

The Post-Authoritarian Chilean Party System between Continuity and Change

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine to what extent the post-authoritarian Chilean party system changed in comparison to the period prior to the 1973 coup. Based on an analysis of the period from 1990 until 2010 against the background of the pre-1973 period and the military dictatorship (1973-1990), the main argument of this article is that the post-authoritarian Chilean party system oscillated between continuity and change. Whilst continuity found its roots in the pre-authoritarian period and Chile's long-running democratic tradition, change was particularly enforced by the anti-democratic practices of the military government. As such, this study has pinpointed three interrelated tensions between continuity and change that characterised the post-authoritarian party system: the centrality of parties vs. the growing public disillusionment with politics; the pro-/anti-authoritarian cleavage vs. the consensus-based relations between parties; and the tripartite party system vs. the bipolar coalition politics. This tension profoundly influenced all the political parties and inter-party coalitions that functioned during this period, not least the ruling Concertación bloc.

Keywords: Chilean Politics, Augusto Pinochet, Military Dictatorship, Transition to Democracy, Concertación.

Süreklilik ve Değişim Arasında Post-Otoriter Şili Parti Sistemi

ÖZ

Bu makale, post-otoriter Şili parti sisteminin 1973 darbesi öncesine kıyasla ne ölçüde değiştiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. 1990'dan 2010'a kadar olan dönemin, 1973 öncesi dönem ve askeri diktatörlük (1973-1990) arka planında analizine dayanan bu makalenin temel savı, post-otoriter Şili parti sisteminin süreklilik ve değişim arasında gidip geldiğidir. Süreklilik, diktatörlük öncesi dönem ve Şili'nin uzun yıllara dayanan demokratik geleneğinden ileri gelirken, değişim, bilhassa askeri hükümetin anti-demokratik uygulamaları tarafından dayatılmıştır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, post-otoriter parti sistemini karakterize eden süreklilik ve değişim arasında birbirine ilişkili üç gerilim saptamıştır: partilerin merkezi konumuna karşı halkın siyasete dair büyüyen hayal kırıklığı, otoriterlik yanlısı/karşıtı ayrımına karşı partiler arası uzlaşmaya dayalı ilişkiler ve üçlü parti sistemine karşı iki kutuplu koalisyon siyaseti. Bu gerilim, iktidardaki Concertación bloğu başta olmak üzere, bu dönemde faaliyet gösteren tüm siyasi parti ve partiler arası koalisyonları derinden etkilemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şili Siyaseti, Augusto Pinochet, Askeri Diktatörlük, Demokrasiye Geçiş, Concertación.

1. Introduction

Chilean politics has always been in the spotlight because of its *sui generis* character. Despite being a part of the Latin American context, Chile is distinguished by its robust political party system, which goes back to the early nineteenth century. As depicted in Figure 1, since the Conservative-Liberal divide in the 1830s, the party system developed in parallel with different forms of cleavages between social groupings, including aristocrats, landowners, clericals, anticlericals, middle class elements, etc. (Burnett, 1970). Moreover, the peculiarity of Chilean politics was underpinned by a newly developed tendency in the ranks of the army by the 1960s: After causing domestic instability by intervening in politics many times before, the military under the Commander-in-Chief General René Schneider remained neutral by respecting the democratic procedures, known as the "Schneider Doctrine"¹. However, these features do not mean that Chilean democracy always proceeded on a smooth path. The military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet in 1973 caused a serious rupture in domestic politics. During the subsequent 17 years, the

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¹ This was one of the primary factors enabling the election of Salvador Allende as the first socialist president of Chile in 1970.

military dictatorship spent a considerable amount of effort to radically transform the way Chilean politics operated. This inevitably impacted on the party system since the first democratically elected government took office in 1990.

Yet to what extent did the post-authoritarian Chilean party system differentiate from its equivalent before the 1973 coup? This article originally tries to answer this question by examining the post-authoritarian party system (1990-2010) with reference to the two historical periods, covering the pre-authoritarian period and the military government. This entails resting the analysis on some critical junctures, including the 1973 *coup d'état*, the 1980 and 1988 plebiscites, the 1989 presidential and parliamentary elections, the arrest of Pinochet in London in 1998, and the end of the Concertation of Parties for Democracy (*Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*)'s uninterrupted political dominance in 2010. Depending on this analysis, the main argument of this article is that the post-authoritarian Chilean party system wavered between continuity, which was promoted by the long-seated democratic tradition, and change, which was enforced by the military dictatorship. As such, three interrelated tensions between

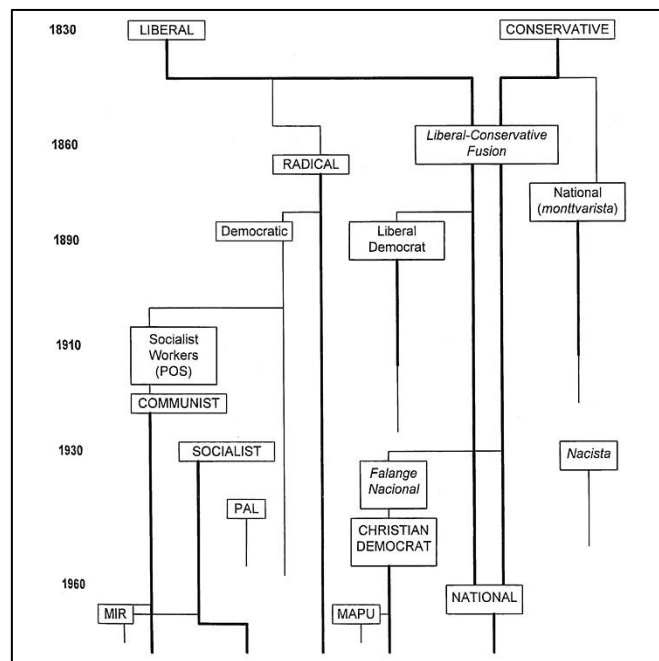


Figure 1. The evolution of Chilean political parties, 1830-1970.

Source: Sater, W. F., & Collier, S. (2022). *A history of Chile 1808–2018*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 275.

continuity and change have been pinpointed: the central position of parties vs. the voters' growing disillusionment with politics; the pro-/anti-authoritarian cleavage vs. the stable cross-party relations; and the tripartite party system vs. the bipolar coalition politics. These tensions affected all the parties or coalitions involved in the post-1990 politics, not least the ruling Concertación.

In the light of these points, the article consists of three main parts. First, the four defining characteristics of the pre-authoritarian party system are presented as the sources of continuity. This is followed by an analysis of the three key legal amendments by the Pinochet dictatorship, including the 1980 Constitution, the 1987 Political Parties Law, and the 1987 Electoral Law, which dictated change after 1990. In the third and final part, the post-authoritarian party system is examined based on the three pinpointed tensions between continuity and change outlined above.

2. The Key Characteristics of the Pre-Authoritarian Chilean Party System

In South America, Chile is one of the countries where party politics has a very long past. From the early nineteenth century onwards, parties became an inevitable part of ordinary life in Chile both nationally and locally (Hudson, 1994). Therefore, as Valenzuela (1978) argues, parties emerged as the

primary agents of political participation across the country. Despite high electoral volatility and periodic episodes of personalism and populism (Montes, Mainwaring, & Ortega, 2000), the settled nature of the Chilean party system is argued to resemble West European party systems, not its equivalents in the Americas (Ruiz-Rodriguez, 2005). As such, four main features of the Chilean party system that were prevalent until the breakdown of democracy in 1973 can be mentioned.

First, as in most of the Latin American cases, Chilean politics revolved around a central cleavage, in accordance with which parties determined their positions in the political spectrum. Initially, this contentious issue was 'religion'. The clerical-anticlerical divide was rooted in contending views on the Church-State relations, as well as on the Church's overall influence in the society. This conflict led to the emergence of the Conservative, Liberal, and Radical parties in the early-to-mid nineteenth century (Scully T. R., 1992). The second big issue was 'class'. In the early-twentieth century, the Socialist and Communist parties were established against the backdrop of industrial antagonisms and rising power of the working class (Valenzuela, Somma, & Scully, 2018). From then on, the religious-secular and left-right divides remained at the heart of party politics in Chile as the primary tools of voter mobilisation.

Second, in line with the greater salience of class cleavage, three ideological currents, including the left, centre, and right, increasingly dominated the political landscape in Chile. Despite differing in terms of the electoral support they garnered, the leftist (Socialist Party -*Partido Socialista de Chile*, PS-, Communist Party -*Partido Comunista de Chile*, PC-), centrist (Radical Party -*Partido Radical*, PR-, Christian Democratic Party -*Partido Demócrata Cristiano*, PDC-), and rightist parties (Liberal Party -*Partido Liberal*, PL-, Conservative Party -*Partido Conservador*, PCon-) characterised the earlier phases of cross-party competition. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that what really mattered regarding the voting behaviour was not party labels, but these three ideological tendencies. This translates into that dramatic changes could happen in the electoral performances of parties, as seen in the replacement of the Radical Party by the Christian Democratic Party as the biggest party of the centre from the 1960s on (Valenzuela J. S., 1995). The ongoing flux of parties thus led some commentators to argue that even before the military coup, "parties appeared and disappeared with frequency and parties were relatively weak organisationally" (Montes, Mainwaring, & Ortega, 2000).

The third primary characteristic of the Chilean party system particularly before the 1964 presidential elections was the lack of excessive polarisation. In particular, during the 1930s and the 1940s, cross-party relations generally rested on consensus and compromise (Angell, 2003). Parties still competed on the issues of religion and class and diverged over key political, economic, and social matters. Yet these differences did not hinder the proper functioning of democracy. Nor did they prevent parties from finding common ground when necessary.

In relation to this point, fourth, Chilean parties tended to form temporary alliances to win presidential elections or secure working legislative majorities in the Congress. The low level of fractionalisation of the party system before 1964 facilitated the parties' coalitional behaviour. As a result, the parties belonging to different ideological tendencies could pragmatically come together to get their candidate elected (Hira & Sanghera, 2004). For instance, this was the case when Pedro Aguirre Cerda was elected president as the candidate of the Popular Front (*Frente Popular*) in the 1938 presidential elections. Likewise, Gabriel Gonzalez Videla took office as the candidate of the Democratic Alliance (*Alianza Democrática*) in 1946 (Sater & Collier, 2022).

However, beginning from the early 1960s, there occurred dramatic changes in the political framework. Given the intensity of the electoral campaigns run by Eduardo Frei Montalva and Salvador Allende, the 1964 presidential elections showed the first signs of escalating political conflict between rival ideological camps. As an example of 'extreme polarisation' in Giovanni Sartori's classification (1976), Chilean politics was increasingly characterised by deep ideological fragmentation. Undoubtedly, this was aggravated by deepening societal conflicts, as well as growing US interference with elections. During this period, political activism of the trade unions, urban professionals, and university students increased remarkably. In addition, some societal sectors hitherto excluded from politics were more willing for political participation, such as the peasantry and the rural poor. Although some groupings were inherently more inclined towards certain ideological tendencies (the working class towards the left, the middle class and the bureaucracy

towards the centre and the right), high levels of political volatility became decisive in election results. On the one hand, the greater engagement of people with politics strengthened the link between parties and masses. This provided the main impetus for the Christian Democrats' "revolution in liberty" and the Socialists' "transition to socialism" agendas by the late-1960s (Sater & Collier, 2022). On the other hand, rising ideological fragmentation posed a serious threat to democracy. As the parties of the left, centre, and right adopted hardline ideological positions, the commonly agreed principles of consensus and compromise were gradually abandoned (Angell, 2003; Caviedes, 1979). With the rising ideological battle between parties, centrifugal tendencies further dominated party programmes and policies in a manner that further contributed to ideological fragmentation (Valenzuela & Scully, 1997). In particular, the rightist and centrist parties collaborated to prevent the political rise of the left. For instance, this led them to support Frei against Allende in the 1964 presidential elections. The 1970 presidential elections, which saw Allende elected as Chile's first socialist president, marked a turning point as regards ideological polarisation. Following the elections, the Christian Democratic Party (centre) and the National Party (*Partido Nacional*, PN) (right) even joined forces in the Congress against the left and President Allende. Moreover, the political right sought to forge extra-parliamentary alliances with the business sector and the military against Allende's revolutionary programme. In the end, the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet on 11 September 1973 put an abrupt end to Chilean democracy, to be followed by a 17-year military rule until 1990.

3. The Effect of the Pinochet Dictatorship on the Party System

Even after decades, the Pinochet dictatorship is still remembered for its human rights abuses and various crimes against humanity. Marking a period full of exiles, arrests, imprisonments, tortures, and executions, the 17 years of the military regime left a lasting scar on Chile's recent past. Nevertheless, given the limited scope of this article, this part only focuses on the three key initiatives of the military government that exerted a tangible impact on the post-authoritarian Chilean party system, including the 1980 Constitution, the 1987 Political Parties Law and the 1987 Electoral Law.

Following the 1973 coup d'état, the Pinochet dictatorship committed itself to radically changing Chile's economic and political structures. With the help of a group of young economists trained at the University of Chicago, popularly known as the "Chicago Boys", the military government embarked on transforming the economy with an ambitious neoliberal economic agenda (O'Brien & Roddick, 1983; Valdes, 1995). This led to a number of state-led privatisation, marketisation, and deregulation projects, endorsed by global finance capital. In addition, in an effort to prevent the intense ideological polarisation that characterised the pre-1973 period, Pinochet and other generals aimed to transform the party system. To this end, both the Congress and political parties were banned, with the constitution suspended (Barrett, 2000). This was followed by the ratification of a new constitution in a national referendum in 1980, marked by allegations of fraud. Bringing a set of anti-democratic measures, the 1980 Constitution was used as the primary means to reshape the political system. Under intense pressure from domestic and international settings, the military government sought to legitimise its rule via this constitution. The Constitution instituted an eight-year transition period, which would be followed by a national plebiscite on the future of the authoritarian regime.

Meanwhile, although neoliberal prescriptions seemed to provide short-term relief for the economy, they could not prevent the 1982 economic crisis. Together with these economic difficulties, the widespread dissatisfaction with the dictatorship led to massive social protests across the country in 1983-1986, known as "Days of National Protest" (*Jornadas de Protesta Nacional*). In the face of the rising domestic and international criticisms towards his regime, Pinochet embarked on limited political liberalisation ahead of the 1988 plebiscite. Therefore, the ban on non-Marxist political parties was lifted in 1987. The military authorities noticed that political parties secretly maintained their activities despite all the restrictions since 1973 (Hudson, 1994). However, this by no means prevented the authoritarian government from radically restructuring the political system. Therefore, together with the lifting of the ban on some political parties, a new Political Parties Law was introduced in 1987. In an attempt to set the rules of the political game, this law brought strict requirements for political parties as to their financing, organisation, and

membership. For instance, for a party to be qualified for elections, it was required to submit 40,000 signatures equivalent to 5 percent of the electorate in at least eight regions or in at least three neighbouring regions (Navia & Sandoval, 1998). In addition, party leaders were to be elected by rank-and-file members (Valenzuela J. S., 1995). At first glance, these provisions seemed to pose additional challenges to parties during their re-establishment. Yet, after a while, they successfully managed to employ these provisions when mobilising voters before the 1988 plebiscite and the 1989 presidential and congressional elections.

In 1987, another crucial legislation was enacted by the junta government, which was the Electoral Law. This new law played a key part in the military regime's plans to prevent the re-emergence of an ideologically fractured party system (Siavelis P., 1997). What the ruling generals wanted to see was a moderate two-party, or two-bloc, system in a "protected" democracy (Siavelis P. M., 2000). Therefore, this new law brought important changes to the way elections were held, such as the 5 percent electoral threshold, the division of the country into 60 legislative districts, each of which would be represented by two members in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (Navia & Sandoval, 1998).

Yet the primary change was the introduction of the binomial electoral system, which had a substantial impact on domestic politics. This electoral system required parties or electoral coalitions to nominate two candidates from each district in an open list. The candidate of the party or coalition garnering most of the votes would take one seat, whereas another seat would go to the candidate coming second (Siavelis P. M., 2000). The winning party or bloc could win both seats provided that it gets twice the total number of votes garnered by the second biggest party or bloc. What this complicated electoral formula means in practice is that whilst it is enough for the second largest party or electoral coalition to take 33.4 percent of the vote to get one seat, the strongest party or bloc needs to receive at least 66.4 percent to win both seats. Any extra votes taken by the biggest party or coalition beyond 33.4 percent but below 66.7 percent would be "wasted" (Hudson, 1994; Pastor, 2004). The binomial electoral system therefore apparently favoured the right-wing parties, garnering relatively less support than other parties. Instead of winning elections, it was sufficient for these parties to come second in several districts to secure representation in the lower and upper chambers of the Congress. Beyond guaranteeing the overrepresentation of the pro-authoritarian parties of the right, this voting system also aimed to establish these parties as a counterbalancing force against the pro-democracy parties of the left and the centre (Silva, 2002).

In brief, by engineering a new institutional framework, the primary intention of the Pinochet regime was to manipulate the electoral process even after the transfer of power to the civilians (Mainwaring & Valenzuela, 1997). Therefore, this automatically rendered the three legal amendments enacted by the military government main sources of change as to the post-authoritarian Chilean politics.

4. The Post-Authoritarian Chilean Party System Amid the Tension between Continuity and Change

Amongst its equivalents in South America, the Chilean transition to democracy can be considered a case of 'mixed', or 'intermediate' transition (Viola & Mainwaring, 1985), combining the elements of 'pacted' and 'reform' transition models (Karl, 1990). This means that the transition was both initiated by the authoritarian government ("transition from above") and moulded by the pressure exerted by the political opposition and civil society ("transition from below") (Scott, 2001). As such, the democratic transition in Chile *de facto* began with the 1988 plebiscite. Contrary to Pinochet's expectations, around 54 percent of the voters said 'No' to his continued presidency until 1997, in favour of holding fair and competitive elections next year. In 1989, both presidential and congressional elections were held, with Patricio Aylwin elected as the first democratically elected president since Allende. In what follows, two cross-party coalitions dominated politics from 1990 until 2010, namely the ruling centre-left Concertación and the right-wing Alliance for Chile (*Alianza por Chile*) in opposition. Alongside other smaller parties and movements, the Concertación coalition was mainly made up of the social conservative Christian Democratic Party, the social democratic/democratic socialist Party for Democracy (*Partido por la*

Democracia, PPD) and Socialist Party, and the social liberal Radical Party (Carey & Siavelis, 2005)². The Alianza bloc was comprised of the radical right National Renewal (*Renovación Nacional*, RN) and the extreme right Independent Democratic Union (*Unión Demócrata Independiente*, UDI)³.

The analysis of the post-authoritarian politics in Chile shows that whilst the pre-authoritarian period promoted continuity, the military dictatorship spanning from 1973 until 1990 dictated change despite minor exceptions. Put simply, whilst continuities in the post-1990 Chilean party system were rooted in the period before the coup, changes were driven by the deliberate acts of the military authorities to transform the political system (Munck & Bosworth, 1998). As the post-authoritarian Chilean party system oscillated between continuity and change, this inevitably influenced parties and inter-party coalitions, not least the ruling Concertación. As such, three main tensions between continuity and change characterised the post-1990 party system: the central position of parties vs. voters' growing disillusionment with politics; the pro-/anti-authoritarian cleavage vs. warm relations between parties; and tripartite party system vs. bipolar coalition politics.

4.1. Centrality of Parties vs. Growing Public Disillusionment with Politics

The first tension is between the continuing strength of political parties and the growing gap between parties and voters. Comprising a variety of political identities and ideological tendencies, political parties continued to remain at the heart of politics in Chile during the transition to democracy. Without a doubt, this comes from the fact that Chile is one of the few Latin American countries with a long history of multiparty politics. Prior to the military coup, parties accounted for a crucial part of the collective memory, as explained above. Therefore, even if the military government banned all political parties in 1977 and promoted anti-party views (Angell & Pollack, 1990), the multi-party system re-appeared by preserving its main features (Garreton, 1989; Siavelis P. , 1997). Despite all the repressive and legal attempts of the Pinochet regime, political parties could not be eliminated. As depicted in Table 1, the leading parties from the pre-authoritarian period, such as the Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, and the Radical Party, returned to the political scene.

Table 1. Main Political Parties in Chile before the Coup and after the Dictatorship

	Pre-1973 period	Post-1990 period
Left	Socialist Party (PS) Communist Party (PC)	Party for Democracy (PPD) Socialist Party (PS) Communist Party (PC)
Centre	Christian Democratic Party (PDC) Radical Party (PR)	Christian Democratic Party (PDC) Radical Party (PR)**
Right	National Party (PN)*	National Renewal (RN) Independent Democratic Union (UDI)

Source: Author's own.

*As a result of the merger between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party.

**Social Democratic Radical Party since 1994.

In relation to the centrality of parties, another continuity from the pre-authoritarian period is the flux of party labels. Like before 1973, new parties emerged on the left, centre, and right in addition to the established ones. As a manifestation of this continuity, only the Radicals took part in all 14 elections and only 7 parties competed in seven or more elections among the 71 parties winning seats in lower chamber elections between 1932 and 1997 (Montes, Mainwaring, & Ortega, 2000). The formula is very simple: To the extent that a newly founded party is perceived by voters to be more influential in representing their

² The Concertación went on to win elections from 1989 until 2009. During this period, four different Concertación governments served under the presidencies of Patricio Aylwin (1990-1994), Eduardo Frei (1994-2000), Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006), and Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010).

³ However, it should be noted that these parties consisted of a range of internal groups, such as the progressives within the PDC and an ultraconservative faction within the RN.

views, it can replace the already dominant party. This demonstrates that what actually matters is the uninterrupted representation of the three main ideological tendencies, rather than ongoing loyalty to political parties.

As such, notable changes happened on the left, centre, and right during the transition period. First, in an environment where all political activities were outlawed by the military regime, it was the Socialist Party and the Communist Party that were the most negatively affected. In addition to the systematic persecution of their members by the military regime, the two parties continued to be legally banned when other parties were allowed to be re-established in 1987. Therefore, a new party called the “Party for Democracy” was formed in the same year. Initially, the PPD was seen as an “instrumental party” that would clear the legal obstacles to contesting the 1988 plebiscite and the 1989 elections. Over time, though, this party gained its own identity and proved to be one of the leading parties of the left, with the Socialist Party legalised again in 1990. However, compared to these two parties, the Communist Party failed to reach its pre-1973 popularity among voters.

Second, the Christian Democratic Party continued to be the biggest party of the centre after the end of the military rule. The Christian Democrats had already displaced the erstwhile dominant Radical Party in the 1960s as the main representative of the centrist votes. Even if they had temporarily collaborated with the junta following the coup, the PDC subsequently opposed the regime because of its human rights abuses (Hudson, 1994). Taking the lead in the pro-democracy movement against the Pinochet regime, the PDC gradually got closer to the left, paving the way for the formation of the Concertación. After 17 years of dictatorship, the Christian Democrats shifted from allying with the right against the left before 1973 to establishing an anti-authoritarian coalition with the left since the 1988 plebiscite.

Finally, two new parties appeared on the right: the National Renewal and the Independent Democratic Union. RN and UDI emerged as the successors of the National Party, which gave the biggest support for the military coup and voluntarily dissolved itself to show this adherence in 1973. Coming from a pro-authoritarian past, the two parties thus only differed over the level of support given to the Pinochet regime: Whilst the RN tacitly supported it, the UDI was closely identified with the military rule. As the two parties supported Pinochet’s continued presidency in the 1988 plebiscite, there were serious doubts over their actual commitment to democracy.

Despite the continued centrality of parties, an unexpected change was the widening gap between political parties and their constituencies after the restoration of democracy. It is not uncommon to see political parties from around the world have a legitimacy crisis in recent decades, not least in Europe. As part of this broader trend, Chilean parties thus encountered the same problem, even leading to the question of whether the era of political parties in Chile was over (Luna & Mardones, 2010). Yet how can we make sense of the loosening ties between parties and voters despite the ongoing central position of parties? Three reasons can be raised for that, including depoliticisation imposed by the military government, parties’ ideological moderation, and voters’ distrust of parties and politicians.

As the first reason, the Pinochet regime sought to prevent people’s engagement with politics through various means. These included torturing or persecuting party members; sending prominent political figures to exile; and bringing certain restrictions on political activism. Although political parties tried to maintain their activities in spite of the regime’s contempt for politics (Valenzuela & Constable, 1989), these legal measures led to depoliticisation, and even demobilisation, in certain parts of the society. Given that this depoliticisation project largely remained untouched during the Concertación era (Fernandez & Vera, 2012), Chilean people lost their former appetite for politics.

The second reason is the declining salience of ideology in determining inter-party differences. It is to be noted that there was a wide-ranging consensus during the transition to democracy over preventing excessive ideological polarisation. However, in an environment where almost all parties tended to move towards the centre (Shifter, 2011), this blurred cross-party differences over substantive issues, such as the prevalent political, institutional, and socio-economic patterns. This shift marked the transition from the centrifugal politics of the period 1964-1973 to the centripetal politics of the post-1990 period (Valenzuela J. S., 1995). In an attempt to adjust to the post-authoritarian Chile, as well as to the post-Cold War order,

the parties on the left, centre, and right increasingly attributed less importance to ideology-orientated politics.

For example, the cross-party consensus over the necessity of the free market economy significantly blurred ideological boundaries between parties. As mentioned before, the Pinochet regime imposed the neoliberal economic model on the country with the help of internal and external facilitators. Because of the aggressive neoliberal transformation of its economy, Pinochet's Chile even influenced Thatcher's UK and Reagan's US at the time (O'Brien & Roddick, 1983). What is interesting is that the parties from the three ideological tendencies agreed on the inevitability of the market economy for Chile's political and economic stability even after the end of the dictatorship. In this respect, the most remarkable change can be observed in the shifting attitudes of the parties on the left. Except for the Communist Party, the two leading parties of the left, the Party for Democracy and the Socialist Party, took this economic model for granted, like the parties on the centre and right (Carreras, 2012). Put simply, instead of seeking radical change in the capitalist system, which the pre-1973 Socialists and Communists did so ambitiously, the post-1990 PPD and PS were content with demanding minor corrections to the system, such as ensuring equality and social justice and expanding the provision of basic public services (Hira & Sanghera, 2004). Therefore, beyond rendering the majority of mainstream parties "alike", this broad inter-party consensus over neoliberalism served to keep Pinochet's economic model intact, even outliving his dictatorship.

In the event, since political parties started to diverge over minor details instead of grand socio-economic ideas and models, their ideological distinctiveness became further unclear. However, their adopting more or less similar views on key issues did not bode well with the electorate. For a notable portion of Chilean voters, parties largely ended up being similar, with little meaningful differences between them.

The third and final reason is the growing distrust of Chilean voters in politicians. The long-running marketisation, personalisation, and depoliticisation trends, which can be traced back to the Pinochet years, ultimately impacted on the unfolding of domestic politics after 1990 (Barrett, 2000). In line with the centrist shift of political parties, politicians adopted a consumerist approach to politics, leading them to 'sell their electoral products via media (Silva, 2004)'. There is no doubt that this approach has resonated with some voters in the so-called 'market of politics' but ultimately pointed to a broader legitimacy crisis for mainstream politics. To the extent that a notable portion of voters noticed that their problems were not adequately addressed by parties and politicians, they grew disillusioned with the mechanisms of conventional politics (Siavelis P. M., 2002)⁴.

Table 2. Percentage of Registered Voters in Chile (By Election Year)

Year	Type of election	Abstention as % of registered voters*	Registered voters as % of voting-age population	Registered voters under 29 as % of voting-age population
1989	Pres./Cong.	5.3	89	85
1993	Pres./Cong.	9.0	89	79
1997	Cong.	12.4	83	55
1999	Pres.	10.1	80	45
2001	Cong.	13.7	76	36
2005	Pres./Cong.	12.1	71	26
2009	Pres./Cong.	13.9	68	23

Source: Luna, J. P., & Mardones, R. (2010). Chile: Are the parties over? *Journal of Democracy*, 21(3), 107-121.

⁴ In recent decades, this led people to alternative channels of political participation, such as massive protests. In particular, the student-led protests across the country in 2011-2013 emerged in reaction to the privatization of higher education, with a huge demand for university reform. Together with this, these protests also reflected the wide-ranging public dissatisfaction with the Piñera government and other established parties' unwillingness to address the issue of social inequalities.

As depicted in Table 2, since the first democratic elections in 1989, the rate of abstention in elections steadily increased, with a paralleled decrease in the number of registered voters. As such, whilst 5.3 percent of registered voters did not go to the ballot box in the 1989 elections, this increased to 13.9 percent in the 2009 elections. Likewise, whilst 89 percent of all voters and 85 percent of the voters under 29 were registered to vote in the 1989 elections, these numbers fell sharply to 68 percent and 23 percent as of 2009, respectively (Luna & Mardones, 2010).

Another major indicator revealing the extent of political disillusionment is the declining popular identification with the two dominant political blocs, that is, the incumbent Concertación and the Alianza in opposition. Here, the figures are not that different from the abstention and registration rates. As shown in Figure 2 below, although the percentage of voters identifying with the Concertación was 50 percent and with Alianza was 20 percent in 1991, this significantly dropped to over 20 percent and below 20 percent in 2008, respectively. What is alarming for Chilean politics is that the percentage of voters not identifying with any of the blocs increased from 20 percent in 1991 to 50 percent in 2008. This shows that recently voters have abandoned established political parties or blocs regardless of being in power or opposition, largely because of the reasons mentioned above.

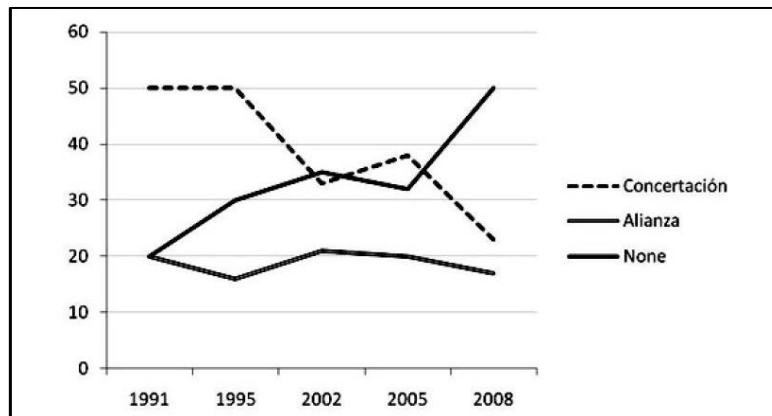


Figure 2. Percentage of Identification with the Two Main Coalitions, 1991-2008.

Source: Luna, J. P., & Altman, D. (2011). Uprooted but stable: Chilean parties and the concept of party system institutionalization. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 53(2), 1-28.

4.2. Pro-/Anti-Authoritarian Cleavage vs. Consensus-Based Inter-Party Relations

The second tension is between the pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage and the cultivation of harmonious relations between parties and blocs. Like before the 1973 coup, domestic politics revolved around a core issue after the end of the military dictatorship. However, following the former clerical/anti-clerical and left/right divides, cross-party competition now took place between the political forces that opposed and the ones that supported the authoritarian regime. In a period when the democratic transition was still underway, this new cleavage saw the pro-democracy parties of the left and centre come together against the pro-authoritarian parties of the right.

In effect, the debates on the emergence of a new political cleavage went back to the 1988 plebiscite. Following the military intervention in 1973, right-wing politicians lent full support to the military regime, as well as enjoyed many privileges granted by the generals such as high-profile positions in public institutions. The leftist and centrist politicians, on the other hand, fiercely opposed the regime and supported the return to democracy. It was in this political atmosphere that the plebiscite was held. As this plebiscite was to determine whether Pinochet would remain as president for another 8 years or free and competitive elections would be held next year, it marked a crucial turning point for the future of Chilean politics. Against the political background mentioned above, the parties of the left (PPD) and centre (PDC) formed a 'No' coalition to unseat Pinochet. As expected, the pro-authoritarian parties of the right (RN, UDI) joined forces with the military government to campaign for the 'Yes' vote. Therefore, these

groupings automatically set the stage for the emergence of a new political pattern centred on supporting authoritarianism or democracy.

Following the defeat of Pinochet's regime in the plebiscite, the two blocs continued their activities in the run-up to the 1989 presidential and congressional elections, as well. These elections saw the pro-democracy Concertación parties support the candidacy of Patricio Aylwin and the pro-authoritarian Alianza parties support Hernan Büchi, a former Finance Minister of the Pinochet government. As it turned out, Aylwin won the elections, but the pro/anti-democracy divide kept on dominating domestic politics in the following decades. Although the ruling Concertación governments were publicly expected to take bold steps for democratisation, the RN and the UDI were widely seen as the guardians of the political order engineered by Pinochet.

In addition, the rising prominence of the pro/anti-authoritarian conflict in the post-authoritarian Chile can be understood from three key points. First, the PDC allied with the right in the Congress to oppose Allende's presidency before 1973. However, it was the same Christian Democrats joining forces with the left first in the 1988 plebiscite and then since the 1989 presidential and parliamentary elections under the pro-democracy Concertación bloc. In other words, by leaving their ideological differences aside, the centrist Christian Democrats came together with the leftist Party for Democracy and the Socialist Party to defend democracy. Second, as shown by Valenzuela and Scully (1997), Allende's vote in 1970 correlates positively with Aylwin's vote in 1989. What is striking is that this happens although Allende was a socialist and Aylwin was a Christian Democrat and Aylwin was once an opponent of Allende's presidency. Third, following the centrist Aylwin and Frei's presidencies, Ricardo Lagos was elected as the first socialist president in 2000 since Allende, to be followed by another leftist Concertación president, Michelle Bachelet. The fact that this could happen with the approval of the Christian Democrats was symbolically very important. Taken together, these points demonstrate that the identities centred on supporting or opposing the military regime took centre stage in shaping political allegiances, particularly during the initial stages of the democratic transition.

Meanwhile, amid this political competition between pro- and anti-authoritarian parties, the post-1990 Chilean politics was strikingly characterised by good relations between parties and blocs. With the rising salience of ideological moderation, parties from the three ideological tendencies focused their attention on completing the ongoing transition to democracy. There are actually three main reasons underlying this situation. First, the legacies of the two dark phases in the recent past, that is, the pre-1973 period and the 17-year Pinochet dictatorship, fostered good relations between parties. The intense ideological polarisation culminating in the breakdown of democracy in 1973 prompted parties to not prioritise ideological differences in the post-authoritarian period. Instead of "messianic, all-encompassing, and exclusionary ideological notions", the post-authoritarian parties thus placed more emphasis on compromise (Siavelis P. M., 2000). Likewise, the military dictatorship, ruling with a predominant anti-party discourse for almost two decades, made the parties appreciate the salience of multi-party democracy. Therefore, a consensus-based political framework where political parties mutually saw themselves as legitimate actors could be established (Hira & Sanghera, 2004). Put simply, in the light of these two periods, the post-authoritarian Chilean parties were very willing to collaborate, to not encounter either ideological fragmentation or a partyless dictatorship again.

Second, the modified political system inherited from the Pinochet regime enforced cooperation between parties and electoral coalitions. As explained above, together with the 1980 Constitution, the military government made crucial changes relating to the electoral system, civil-military relations, and the Congress. These changes include the binomial voting system; nine appointed members of the Senate; and the relative autonomy of the military from civilian control, as seen in the army's autonomy in dealing with its internal affairs, the impossibility for the President to remove the Commander-in-Chief from office, and the composition of the 'National Security Council' favouring the military members (Valenzuela & Constable, 1989).

In particular, the binomial voting system had a profound impact on domestic politics by securing the overrepresentation of the pro-authoritarian right in the lower and upper chambers (Aleman, Cabezas, & Calvo, 2021; Polga-Hecimovich & Siavelis, 2015). Achieving almost equal representation with the ruling

centre and left parties of the Concertación in the Congress, the right-wing RN and the UDI had great leverage in the legislative process. This necessitated the governing (Concertación) and opposition (Alianza) blocs to reach consensus over the passing of some legislations, not least the critical ones concerning democratisation. In the context of the Concertación's 'democracy of agreements' model (Luna & Mardones, 2010), the post-authoritarian Chilean politics thus rested on "a cult for non-stop concessions, negotiations and agreements" (Silva, 2004), as enforced by the military government's anti-democratic provisions.

Third, the fragile nature of the democratic transition *per se* made parties recognise the necessity of having good relations. Despite the Concertación won the elections and Aylwin was elected as the new president in 1989, the consolidation of democracy in Chile was far from complete. The incumbent Concertación was publicly expected to remove anti-democratic provisions from the 1980 Constitution and existing laws and ensure civilian control over the military. However, this task proved very difficult as the military kept on having considerable formal political power. After all, despite stepping from office as president in 1990, Pinochet remained as the Commander-in-Chief until 1998. This enabled him to play a crucial part in key political matters. More importantly, he was willing to neither give up on this political power guaranteed by the anti-democratic provisions nor allow any interrogation of his 17-year dictatorship: During the 1989 election campaign, Pinochet once made a very contentious remark that "if they touch one of my men, the rule of law is over (Angell & Pollack, 1990; Fitch, 1998)". Obviously, the threat of military intervention was still there as the transition to democracy proceeded on shaky ground.

Another cause of concern was the level of commitment of the rightist parties to democracy. Since the 1973 coup, the right-wing parties and politicians emerged as the chief supporters of the Pinochet regime. They revealed their pro-authoritarian stances again by campaigning for the 'Yes' vote in the 1988 plebiscite and presenting Büchi as their presidential candidate in the 1989 elections. Given their express commitment to the political and economic models established by the military government, there were question marks over to what extent the RN and the UDI would be willing for further democratisation.

When faced with these realities, the governing Concertación coalition, manifesting the fragile nature of Chile's re-founded democracy (Munck & Bosworth, 1998), was confronted with two options: either challenging the parties on the right by drawing on the pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage or establishing working relations with them. With hindsight, it can be argued that the Concertación opted for the second one. This was primarily because the Concertación parties recognised that although the democratic regime was restored, they still needed to work for its full-fledged settlement. After all, it was the primary motivation behind turning the loose alliance established before the 1988 plebiscite into a permanent pro-democracy platform since the 1989 elections (Navia & Sandoval, 1998). As part of this strategy, the Concertación moved cautiously to avoid any conflict with the opposing Alianza bloc and the military to not risk the transition to democracy. In particular, the pro-democracy centre and left parties did not want to provoke any reaction from these two sectors by embarking on a radical overhaul of the system or encouraging popular mobilisation (Carreras, 2012). This cautious attitude explains why comprehensive democratisation reforms were postponed until the early 2000s despite the Concertación's successive election victories. Instead, under the Aylwin and Frei governments, the Concertación parties were content with gradual changes to the system. This preference even caused some of its supporters to question the Concertación's *raison d'être* as it was widely expected to take bold steps in favour of further democratisation. Ironically, in order to secure democratisation in the long run, the incumbent coalition prioritised good relations with the rightist parties over short-term democratisation.

Over time, however, the tension between the pro/anti-democracy cleavage and the consensus-based relations between parties declined. This was rooted in the rising commitment of the RN and the UDI to the democratic regime despite minor exceptions. This was particularly seen in the RN's collaboration with the Concertación parties for amendments to the 1980 Constitution to improve democracy. As the political right increasingly distanced itself from the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship, this contributed to the shared adherence of the Chilean political mainstream to democracy. Taking advantage of this development, the Concertación presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet, whose father was murdered by the Pinochet regime, took bolder steps in eliminating anti-democratic provisions and

securing civilian control over the military since the early 2000s⁵. The declining salience of this tension was particularly felt when the Concertación's 20-year grip on power ended with the election of the right-wing Sebastián Piñera as president. When Piñera took office in 2010, it was expected that he would reverse the preceding Concertación governments' landmark policies. However, as it turned out, because President Piñera remained committed to many of his predecessors' policies, his first term in office is even dubbed the "fifth Concertación government" (Shifter, 2011).

That said, it is not possible to argue that the pro/anti-democracy cleavage has entirely disappeared. Even if its earlier influence diminished, this conflict continues to be relevant even today by intermingling with other pressing issues, such as inequality. In particular, given the strong resistance of the political right to displacing the 1980 Constitution in the 2022 constitutional referendum, it is possible to argue that the 'pro-' and 'anti-authoritarianism' are still very popular labels in contemporary Chilean politics.

4.3. Tripartite Party System vs. Bipolar Coalition Politics

The third tension is between the tripartite political structure and the bipolar bloc system since 1990. As a major continuity from the pre-authoritarian period, parties from the left, centre, and right kept on dominating domestic politics in the post-1990 period. Because the Chilean electorate continued to identify with these ideological tendencies, the tripartite political system emerged again following the end of the military dictatorship. What is striking is that compared to the pre-authoritarian period, the parties on the left, centre, and right got nearly the same percentage of votes after the restoration of democracy. For instance, the Christian Democrats' share of the vote in the 1992 local elections, which stood at 28.9 percent, was almost the same as their results in the 1969 and 1973 parliamentary elections, which were 29.8 and 29.1 percent, respectively (Valenzuela A. , 1978).

Yet how can we explain this continuous trend in the party system despite all the years passing under a military government and substantial changes in the number and composition of voters? First, the continued centrality of parties lay beneath this continuity. As explained above, parties remained at the heart of politics despite the military government worked hard to prevent it. Another factor behind the maintenance of the tripartite political structure is that political and ideological allegiances were transferred from one generation to another even under the repressive military regime. Drawing on the long-running cross-party tradition in Chile, parties on the left, centre, and right maintained their presence among people despite being legally disbanded. Most importantly, as in the pre-1973 period, parties proved capable of encompassing a wide range of views in society in the post-authoritarian period. Therefore, even if party labels changed, the uninterrupted representation of the three main ideological tendencies by parties remained unchanged. As a result, the Chilean party system could be revitalised by relying on the three ideological currents in the sudden aftermath of the military rule.

However, compared to the pre-authoritarian period, one of the novelties of the post-authoritarian Chilean politics was the prevalence of inter-party coalitions. There is a vibrant academic debate over the actual meaning of bloc politics for Chilean democracy: Whilst some scholars (Carey, 2002; Carreras, 2012) argue that the establishment of the two rival coalitions transformed politics in Chile, others (Siavelis P. , 1997) state that the cross-party alliances exerted a negligible impact on politics. The first view contends that the conventional party system resting on the three ideological currents was incrementally displaced by a *de facto* two-bloc system, whereas the proponents of the latter view reject it. An analysis of the post-authoritarian Chilean politics actually tells a story that partly confirms both standpoints.

⁵ However, this was not the case when contentious social issues were at stake, such as abortion. President Bachelet pledged to decriminalise abortion to grant women more rights in relation to their reproductive choices. Yet in the face of the fierce opposition by the RN and UDI, as well as some PDC deputies, the resulting 2017 Abortion Bill liberalised abortion on only three main grounds: threat to woman's life, foetal anomaly posing health risks, and rape. Although this bill was acknowledged as a crucial milestone ending the Pinochet regime's draconian ban on abortion, it was also criticised for its limited scope and not providing full reproductive justice in Chile. For further information, please see (Maira, Casas, & Vivaldi, 2019).

Table 3. Concertación vs. Alianza: Main Political Parties (1990-2010)*

Concertación (centre-left)	Alianza (right)
Christian Democratic Party (PDC) Party for Democracy (PPD) Socialist Party (PS) Radical Party (PR)/Social Democratic Radical Party (PRSD)	National Renewal (RN) Independent Democratic Union (UDI)

Source: Author's own.

*By excluding the smaller parties in the two blocs.

First, it seems necessary to elaborate on why coalition politics stands out as a novelty in the post-authoritarian Chile (Aleman & Saiegh, 2007). In effect, the pre-1973 domestic politics was no stranger to the political competition taking place between rival electoral alliances. For instance, the 1973 parliamentary elections took place between the leftist Popular Unity (*Unidad Popular*, UP) alliance, comprising the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and left-wing Radicals, and the right-leaning Democratic Confederation (*Confederación de la Democracia*, CODE) alliance, formed by the Christian Democratic Party, the National Party and rightist elements of the Radical Party (Valenzuela & Scully, 1997). Nevertheless, what distinguishes the post-1990 inter-party alliances from their equivalents in the pre-authoritarian period is their longevity. Although the pre-authoritarian cross-party coalitions were mainly formed to win presidential and parliamentary elections, the post-1990 alliances extended beyond elections and became inevitable parts of political life during the transition to democracy, not least in terms of legislative politics (Aleman & Saiegh, 2007). Over two decades from 1990 until 2010, domestic politics was dominated by the two inter-party coalitions, namely the ruling centre-left Concertación and the opposition right-wing Alianza. Therefore, compared to the ephemeral electoral coalitions of the pre-1973 period, these two inter-party alliances proved to be long-running and more politically effective.

This brings us to the question of what triggered the formation of inter-party alliances during the transition to democracy. First, the bipolar bloc system emerged out of the conflict between the supporters of authoritarianism and democracy. The rising relevance of the pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage forced parties from the three ideological tendencies to make a choice between the two dominant options. There were undoubtedly other electoral coalitions formed by relatively minor parties, but the two cross-party alliances were the most prominent. In particular, the Christian Democrats, the Party for Democracy, the Socialists, and the Radicals were determined to accomplish some common goals regarding democratisation (Siavelis P. M., 2005; Scully T. R., 1995). These included obtaining the majority in the Congress; protecting the democratic gains won since the 1988 plebiscite; and steering a smooth transition to democracy. Given that the parties on the right aimed to protect the political and economic structures inherited from the Pinochet regime, this explains how the two inter-party coalitions naturally came into existence. As the second primary factor, the binomial voting system set the stage for the settlement of the bipolar bloc politics. By guaranteeing the overrepresentation of the pro-authoritarian right as a counterbalance to the anti-authoritarian centre and left in the Congress, this voting system strengthened the coalitional behaviour of parties (Aleman, Cabezas, & Calvo, 2021). As no single party could take the majority in the legislature because of the voting system, the like-minded parties became more willing to form electoral, and indeed legislative, coalitions. The third and final reason is the rising political disillusionment among voters. Here, there is kind of a vicious circle: As parties tended to form inter-party coalitions based on ideological moderation, voters increasingly distanced themselves from parties and mainstream politics. In such a climate, parties much more needed to stick together within coalitions. Given the continuous flux of party labels and Chilean people's greater interest in non-conventional politics, inter-party coalitions somehow turned into a means of survival for mainstream parties. This may also explain why political parties were not willing to dissolve inter-party alliances despite the declining salience of the pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage.

That said, the question can be raised on whether the settlement of bloc politics brought about the erosion of the tripartite party system in the long term. It cannot be denied that cross-party alliances, a product of the extraordinary climate of the transition to democracy, rose in prominence since 1990. However, the rising political salience of inter-party coalitions did not eliminate the dominance of the

parties on the left, centre, and right. Political parties continued to remain as the central actors. After all, it was the parties, not inter-party coalitions, to which people were linked with their long-running political and ideological allegiances. Parties formed alliances for several reasons but they still relied on different historical backgrounds, socio-economic support bases, and ideological standpoints. This was despite the increasing salience of ideological moderation blurring differences between them. As such, even parties in the same coalition might differ over certain matters (Siavelis P. M., 2002), such as civil-military relations, socio-economic inequalities, and abortion.

At that point, the Concertación is a case in point. Compared to the right-wing bloc in opposition, this ruling coalition directly encountered the tension between the tripartite party structure and the bipolar bloc politics. At critical junctures, this tension even tested its unity. In a sense, it was not surprising because comprised of several parties ranging from the left to centre-right, the Concertación was persistently subject to this dilemma; yet it was much easier to find common ground between the rightist RN and UDI in the Alianza.

For each of the Concertación parties, the biggest challenge was to reconcile the necessities of functioning within an inter-party coalition and keeping a distinctive party profile. When trying to come up with uniform policy positions as a government, they were compelled to overcome differences in favour of reaching consensus. From the onset, the leading parties of the Concertación, the centrist Christian Democratic Party and the leftist Party for Democracy and the Socialist Party, agreed on the primacy of democracy. However, this did not prevent these parties from holding different views on a range of issues, which in a sense avoided their melting within the alliance (Siavelis P., 1997). Because of the lasting effect of the clerical/anti-clerical and the left/centre divides, the PDC, PPD, and PS diverged over certain issues despite their commonly shared belief in democracy.

Added to this were the recurring divisions between the government and the Concertación's constituent parties. For instance, in an attempt to prevent Pinochet from being a senator for life, several members of the PPD, PS, and even the PDC publicly accused Pinochet of destabilising democracy many times before⁶. However, when making this statement, they diverged from the policy line pursued by President Frei, who objected to this step because of its potential harm to the consolidation of democracy. Likewise, the arrest of Pinochet in London in 1998 because of the crimes committed against humanity caused an internal division within the Concertación. Whilst most of the PPD and the PS members, such as Isabel Allende, supported it, President Frei rejected Pinochet's detention in the UK, as well as his extradition to Spain. When pressing for Pinochet's return, the Frei government highlighted the necessity of his prosecution in Chile. Frei's other motivation was to not strain relations with the pro-authoritarian political right and the military under the very fragile conditions of the ongoing transition to democracy. As another example, in addition to the internal tensions over whom to nominate for the president, the leftist and centrist sectors of the Concertación might not always agree over the passing of some legislations. Therefore, on certain occasions, it was not unlikely to see the conservative or right-leaning parts of the PDC and the Radicals move together with the right-wing opposition in the Congress.

5. Conclusion

Taken together, the legacies of the pre-authoritarian democratic experience and the military dictatorship deeply influenced the transition to democracy in Chile. Therefore, these two periods jointly accounted for the historical background of the tension between continuity and change that characterised the post-1990 Chilean party system.

On the one hand, the pre-authoritarian Chilean party politics promoted continuity based on its four primary features, including the presence of a central political cleavage; the primacy of the left, centre, and right-wing parties; the lack of excessive polarisation, subsequently displaced by excessive ideological fragmentation; and the formation of temporal cross-party alliances. On the other hand, alongside its

⁶ The high-profile events marking tension between the government and the military include the 'liaison exercise' in December 1990, the 'boinazo' in May 1993, and the 'peucazo' in June 1995. They largely occurred in relation to the parliamentary attempts to investigate General Pinochet and his sons' suspicious financial transactions, known as the 'pinocheques' case. For further information, please see (Silva, 2002).

repressive actions against the legally banned parties, the Pinochet regime enacted three key legal amendments, including the 1980 Constitution, the 1987 Political Parties Law, and the 1987 Electoral Law. With their anti-democratic provisions, not least the binomial voting system, the military government aimed to transform the political landscape.

Against this background, the post-1990 Chilean party system encountered three main tensions between continuity and change. The first one is between the continued centrality of parties and the growing public disenchantment with politics. After the return to democracy, established political parties re-emerged, alongside the newly founded ones. However, the unexpected change was the widening gap between political parties and their constituencies after the restoration of democracy.

The second tension is between the pro-/anti-authoritarian cleavage and the forming of stable relations between parties after 1990. In the sudden aftermath of the military dictatorship, political competition revolved around supporting or opposing the authoritarian regime. However, this pro-/anti-authoritarianism cleavage was contrasted with unexpectedly good inter-party relations. This politically stable period saw the Concertación in office and the Alianza in opposition interact with each other based on compromise when the democratic transition was still underway.

The third and final tension is between the tripartite party system and the bipolar bloc politics. Like the period before 1973, the post-authoritarian politics was dominated by parties on the left, centre, and right. However, in comparison to the short-lived electoral alliances of the pre-authoritarian period, the post-1990 Chilean politics rested on two enduring inter-party coalitions. That said, despite the rising salience of inter-party coalitions, domestic politics still rested on the tripartite party system. Parties were compelled to form coalitions, but they preserved their different views on certain issues, as the Concertación case shows.

These findings may give some clues about the future of Chilean politics, as well. As explained above, in the fragile political atmosphere of democratic transition, parties commonly benefited from moving to the centre and centripetal politics. However, the decline in ideological differences between mainstream parties has narrowed the political space, rendering them mostly alike in the eyes of the voters. In a sense, the massive protests in 2011-2013 and 2019-2022 reflected the wide-ranging public disillusionment with this situation in the post-transition period. Therefore, unless political parties and politicians genuinely 'represent' citizens and produce satisfying solutions to newly emerging problems, they may risk losing connection with their social bases. The further deepening of the legitimacy crisis may in turn pose greater challenges to Chilean democracy in the long run.

All in all, the last decade saw dramatic changes in Chilean politics. The 2009 general elections saw the defeat of the Concertación bloc, alongside the election of a right-wing president, Sebastian Piñera, for the first time since the return to democracy. After Piñera's first term in office, Michelle Bachelet was returned to *La Moneda* in the 2013 elections, based on a promise of electoral reform following the 2011-2013 student protests (Montes R. , 2015). As a result, the contentious binomial voting system was displaced by a traditional proportional representation system. All these changes, *inter alia*, culminated in the election of Gabriel Boric as president in 2021 from outside the centre-left or right-wing political conglomerates. This means that Chilean politics is now more fragmented and diverse than in the period 1990-2010. Nevertheless, given the recent national deadlock over replacing Pinochet's 1980 Constitution, the tension between continuity and change still casts a shadow over contemporary Chilean democracy.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı / Conflict of Interest

Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.
There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person in the study.

İntihal Politikası Beyanı / Plagiarism Policy

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Bu çalışmada Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi kapsamında belirtilen kurallara uyulmuştur.
In this study, the rules specified within the scope of the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were followed.

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