret vote was implemented an average of 19 years before universal male suffrage, in Latin America it was adopted an average of 14 years later. See Caramani (2000) and Nohlen (2005).

[13] We here classify elections in authoritarian regimes following Howard and Roesler (2006, 367-368). See footnotes to Table 3.

[14] On presidential and legislative electoral systems in Latin America, see Negretto (2013).

[15] Technically, the mixed-member majoritarian electoral system adopted in Mexico in 1977 should not count as a PR reform. We include the case, however, because the incorporation of PR in this country is comparable to other cases in which the ruling party shifted to PR to broaden support for the regime. See Molinar and Weldon (2001).

[16] In other words, the initial adoption of PR in a given country fits a particular path of reform and occurs at a specific point in time only when antecedent conditions combine and interact with the event that makes the status quo no longer sustainable.

[17] We have excluded only Chile and Honduras from the proposed explanations of PR reform. Both share several features with the third path to electoral change, but differ from it either in the antecedent conditions (Honduras) or in the triggering event (Chile).

[18] In fact, when the dissident faction of the ruling party was sufficiently strong to put the reform in place itself, as was the case in Panama in 1925 and Costa Rica in 1913, it adopted PR without the support of an opposition party. For Panama, see Pizzurno and Aráuz (1996); for Costa Rica, Lehoucq and Molina (2002).

[19] Factional divisions within the dominant party were not new in either Uruguay or Colombia, and the opposition, which also suffered divisions, often exploited this to obtain benefits. Not all divisions, however, were equally strong in terms of intra-party competition or led to cross-party alliances between a challenger faction of the dominant party and the opposition, as was the case of the factional dispute within the Colorado party between 1913 and 1916 and within the Conservative party between 1928 and 1929.

[20] Nationals and dissident Colorados had control over 58% of the seats in the constituent assembly, while the Batllistas secured only 40%. See Nohlen (2005).

[21] The Riveristas' support for PR was explicit during the convention. See statements by Pedro Manini Ríos during the March 26, 1917 session, in *Convención Nacional Constituyente,* Vol. 2, p. 212.

[22] On the working of this system, see Faig Caricotis (1996).

[23] See Mayorga Garcia (2012) and *El Tiempo,* October 30, 1929.

[24] The reform was passed in the House by a 49 to 25 vote. Since 49 votes amounted to 51 percent (49/96) and the Liberals had only 30 percent of the House, this means that the reform was made possible thanks only to the support of a considerable number of dissident conservatives. See *Anales de la Camara de Representantes*, 11/05/1929, p. 623.

[25] In the end, the Liberals did not fulfill their part of the agreement because they did concur on the candidacy of Enrique Olaya Herrera as their presidential candidate.

[26] In fact, in the case of Colombia, the dissident factions of the ruling party were in a worse position than those in Uruguay because they lacked a mechanism such as the double simultaneous vote to compete internally.

[27] As a first step, a Hare quota was established by dividing the votes cast in the district by the number of seats to be filled. The parties that did not reach this quota would be eliminated. In a second step, a new quota was obtained by dividing the total vote of these parties by the number of seats in the district. This quota would now be used to distribute seats in the district. Finally, if any seat was left, it would be allocated to the party with the largest number of votes in the district. See Leaño Román (2005).

[28] A comparable explanation for electoral reform has been used to account for the choice of more-than-plurality rules for presidential elections when outgoing military rulers had control over constitutional design. See Negretto (2006).

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