
**“The Determinants of Candidate Selection Procedures in
New Democracies:
Evidence from Spain (1977-1982) and Chile (1989-2005)”**

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In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in legislative candidate selection (for a review, see, Field & Siavelis 2008).¹ This newer research provides improved candidate selection typologies and essential empirical information regarding parties' candidate selection processes. The newer and classic literature on parties also elucidates the important effects of candidate selection procedures, which include the distribution of power within party organizations (Duverger 1959, p. 151; Michels 1949, pp. 111-13, 183, 187), the types of candidates selected (Gallagher 1988a, pp. 12-14; Norris 1997), legislator behavior (Gallagher 1988a, 1988b; Taylor-Robinson 2001), party cohesion and discipline (Gallagher et al. 2001, p. 288; Pennings & Hazan 2001, p. 267; Rahat & Hazan 2001, p. 316), the stability of parliamentary governments (Rahat & Hazan 2001, p. 313), and the effectiveness of presidential systems (Taylor-Robinson 2001; Siavelis & Morgenstern 2008).

However, we know little about why certain candidate selection methods are adopted, particularly in new democracies; and how they interact with the democratization process to shape political behavior and party institutionalization. This paper contributes to filling these gaps by analyzing why particular legislative candidate selection procedures are adopted in nascent democracies. We contend that within transitional systems distinct contexts differently constrain choice and bargaining, and condition party adoption of legislative candidate selection procedures. In particular we hypothesize that the relative levels of uncertainty about the installation and continuance of democracy, strategic complexity of the electoral system, and party leadership autonomy, conspire to create incentives for the adoption of more or less inclusive procedures. We illustrate the potential explanatory value of these determinants using the parties in the nascent democracies of Spain and Chile.

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Methodology

Qualitative Case Studies: This study employs qualitative case study methodology. We define a *case* as a *relevant* political party, one that affects party tactics or competition at the national level by having “coalition” or “blackmail” (Sartori 1976, p. 123). Qualitative comparative case studies are most appropriate for the initial stages of this project for many reasons. First, theory on the determinants of candidate selection procedures is not advanced enough to employ solely a “testing” logic (Ragin 2004). We need a method that can best advance theory development and rigorous incremental testing. Case studies are particularly good for hypothesis generation, theory development, and identifying missing variables (George & Bennett 2005; McKeown 2004; Munck 2004), especially those that are unexpected or counterintuitive. Second, variables may interact in distinct ways to produce the same outcome, and qualitative case research is better suited to grasping the distinctions, which might be missed in statistical analyses (Ragin 2004). This condition may partially explain the sparse findings on the determinants of candidate selection procedures. Third, case studies permit on-going clarification of key concepts (Ragin 2004) and better achieve measurement validity. Therefore, we pay particular attention to operationalizing the concepts appropriately for distinct environments, the importance of which would be missed in standard statistical analyses that employ common indicators (Munck 2004).

Research Design & Country Selection Rationale: Research for this paper is based on the study of the relevant parties in Chile and Spain. This nonrandom case selection approximates the “most different system design” (Przeworski & Teune 1970) and John Stuart Mill’s “method of agreement.” We identify a common outcome to be explained and seek to identify common traits that can account for it. We also rely on what Munck (2004, p. 108) calls selecting “sharply contrasting cases”, which “may permit stronger tests of hypotheses

through focus on diverse contexts. High variability specifically on rival explanations may yield more leverage in test of theory.”

In Spain and Chile, the relevant political parties adopted highly exclusive candidate selection procedures. Yet at a systemic level of analysis, there are stark differences in the countries’ formal institutional arrangements—still institutions are prevalent explanations for the type of candidate selection procedures. Spain established a quasi-federal, parliamentary monarchy that uses closed-list proportional representation at the district level to elect its lower house. Chile, in contrast, is a unitary, presidential republic, which uses the binomial system to elect its deputies. While these factors are discussed further below; the claim here is that since these potential explanatory variables vary across cases, they are not necessary to explain the outcome. Despite important differences, and though specific measurements vary by party, the parties in both countries exhibit similar values on the three potential explanatory variables—uncertainty about the stability of the nascent democracy, strategic complexity of the electoral system and party leadership autonomy.

Caveats and Limitations: The authors are fully aware of the potential limitations of this design (George & Bennett 2005, pp. 153-60), and their causal inferences are therefore appropriately tempered. These limitations include but are not limited to: (1) nonrandom case selection is subject to “cherry picking” whereby the investigators chose cases that fit their favored theoretical variables; (2) homogeneity of variables (e.g. presence of x and y) does not in and of itself establish a causal link between the variables; (3) there may be unidentified independent variables that could account for the outcome, y ; (4) the lack of variation of the dependent variable can lead to serious problems of causal inference; and (5) the possibility that there are distinct and multiple combinations of causes that produce the outcome.

At this stage, we simply make the case for the plausibility of the causal variables identified here. Our evaluation is based on examining newspaper reports, secondary sources, party documents and numerous interviews with party officials in Spain and Chile, in the spirit of process-tracing analysis: “The process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanisms—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George & Bennett 2005, p. 206). While space limitations prevent an in depth discussion of each party here, the authors will also conduct within country analyses of the choice of candidate selection procedures in each party. Further research is planned to incorporate two country studies (and multiple additional party cases) with variation on the dependent variable, that is, more inclusive candidate selection procedures, to develop, test and refine the findings of this study.

Candidate Selection Procedures

As a starting point, we are interested in the candidate selection procedures that emerge just prior to the founding elections, defined as elections that are likely to occur under reasonably fair conditions (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986, p. 58), and the consolidation of the democratic regime—when democracy has become “the only game in town” (Linz & Stepan 1996, p. 5)—as the endpoint. In Spain, this corresponds to the period from 1977 to 1982. Negotiations between the incumbent authoritarian government and the opposition produced a democratically elected government under reasonably free and fair conditions in June 1977, approximately 19 months after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in November 1975. The elections were won by a new center-right electoral alliance—the *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD)—organized around the last reformist president of the authoritarian regime, Adolfo Suárez, who subsequently led a UCD minority government as prime minister.

The *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) became the largest opposition party, followed by the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE) and the right-wing *Alianza Popular* (AP). Other relevant parties were the regional parties that attain significant representation in the national parliament: *Pacte Democràtic per Catalunya* (PDC) and later *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), and the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV). Between 1977 and 1982, the new democracy was challenged by unreformed and potentially hostile military and security forces, exacerbated by ETA (Basque independence organization) and right-wing terrorism. However, by 1982, Spain had negotiated a new, consensual constitution (1978), defeated a coup attempt (1981) and experienced an alternation of power to the PSOE (1982)—a center-left party unassociated with the authoritarian past. Therefore, Spanish democracy is considered consolidated after 1982.

Chile's lengthy democratic transition began with the 1980 plebiscite. Termed an opening by the military government, the plebiscite really represented an attempt to provide a purportedly "legal" formula to prop up a fatigued regime and an institutional framework to keep it in power. In the plebiscite (despite its questionable democratic propriety) voters simultaneously approved a new constitution and a timeline for transition that kept former dictator Augusto Pinochet as president until another plebiscite would be held on his continued rule in 1988, followed by presidential elections in 1989. Two multiparty coalitions contested these and subsequent elections. The center-left *Concertación* coalition comprised the *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (PDC), the *Partido Socialista* (PS), the *Partido por la Democracia* (PPD) and the smaller *Partido Radical* (PR) and *Partido Social Demócrata* (PSD). The latter two parties merged in 1994 to form the *Partido Radical Social Demócrata* (PRSD). On the right, the *Alianza* coalition was composed of two major parties, *Renovación Nacional* (RN) and the *Unión Demócrata Independiente* (UDI), with the exception of the

1993 election when the *Unión de Centro Centro* (UCC) also joined the *Alianza*. The Chilean transition ended with the 2005 constitutional reforms, which eliminated most of the constitution's non-democratic elements. After these reforms, Chile finally met the basic standards of democracy set out by Linz and Stepan, because “the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy” no longer had to “share power with other bodies *de jure*” (1996, p. 3).

The dependent variable in this study is the inclusiveness of the *selectorate*—the body that chooses the candidates. We employ Rahat and Hazan's (2001) typology in which the selectorate, on a spectrum from inclusive to exclusive, may be the electorate as a whole, party members, selected party agency, nonselected party agency, selected party leader, and nonselected party leader. Therefore, the procedures may run from party primaries of various types on the inclusive end, selection by a convention of intermediate-level party activists in the mid-range, and leadership selection on the exclusive end. A serious problem confronted when developing a typology of candidate selection procedures, or establishing their determinants and/or effects, is that aspirants often face multiple selectorates on their path to candidacy (Rahat & Hazan 2001). On which or how many should we concentrate? In this paper, we ask, “Who ultimately decides?” The answer may or may not correspond with formal party procedures; therefore any characterization of the candidate selection procedures must be based on a party specific understanding of the *de facto* and informal processes.

All of the Spanish parties employed exclusive candidate selection procedures. Focusing on the two largest parties, the UCD and PSOE, candidate selection in the founding 1977 elections was largely an elite affair, with the parties frequently struggling to find sufficient candidates. *De jure*, by 1979, sub-national party-leadership bodies proposed

candidate lists that could be subsequently altered by the national party-leadership bodies in Madrid. There were no party conventions to choose candidates; yet in this process rank-and-file members of sub-national party branches could voice their preferences on candidates, but they did not ultimately decide. The PSOE candidate selection procedures remained in place until 1998, and, in essence, the UCD procedures remained in effect until the party disbanded in 1983.

De facto, candidate selection in all parties was largely ultimately controlled by a few party leaders (Esteban & López Guerra 1985; Gillespie 1989, p. 343; Tusell Gómez 1985). The national party organizations did not just have veto power, but could (and did) replace proposed candidates with candidates of their own choosing, including “parachuting” politicians into districts with which they had no ties. The procedures used by the UCD were even less inclusive than those used by the PSOE. This meant the inclusion of fewer actors at the national level, and where regional-party actors were involved in candidate selection they were more likely to be small groups of local notables than regional-party organizations representing a base. For the 1977 UCD alliance lists, Suárez selected Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo to handle negotiations with the constituent parties’ leaders; Calvo-Sotelo in turn required the party leaders sign a document granting him the power of final arbitration of candidate lists, which they did (Ramírez 1977, p. 121). After the UCD became a formal party, the 1978 party statutes gave the party president formal control of “electoral matters,” which according to Hopkin (1999, p.89) allowed Suárez to control the lists. Candidate selection in 1979 was more centralized in the hands of Suárez, with the influence of the party barons (Esteban & López Guerra 1985, p.68) and some of Suárez’s own allies reduced. Also, the statutory role of the sub-national party organizations, whose executives were elected in 1978, was largely ignored. Where the UCD was able to ignore a largely nonexistent base, the PSOE leadership

could not completely ignore sub-national party organizations. Each provincial branch was asked to draw up a list of names twice as long as the number of seats, with final selection to be approved and possibly modified by the national party organization (Esteban & López Guerra 1985, p. 71). An important contrast with the UCD was that changes at the national level had to be approved by the PSOE's Federal Committee. The Federal Committee is composed of members of regional party federations and of the Executive Committee.

In interviews with party officials, the consistent response to the question of who ultimately controlled candidate selection in each election was an offering of one or two names: for the PSOE, Alfonso Guerra; and for the UCD, Adolfo Suárez, Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo, Rafael Arias Salgado, Landelino Lavilla or Rodolfo Matín villa, depending on the election. Yet the key actors themselves were quick to claim that their "power" was exaggerated as many voices were heard. Therefore that leaders ultimately decided does not mean that other party organs or individuals were not consulted. PSOE party leaders all mentioned the role of provincial and later regional-party bodies; UCD party leaders referenced faction leaders and key regional figures. Ultimately, however, candidate selection authority resided with a few individuals.

Chile's candidate selection story is one of accommodating multiple parties within an electoral system characterized by magnitudes of two, and necessitating intense negotiations (Navia 2008; Siavelis 2002). In the first elections following the return of democracy in 1989 every party relied on either party elites or a body composed of party elites to choose its candidates, and then entered into coalitional negotiations to determine final lists.² In subsequent elections, the selection process became more of a multilevel game. Each party had its own

²For the UDI candidate designation has been a completely informal decision by party elites while in the cases of the RN it was the party's National Council. For the PPD it was the party's National Board. For the first election (1989) the PS Central Committee chose candidates as did the PDC's Provincial Juntas.

process to designate initial slates of candidates before coalitional negotiations. In assembling party lists, elites usually consulted with sub-national party bodies in the initial designation of candidates, though local actors often simply ratified recommendations coming from Santiago, and the many incumbents were understood to have a right of re-nomination. In the *Alianza*, this same exclusive process characterized all subsequent elections, with the UDI General Secretariat hand picking candidates and the RN National Council selecting candidates (albeit with more input from local party councils than the UDI) (Navia 2008, p. 111).

While observers have pointed to the use of primaries in the *Concertación* in subsequent elections, in reality they rarely happened and when they did party elites often overrode the results. The PDC and PPD held a few primaries relying only on party militants for the 1993 and 1997 elections. In the very limited cases in which they were used for the 2001 elections, the PPD continued to rely on closed primaries and the PDC is the only party to have used open primaries for the 2001 elections (Navia 2008). One principal involved in the process noted that the use of “internal primaries is really the exception. I can only remember three or four cases.”³ The reasons for the limited use of primaries are manifold. They were usually held only where an incumbent was not running or where there were challenges to a “natural” candidate (Navia 2008). More importantly, however, in all cases parties accepted that primaries could be overruled during negotiations at the coalitional level, meaning ultimate responsibility for candidate selection remained in the hands of a very small cadre of elites.

The calculus on the right for overturning the decisions of its constituent parties was distinct. Because there were only two parties at the negotiating table (with the exception of the 1993 elections when the UCC participated, and indeed complicated the selection process), the

³ Interview with Jorge Navarrete, August 18, 2008.

RN and the UDI simply decided to divide candidacies, precluding the necessity of trading away party designated candidacies for concessions elsewhere or to accommodate small parties. In interviews with party leaders on the right, all significant actors in the process unapologetically noted that elites named candidates, and on the center-left every party leader acknowledged willingness to overrule primary results to satisfy the interest of the coalition, or, as noted by one interviewee, to satisfy the preferences of the party leadership hidden behind the guise of coalition interests. Thus, party elites had the last word on candidate selection in all cases.

Sharp Contrasts and Casting Doubt on Alternative Explanations

Some of the most common explanations advanced to explain the use of distinct candidate selection processes are institutionally based. These explanations hold traction for contemporary analysts of candidate selection, as many of these scholars are firmly rooted in the institutionalist tradition.

Perhaps the most common explanation in this vein is that the incentives associated with different election systems drive parties to employ different candidate selection procedures (Czudnowski 1975, p. 221; Epstein 1967, pp. 225–6; Gallagher 1980, 1988a, b, c; Hermens 1972, pp. 51–9; and more recently, Jones 2008; Siavelis 2002). The conventional wisdom is that given the increased importance of the personality and particular characteristics of candidates for success in single-member or low-magnitude systems, there are incentives to adopt primaries rather than more exclusive procedures. On the other hand proportional representation (PR) systems, multimember districts and higher magnitudes should tend more towards exclusive selection (and greater control for party elites), especially in closed list systems, given that a candidate's personal characteristics are less important and policy and

program should dominate campaigns. These arguments grow logically out of the literature on the incentives to cultivate a personal vote, where closed list systems with high magnitude are understood to make the cultivation of a personal vote less important (Carey & Shugart 1995).

Nonetheless, even a cursory comparison of Chile and Spain shows that the electoral system format alone cannot account for different selection procedures. Chile employs a two-member district system to elect deputies across 60 districts, which tends toward majoritarianism. Given this small magnitude and the use of open lists, candidate selection processes that highlight individual candidate differences like primaries should be the norm. In comparison, Spain's Congress of Deputies during the period analyzed employed a closed-list PR system with an average district magnitude of 6.7. If the above logic holds, one would expect this type of election system to tend towards less inclusive selection processes. Nonetheless, exclusive and party dominated procedures have been the norm in both countries.

Something similar can be said of regime structure. Parliamentary systems are said to encourage party and elite selection of legislative candidates given the centrality of generating the party discipline necessary to sustain parliamentary government, while presidential systems are more apt to rely on more inclusive procedures because discipline is less central to the maintenance of governments (Epstein 1967, p. 225). Once again, presidential Chile's and parliamentary Spain's similar and exclusive party-leadership dominated selection procedures fail to provide evidence that the structure of executive-legislative relations alone is necessary to account for the emergence of different selection procedures.

Neither do arguments based on the geographic dispersion of power hold much traction. Multilevel systems with important regional governments have been tied to more

inclusive selection procedures because parties are also likely to follow geographic decentralization to mirror state institutions, perhaps allowing for more inclusive procedures at the sub-national level. Multilevel systems have also been tied to decentralized selection procedures because localized parties will have incentives to offer candidates with local appeal to the local electorate (Epstein 1967, pp. 209, 229; Gallagher 1988a, b; Harmel 1981). Once again, Chile's extremely unitary state and Spain's decentralized state vary completely on these counts. Indeed, in both systems we find local input into the candidate selection process.⁴ Yet ultimately candidate selection remains a very exclusive process with central party elites making the final decision.

Additional explanations of different modes of selection are based on aspects of internal party organization or ideology (Epstein 1967, pp. 207, 210, 231; Gallagher 1988b; Key 1964, p. 377). In terms of party organization, parties with large membership bases have been hypothesized to tend toward more inclusion. Again, a rudimentary review of our cases disaffirms a strong connection between these variables and different modes of selection. At the party level, party organizations during the dictatorships and transitions varied substantially. The Chilean opposition parties clearly faced brutal repression, yet with the return of democracy emerged with the same strength, levels of social penetration and competitive physiognomy that characterized them during the prior democratic period. In contrast, the Spanish parties all but disappeared, with the partial exception of the PCE, over the near 40 years of authoritarian rule. Therefore, both the parties with large membership bases and those with less developed ones relied on exclusive modes of selection. With respect to ideology, the use of exclusive candidate selection procedures by all of the parties within

⁴ While Spain's decentralization process occurred late in the transition, beginning in 1980, we see no significant change in candidate selection procedures in the direction that would be hypothesized by the literature.

each country casts doubt on explanations based simply on ideological, left-right categorizations.

Here we have discounted some of the most common and potentially most powerful explanations for the emergence of different kinds of candidate selection procedures. In the next sections, we posit that the interaction of regime uncertainty, strategic complexity of the election system, and party leadership autonomy help explain the adoption of more or less inclusive candidate selection procedures in democratizing polities.

Regime Uncertainty

Regime uncertainty refers to the degree to which significant political actors believe that the installation and continuance of democracy are endangered. The hypothesis is that moments of political uncertainty provide an external constraint on the choice of candidate selection procedures (see Arian 1979; Coppedge 1994; Field 2006; Thiébaud 1988). High uncertainty is likely to encourage a smaller selectorate because it provides party leaders with an incentive and a credible argument vis-à-vis midlevel activists and the party rank-and-file to seek and attain control of who will represent the party—the stakes are too high to leave to the vagaries of a more inclusive process. For example, if political actors fear the military's reaction to a potentially radical cohort of legislators, party leaders will attempt to control the outcome to the degree possible. Uncertainty should affect democratic and nondemocratic actors as party leaders would want to control the direction of change. There may still be challenges to leadership control of candidate selection, but uncertainty is more conducive to the leadership attaining and maintaining control. While this cannot be tested here, we hypothesize that transitions with greater certainty are not as constrained and do not prescribe particular

candidate selection procedures. Therefore, certainty permits, but does not guarantee, greater inclusiveness of candidate selection procedures.

Actor calculations of regime uncertainty vary across countries and over time as transitions unfold. In addition to key actors' perceptions of uncertainty, we assess regime uncertainty based on three conditions: first, the attitudes of the last authoritarian ruling elites toward democracy (Valenzuela 1992). Valenzuela categorizes cases according to whether the last authoritarian elites favored full democratization (e.g. Spain 1976), preferred a liberalized authoritarian regime but would accept democratization (e.g. Argentina 1983), or opposed democratization (e.g. Chile 1990). The regime preference(s) and strength of the military and paramilitary forces also affect certainty. The military is in a unique position to impose its political preferences, and therefore its attitude toward democratization affects actor calculations. The military's regime preference may or may not correspond with the attitude of the last authoritarian regime depending on whether the non-democratic regime was composed of and led by a hierarchical military, a nonhierarchical military, civilian leadership (including a monopoly party) or sultanistic leadership (Linz & Stepan 1996). Finally, the strength of non-democratic (and non-military) collective actors affects certainty.

Both countries had highly uncertain transitions. In Spain, the last incumbent authoritarian government, under the guidance of King Juan Carlos, favored full democratization and initiated the transition process; however, transition initiators were civilian not military leaders. The military was a key pillar of the Francoist regime, and its acceptance of democracy was seriously in question. Furthermore, the military was left largely untouched during the transition. True military reform would not occur until the Socialists came to power after 1982. The Franco regime was, however, a civilianized authoritarian

regime (Agüero 1995, p. 43-58), which means that there was somewhat of a practice of the military responding to a civilian government, compared to the more militarized Chilean regime. However, this was tempered by the fact that Spanish armed-forces ministers were military leaders. Finally, nondemocratic and nonmilitary actors, particularly ETA's use of terrorism played into the hands of those sectors of the military reticent about the democratic transition. Several coup plots were discovered and, on February 23, 1981, the in-session Congress of Deputies was interrupted, and almost the entire political class was held hostage, by a coup attempt. While the coup attempt was subsequently defeated with the help of King Juan Carlos, this outcome could not have been predicted in advance.

The uncertainty of democracy was felt by actors across the political spectrum. Rafael Arias Salgado, former UCD Secretary General, states that uncertainty was always latent because there were many generals that thought democratization was "foolish" (*un disparate*).⁵ According to José María (Txiki) Benegas, former PSOE Organizational Secretary, the conditions were ripe for a military response, including rampant terrorism: "imagine what a year with a 100 [deaths] is; that is every three days a death, plus the funerals, the burials, the families...of course...and many military deaths."⁶ In the words of Santiago Carrillo, former PCE Secretary General: "Spanish democracy at that moment was walking along the edge of an abyss. It was known that the army was conspiring and that in block the army was hostile to democratic development; it was the army that had won the civil war with Franco and more than a Spanish army it was a Francoist army...We were always worried that, in spite of being in the European democratic context, at any moment there could have been a military coup."⁷

⁵ Interview, May 30, 2008.

⁶ Interview, May 27, 2008.

⁷ Interview, May 29, 2008.

In Chile, the Pinochet regime allowed a controlled transition to go forward, yet did not have a favorable attitude toward democracy. The Chilean military also backed a “distinctly authoritarian” constitutional design (Agüero 1995, p. 36). Indeed, in the hindsight of success, one forgets the real challenges to government authority posed by the military. While in many countries former dictators board a plane for Miami or Paris when their regimes come to an end, Pinochet packed his desk at *La Moneda* presidential palace and simply moved across the street to the Ministry of Defense. There were several tense conflicts in the following years. The “*ejercicio de enlace*” of 1990 was one of the most serious, with Pinochet putting troops on high alert in response to incipient investigations into human rights abuses and rumblings of trying the military. Allegations of conflicts of interests in the business dealings of Pinochet’s son combined with military accusations that the Ministry of Defense was holding up military approved promotions led to the “*boinazo*” of 1993, where troops in full military gear surrounded the Ministry of Defense. There were, however, no significant nonmilitary, nondemocratic collective actors in Chile.

Uncertainty was clearly perceived by the key actors. The first General Secretary of Government explicitly recognized in 1989 the military’s veto power in a then confidential internal memo circulated among high-level government officials, noting: “The fear of a military regression, and the understanding of the risk of such an event occurring, will be directly determined by the level of conflict that exists between political parties” (Boeninger 1989). In an interview with the authors, the first president of the nascent democracy, Patricio Aylwin (1990-94), expressed that the gravest political problems he faced were the continuation of militarism and the possibility of Pinochet becoming a political persona equal to the President. Commenting on the *boinazo*, he noted, Pinochet “always thought we were

going to fail and that the country was going to call him back to replace me.”⁸ Similarly tense moments followed Pinochet’s 1998 London arrest on charges of human rights abuses. Though by the time of his mandate (2000-06), President Ricardo Lagos thought uncertainty had largely been eliminated.⁹

Strategic Complexity of the Election System

While a particular election system format cannot simply be tied to a particular pattern of candidate selection, election system dynamics are not irrelevant. We hypothesize that what is determinative is how the political context interacts with the election system. In particular, we hypothesize that strategically complex electoral systems are more likely to elicit exclusive candidate selection procedures to facilitate successful strategic coordination (Siavelis 2002, pp. 436-7); while environments with few strategic coordination problems permit, but do not guarantee more inclusive candidate selection procedures.

Strategic complexity operates at the systemic *and* party levels, and depends, not on the electoral system *per se*, but on its interaction with the individual party and the party system. Building on Cox (1997) we contend that strategically complex electoral systems are those in which parties must solve coordination problems in order to win, where winning for one candidate depends on the decisions and actions of other potential or actual allied candidates or their parties. Certainly, to some extent this can be said of all electoral systems. However, certain situations provide higher probability of a failure of strategic coordination, and we regard these as more strategically complex. Cox also notes that if a high number of agents care about “current and future policy outcomes, rather than just current seats” that the

⁸ Interview, August 20, 2008.

⁹ Interview, August 18, 2008.

“probability of strategic failure increases” (1997, p. 9). For example, if alliances or pacts of exclusion are necessary for electoral success or if the electoral system compels deal-making at various electoral levels for the distribution of limited electoral spoils the greater the strategic complexity. Electoral rules that produce uncertain outcomes for parties due to thresholds, complex rules, or unpredictability in the translation of votes to seats also produce greater strategic complexity. If parties are concerned that alliances with particular parties might affect potential success in achieving fundamental policy goals, we can expect more complexity. Finally, strategic complexity also varies for individual parties depending on size, negotiating capacity, and the competitive dynamic produced by the election system. For example, majority parties expecting easy electoral victory face less strategic complexity than a small party that needs to negotiate to ensure representation.

While tempting to assert that the higher number of candidates per district in large magnitude PR systems makes them more strategically complex, such systems may actually provide fewer coordination problems. A multiplicity of parties can run a full complement of candidates without significantly reducing their chances of winning seats. Victory depends on voters’ preferences and not the outcome of successful negotiations over spoils. Small-magnitude systems introduce relatively more strategic complexity where multiple parties are forced to negotiate elaborate pre-electoral alliances to ensure the representation of many parties. In these cases, exclusive candidate selection to solve coordination problems is likely to be the norm. Therefore, few parties in both small- and large-magnitude electoral systems and multiple parties in large-magnitude systems are less strategically complex than multiple parties in small-magnitude systems. List type may also be important in introducing or reducing strategic complexity. Closed-list systems tend towards more strategic complexity than open list systems because selecting the candidate often amounts to selecting the

representatives. Therefore, in this type of system party elites have a much greater incentive to intervene in the details of selection and list formation than where open lists exist because they can more effectively ensure the election of their nominees. If more than one party appears on a single ballot (whether open or closed) ballot, negotiations and elite intervention aimed at solving coordination problems are the most likely mechanisms for determining list position across districts.

Further, the format of executive-legislative relations matters. In multiparty presidential systems it is often necessary to form electoral alliances before elections, because presidential candidates seek to combine electoral lists with allied parties to be able to rely on multiparty support in the presidential election and later in the legislature. On the other hand, in two-party presidential systems less complexity may exist, because presidents will either simply rely on a majority of their own party (likely where concurrent elections take place), or face a united opposition party with which they must negotiate.

Chile's election and multiparty systems presented an extremely high degree of strategic complexity, reinforcing the tendency toward exclusive selection procedures, even though the formal election system is candidate centered. Since 1989, the *Concertación* and *Alianza* have each presented a negotiated list of two candidates drawn from its member parties in each of the country's 60 electoral districts. The voter casts a single vote for her preferred candidate on the two-candidate open list. Votes for both candidates on each list are first pooled to determine which list wins, allocating seats via the D'hondt method. After determining whether a list wins one or two seats, seats are allocated to individual candidates based on their vote shares. While at first glance the system seems quite straightforward, the binominal election system has created a good deal of strategic complexity.

Each alliance's fundamental challenge is to assemble two-member electoral lists with candidates chosen from their constituent parties. However, the binomial system's operational characteristics compel the most-voted list in each district to double the vote total of the second place list to win both seats. If it does not, each of the two top-polling lists wins one seat. The system, thus, creates two powerful electoral thresholds. With a pattern of two alliance competition, in order for an alliance to win one seat, it must garner over 33.3% of the vote of the two largest finishers in each district, and in order to win two seats, it must win more than 66.6% of said vote.¹⁰

These high thresholds mean that one candidate on each alliance list will likely lose, making pairing on individual lists crucial. Each party seeks to place its candidate on the same list either with an extremely weak candidate (who they can handily beat), or an extremely strong candidate (who can carry the list to a rare two-seat victory). Particularly on the left, negotiations are further complicated because smaller parties want to be placed not just on lists, but on lists where they can win. It is likely that representatives from major parties will trounce candidates from small parties, making small parties demand even weaker list partners. Strong parties, in turn, need weak parties to maintain the presidential coalition (Siavelis 2002). These coordination problems and the need to be able to honor the electoral bargains that parties strike provide a very strong incentive for exclusive candidate selection to manage the complexity. Former president Lagos, underscoring the strategic complexity of the election system, noted that the binomial system "obligates centralized negotiation to choose candidates, because it is not like the American systems where in every district you just have to choose one candidate and every party can simply do so." After underscoring the horse

¹⁰ A complete discussion of the operational dynamics of this election system is beyond the scope of this paper. For a full account see Navia (2008); Rabkin (1996); Siavelis (1997; 2002); Valenzuela and Scully (1997).

trading involved and the reality that party primaries are overruled by coalitions he noted, “that is the perverse part of the system...it obliges centralized control, because if you don’t have it, how are you going to engage in negotiations?”¹¹ A consideration of the dynamic of coalition formation on the right reinforces much of what we have said. The principal negotiator for the RN, Roberto Palumbo, acknowledged that candidate selection in the *Alianza* was less complicated because there was less horse trading with only two parties involved.¹²

Spanish parties faced significantly less strategic complexity than their Chilean counterparts; yet, strategic complexity was still moderate to high depending on the election year and party. The Spanish Congress of Deputies has 350 members that are directly elected from 50 multi-member district lists (provinces) and two single-member districts. Lists are closed and seats are allocated using the D’hondt method of proportional representation with a minimum threshold of 3% of the valid votes at the district level. The law guaranteed a minimum of two seats per district, and there was an average district magnitude of 6.7. The electoral system was designed to prevent fragmentation, produce disproportional effects and over-represent rural, presumably conservative districts. According to Gunther (1989, p. 836), the electoral system produces similarly disproportional results as single-member district systems.

Leaving party-level differences aside, there are several aspects of the Spanish party and electoral systems that produced strategic complexity: first, the relatively small district magnitude. There were 33 districts with fewer than seven seats; 15 between seven and ten seats; and four with greater than ten seats.¹³ Only 19 (36.5%) districts were large enough (\geq seven seats) to produce reasonably proportional results. 63.5 percent have fewer than seven

¹¹ Interview, August 18, 2008.

¹² Interview, August 19, 2008.

¹³ Authors’ calculation based on data from the Ministerio del Interior, Spain (<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/>).

seats, which encourages cross-party electoral coordination where a single large party does not exist. Second, when it became evident that competitive parliamentary elections would occur in 1977, the political scene exploded with political parties, and it was not clear which formations would succeed. Polls conducted during the campaign found that 40 percent of respondents were undecided (Gunther et al 1988, p. 99). The incentives of the electoral law, the sheer number of parties, and uncertainty created strong incentives for party mergers and alliances to maximize their possibilities or minimize their losses.

This process was most pronounced on the right where no significant historic parties emerged. Centrist and center-right political forces allied in the UCD and more right-wing forces allied in AP. Esteban and López Guerra surmise that alliance politics required that list formation be left to the party leaders (1985, p. 63). In the UCD, list-makers had to accommodate the distinct parties and political families (Christian democrats, liberals, *azules*,¹⁴ and social democrats), and mold candidate lists to make the party appear more moderate.¹⁵ The greater number of parties on the center-right and right competing for votes further heightened the degree of strategic complexity. While the PSOE benefited from its status as a historic party, and did not widely employ electoral alliances, multiple socialist and center-left formations emerged, including the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP), *PSOE (histórico)*, and multiple regional socialist parties. In subsequent elections (1979 and 1982), the party reached agreements with many of these formations, including the social democrats from the UCD, to join the PSOE. PSOE leaders intervened in candidate selection to fulfill these agreements.¹⁶ Party leaders determined not only the number of seats granted on candidate lists but also the placement on the closed lists.

¹⁴ Azules (blues) refers to those with close ties to Suárez and the prior regime.

¹⁵ Anonymous interview with a high ranking UCD official, June 5, 2008.

¹⁶ Interview with Txiki Benegas, May 27, 2008.

Party Leadership Autonomy

While control of candidate selection can be a powerful tool, political party leaderships vary in their ability to determine which procedures are adopted. Party leadership autonomy refers to the ability of the central party leadership to make decisions relatively independently of other party and non-party affiliated actors, and to make decisions that are not systematically subject to vertical checks. Accountability means that the party leadership's decisions are more constrained by other actors or internal party processes (Kitschelt 1994). The hypothesis here is that high party leadership autonomy by definition allows party leaders greater latitude to choose which procedures are employed to select candidates. Party leadership autonomy is compatible with a variety of candidate selection procedures because the leaders' primary goals can vary.¹⁷ Yet, in highly constrained transitions, such as the Chilean and Spanish ones, leaders are likely to prefer more exclusive candidate selection procedures. Leadership accountability, on the other hand, encourages the inclusion of powerful party actors because they are in a better position to compel their place in the process; the precise form of inclusion will depend on the internal dynamics of the party.¹⁸ However, this does not necessarily encourage the inclusion of rank-and-file party members or the electorate. While accountable leaders may still manage to exact control of candidate selection, they must face and convince the other significant actors that they should have this control.

Party leadership autonomy is extremely difficult to measure in transitional environments where decision making processes may not be formalized or well-

¹⁷ We do not employ simple vote-maximizing assumptions regarding party leader behavior; rather our model allows for multiple goals. Party leaders whose goal is, for example, legislator loyalty do not need to struggle with the party organization to attain leadership control of candidate selection. On the other hand, the leadership may determine that inclusive candidate selection is an effective strategy to attract members and/or to improve their electoral prospects (Adams & Merrill 2008; Carey & Polga-Hecimovich 2006; Serra 2006).

¹⁸ This can also apply to parties that are heavily factionalized. In these instances, more inclusive candidate selection procedures can be used as a mechanism to resolve internal disputes (see also Kemahlioglu et al. 2009).

institutionalized, and where behavioral norms may have little to do with the formal procedures. Therefore, we must take into consideration a variety of characteristics that could affect leadership autonomy. To assess leadership autonomy, we focus on the distribution of resources within the parties and state institutions, the degree to which the central party leadership was disputed, and leaders' perceptions of their autonomy.

While we focus here on the two largest parties, the UCD and POSE, all parties in Spain exhibited high leadership autonomy at the outset of democracy. The party leaderships were unconstrained by strong party organizations as either the parties were entirely new or were severely weakened by decades of authoritarian rule. Resources were also concentrated in the central party office and in the national level political institutions. Party- and election-financing laws, designed by the party leaders themselves, provided state funding to the central party headquarters from the outset of the transition. Also, though it was clear that decentralization would occur in the heavily centralized political system, at least to the historic communities of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, actual (and substantial) decentralization did not occur until years later. The first local democratic elections took place in 1979 (after the second national parliamentary elections). Regional autonomy charters were approved between 1979 and 1983. A few regional elections occurred in 1980 (after two parliamentary elections), yet most were not held until 1983 (after the third parliamentary elections). Therefore power and resources were concentrated in the national level and in the central party offices in Spain at the outset of democracy.

The leaderships of the parties were relatively undisputed at the outset of the transition. Felipe González and his team had taken control of the PSOE from the leadership in exile in 1974, and had won recognition from the Socialist International. Those disenchanted with this

outcome formed alternative socialist parties, including the PSOE (*histórico*). Though the PSOE did not win a general election until the third parliamentary elections in 1982, González's popularity was undeniable as he helped deliver the unexpected electoral success in the founding 1977 elections. The degree to which the leadership was indispensable is illustrated by González's stepping down as General Secretary in 1979 when the party Congress voted against removing the reference to Marxism from the party's statutes. There was no viable alternative. González ultimately returned and the statutes were modified. These events further consolidated the leadership. In the case of the UCD, while there were a number of party and factional leaders who wanted to lead the UCD; it was clear that only with Suárez would the nascent alliance have any chance of winning the elections. Notably, when the UCD began to divide internally beginning in 1981, Suárez sought to concentrate candidate selection for the 1982 elections exclusively in his hands. By that point his leadership was clearly in question, and his demand was rejected. He abandoned the party in 1981 to form his own, at which time the UCD entered terminal illness and ultimately disbanded in 1983.

Party leaders themselves perceived substantial autonomy in decision-making. Regarding leadership autonomy at the outset of democracy, Alfonso Guerra (former PSOE Vice-Secretary General) tellingly stated: "From a statutory perspective, very little; from the perspective of moral authority, a lot, a lot. That is to say that if a local party body said that *this* is what we needed to do, very difficult to derail that, very difficult to derail from an organic/statutory perspective. Now, if Felipe González or I said, look *this* isn't the way, it was very, very difficult that they didn't pay attention."¹⁹ Similar sentiment was expressed by the leaders of the UCD, PCE, AP, and *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC).²⁰ In the words of Miquel Roca, CDC General Secretary at the time: "the party didn't have many

¹⁹ Interview, June 4, 2008.

²⁰ CiU is formed by two parties, CDC and *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (UDC).

power centers.”²¹ Spain is therefore a case of a highly constrained new democracy—high uncertainty and moderately high strategic complexity. In this context, autonomous party leaders ultimately selected the legislative candidates.

While Chilean political parties had more elaborate party organizations and firmer roots in society (Mainwaring & Scully 1995; Scully 1995), in some cases due to their survival during authoritarian rule (Garretón 1989) and in part due to the need to organize for the plebiscite on Pinochet’s continued rule (Scully 1995), the party leadership still enjoyed ample autonomy. As Angell (2007, p. 291) states: “One feature that has remained constant is the highly centralized nature of the parties, in which real decision-making is limited to a small elite.” While the parties may have enjoyed high levels of identification among party activists in early years of the democratic transition, the organizational mechanisms through which these activists could exercise control over elites had yet to develop. In addition, the dictatorship weakened organizations like trade unions that had traditionally acted as a check on parties of the center and left (Angell 1995, p. 189). As the democratic transition advanced these groups also surrendered influence in the interests of the security of the democratic transition (Siavelis 2000).

Party leaders also have independent control over party financing and regularly negotiate policy deals with the opposition and allied parties at the coalition level. Furthermore, at the outset of democracy, there were few resources available to potential challengers to the party leadership. Chile is a unitary system; therefore, regional elites armed with significant state resources did not exist. Even elections of local governments, which

²¹ Interview, May 16, 2008.

have limited functions (Angell 2007, p. 291-2), did not occur until 1992. Regional and local party branches were therefore weak vis-à-vis the national party office.

Before the Chilean transition began, leadership was highly contested on the left. Factions of the Socialist Party vied for control, as much of the leadership structure had been decapitated by the death or exile of members. Carlos Altamirano led a faction of more moderate socialists, while Clodomiro Almeyda's faction increasingly allied with Chile's communists to take a more militant line (Constable & Valenzuela 1991). Less traumatized by the regime, the Christian Democratic leadership structure was largely frozen, with long-standing members like Patricio Aylwin, Gabriel Valdes, Andrés Zaldívar, and former president Eduardo Frei remaining as the largely undisputed, natural leaders of the party. Dealt a blow by Frei's death in 1982 the PDC experienced limited leadership struggles between its progressive (*chascon*— long-haired, or progressive) faction and its (*guaton*— pot-bellied, or conservative faction). While there was disputed leadership, these disputes were based largely on personal followings, and among the citizenry this coterie of leaders was viewed as the natural inheritors of the new democratic regime, and definitively choosing eventual candidates was to become a question of personality and personal loyalty.

Pinochet's strategy of calling a plebiscite in 1988 unintentionally solidified this leadership as it provided a strong incentive for unity. The 1985 National Accord for a Full Transition to Democracy unified the center-left, in its first significant agreement, and Pinochet's decision for a yes or no plebiscite on his continued rule in 1988 sealed this unity. Several factions of the moderate Socialist Party joined the PDC in forming the *Concertación* alliance, while the Almeyda Socialist leadership was removed from the scene, through its alliance with the Communist Party. Those who gained popularity and support in campaigning

for, and ultimately winning the “no” vote ultimately emerged as the unchallenged leaders of their parties, including Patricio Aylwin in the Christian Democratic Party and Ricardo Lagos in the PPD.

Leaders themselves noted a high degree of leadership autonomy. PDC leader Jorge Navarrete contended that party leaders are “completely autonomous for the majority of areas where they must make decisions with very few exceptions” and that party culture is “very vertical...where politics is undertaken by specialists who make decisions between four walls away from the view of citizens.”²²

Party leadership autonomy on the right is a much less complex affair. In the first elections following the return of democracy, leaders on the right had a virtually free hand because they were in most cases authoritarian regime incumbents and party organizations were virtually non-existent.²³ With the return of democracy the historically very decentralized nature of the traditional right (from which the RN grew) left RN elites subject to very little pressure from party activists, while as a new party, UDI leaders self-consciously built a centralized party organization dominated by elites as a strategy for growth and selecting candidates that the leadership itself felt could win (Navia 2008). In the Chilean system, the very high degree of uncertainty and strategic complexity of the electoral system and party leadership autonomy encouraged a candidate selection process largely in the hands of the party leadership.

²² Interview, August 18, 2008.

²³ Interview with Roberto Palumbo, August 19, 2008

Conclusion

While research on the origins of candidate selection processes exists, much of it treats selection processes as tangential byproducts of other institutional processes, and very little of it has comparative explanatory traction. Yet the candidate selection process is central to the nature and quality of representation in democracy. Here we provide a number of hypotheses that put the origins of the process of selection itself directly under the microscope, and that can provide potentially more powerful comparative explanations than those traditionally relied upon in the literature.

We contend that within transitional systems distinct transitional environments condition party choice of candidate selection procedures. In particular we hypothesize that the relative levels of uncertainty about the installation and continuance of democracy, strategic complexity of the electoral system, and party leadership autonomy, conspire to create incentives for the adoption of more or less inclusive procedures. Parties in both Spain and Chile countries adopted exclusive candidate selection procedures, largely as a result, we argue, of the interaction of variables set out above. Future empirical tests of these variables using parties that employ more inclusive selection procedures will allow us to develop, test and refine the findings of this study.

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