University of Oxford

Department of Politics and International Relations

# Dealignment in Costa Rica: A Case Study of Electoral Change

*Fernando F. Sánchez*
St Antony's College

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Michaelmas Term
2003 (ie 2004)

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## ABSTRACT

The erosion of partisan identification (i.e. dealignment) and its impact on the declining support for traditional parties has been widely documented in Western countries. However, this phenomenon does not appear to be a Western peculiarity. Costa Rica, Latin America's most stable democracy, seems to be following a similar—hitherto unstudied—path. The present thesis analyses electoral change in this nation. The study assesses whether Costa Rica is undergoing a long-term electoral change; and if so, how the process could be classified and explained. Moreover, it also evaluates how well the theories developed to explicate electoral change in Western democracies illuminate the Costa Rican case. The thesis is divided into five parts. Part I poses the research's methodological and theoretical framework. Part II contextualises the problem via a historical account of political parties' development, and an assessment of the electoral system. After analysing the main evidence of change in citizens' electoral behaviour and political attitudes, Part III characterises the process. Then, Part IV concentrates on explaining it. Finally, the central findings are presented in Part V. The thesis concludes that: 1) Costa Rica is undergoing a long-term electoral change process. This process can be defined as secular dealignment. 2) In the case studied, the erosion of citizens' partisan identification (partisan dealignment) has resulted in a growing electoral flux and the decline of electoral support for the traditional parties (electoral dealignment). 3) Dealignment in Costa Rica is basically caused by the decline of the PLN's (the country's oldest, most important party) historical loyalties. 4) The PLN's partisan identification is eroding due to the combination and mutual influence of political factors and social transformations. While many of the sociological determinants of dealignment in Costa Rica find parallels in developed democracies, some political factors seem to be specific to this country—and most probably to Latin American nations. In general terms, this thesis demonstrates the relevance of in-depth, context-sensitive case studies for comparative electoral research, shows that such studies can be undertaken in Latin America, and highlights the theoretical and empirical benefits of election studies outside advanced industrial democracies.

*Al Jefe, Milagro y mis padres.*

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# List of Acronyms*

| | |
|---|---|
| ANFE: | Asociación Nacional de Fomento Económico |
| APRA: | Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana |
| ASIES: | Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales |
| BAC: | Banco Anglo Costarricense |
| BES: | British Election Studies |
| BV: | Block Volatility |
| CA: | Conservative Alliance |
| CAP: | Coalición Alianza Popular |
| CAPEL: | Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral |
| CBO: | Congressional Budget Office |
| CEDAL: | Centro de Estudios Democráticos de América Latina |
| CELADE: | Centro Latinoamericano de Demografía |
| Centro: | Centro para el Estudio de los Problemas Nacionales |
| CES: | Centro de Estudios Estratégicos |
| CIAPA: | Centro de Investigación y Adiestramiento Político Administrativo |
| CODESA: | Corporación Costarricense de Desarrollo |
| CONARE: | Consejo Nacional de Rectores |
| CPU: | Coalición Pueblo Unido |
| CU: | Coalición Unidad |
| CUN: | Coalición Unificación Nacional |
| ECLAC: | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| ECPR: | European Consortium for Political Research |
| EE: | Escuela de Estadística |
| ELN: | Ejército de Liberación Nacional |
| ENP: | Effective Number of Parties |
| ENPlegs: | Effective Number of Parties Legislative |
| ENPP: | Effective Number of Parties Parliamentary |
| ENPpres: | Effective Number of Parties Presidential |
| EU: | European Union |
| FES: | Fundación Friedrich Ebert Stiftung |
| FLACSO: | Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales |
| FPTP: | First Past The Post |
| FSLN: | Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Nicaragua) |
| GDP: | Gross Domestic Product |
| GMA: | Grand Metropolitan Area |
| Grupo ATD: | Grupo de Apoyo para la Toma de Decisiones |
| IADB: | Inter-American Development Bank |
| ICE: | Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad |
| ICEP: | Instituto Costarricense de Estudios Políticos |
| IDEA: | Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance |
| Idespo: | Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población |
| IIDH: | Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos |
| IIP: | Instituto de Investigaciones Psicológicas |
| IIS: | Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales |
| IMF: | International Monetary Fund |
| INCAE: | Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas |
| INCEP: | Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Políticos |
| INEC: | Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo |
| ISD: | Instancia Social Demócrata |
| LR: | Largest Remainder |
| MIDEPLAN: | Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica |

* The political parties included are from Costa Rica unless indicated otherwise.

| | |
|---|---|
| NGOs: | Non Governmental Organisations |
| NPD: | Nuevo Partido Democrático |
| OECD: | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PAC: | Partido Acción Ciudadana |
| PAD: | Partido Acción Demócrata |
| PADP: | Partido Acción Democrática Popular |
| PAE: | Plan de Ajuste Estructural |
| PAS: | Partido Acción Socialista |
| PCCR: | Partido Comunista de Costa Rica |
| PCD: | Partido Constitucionalista Democrático |
| PD: | Partido Demócrata |
| PDC: | Partido Demócrata Cristiano |
| PEN: | Proyecto Estado de la Nación |
| PFD: | Partido Fuerza Democrática |
| PFPC: | Partido Frente Popular Costarricense |
| PI: | Partido Independiente |
| PID: | Party Identification |
| PIO: | Partido Independiente Obrero |
| PLC: | Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (Nicaragua) |
| PLN: | Partido Liberación Nacional |
| PLP: | Partido Liberal Progresista |
| PML: | Partido Movimiento Libertario |
| PNI: | Partido Nacional Independiente |
| PNUD: | Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo |
| POST: | Partido Organización Socialista de los Trabajadores |
| PP: | Partido del Progreso |
| PPU: | Partido Pueblo Unido |
| PR: | Proportional Representation |
| PRC: | Partido Republicano Calderonista |
| PRD: | Partido Renovación Democrática |
| PRef: | Partido Reformista |
| PRep: | Partido Republicano |
| PRN: | Partido Republicano Nacional |
| PRNI: | Partido Republicano Nacional Independiente |
| PROCESOS: | Programa Centroamericano para la Sostenibilidad Democrática |
| PRTL: | Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores en Lucha |
| PSC: | Partido Socialista Costarricense |
| PSD: | Partido Social Demócrata |
| PT: | Partido de los Trabajadores |
| PUN: | Partido Unión Nacional |
| PUP: | Partido Unión Popular |
| PUSC: | Partido Unidad Social Cristiana |
| PVD: | Provisional Vote Decision |
| PVP: | Partido Vanguardia Popular |
| RPGM: | Responsible Party Government Model |
| STV: | Split-Ticket Voting |
| TCE: | Total Campaign Effect index |
| TSE: | Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones |
| TV: | Total Volatility |
| U.S.: | United States of America |
| UCR: | Universidad de Costa Rica |
| UNA: | Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica |
| USA: | United States of America |
| WB: | World Bank |
| WBV: | Within Block Volatility |

*"You still need a strong party to be a serious competitor in Costa Rican elections. However, to win them it is now essential to have a good, trustworthy candidate. 'Captive electorates' are a feature of the past in our country."*

**Oscar Arias-Sánchez**

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*"In Costa Rica* **'calderonismo'** *and* **'figuerismo'** *used to be like two different religions. Our supporters followed La Unidad or Liberación almost as an act of faith. Not any more...The electorate was emancipated after the sons of the 1948 Civil War leaders, José María Figueres and myself, were elected Presidents. Having paid this 'historical bill' and endowed with more political resources than ever, nowadays no one can take Costa Rican voters for granted."*

**Rafael Ángel Calderón-Fournier**

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# Part I

## The Framework: Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

# 1 Electoral Change: Why it Matters

Elections are at the heart of democracy. It is not possible to classify a country as democratic if it lacks free, fair, and regularly organised elections, where virtually the entire adult population is able to vote.[1] Being the most elementary form of political participation, regular voting allows common citizens to evaluate parties—and governments—and compel politicians to listen and report to the electorate. As claimed by Russell Dalton, "Voting is the one activity that binds the individual to the political system and legitimises the rest of the democratic process."[2] Regardless of the variety of means that citizens have to participate in politics, the electoral connection through political parties is still the primary basis of the public's influence in representative democracies.

For more than fifty years this connection has been the object of academic research in a myriad of election studies, especially in advanced Western countries.[3] Indeed, explaining how transformations in parties' relation with society affect stability and change in democratic polities has been a topic of constant scholarly inquiry and debate.[4] This is so because the connection between parties and the electorate is dynamic by nature. Parties as well as societies and, hence, election realities, are constantly changing.[5] Given that parties and citizens influence each other in a dialectic fashion, it is not unexpected that, depending on the time spans and countries assessed, analysts find different, and in many cases, conflicting results when studying their linkage.

It was probably this perception of constant change in one of democracy's central relationships (the one between parties and citizens through elections), which drove Ralf Dahrendorf to claim that democracy always seems to be in crisis.[6] However, it is precisely the changing nature of the relationship between parties and voters which

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[1] Huntington 1991, p. 7.
[2] Dalton 1996b, p. 47.
[3] Katz and Warshel 2001b; McGuire 2001; Lipset 2001.
[4] The evolution and main debates of the theory on electoral change is assessed in Chapter 2.
[5] McGuire 2001, p. 16.
[6] Dahrendorf 2000, p. 311.

increases the relevance of research on elections. Understanding the dynamics of parties' electoral link is central to explain the process and outcomes of democracy. After all, it is through parties that power is exercised, and through them that citizens are represented in a democratic political system.

One of the central driving forces of change in parties is found in their relation to the electorate. This is either because parties change to influence voters, or because citizens' transformations influence and change parties. In either case, these changes normally affect citizens' political attitudes and electoral behaviour, and can grow into electoral change processes. Analysing a process of electoral change—its symptoms and causes—allows us to comprehend political parties' transformations and, ultimately, democracy's dynamics in a country. By studying how voters and parties relate to and influence each other, one can unveil not only why they change, but also how democratic representation works and evolves. Arguably, electoral studies (over time and across societies) provide indispensable input for the general understanding and comparison of political systems.

Recent research on political parties has reached divergent conclusions. Not surprisingly, analysts have not agreed on a way to define their current situation. Therefore, it is reported that parties are in crisis, declining, or adapting, depending on the scope and emphasis of the study.[7] Nevertheless, when it comes to the electoral link, it appears that parties are generally losing citizens' support and loyalty.[8] In other words, they seem to be enduring a process of partisan dealignment. Thus, irrespective of how we qualify political parties' transformations, it appears that at the electoral level they are having problems.

Fortunately, there is no shortage of research on this phenomenon, although it mostly focuses on developed Western countries. It is predominantly in these societies where stable democracies with strong political parties exist, and where their loss of support amongst the electorate entails essential changes in the normal development of the

[7] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000a; Gunther et al. 2002; Webb et al. 2002; Mair 1997; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Gomáriz-Moraga 2001.
[8] Norris 1998a; Dalton 2000; Dalton et al. 2000; Wattenberg 2000.

political system. Hence, most of the theoretical propositions on electoral change and, specifically, on dealignment, are inspired by Western cases.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that parties and electorates are not changing elsewhere. In fact, Costa Rica, Latin America's most developed democracy, also seems to be undergoing a similar process of dealignment as that experienced in many Western societies. However, the political implications and general causes of this phenomenon have yet to be adequately analysed and explained. Apart from the need to understand how and why Latin America's oldest and most stable democracy is changing, an in-depth analysis of the Costa Rican case will also enrich the general, Western-centred, approach proper of electoral change studies.

Building on dealignment's central theoretical propositions, and on electoral trends that have been observed particularly in developed countries, the present research analyses Costa Rica's electoral change process. By doing so, it aims at explaining the loss of support of its political parties, while probing and complementing this Western-centred theoretical approach. Part I of the thesis (Chapters 1 and 2) develops the methodological and theoretical framework for the analysis. Specifically, Chapter 1 presents the topic, objectives, methods, and structure of the thesis. It is divided into five general sections. The first section discusses the relevance of the topic assessed, and introduces the research's main objective. The second section presents the case's general background, while the third posits the thesis's research questions and objectives. Afterwards, the fourth section discusses and justifies the study's methodological approach. Finally, the chapter concludes presenting the structure and the main sources used in this thesis.

## 2 The General Background to Parties in Costa Rica

Costa Rica is recognised as Latin America's oldest and most stable uninterrupted democracy.[9] In fact, among developing countries, the longevity of its democratic rule

[9] Knight 2001; Booth 1998, Chap. 1.; Seligson 2001b; Seligson and Gómez 1989; Peeler 1992; Peeler 1985; Mesa-Lago and Müller 2002, p. 702.

is matched only by India.[10] Ruled by a presidential government, for over fifty years—after the Civil War of 1948—the country has experienced democratic elections with widespread popular participation[11] and regular rotation of rulers and parties.[12] Thirteen elections have been held since the civil war.[13] According to various surveys, 77 per cent of Costa Ricans believe that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government,[14] 70 per cent claim to participate in transparent electoral processes,[15] and almost 87 per cent think that it is important to vote in the national elections.[16] Although democracy and elections are not synonymous concepts, as indicated, the existence of free, competitive elections is one of democracy's central mechanisms and a critical feature defining nations as democratic.[17] In fact, Schumpeter's often-quoted definition of democracy characterises it as a "competitive struggle for the people's vote."[18] Free, fair, and competitive elections have been basic to Costa Rica's political development and institutional maturity.

Indeed, democracy has proven to be deeply entrenched in this Central American nation. It survived the debt crisis of the 1980s and the violent armed conflict in the isthmus that lasted until the 1990s. In the midst of regional political commotion and suffering the worst economic crisis of its history, with unprecedented levels of inflation, unemployment, and general popular unrest,[19] this nation held regular

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[10] India has a democratic history dating almost from its independence in 1947. However, democratic rule in this country nearly suffered a breakdown between 1975 and 1977. On the other hand, it is safe to argue that Costa Rica has been a democracy since 1953. For further details about the Indian political and party systems see, Björkman 1987. For works assessing Costa Rica's democratic transition see, Booth 1998; especially Chaps. 3-4.; PEN 2001, Chap. 2.

[11] Vote restrictions for women and blacks (the only ones remaining before the civil war) were eliminated after the 1948 battle.

[12] One of the best known democracy rating systems, the Freedom House Index, has consistently given Costa Rica one of its highest rankings. For more details see, Freedom House 2003; Karatnycky 2000.

[13] General elections were held in 1953, 1958, and every four years thereafter. In each election Costa Ricans choose their president, two vice-presidents, 57 congressmen, and their municipal authorities.

[14] The only higher figure was registered in Uruguay, where 78 per cent of the population feel the same way. The rest of the Latin American countries show figures ranging from 75 per cent in Venezuela, to 37 per cent in Brazil. Latinobarómetro 2002.

[15] The perception of fraud-free elections is not as high in the other Central American countries. The corresponding figures are 60 per cent for Nicaraguans, 56 per cent for Panamanians, 48 per cent for Guatemalans, 46 per cent for Salvadorians, and 45 per cent for Hondurans. PNUD 1997, p. 23.

[16] Rodríguez et al. abril 2002, Cuadro 11, p. 22.

[17] LeDuc et al. 1996, p. 4.; Norris 1997, p. 1.

[18] Schumpeter 1952.

[19] This economic crisis affected Costa Rica mainly during President Carazo's administration (1978-1982). Inflation increased from 6.0 per cent in 1978 to 90.1 per cent in 1982. Likewise,

elections, consolidated its party system and maintained a high level of support for its governmental institutions.[20] As stated by Cynthia Chalker, "Costa Rica's institutionalised democratic practices have demonstrated not only resiliency but also the capacity to adapt."[21] Indeed, the Costa Rican case constitutes a particularly good example to challenge Norris' assertion regarding wealthy industrialised nations as the only countries that enjoy strongly institutionalised democratic governments.[22]

Central to the country's democratic strength have been political parties and its well-institutionalised two-party system. Arend Lijphart has indicated that no strong democracy is imaginable without well-functioning parties.[23] Backing this position Héctor Gross-Espiell stresses that "Without strong political parties...democracy lacks one of the essential elements for its existence and development."[24] Mainwaring and Scully have argued that "the nature of parties and party systems shapes the prospects that stable democracy will emerge."[25] These authors claim that parties have been at the centre of Costa Rica's democracy.[26] Local academics agree. José Luis Vega-Carballo, for instance, acknowledges that:

> "Costa Rica's democratic regime was possible only because the social forces that formed the state opted for the political party as the instrument by which to organise their participation. Thereby they created strong, dominant parties that would have an impact across generations."[27]

It can safely be stated that strong political parties and the concomitant well-institutionalised party system, are central reasons for Costa Rica's political stability.

This nation's party system is historically rooted. More than class or religious cleavages, as in many European nations,[28] the two main parties in Costa Rica

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unemployment rose from 4.5 per cent to 9.4 per cent in the same period. MIDEPLAN 2002. This crisis is assessed in more detail in Chapter 7.

[20] Costa Rica's current democratic stability is thoroughly analysed in PEN 2001, Chap. 3.

[21] Chalker 1995, p. 117.

[22] Norris 1999b, p. 7.

[23] Lijphart 2001.

[24] Gross-Espiell 1989, p. 206. This and all the translations from Spanish-language works or interviews (cited from Spanish sources in the bibliography) are my own.

[25] Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, p. 2.

[26] Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, p. 18.

[27] Vega-Carballo 1992, p. 203.

[28] Lipset and Rokkan 1967. The Irish case constitutes a salient exception in Europe.

originated from a political cleavage: the 1948 Civil War. The Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN)—a social democratic party—was formed in 1951 by members of the winning side of that war. In the absence of a unified opposition, this party controlled the local political arena for almost thirty years (from the elections of 1953 to those in 1982). The PLN won four presidential elections (1953, 1962, 1970, and 1974) and lost three (1958, 1966, and 1978) during this period, against different party coalitions that were formed in each case to oppose it.[29] The groups that challenged the PLN integrated into a single political party in 1983 (35 five years after the civil war) creating the Partido Unidad Social Cristiana (PUSC)—a social christian party. The PUSC won its first election as a unified party in 1990. Their first success was not repeated in 1994 when the PLN prevailed. However, the Social Christians returned to power in 1998, and were elected again in 2002. The PLN and the PUSC have been the two main political forces in Costa Rican politics since the 1986 elections,[30] when—following Rovira-Mas—"the two-party era" began.[31] Leftist parties, always obtaining rather modest results, have also participated in national elections since 1962.[32]

Despite the fact that other political parties participate in the electoral processes,[33] Costa Rica is—since 1983—a two-party system in Sartori's terms, as the two major parties obtain most of the votes and govern with no need to pursue any arrangement or coalition with minor parties.[34] As we will see later, the validity of this assertion has been questioned after the 1998 and, especially, the 2002 electoral results. In any

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[29] However, even after losing the presidential contest, the PLN enjoyed a congressional majority both in 1958 and 1966.

[30] The two parties together obtained 98 per cent of the votes in the presidential race and 95 per cent of the seats in congress in the 1986 elections, 99 and 95 per cent in the 1990 elections, 97 and 93 per cent in the 1994 elections, 92 and 88 per cent in the 1998 electoral process, and 70 per cent (in the first presidential election round) and 63 per cent in the last 2002 elections. Hernández-Naranjo 2001; TSE 2002b. The results and changes in Costa Rica's electoral dynamics are studied in detail in Chapter 5.

[31] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, pp. 11-14.

[32] Leftist parties were officially banned from electoral politics from 1949 to 1975. However they were able to evade the prohibition by using different party names.

[33] Political parties from the Left had relatively successful but ephemeral electoral performances in the 1978 and 1982 elections when they united in a coalition called Pueblo Unido and had 3 and 4 congressmen elected respectively. Conflicts and internal divisions led to the end of the coalition in 1986. A new party called Fuerza Democrática (PFD) temporarily became an option for former leftist leaders and disgruntled ex-PLN and PUSC members. The PFD was able to elect 2 deputies in 1994 and 3 in the 1998 elections. However, following the transient style of it predecessors, it did not elect any representatives in the 2002 electoral process. For more details see Chapter 3.

[34] Sartori 1992, p. 239.

case, arguing in favour of the resilience of Costa Rica's bipartism, Oscar Fernández has defined the country's party system—clearly influenced by Duverger's and Sartori's ideas[35]—as a "dissuasive bipolarity" (*bipolaridad disuasiva*). This refers to the existence of historical, legal, and financial mechanisms that may have reinforced the electoral dominance of the PLN and the PUSC, and hindered the development of strong "third" political options.[36] Indeed, even if one can only formally define Costa Rica's party system as bipartisan after 1983, the nature of the party blocks formed after the civil war and the weakness of the "leftist family," have basically constituted a bipolar party configuration since the 1948 rupture.

Seeing the Costa Rican case within the Latin American context, this country's long-standing democratic stability and the strength of its party system are an exception in the region. Other traditional two-party Latin American democracies, such as Colombia and Venezuela,[37] have rather weak political parties, or have witnessed the collapse of their party system.[38] According to Mainwaring and Scully, other than in Costa Rica, well-institutionalised party systems can be found among the region's democracies only in Uruguay and Chile.[39] Nevertheless, both countries have suffered relatively recent breakdowns of their democratic rule, 1973-1990 in Chile and 1973-1985 in Uruguay. Costa Rica's political singularity is more striking when compared with countries like Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Paraguay, Ecuador, or with any of its Central American neighbours (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama).[40] Indeed, Forrest Colburn has grounds to describe Costa Rica as "arguably the region's most successful democracy."[41] This country's political

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[35] Duverger 1987, pp. 242-255.; Sartori 1992.
[36] Fernández 1996; Fernández 1992, pp. 28-31.; Fernández 1991.
[37] For an insightful study about Venezuelan parties before the rise of Hugo Chávez see, Coppedge 1994.
[38] For further discussion on the effects of two-party systems in Latin American countries see, Peeler 1985, pp. 96-131, especially p. 103.
[39] For these authors an institutionalised party system implies: 1) stability in inter-party competition, 2) the existence of parties that have fairly stable roots in society, 3) acceptance of parties and elections as legitimate institutions to determine who governs, and 4) party organisations with reasonably stable rules and structures. Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, p. 1.
[40] For different assessments of party systems in Latin America see, Coppedge 1998; Peeler 1998, Chap. 6.; Mainwaring and Scully 1995a; Mainwaring 1999; Colburn and Sánchez 1999, pp. 11-18.; Colburn and Sánchez 2000, pp. 19-34.
[41] Colburn September/October 2002, p. 11. Costa Rica's democratic "exceptionalism" has also been highlighted in, Camp 2001; Colburn and Sánchez 2001; Booth and Walker 1999; Peeler 1998; Seligson and Booth 1995; Mainwaring and Scully 1995a; Rouquié 1994; Diamond 1993.

stability and its institutional maturity provide a unique scenario in Latin America to study the dynamics of electoral behaviour and political parties in a well-established democracy.

As we can see, "stable" is the best word to describe Costa Rica's democracy after the 1948 cleavage, and its elections, especially once in the "two-party era." However, the results of the last two electoral processes (1998 and 2002) suggest that the country's electoral dynamics have exited their apparent stability. During these elections absenteeism figures increased more than 50 per cent, growing from a historical 18.9 per cent average, to 30 and 31.2 per cent, in 1998 and 2002 respectively. Ticket-splitting skyrocketed, reaching its highest levels since 1963 (15.5 and 17 per cent, correspondingly). The country's main parties started to lose electoral support *vis à vis* "third parties." In fact, in the 2002 presidential and legislative elections, third parties obtained their best results in Costa Rica's modern political history (after the 1948 cleavage), while the PLN and the PUSC got the lowest support since their creation. Finally, the 1998 elections registered a shift in the direction of the electoral volatility index (both at the presidential and legislative levels), which clearly started to increase. In 2002, electoral volatility registered the highest figure in the last twenty years.[42] These results indicate that something is evidently changing in Costa Rica's political scenario.

## 3 Research Questions and General Objectives

### *3.1 Research Questions*

The 1998 and 2002 elections results have left many unanswered questions. What happened? Were the changes in these elections a result of a long-term progressive decline in partisan identification, or just a pair of atypical, isolated, "tsunami type" contests?[43] Can the changes in the country's electoral dynamics be classified as dealignment? If not, how can they be classified (realignment, short-term instability,

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[42] Sánchez 2002.

[43] Following Pippa Norris, "tsunami elections" are "high electoral waves" that may cause a lot of commotion, but once gone have little impact on the political setting. Norris 1997, p. 3.

or another type of process)? In any case, what explains the peculiar electoral results? Are they caused by general transformations in Costa Rica's society? If so, how have political parties responded to these changes? Or alternatively, are parties responsible for the variations in the electorate's behaviour? What role have the parties' history and the electoral system played in the process? And, in light of the existing theory, is Costa Rica following similar trends as many advanced industrial societies? Concentrating on Costa Rica's electoral processes from 1953 to 2002 and on survey data from 1978 to 2002, and building on the local, and especially on the general literature assessing electoral dynamics, the present research project specifically tackles the following questions:

> *Is Costa Rica undergoing a long-term electoral change? If so, how could the process be qualified? How could it be explained? And, how well do the theories developed for advanced Western democracies illuminate the case?*

## *3.2 General Objectives*

In general terms this thesis pursues the following objectives:

1) To analyse the electoral dynamics in Costa Rica after the 1948 Civil War, concentrating especially on the 1978-2002 period. It is in the first part of this period when the country's two-party system consolidated, and in the last one when it seems to have started to change.
   a) Study the historical development of political parties in Costa Rica.
   b) Assess the impact of the electoral system on the electoral dynamics and on the party system.
   c) Characterise the process of change in the country's electoral arena.

2) To evaluate general explanations for the electoral change process evident in Costa Rica since 1998.
   a) Discuss political parties' main changes (in government and as institutions) and their influence on the electorate's changing behaviour.
   b) Analyse the influence of sociological factors (social class, age, education, place of residence [urban, rural], and so forth) on the electoral change process.
   c) Examine the relevance of "foreign" theoretical approaches for assessing the Costa Rican case.

3) To yield conclusions and potentially applicable hypotheses with some bearing not only to the Costa Rican case, but also to the regional and the global debate about electoral change. This will be accomplished by providing a systematic study about electoral change in Costa Rica that could later be useful in broader comparative studies on the topic.

## 4 Methodological Approach

The proposed research falls under the tradition of comparative politics, and follows a "neo-institutionalist" approach.[44] Specifically, in terms of the theme of dealignment, neo-institutionalism attempts to integrate the individual voter within a broader structural context of individual choice.[45] The comparative method was selected as it has been proven to be the most suitable approach to answer questions dealing with relations among institutions, social groups, and norms in a specific context.[46] As indicated above, a case study will be the particular type of comparative analysis developed in this thesis.

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[44] The neo-institutionalist approach combines the study of traditional aspects of institutionalism (history, development and comparisons of constitutions, states, governments and their different branches—at the central and local levels—burocracies, and political parties, among others), with developmentalism. Four relatively distinct schools of thought have developed under the rubric of new institutionalism: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, economic institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism. Hagopian 1998, p. 129, citing, Hall and Taylor 1994. For a cogent assessment of the development of the main approaches in Comparative Politics see, Apter 1996.

[45] Norris 1998b, p. xix. For further details regarding the distinctive views and agenda items of dealignment research developed under the new-institutionalist perspective see, Norris 1998b, pp. xix-xxii.

[46] Morlino 1994, p. 16.

### *4.1 Why a Case Study*

Regarded by various authors as a central type of research,[47] case studies allow undertaking in-depth and comparative analyses of specific phenomena while applying different theoretical approaches. That is exactly what this project aims to accomplish. Specifically, a case study was chosen for two main reasons.

In the first place, it is the best way to go more deeply into a single case and perform, in Eckstein's terms, an "intensive" research.[48] Given the absence of a similar study on which to build, a proper understanding—v*erstehen*—of the case needs to be achieved in order to fulfil this project's objectives. Authors such as Linz, Bartels, and Katz and Warshel have correctly argued that an election study needs to be conceptualised and contextualised as part of a political system that is run by institutions, and that has a past and a future, not only a present. Following these authors, "good" election studies are not disconnected from the political system's institutional and historical contexts, as it is within these contexts that parties and electorates interact and function.[49] Hence, a thorough assessment of Costa Rica's political history, electoral rules, electoral results, of their citizens' political attitudes and behaviour, of its parties' main changes, and of the nation's central social transformations, among others, has been carried out. Moreover, working with a single case enabled the evaluation of country-specific factors with no disregard of general international trends. Indeed, the present analysis is part of what Mair calls, "a renewed emphasis on the deeper understanding of particular cases or countries."[50]

In the second place, in more practical terms, a case study is an approach that is economical in terms of money, manpower, and time. The restrictions of this project demand for a study that can be carried out by a single researcher, in three to four years, and with limited economic resources.

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[47] See for example, Campbell 1975; Collier 1991; Eckstein 1975.
[48] Eckstein 1975, p. 81.
[49] Linz 2001; Bartels 2001; Katz and Warshel 2001b.
[50] Mair 1996a, pp. 329-330.

### *4.2 Why Costa Rica*

Four specific reasons justify the selection of the case.

Firstly, the selection of Costa Rica cannot be justified in terms of the "most similar" or the "most different" case.[51] Rather, it stands as the most similar case in one of the most different settings. Most of the research evaluating electoral change (dealignment cases) has been done in developed countries. The reason is quite simple. Partisan identification takes time to develop.[52] It is only possible to talk about partisan dealignment if it is endured by parties that have been present in the electoral arena for long enough to enjoy the loyalty of two or more generations of voters. Thus, one can only explain electoral changes in terms of dealignment if they are taking place in nations with long-standing democratic traditions, where stable parties and party systems have developed. This surely is a reason why, according to Norris, there is a shortage of systematic dealignment research in newer transitional or consolidating democracies.[53]

The present study aims to analyse an electoral change process in the Latin American scenario. The use of a case study of Costa Rica, Latin America's most stable democracy, endowed with a strong democratic political culture and a well-institutionalised party system,[54] has provided a particularly good opportunity for studying electoral change in the developing world. Future research may undertake a similar task in other regional countries with a shorter or less stable democratic history. However, as a first step, relating developed first world democracies to the third world's most developed democracy is the most sensible thing to do.

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[51] For a discussion on these alternative methods of selecting a case study see, Peters 1998, pp. 37-41.
[52] Pippa Norris has proven that party identification is systematically higher (47 per cent) among the electorate in older democracies, compared with that one in newer democracies (34 per cent). Norris forthcoming, Chap. 6.
[53] Norris forthcoming, Chap. 6.
[54] For recent analyses on Costa Rica's political culture see, Booth and Seligson 1993; PEN 2001, Chap. 13.

Secondly, many authors have highlighted case studies' relevance for theory probing and even theory building.[55] The Costa Rican case will be analysed in light of several—some time even contrasting—theoretical generalisations about electoral change in advanced industrial democracies. Costa Rica is an ideal case—maybe even a "crucial case"[56]—for testing some of the basic elements of these theoretical approaches in a developing country. Providing new propositions for the scholarly debate about electoral change is one of the aims of this study.

Thirdly, working in Costa Rica has allowed me to study a country whose culture I am completely acquainted with. This has granted me what Laurence Whitehead calls "normative involvement" or attunedness and familiarity with the context, which are indispensable complements to analytical clarity and respect for the evidence.[57]

Finally, and of central relevance, several private firms, public institutions, academic entities, and individual scholars in Costa Rica have produced a robust array of survey studies and electoral data related to the research topic, most of which I have had access to. Generally, aggregate electoral data is available starting from 1953 on. Even though no systematic studies assessing long-term electoral change exist, survey studies dealing with elections have been done every single year since 1978. Likewise, a significant bulk of conjunctural, descriptive, period, and statistic electoral analyses of the last thirteen electoral processes is generally available. Moreover, the Costa Rican Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (Supreme Electoral Tribunal [TSE]) library is open to the public and their up-dated Internet site can be consulted anytime. There is not a shortage of studies on Costa Rica's political history, electoral system, and political parties. The country's central political debates are normally reflected in the local newspapers most of which can be accessed on-line. Finally, politicians, journalists and representatives from the media, and academics are generally accessible for interviews. In sum, availability and access to information has not been a major problem for the completion of this thesis.

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[55] See for example, Verba 1967; Lijphart 1971; Eckstein 1975; George 1979; Skocpol and Somers 1980; Peters 1998.
[56] Eckstein 1975, pp. 118-119.
[57] Whitehead 1996, p. 367.

### *4.3 How is this Case Study Comparative?*

Three distinctive features make of this case study a comparative analysis.

In the first place, moving away from Eckstein's restrictive definition of case study,[58] this research has undertaken what Morlino defines as "diachronic comparison" or an assessment of the same case over time in order to evaluate a specific phenomenon.[59] Following the advice posited by King and colleagues,[60] the analyses in the present research consider multiple measures or "observations" of electoral change in Costa Rica. This type of more extensive longitudinal assessment of a single phenomenon is what Bartolini defines as a "developmental-case-study."[61]

In the second place, again following the proposed strategy of King et al.,[62] whenever possible the present research has increased the number of observations by analysing the Costa Rican case in the context of other countries. Especial attention has been given to trends in advanced industrial societies. Latin American cases are also mentioned when appropriate. However these are not so useful, as no other long-stable, two-party democracy exists in the region. It should be stressed though—given the nature of this research—that the emphasis of the study is on "vertical" analyses (i.e. comparisons over time in Costa Rica) rather than "horizontal" analyses (i.e. comparisons between countries).

Finally, the Costa Rican case has been analysed in light of the most relevant theoretical approaches regarding electoral change in Western democracies. This is possible when studying a country that, according to Edelberto Torres-Rivas, "is facing the challenges of a developed democracy."[63] As claimed by Sidney Verba, a case study is comparative if the research has strong connections to theories based on

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[58] Eckstein understands a case study as a phenomenon for which only one measure of any single pertinent variable is reported and interpreted. Eckstein 1975, p. 85.
[59] Morlino 1994, pp. 21-22.
[60] King et al. 1994, Cap. 6.
[61] Bartolini 1994, pp. 116-117.
[62] King et al. 1994, p. 127.
[63] Salas et al. 2000.

comparisons.[64] An eclectic, comparative theoretical framework (presented in Chapter 2) has been constructed and used in this thesis. Rose calls this approach a "typical strategy" when undertaking electoral change case study analysis from a comparative perspective.[65]

## 5 Thesis Structure and Main Sources

### *5.1 Thesis Structure*

The present thesis is divided into nine chapters, organised in five general parts. Part I includes Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 1 poses the research's objectives, structure, and methodological approach. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework for the analysis. The framework constructed in this part provides the theoretical and methodological grounding for the rest of the thesis.

Part II is made up of Chapters 3 and 4. This section of the thesis presents the historical and the institutional contexts. Chapter 3 assesses the historical development of Costa Rica's political parties, while Chapter 4 analyses the influence of the electoral rules on its party system. Undertaking an in-depth analysis of the historical and institutional particularities of Costa Rica's democracy was essential to understanding the implications and causes of the electoral change process taking place in the country.

The third part of the thesis includes Chapters 5 and 6. This part examines the country's recent electoral changes, and discusses whether they can be defined as a process of dealignment. Chapter 5 concentrates on aggregate electoral trends, while Chapter 6 focuses on behavioural data from survey studies. Part III argues that Costa Rica is indeed enduring a process of dealignment, which is basically motivated by the loss of support of the country's oldest party: the PLN.

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[64] Verba 1967.
[65] Rose 1974, p. 4.

Part IV is again composed of two chapters: 7 and 8. It assesses the causes of the dealignment process observed in Costa Rica, in light of the two most popular explanations used to elucidate this phenomenon: the political (Chapter 7) and sociological (Chapter 8) approaches. Given the "one-party nature" of dealignment in Costa Rica, both chapters concentrate on explaining PLN's secular loss of partisan loyalties and voters' support, and the concomitant increase of partisan independence in the country.

Finally Part V is made out of Chapter 9. This concluding chapter presents the main findings of the thesis. Additionally, future possible lines of research inspired by the present study are signalled.

### *5.2 Main Sources*

As King and colleagues correctly assert, "...neither quantitative nor qualitative research is superior to the other..."[66] The present study is based on both. Quantitative and qualitative information of primary and secondary nature have been used to build the nine chapters which compose the present research project.

Specifically, the time series used in this thesis (especially in Parts II, III, and IV) were constructed with aggregate electoral data from official reports published by the TSE, and with general census, social, and economic official information provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo (National Statistics and Census Institute [INEC]), and by the Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy [MIDEPLAN]). Furthermore, time series and tables were also built with data from survey studies mainly by CID-Gallup and Unimer RI-La Nación—the two most reputable polling firms conducting periodic opinion polls in Costa Rica.[67]

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[66] King et al. 1994, pp. 5-6.

[67] CID-Gallup started its public opinion surveys in 1977 and Unimer RI-La Nación, a joint effort by the polling firm (Unimer RI) and the newspaper (*La Nación*), in 1991.

Regarding the survey data, most of the information came from "physical documents," as electronic versions of the polls were available only for the last few years. In terms of survey data of CID-Gallup, 96 polls from November 1978 to December 2003 were assessed. Given that at least one survey was taken every four months in this period (starting either in 1978, 1979 or 1980, for different questions), the time series were constructed using 4-month periods. When more than one poll was conducted in the 4-month time span, their average was calculated and registered as the figure for the specific period. Moreover, for the purpose of clarity, sometimes the annual or the 4-year averages were used. Time series were constructed to cover as many complete administrations as possible. Six administrations have come and gone since 1978, when the first survey study of the series was conducted, namely: 1978-1982, 1982-1986, 1986-1990, 1990-1994, 1994-1998, and 1998-2002. Data available from CID-Gallup surveys and from other polling firms studies for the first years of the 2002-2006 ongoing administration is also used to support certain arguments and at the conclusion of the thesis.

In the case of Unimer RI-La Nación, 52 polls from January 1991 to May 2003, were studied. The most relevant information came from three polls taken on elections day (prior to the announcement of the official results) in 1994, 1998, and 2002. Discrete data and survey studies provided by the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la Universidad de Costa Rica (IIS), and by other equally trustworthy institutions such as Demoscopía S.A., the Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población de la Universidad Nacional (Idespo), the Programa Centroamericano para la Sostenibilidad Democrática (PROCESOS), the Grupo-Nación, and an internal PLN poll conducted by the Instancia Social Demócrata and the Centro de Estudios Democráticos de América Latina (CEDAL), were also used The data provided by these institutions was employed either to construct certain graphs and tables or to corroborate observed trends. Overall, around 200 individual survey studies were assessed and used to substantiate the results presented in this thesis.

Apart from a thorough literature review, relevant information was also obtained from electoral observation, interviews, and newspaper revision. Indeed, I was able to observe the 2002 Costa Rican elections in different provinces of the country. It was

also very informative to follow closely the events prior to the election, as well as its aftermath. Moreover, between March and April 2001 and January and August 2002, I conducted 114 elite interviews with academics, members of the press, and politicians (former presidents, deputies, former deputies, former ministers, former presidential candidates, and highly ranked as well as local party officials). They were open interviews, and lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours. The information obtained from the interviews was especially useful when analysing the causes of dealignment in the country.

Finally, using on-line resources, and during my two visits to Costa Rica, I gathered the main articles published by the local papers regarding the 2002 elections. Furthermore, the most important newspaper in Costa Rica, *La Nación*, kindly granted me access to their private library which has editions dating back to October 1946. Thus, I was able to complete a thorough historical review of the most important political events related to my topic. Building on this information, and following the explained structure, the coming chapters present an in-depth study of electoral change in Costa Rica.

# Chapter 2

# Theoretical Approach

# 1 Introduction

As stressed in the previous chapter, elections are at the base of democracy. Indeed, even the most minimalist notions of democracy contemplate the periodic organisation of competitive, honest elections. Electoral contests and, thus, democracy are possible given the existence of political parties that participate in and run the democratic process. In short, democracy is inconceivable without elections, and elections are not possible without parties. No wonder political parties have been regarded as the "building blocks" of democracy.

This is a widely accepted generalisation. Farrell and Webb emphasise that "Just as it is impossible to conceive a definition of democracy which does not place elections centre-stage, so it is also difficult to find a definition of parties which does not stress their electoral function.[1] This assertion is supported by Sartori's famous minimal definition of parties as "any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office."[2] This same author has stated that citizens...are represented *through* and *by* parties."[3] Much of the same point is made by Powell: "the competitive electoral context, with several political parties organizing the alternatives that face the voters, is the identifying property of the contemporary democratic process."[4] Moreover and paraphrasing Schattschneider, Richard Katz argues that democracy would be unthinkable without parties.[5] Finally, Mair has claimed that the twentieth-century was not only that one of democracy, but of "*party* democracy."[6] The relationship between citizens and parties through elections is certainly a defining characteristic of democracy.

In established democracies voting is a regular activity for most citizens, so it provides an opportunity to study the links between political attitudes, actual behaviour, and political parties. Building on the main theory that assesses these links, the present

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[1] Farrell and Webb 2000, p. 102.
[2] Sartori 1992, p. 64.
[3] Sartori 1968, p. 471. Italics in the original.
[4] Powell 1982, p. 3.
[55] Katz 1980.
[6] Mair 1997, p. 125. Italics in the original.

thesis examines the relationship of citizens, elections, and parties in Costa Rica. Specifically, this chapter evaluates the main theory used to build the conceptual framework for this analysis.

This chapter is divided into six parts. To begin with, an introduction containing its main objective is followed by a set of qualifications regarding the premises and applicability of the most relevant electoral change theory to the Costa Rican case. Afterwards, a chronological revision of the main theory on the topic illustrates its evolution and allows us to locate in it the present study. Subsequently, the different electoral periods, followed by the most important models explaining electoral change processes are posited. The chapter ends with a graphic synthesis of the theoretical framework that will be used to analyse electoral change in Costa Rica.

## 2 Qualifications

Before undertaking a discussion of the central theory used in this research—most under the "jurisdiction" of comparative politics—three specific points ought to be mentioned regarding its premises and applicability to the Costa Rican case.

### *2.1 Responsible Party Government*

As could be gathered from the introduction of this chapter, most of the literature explaining electoral change builds on the premise that political representation works via a "responsible party government model" (RPGM), where parties function as critical institutions linking citizens and the state.[7] As claimed by Strøm, "Representative democracy has long been associated with, or even equated with, party government."[8] This model—at least its minimum conditions—is also at the base of the present research. Following Pippa Norris[9] and Richard Rose,[10] in the RPGM the

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[7] For the central ideas of this model see, Ostrogorski 1922; Ranney 1954; Schattschneider 1942; Schattschneider 1948; APSA 1950; Harmel and Janda 1982; Klingemann et al. 1994.
[8] Strøm 2000, p. 180.
[9] Norris 1997, pp. 4-5.

electorate selects from two or more parties based on their policies and performance. The model has three minimum conditions:

A. On the supply side, parties need to provide alternative and distinctive sets of programmes on the major issues faced by the country, so that voters are given meaningful electoral choices. Parties should implement them if they win. They may compete on other grounds (with charismatic leaders, clientelistic benefits, etc.), but only programmatic parties offer voters rational policies.[11]

B. On the demand side, voters should at least be sufficiently informed to reward or punish parties based on their performance in government and, hopefully, on prospective evaluations of their policy platforms.

C. Finally, free and fair elections need to be held at regular intervals in order to evaluate parties and allow their alternation in government.

## 2.2 *Western-Centred Theory*

So far, most of the work published on elections in Costa Rica either has consisted of conjunctural analysis of specific elections or evaluated a limited number of electoral processes, focused on particular social groups, is been highly descriptive, or concentrated on explaining stability rather than change.[12] In fact, virtually all the systematic research available on electoral change has been carried out in advanced industrial democracies. Hence—as indicated before—almost all the theory explaining changes in electoral dynamics has been inspired by cases in these societies. Although models proposed to study electoral change in the developed world could be used to

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[10] Rose 1984.

[11] The nature of the parties is central when undertaking electoral change studies. In this respect, analysing Latin American parties Hagopian has contended that "programmatic parties more often inspire intense party identification in the electorate than do clientelistic ones..." Hagopian 1998, p. 102.

illuminate the Costa Rican case, caution and selectivity are central when constructing the theoretical framework of this thesis. As argued by Alker, political theories are linked to specific political contexts.[13] An eclectic "foreign" theoretical approach enriched with contributions by local academics will be used to generate the conceptual framework to analyse this case. By doing so, the present research will benefit from the conclusions, analyses, and frameworks of the relevant existing literature, and avoid falling into what Sartori regards as "parochialism."[14]

### *2.3 What this Project is and what it is not*

The present study will concentrate on the process and causes of electoral change in Costa Rica. In his various critiques of the relevant literature about electoral change and party systems, Peter Mair is right when he questions whether electoral change is a necessary or even a sufficient condition for party system change. Mair is also correct when he indicates that party system change may be the result of transformations in dimensions other than the electoral one (for example in party organisation, party ideology, or in parties' patterns of competition).[15] However these considerations find little bearing for the proposed study, as the present research is not making a case for party system change in Costa Rica as a result of transformations in citizens' electoral behaviour. Instead, this thesis seeks to shed light on whether the country is undergoing a long-term process of electoral change, and if so, to characterise this process and reveal its causes—a task that, to the best of my knowledge, has not been previously done.

In understanding this problem, one must keep in mind that parties and the electorate's partisan loyalties normally originate from the foundational cleavage of the party system. Thus, the erosion of these loyalties can be regarded as a sign of the "unfreezing" of the party system cleavage, and probably of the beginning of a party

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[12] Two salient exceptions are ongoing research projects by the IIS on absenteeism and by PROCESOS on electoral behaviour. For a thorough review of basic bibliography on democracy in Costa Rica see, Rovira-Mas and Rodríguez-López 2001.
[13] Alker 1996, p. 796.
[14] Sartori 1994, p. 37.
[15] Mair 1987, Chap. 1.; Mair 1997, Chaps. 2 and 3.

system change. As contended by Schmitt and Holmberg, "Stable party systems and stable partisanship run in parallel, while declining partisanship is associated with party system change."[16] However, the party system may or may not change, and its other dimensions may or may not vary. When analysing the party system, this project concentrates on changes resulting from, or induced by the electoral dimension, or alternatively—taking Sartori's "parties as subjects" approach[17]—by the actions taken by parties to influence their "electoral environment." This approach reflects on the literature chosen to assess the case.

## 3 Evolution of Theory on Electoral Dynamics

An account of the development of the central theory on electoral change with some bearing to the Costa Rican case will allow us to understand its evolution, locate the present study in it, and further specify the central approaches that are used in this thesis. Even if most of the studies reviewed—for reasons already explained—are based on data from European countries and the USA, their analytic frameworks, empirical analysis techniques, and general explanations and conclusions are of great relevance for the present research.

### *3.1 Stability as the Rule: 1950s and 1960s*

During the 1950s and 1960s two approaches dominated the studies on electoral behaviour. Both of them focussed on sources of stability rather than change. The first was the "social structural" paradigm, well represented in the seminal work of Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan.[18] It basically assumed that party systems and voting alignments on which they are based reflected the country's social structure. Political alignments in Western Europe were seen to reflect the imprint of four major cleavages based on divisions among centre-periphery, church-state, urban-rural, and worker-employer. Following this approach, cleavages proved to be

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[16] Schmitt and Holmberg 1995. p. 117.
[17] Sartori 1969.

politically salient if they: 1) divide nations based on social characteristics, 2) groups involved in the division are conscious of their collective identity, and 3) if the cleavage is expressed in organisational terms.[19] Of particular relevance for the Costa Rican case—even considering the political nature of its central cleavage[20]—Lipset and Rokkan argue that parties developing around crucial cleavages are able to "narrow the support market."[21] Discussing this approach, Ivor Crewe indicates that elections are an occasion on which political parties mobilised deeply-rooted supportive voters, which see in these processes an opportunity to re-affirm their loyalties.[22]

The second paradigm is anchored in the concept of party identification developed by Angus Campbell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan.[23] This model assumed that most electors acquired an enduring alliance to major established parties. In their view, this is the key to explain stability in the electorate's voting choices. Partisan identification, or "partisan self-image" as described by Butler and Stokes,[24] not only determines citizen's vote but also works as a "cognitive map" shaping their general perception of the world of party politics (issues, candidates, campaign events, governments' evaluation, etc.). Hence, general political perceptions are structured through the prism of party loyalties.

According to Norris, party identification has two dimensions: *direction* (for which party) and *strength*. It is defined as *affective*, relating to individual feelings; *stable*, persisting across successive elections; *durable*, not disturbed by specific issues, events, or personalities; *pervasive*, most citizens have this sense of party attachment; and *sensitive to age*, it strengthens as the voter gets older.[25] This latter point is also known as the "life-cycle effect," given that both strength and stability of partisan loyalties at the individual level tend to be a function of time, which is reflected in the

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[18] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.
[19] Norris 1997, p. 83.
[20] The nature of Costa Rica's central cleavage is analysed in Chapter 3.
[21] Lipset and Rokkan 1967, p. 51.
[22] Crewe 1985.
[23] Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell et al. 1966; Campbell et al. 1954.
[24] Butler and Stokes 1969.
[25] Norris 1997, pp. 77-81.

age of the identifier.[26] Indeed, partisanship is self-reinforcing and self-strengthening over time, persisting long after the disappearance of the "originating event," as it tends to be bequeathed from one generation to the next.[27]

These two approaches are complementary. The emphasis on social structures does not deny the existence of partisan identification, but regards it as an inevitable concomitant. Similarly, the authors of the party identification model do not discount the importance of crucial social variables and events, as they are frequently responsible for originating and sustaining party identifications.[28] In both views it was hardly surprising that elections registered continuity rather than change. In fact they regard the amount of electoral change from election to election as caused by short-termed forces or, as explained by Crewe, "short-lived and self-cancelling deviations from the stable 'normal vote'."[29] Further studies by Richard Rose and Derek Urwin, and by Philip Converse, confirmed the thesis of electoral stability.[30] In sum, structural and psychological forces were considered responsible for widespread electoral continuity.

### *3.2 Questioning Stability and Explaining Change: 1970s and 1980s*

During the 1970s the thesis of electoral stability was called into question. Accumulating evidence from aggregate electoral data (cross-national analyses and case studies) suggested that perhaps voters were not as loyal as they were hitherto thought to be. Wolinetz claimed that even if Rose and Urwin's research supported the Lipset and Rokkan thesis, subsequent electoral volatility meant that the picture had changed.[31] Similarly, Morgens Pedersen reported an electoral change trend in his summary index of party system volatility.[32] Maguire, who replicated and updated

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[26] Miller and Shanks 1996, p. 184.; Converse 1969.
[27] Crewe 1985, pp. 2-3. For further details about the concept of party identification and its applicability to the Costa Rican political scenario, see Chapter 6.
[28] Crewe 1985, p. 3.
[29] Crewe 1976, pp. 40-41.
[30] Rose and Urwin 1970; Converse 1969.
[31] Wolinetz 1979.
[32] Pedersen 1983.

Rose and Urwin's study, also confirmed this pattern.[33] Likewise, case studies by Converse, Ladd and Hadley, Crotty and Jacobson, and Crewe, revealed a gradual decline in the incidence and strength of party identification (partisan dealignment).[34] Adding to the evidence of electoral change, a broader-scoped research by Crewe and Denver found evidence of partisan dealignment in 8 out of 13 countries studied.[35] Moreover, two other longer-termed analyses by Lane and Errson, and by Shamir, not only challenged the continued validity of the electoral stability thesis, but also questioned whether it carried much validity in the first place.[36]

Mounting evidence of electoral change primarily derived from survey studies also challenged the stability thesis. The most influential research on this vein is provided by Ronald Inglehart and, particularly, by Russell Dalton, Scott Flanagan and Paul Allen Beck. Building on Maslow's work,[37] Inglehart explains that a set of social changes[38] have combined to inculcate new post-material values, especially among the younger, more prosperous, and better educated generations. Post-materialists are well informed and can thoroughly understand politics and its central issues. Thus, they are more sophisticated, independent voters, which tend to have lower levels of party identification, and normally prefer active political participation and direct democracy, rather than the passive pre-empted endorsement of a party at intermittent elections.[39] Using Inglehart's ideas to assess electoral change processes, and after analysing several advanced industrial societies, Dalton and his colleagues concluded that electoral changes reflect more than short-term oscillations in party fortunes. The decomposition of electoral alignments, they argue, often can be traced to shifts in the long-termed basis of partisan support—party identification and social cleavages.[40] Hence, electoral change, not stability, was what needed to be explained.

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[33] Maguire 1983.
[34] Converse 1972; Converse 1976; Ladd and Hadley 1975; Crotty and Jacobson 1980; Crewe 1984.
[35] Crewe and Denver 1985.
[36] Lane and Ersson 1987; Shamir 1984.
[37] Maslow 1954.
[38] Among them he mentions: unprecedented levels of prosperity and social welfare, sustained peace, greatly increased educational levels, expanding travelling and general communication opportunities, and the increasing availability of information. See, Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1981; Inglehart 1984.
[39] Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1981; Inglehart 1984.
[40] Dalton et al. 1984c, p. 451.

## *3.3 Stability or Change?: 1990s - ?*

### 3.3.1 The Western Debate

The 1990s saw the emergence of discrepancy and general scepticism regarding electoral change. Based on the findings of an aggregate electoral data research, Bartolini and Mair claimed that political identities and alignments were indeed quite resilient. These authors argued that evidence of electoral change is illusionary. Of great relevance to the proposed research is their analytic model, which stresses the importance of institutional incentives and socio-organisational bonds to explain electoral instability/stability.[41] In his more recent writings Mair has even regarded electoral change as a "myth."[42] Similar results reporting patterns of stability rather than change and/or arguing in favour of partisanship strength have been contended by other authors such as Kligemann and Fuchs, Keith et al., Zelle, Widfelt, and Bartels.[43]

Taking an opposite position, Franklin, Mackie and Valen, have reported a widespread decline in the ability of social cleavages to structure voting choice, and its compensation by short-termed factors—most saliently, "issue voting."[44] Issue voting and its implications have been analysed by various authors, especially at a case study level.[45] Moreover, in a pertinent conclusion for the Costa Rican research, Alan Ware asserts that cleavage decline is especially true in the case of non-class cleavages that cut across class divisions.[46] Likewise, thoroughly integrating Inglehart's value change theory into his work,[47] Dalton's continuous research has supported Franklin and colleague's thesis, and further stressed the decreasing impact of enduring party attachments on voting decisions. In addition, he has underlined the growing importance of short-termed factors such as policy preferences, performance judgements, and candidate image for electoral choice. In Dalton's view, this happens as a result of the decline of long-termed determinants of party choice (partisanship

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[41] Bartolini and Mair 1990.
[42] Mair 1993; Mair 1997, Chap. 4.
[43] Klingemann and Fuchs 1995; Keith 1992; Zelle 1995; Widfelt 1995; Bartels 2000.
[44] Franklin et al. 1992.
[45] See for example, Himmelweit 1981; Budge and Farlie 1983; Denver and Hands 1990; Boy and Mayer 1993; Heath et al. 1994; Abramsom 1994.
[46] Ware 1987a.

and social cleavages) and the emergence of a more independent and sophisticated voter.[48] Martin Wattenberg and Max Kaase, among others, have analysed this shift towards the so-called "candidate-centred" politics in advanced democracies.[49] These changes in the sources of electoral choice and in the nature of the electorate have led van der Eijk and Niemöller to talk about "the political emancipation of the individual citizen,"[50] driven the former author and his colleagues to highlight "the particularization of voting choice,"[51] and motivated Franklin to describe a "post-collectivist era" in electoral politics.[52] Furthermore, they moved Evans and Norris to point out an "increased instrumentality" of the voting reasons of the electorate,[53] influenced Rose and McAllister to entitle a book "Voters Begin to Choose,"[54] and most notably, inspired Dalton to posit his "individualization of politics" thesis.[55]

A recent, broader-scoped study by Dalton and Wattenberg supported this thesis. Building on V. O. Key's tripartite party functions framework,[56] they concluded that contrary to what had happened to parties' functions as organisations and in government, their roles in the electorate have weakened.[57] Moreover, in their attempt to clarify Schmitt and Holmberg's conclusions regarding partisanship decline,[58] Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg confirmed the "individualization of politics" in Western industrial societies. Indeed they verified the erosion of long-termed determinants of electoral support (cleavages and partisanship), the growing relevance of short-term factors in voting choice, and the general emergence of a more independent electorate; while providing a useful empirical guide of how to measure dealignment and its consequences.[59]

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[47] For Inglehart's follow-up work see, Inglehart 1990; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart 1999.
[48] Dalton 1988; Dalton 1996b.
[49] Wattenberg 1991; Kaase 1994. For an assessment of the influence of leaders on their parties' popularity see, Harrison and Marsh 1994.
[50] Eijk and Niemöller 1985, p. 367.
[51] Eijk et al. 1992, pp. 411-422.
[52] Franklin 1985, pp. 175-179.
[53] Evans and Norris 1999a, p. 271.
[54] Rose and McAllister 1986.
[55] Dalton 1996a, pp. 344-349.
[56] Key 1964.
[57] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000a.
[58] Schmitt and Holmberg 1995.
[59] Dalton 2000; Dalton et al. 2000; Wattenberg 2000.

### 3.3.2 Evidence in Latin America and Costa Rica

Evidence suggests that dealignment—or phenomena that resemble it—is also present in Latin American countries. After undertaking a preliminary assessment of democratic representation and political parties in the region, Frances Hagopian has concluded that "electoral dealignment is in a fairly advanced state and is not likely to reverse itself at any time soon." Moreover, she has argued that partisan and electoral dealignment have proceeded farther and faster in more countries than realignment, and that this phenomenon is occurring at a greater speed in several Latin American countries than in Western Europe.[60]

The progressive loss of support of parties in several Latin American countries has also been observed by Jorge Domínguez and Jeanne Kinney Giraldo. Distinctively building on Fiorina's retrospective voting propositions,[61] and on the alluded work by Ronald Inglehart, they have contended that parties are losing support due to two central reasons. First, Domínguez and Giraldo indicate that parties have less adherents as a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s and the concomitant transition from statist to more-market oriented economies. And, second, these authors claim that parties' endorsement has weakened given that they face a mass electorate that is larger and more urbanised, educated, and exposed to mass media than ever before.[62] This phenomenon is more evident in countries having weakly institutionalised party systems. Nonetheless, in a conclusion with direct bearing to the Costa Rican case, Hagopian acknowledges that, "well-institutionalised party systems that have deep and long roots in the electorate do not provide immunity from the contagion of dealignment."[63]

In fact Fernando Zeledón, politics professor at the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR), has stressed that since the 1994 elections voters have demonstrated a rising

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[60] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-121. The author derives these conclusions mainly from the comparison of different trends in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela; with those in Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Sweden.
[61] Fiorina 1981.
[62] Domínguez and Giraldo 1996, p. 5.
[63] Hagopian 1998, p. 115.

disaffection towards Costa Rica's main parties (the PLN and the PUSC).[64] Supporting this thesis, and after a meticulous analysis of the country's electoral dynamics, UCR sociology professor Jorge Rovira-Mas has concluded that the PLN and the PUSC have been consistently losing electoral support at the legislative level since 1986.[65] His colleague at the History department, José Luis Vega-Carballo, endorses this argument. He claims that during the last decade a group of voters disenchanted with the two main parties are increasingly eager to support a new option, as long as it demonstrates a real chance of achieving power.[66] Finally, Derorah Yashar has posited an alternative diagnosis by suggesting that since the 1990s the country is experimenting a secular realignment of partisan affiliations from the PLN to the PUSC, mainly as a result of economic problems and changes in the policies pursued by the former (largely the progressive reduction of the welfare state).[67]

Media members and political analysts have also highlighted the changes in Costa Ricans' electoral behaviour. Voicing what seems to be the general intuition, Eduardo Ulibarri, former Director of *La Nación*[68] (the country's most important newspaper), has argued that the main characteristic of the 2002 electoral campaign was the fluidity of the electorate. In his words:

> "There have not been any definite trends over the last two years other than what seems to be a consistent and accelerated process of emancipation of voters from their partisan identification..."[69]

He then proceeds to indicate that this phenomenon is happening due to the "mistakes" and the inability to deliver of the main parties, in conjunction with the rise of an ever more demanding, better informed, and more independent voter.[70]

This conclusion is shared by UCR politics professor Manuel Rojas-Bolaños, and by political analysts, Rodolfo Cerdas-Cruz. Rojas-Bolaños characterises the Costa Rican

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[64] *La Nación* 10 de diciembre 2001.
[65] Rovira-Mas 2001, p. 224.
[66] *La Nación* 10 de diciembre 2001.
[67] Yashar 1995, pp. 97-99.
[68] He occupied this position until May 2003.
[69] *La Nación* 5 de diciembre 2001.
[70] *La Nación* 12 de diciembre 2001.

electorate since 1994 as more independent and fluid.[71] Similarly, Cerdas-Cruz has highlighted the progressive personalisation of the citizens' vote in the country, the growing absence of partisan loyalties amongst them, and the real threat of a significant amount of voters migrating to new political parties.[72] Finally Carlos Paniagua, President of Unimer Research International (one of the country's most reputable polling firms), has asserted that changes in Costa Rican's voting motivations and behaviour are not a cojunctural event, and ought to be analysed as a long-term process whose first significant electoral results have been observed in the 1998 and 2002 contests.[73] Local analysts' general agreement on Costa Rica's electoral changes confirms the need for a systematic, in-depth analysis that substantiates and explains these preliminary conclusions.

It is precisely in this general discussion, which has been building up since the 1950s and that is now gathering momentum in Costa Rica, where the present research fits. By assessing the Costa Rican case, it will systematically analyse preliminary evidence and general intuition regarding the evolution of a dealignment process in the country and its causes. Moreover, by doing so, the coming chapters will probe some of the most relevant theoretical conclusions concerning electoral change developed in Western countries in a completely different setting. The results of the present thesis will surely enrich the contemporary debate about changes in electoral dynamics.

## 4 Electoral Periods

In order to undertake their studies, most of the cited authors have developed suggestive conceptual frameworks. Of central relevance for the analysis of the Costa Rican case are Dalton and colleagues' typology of electoral periods: stable alignments, realignment, and dealignment. And also their different models (evaluated in the next section) explaining electoral change: the sociological or social cleavage model, the political or functional model, and an explanation of "unstable stability"

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[71] *La Nación* 18 de diciembre 2001.
[72] *La Nación* 13 de octubre 2002.
[73] *La Nación* 10 de diciembre 2001.

that they regard as the "institutionalisation of partisan change."[74] Similarly analytic frameworks contained in the works of Frances Hagopian,[75] Pippa Norris[76], and Evans and Norris,[77] provide very helpful analytic tools for assessing electoral change from a long-termed perspective. For example, Evans and Norris' types of elections (maintaining, realigning, and dealigning),[78] and Hagopian's evolution of dealignment (from partisan to electoral dealignment),[79] have been employed in this thesis's theoretical framework. As stated above, having taken the necessary measures, some of the conceptual tools applied in different analyses of electoral dynamics in other—mostly developed—countries can be very useful in the assessment of the Costa Rican case.

### *4.1 Stable Alignments or Maintaining Elections*

A normal electoral period is characterised by constancy in party coalitions and aggregate partisan equilibrium.[80] During this kind of electoral period, long-term partisan commitments are widespread and relatively regular, both at the aggregate and individual level. This is what Dalton and colleagues call "stable alignments,"[81] and what Evans and Norris refer to as "maintaining elections" in the case of specific electoral processes.[82] As Dalton and colleagues explain, this does not imply complete stagnation in the party system. Even in periods of unchanging partisan balance, the electorate is in a state of flux. However, there are no major defections of voters from their habitual electoral preferences. In general terms parties mobilise their normal base of support; thus, interelection differences represent basically momentary defections from enduring partisan loyalties. As a result the balance of power remains unaltered. For the reasons explained, in this type of election votes cast for a party ought to be divided into two parts: the "normal or baseline vote" to be expected from

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[74] Dalton et al. 1984b; Flanagan and Dalton 1984.
[75] Hagopian 1998.
[76] Norris 1997.
[77] Evans and Norris 1999b.
[78] Evans and Norris 1999c.
[79] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-119.
[80] Campbell and Valen 1966; Pomper 1967.
[81] Dalton et al. 1984a, p. 11-12.
[82] Evans and Norris 1999c, p. xxvii-xxviii.

a group based on their behaviour in past elections, and the current deviation from the norm due to the immediate circumstances of the specific election.[83] These stable electoral periods could be conceptualised as "dynamic equilibrium eras."

An interesting variant to the stable alignment period, is Lawrence LeDuc's evaluation of electoral change in Canada—particularly in the 1970s. This author classifies this case as an example of "stable dealignment." Stable dealignment occurs, according to LeDuc, when "the potential for change is high but the actual aggregate fluctuations from one...election to another is surprisingly low."[84] Referring to this case, Dalton has argued that patterns of electoral stability cannot be linked to the absence of social change. Rather, the presence of a stable dealignment relates to the significant influence exerted by institutional factors, and the ability of political elite action in channelling the course of social change.[85] In terms of the analysis of the Costa Rican case, the Canadian example clearly illustrates that institutional incentives (such as those provided by the electoral system) and parties' ability to adapt are not to be underestimated when evaluating the presence or absence of electoral change.

### *4.2 Partisan Realignment*

Realignment is defined as a significant shift in the group bases of party coalitions, and usually in the distribution of popular support among the parties as a result. It is a time during which the composition of party coalitions undergoes significant change, with many people who earlier would have been unaffiliated, or loyalist of one party, now affiliated with another.[86] According to Flanagan, the definition of electoral realignment is based on two factors: a change in the source of party support and a change in party vote shares. It is worth noting that even if conceptually these two factors are distinct phenomena, in practice they normally occur in tandem.[87] The same author also recognises that it is not easy to distinguish between realignment and

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[83] Evans and Norris 1999c, p. xxvii-xxviii.
[84] LeDuc 1984, p. 403.; LeDuc 1985, p. 55.
[85] Dalton 1984b.
[86] Dalton et al. 1984a, p. 13.
[87] Flanagan 1984b.

a general weakening in party identification, or dealignment. The main distinction between them is that in dealignment cases the pressures for change normally cause increasing volatility in voting patterns. By contrast, in realignment cases many of the same pressures for change result in long-term cumulative electoral rearrangements with potentially great implications for the party coalitions.[88] Nevertheless, differences between these two processes are not always clear, as both are normally intertwined. A dealignment process may well pave the way for realignment by loosening traditional ties enough to make room for new ones to form. Therefore dealignment could be a prelude to realignment.

The concept of party realignment can be traced back to V. O. Key's work in the 1950s.[89] Key distinguished between critical realignment caused by sharp massive partisan changes and slower evolving secular realignment. Critical realignments are certainly an oddity in practice.[90] Evans and Norris define "critical elections" as "exceptional contests which produce abrupt, significant and durable realignments in the electorate with major consequences for the long-term party order."[91] According to these authors, critical elections are characterised by three inter-related features: realignments in the ideological basis of party competition, in the social basis of party support, and in the partisan loyalties of voters.[92] Alternatively, more common "secular realignments" are characterised by a gradual shift in the electorate over successive elections, with the more or less continuous creation of new party-voter alignments and the decay of the old ones.[93]

Building on Flanagan's two components of realignment, secular realignment can be divided into two different types: "sectoral realignment," or changes in the base of support in one or more of the parties;[94] and "ecological realignment," or long-term

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[88] Flanagan 1984b.
[89] Key 1955, Key 1959.
[90] For an example of a "critical realignment" see the analysis of the Canadian case presented by, Clarke and Kornberg 1996.
[91] Evans and Norris 1999c, p. xxxi.
[92] Evans and Norris 1999c, pp. xxxi-xxxv. For further discussion on the central characteristics of critical elections see, Burnham 1970.
[93] Key 1959.
[94] For examples of sectoral realignment see, Carmines and Stimson 1984; Dalton 1984c.

changes in the party vote shares.[95] An important distinction between the two is that the latter is largely a product of social forces beyond the control of political elites (they may respond to ecological realignment but not cause it), while the former is generally the result of prior changes at the elite level, most notably by parties, party leaders, and their policies.[96] The empirical analysis will demonstrate whether, as argued by Yashar in 1995,[97] a realigning process is a suitable explanation for the changes observed in Costa Rica's electoral dynamics.

### *4.3 Dealignment*

As explained, at first dealignment was considered to be a preliminary step in a realignment process, understood as the weakening of old party loyalties to facilitate new partisan alignments. Inglehart and Hochstein were probably the first scholars to treat dealignment as a separate electoral phenomenon.[98] Although often intertwined, one should differentiate between partisan and social dealignment.[99] Illustrating the "social type" of dealignment, Paul Allen Beck characterises it as a decay in pre-existing mass bases of support for political parties, an erosion in traditional mass party coalitions.[100] As can be seen, this definition already incorporates an explanation for the phenomenon. Alternatively, Pippa Norris posits a more neutral "partisan type" concept, and defines dealignment as "the weakening of affective, habitual and stable party loyalties among the electorate."[101] Hagopian takes the concept and develops it even further by indicating that, in long-term dealignment cases, "partisan dealignment" is a prelude of what may evolve as "electoral dealignment." Electoral dealignment is marked by increasing volatility in voting patterns, rising rates of absenteeism and, in general terms, evident changes in a country's "normal" electoral dynamics.[102] The definition posed by Norris and the useful addendum proposed by

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[95] For examples of ecological realignment see, Barnes 1984; Flanagan 1984a.
[96] Flanagan 1984b.
[97] Yashar 1995, pp. 97-99.
[98] Inglehart and Hochstein 1972.
[99] Norris 1997, p. 85.
[100] Beck 1984b, p. 233.
[101] Norris 1997, p. 86.
[102] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-119.

Hagopian, compose the long-term conceptual meaning of dealignment that is going to be used in the present research.

Where partisanship reflects a long-term standing decision to support a party, partisan dealignment is easily recognised as it manifests in a decline in the party-identified portion of the electorate, and the appearance of a more independent, less loyal, and more individualistic voter. Alternatively, it may be hidden behind the *façade* of an electorate that could appear to be highly partisan, if party identification was mistakenly regarded as an expression of momentary vote choice.[103] Partisan dealignment is hard to detect without measures of partisanship at the individual level. However, other "circumstantial" evidence could suggest partisan decay and, following Hagopian, its evolution to electoral dealignment. The increase in personalistic campaigns; the growing relevance campaign issues for vote decision; mounting figures of vote switching or decreasing vote consistency; more relaxed ideological positions, important divisions, and splits in traditional parties; a decline of party cohesion in the legislature; the rapid rise and demise of new—flash—parties; a shift towards non-partisan forms of political participation (direct democracy, the increased number and relevance of pressure groups, etc.); breakdowns among key social groups, among others, may be signs of dealignment.[104]

Evans and Norris divide dealigning processes into two subtypes: "deviating elections" and "secular dealignment." In deviating elections, the short-term type of dealignment, particular personalities, issues, or events produce a temporary, sharp reversal in the normal share of the vote for major parties. Dissatisfied voters, which made sudden and dramatic changes, tend to "return home" in subsequent contests. This is what Harrop and Miller have called the *homing* tendency.[105] Thus, we are basically in the presence of "short-lived" electoral dealignment. Secular dealignment, instead, is defined as a long-term, incremental, and cumulative progressive weakening in party-voter bonds.[106] In these cases partisan and the subsequent electoral dealignment are

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[103] Beck 1984b.
[104] For examples of dealignment in different countries see, Dalton 2000; Dalton et al. 2000; Beck 1984a; Irwin and Dittrich 1984; Alt 1984; Borre 1984; Mcdonough and López-Pina 1984.
[105] Harrop and Miller 1987, p. 134. Italics in the original.
[106] Evans and Norris 1999c, pp. xxx-xxxi

present. It is worth noting that in both deviating elections and secular dealignment, a dealigned electorate increases the relevance of contingent factors during campaigns. Hence, what we defined above as "circumstantial dealignment evidence" could normally be found.

In a long-term dealignment process the social, historical, and psychological bonds linking parties and voters loosen. The party order may persist, but it becomes destabilised, less predictable, and more fluid. In other words, secular dealignment can happen with no instant changes at the party system level. This is because partisan and electoral dealignment are normally not perceived at the same time, as the latter follows the former and its effect may not cause an immediate change in electoral behaviour. Hence, the electorate may not actually change their voting patterns for some time regardless of the existence of a partisan dealignment process. This means that important differences in party support might not be observed for a while. Nonetheless, the reasons of the electorate to vote for a particular party could have changed. That is why it is so important to distinguish between enduring partisanship and short-term voting choice. As will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, clear signs of electoral and partisan dealignment have been present in Costa Rica's recent political history.

## 5 General Explanations of Electoral Change

This chapter could not finish without reviewing the main general models that have been developed by analysts to explain electoral change. Chapters 7 and 8 undertake a detailed assessment of each explanation applied to the Costa Rican case. As far as the general theoretical approach is concerned, explanations of electoral change have tended to fall into two broad models: those emphasising social-structural factors and those focusing on political elements. The first one, defined here as the "sociological model," attributes electoral change to the eclipse of old cleavages and the rise of a more demanding, better informed, more politically able and independent voter.

Despite different approaches defending this position,[107] they all share the assumption that glacial transformations in social structure and/or in socio-economic experiences are the source of electoral change. In this view, electoral changes are explained in terms of the varying social composition (changes in numbers) and nature (changes in attitudes) of voters. Hence, it would be expected for electoral transformations to be gradual, as social changes themselves.[108]

The second approach, identified as the "political or functional model," takes a political stance and posits that electoral change is a product of political parties' transformations and shortcomings in office and as intuitions, especially in terms of the social and political roles they are supposed to fulfil. Again, many academics endorse this approach.[109] Nonetheless, Adam Przeworski is probably the one who best captures the "spirit" of this explanation of electoral change when he regards individual voting behaviour as "an effect of the activities of political parties."[110] This political account appeals to party strategies or elite positions, independently of changing social experiences, to explain electoral transformations. Thus, electoral changes might present themselves in a rather swift and discontinuous manner, not necessarily showing a secular pattern.[111]

Dalton and colleagues complement both models by adding an explanation for cases in which stability prevails even though relevant factors for electoral change—either those professed by the sociological or the political explanations—are present. They define this phenomenon as the "institutionalisation of partisan change." Responses from the political elite and their parties, and the institutional incentives of the party system (what they define as "intervening variables") play a central role directing, encouraging, or inhibiting electoral change. When the "institutionalisation of partisan

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[107] See for example, Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1984; Inglehart 1990; Lipset 1981; Flanagan and Dalton 1984; especially pp. 8-13.; Sänkiaho 1984; Dunleavy and Husbands 1985; Franklin 1985; Franklin et al. 1992; Rose and McAllister 1986; Dalton et al. 1984c, especially pp. 454-460.; Dalton 1996b, Dalton 1996c; Dalton 2000.

[108] Evans et al. 1999, p 88.

[109] See for example, Downs 1957; Sartori 1969; Flanagan and Dalton 1984, especially pp. 13-17.; Dalton et al. 1984c, especially pp. 460-463.; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Heath et al. 1985; Heath et al. 1991; Kitschelt 1994; Schmitt and Holmberg 1995; Zelle 1995; Mair 1996b.

[110] Przeworski 1985, pp. 100-101.

[111] Evans et al. 1999, p. 88.

change" happens, the adaptation capacity of parties—and of the party system—as well as the influence of the electoral system mediate the relationship between voters and parties, influencing voting behaviour and preventing electoral change to occur.[112] The result is what was defined above as "stable dealignment." This explanation ought to be taken into consideration, provided that no evidence of electoral change is found in the Costa Rican electoral scenario.

As with most explanations in social sciences, strict divisions are only created for analytic purposes. The presented models of electoral change are not an exception. As much as they hold two distinctive approaches, one could find common elements among them, and several ways in which one explanation influences the other and vice versa.[113] However, not only are these two positions the most popular and better developed ones in the academic realm when undertaking electoral change studies, but also (as we will see in Part IV of the thesis) they are suitable approaches for analysing the Costa Rican case. Chapters 7, which examines the political explanation, and 8, which deals with the sociological one, will carry out in-depth analyses of Costa Rica's electoral dynamics in light of these models.

## 6 Conceptual Framework for Electoral Change in Costa Rica

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the discussion of the theoretical approach ends with a graphic synthesis (Figure 2.1) of the general conceptual framework that will be applied to analyse electoral change in Costa Rica. This framework considers the different possible avenues of analysis that might be followed according to the evidence found.

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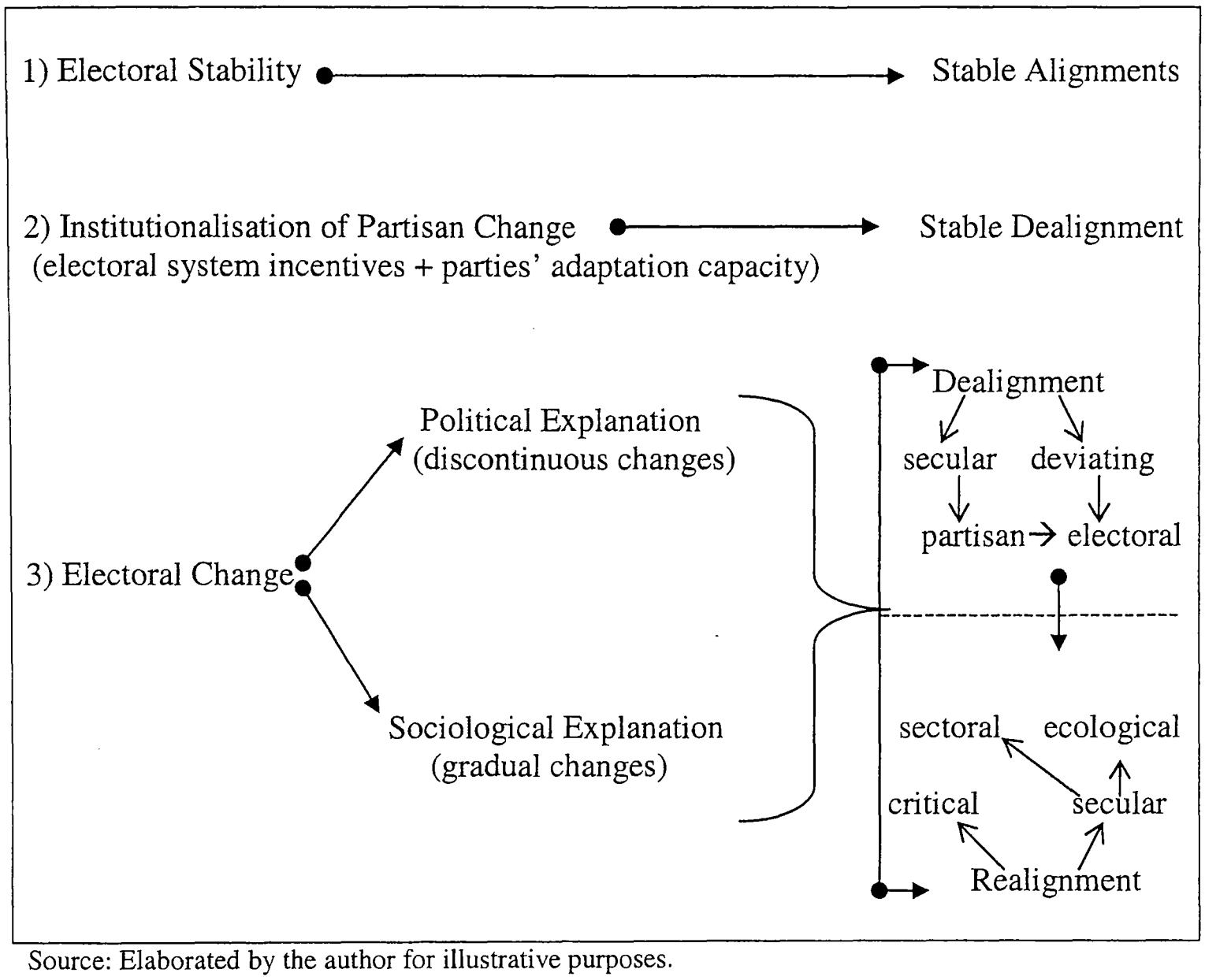
[112] Dalton et al. 1984c, Flanagan and Dalton 1984.
[113] See for example, Kitschelt 1994.

Figure 2.1. General Conceptual Framework for Electoral Change in Costa Rica




Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

# Part II

## The Context: Historical and Institutional Particularities

# Chapter 3

## Historical Development of Political Parties in Costa Rica: The 1948 Central Cleavage and the Institutionalisation Process of the Party System

# 1 Introduction

As stressed in Chapter 1, comprehensive electoral case studies cannot be detached from the historical and institutional contexts where political parties and the electorate had developed, function, and interact. Hence, the historical and institutional particularities of the country assessed and their relation to electoral stability and/or change need to be examined. Part II of the thesis undertakes this task. This chapter analyses the historical development of democracy and political parties in Costa Rica, while the following one studies the influence of the electoral system on the country's party system.

Costa Rica's democratic strength is historically rooted. The resilience of its institutions and the maturity of its democratic culture are the result of a long political evolution. It would not be possible to understand the nature and relevance of the current electoral changes without assessing the country's political history. As claimed by Vega-Carballo when evaluating the Costa Rican case:

> "Participatory regimes that are tolerant of legitimate ideological opposition are clearly products of historical developments...[they] are not merely constructed."[1]

In the same line of thought and influenced by Dahl's ideas,[2] Bernhard Thibaut has defined the development of Costa Rica's democracy as the historical evolution of the political system's capacity for competitiveness and inclusiveness.[3] Democracy is not adopted, it is developed.[4] As it will be demonstrated in this chapter, Costa Rica's current democratic strength is not an exception to this maxim.

Political parties are essential institutions for the development of democratic stability. The origins of Costa Rica's liberal democracy and the identity of its contemporary political parties have roots that go back to the end of the 19th century,[5] but the distinctive process that consolidated the democratic regime began with the conflicts

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[1] Vega-Carballo 1992, p. 203.
[2] Dahl 1971.
[3] Thibaut 1993b, p. 271.
[4] This idea is further developed in, Sánchez 2003.

and alliances that precipitated the Civil War of 1948—Costa Rica's central political cleavage. This chapter analyses the historical evolution of parties since the end of the 19th century, concentrating particularly on the central effects that the 1948 Civil War had on the party system. How did political parties and the party system develop in Costa Rica? And how did the outcomes of the civil war influence this development process? These are the main questions that the present chapter addresses.

The analysis is divided into five sections. After an introduction which states the general purpose of Part II and this chapter's specific objective, the second section discusses the historical development and the core characteristics of political parties prior to the 1948 Civil War. The third section undertakes a thorough analysis of this war, concentrating primarily on its causes. Afterwards, the fourth one focuses on the major effects this event had on the party system. Emphasis is placed on the main political reforms and "party families" that emerged and developed after the armed conflict. Finally, the fifth section presents a set of conclusions and final observations regarding the historical evolution of political parties and the party system in Costa Rica.

## 2 The First Republic (1889-1948)

The civil war is responsible for separating what are now considered to be the two main phases of political history and of parties' evolution in Costa Rica. The first phase, known as the "First Republic," lasted from 1889, when it is claimed that the first political parties participated in national elections, until the civil war, when a critical realignment of political forces and alliances occurred. The second phase, known as the "Second Republic," began after this conflict and has continued until the present. Before analysing the consequences of the civil war, it is important to study the political events and principal characteristics of political parties prior to this historic episode. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of parties' evolution and of the relevance of the civil war outcomes. To do this, the present section is divided into two parts. The first part studies the central political

[5] For a thorough analysis of Costa Rica's political history since its independence see, Obregón-Quesada

characteristics and democratic developments of the country from 1889 to 1940. The second part deals with the political events during the "eight-year regime" that finally ended in the 1948 battle.

## *2.1 First Steps Towards Democracy*

Neither political stability nor political parties existed in Costa Rica before 1889. John Booth has reported that from 1824 to 1899, the average Costa Rican presidency lasted only 2.4 years, 37 per cent of the presidents resigned before completing their terms, and another fifth were deposed by *coups d'état*. From 1835 to 1899, the country had six different constitutions and was ruled by the military for over half the time, having military generals—often coffee aristocrats—in the presidency on a regular basis.[6] The concept of a political party was first introduced by general—and dictator—Tomás Guardia (1870-1882). In his public speeches, Guardia "deplored the absence of ideas and parties" in the country's politics.[7] Nonetheless, it was not until 1889, with the Partido Constitucional Democrático (PCD) and the Partido Liberal Progresista (PLP) that the first political parties emerged.

In that year, José Joaquín Rodríguez (candidate of the opposition PCD) was elected president, breaking the long-standing tradition of incumbents selecting their successors. Many take this date as the birth of the country's electoral democracy.[8] Since then, the constitutional and electoral processes have been interrupted only twice. The first breakdown occurred during the dictatorship of the Tinoco brothers (1914-1917),[9] and the second during the brief rule of the Junta established for eighteen months (1948-1949) after the civil war. However during the first period of the development process of political parties (1889-1940), elections—characterised by indirect, public and highly restrictive voting mechanisms, and often clouded by fraudulent practices—were controlled by the agro-exporting oligarchy. Political parties in those days were basically personalistic electoral machines working as

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2000.

[6] Booth 1999, pp. 432-433.; Booth 1998, pp. 40-41.

[7] Billault 1994, p. 36.

[8] See for example, Vega-Carballo 1992, p. 205. For a divergent opinion see, Peeler 1996, especially pp. 74-75.

appendages of the oligarchy, which accepted and promoted them as an alternative to the expensive method of carrying out presidential successions through *coups d'état.*[10] These political groups behaved like Duverger's parties of notables,[11] and had a parliamentary origin, as they emerged from factions that developed in congress.

These first political parties were far from permanent, ideologically coherent entities. Deborah Yashar characterises them as "ephemeral organisations largely designed to mobilise support during elections for a given candidate."[12] In general terms, parties were dominated by individual leaders—*caudillos*—and their group of close friends. For example, from 1906 to 1936, two elite figures, Cleto González-Víquez—elected for two periods (1906-1910 and 1928-1932)—and Ricardo Jiménez-Oreamuno—serving three presidential terms (1910-1914, 1924-1928, and 1932-1936)—largely dominated the country's political arena. Mariano Jiménez captures the unstable and personalistic nature of parties when he explains that:

> "Coalitions and alliances were very common among parties. A private conversation of the parties' leaders was enough to reach an agreement that involved the whole political group. Furthermore, parties' cadre were unstable, as members used to move from one party to another depending on the candidate."[13]

In those days, political parties were basically the vehicles used by strong, charismatic leaders to access power.

Among all the unstable parties formed during this pre-war period, one political party, the Partido Republicano (PRep)—known as the Partido Republicano Nacional (PRN) since 1936—excelled.[14] The PRep and its leader Ricardo Jiménez (known in Costa Rica as don Ricardo) dominated Costa Rican politics until 1948.[15] It alternated in

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[9] For an analysis of this period see, Jiménez-Murillo 1981.
[10] Wilson 1998, p. 30.; Vega-Carballo 1992, p. 204.
[11] Duverger 1987, pp. 93-101.
[12] Yashar 1995, p. 73.
[13] Jiménez 1996. p. 1001.
[14] The PRep/PRN governed during 1910-1914 (Ricardo Jiménez), 1924-1928 (Ricardo Jiménez), 1932-1936 (Ricardo Jiménez), 1936-1940 (León Cortés), 1940-1944 (Rafael A. Calderón G.), and 1944-1948 (Teodoro Picado). Thibaut 1993a, pp. 198-201.
[15] Some speeches, a brief biography, and a compilation of revealing essays about Ricardo Jiménez has been presented by, Rodríguez-Vega 1994.

power with an unsteady but "friendly" opposition (often guided by Cleto González), as well as with other personalistic parties. These political groups did not have major ideological differences. It has even been argued that the outstanding similarities between political contestants (especially among the groups guided by Jiménez and González) secured peaceful successions in power, and prevented other competitors from presenting alternative political projects.[16] Indeed, during these years the party system can be characterised as a multi-party system with one dominant party.

Nonetheless, despite their personalistic character, political parties and the party system showed their first signs of institutionalisation during this period. These first signs mainly consisted of: 1) parties starting to participate in subsequent elections with the same name, 2) the formation of a leftist party that represented the working classes, and 3) the implementation of several key electoral reforms.

First, in terms of institutional consolidation, parties started to participate in subsequent elections without changing names. This not only gave continuity to leaders and ideas inside the political groups, but also permitted popular identification with an institution rather than with particular charismatic politicians. Thus, the 1932 and the 1936 elections are recorded as the first time in the country's political history that the same party (the PRep) won two elections consecutively.[17] Running for office supported by a recognised, more stable party, not just one assembled for the election, started to become important for political leaders.

Second, social tensions resulting from the emergence of a stronger working class and the 1930s world crisis prompted the organisation of the Partido Comunista de Costa Rica (PCCR). With the extinct Partido Reformista (PRef) as a precedent, the PCCR was founded in 1931. Following the example of the PRef in 1924,[18] this left-wing party organised around a programmatic platform. The PCCR not only restored the

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[16] Vega-Carballo 1992, p. 206.
[17] Jiménez 1996, p. 1008.
[18] Guided by former priest, writer, and soldier, General Jorge Volio, the PRef is regarded as the first political party in Costa Rica's history to organise around a coherent ideological manifesto. During the 1924 elections this party incorporated women—still unable to vote—for the first time in campaign activities. The PRef ended third in that election with 20.4 per cent of the votes, and then disappeared from local politics. For more details see, Volio 1993.

practice of presenting voters a coherent manifesto, but also provided representation for and mobilised the working class. Under the influence and guidance of the leftists, artisans and especially workers on the banana plantations (many of whom were employed by the United Fruit Company [an American firm]) started to unionise.[19] The PCCR's political practices drove other parties to generate and present ideological manifestos (even if in a rather precarious manner) and governmental objectives, and—most importantly—made them aware of the political relevance of the emerging working class.

By this time, political parties in Costa Rica were still far from being strongly institutionalised entities. Nevertheless, they played a central role in the country's process towards the consolidation of a stable democracy. Vega-Carballo claims that during this period:

> "Short of being mass movements, personalistic parties—...with a weak ideological orientation and a heterogeneous class composition—contributed to the creation of vertical participation channels and intermediate power entities in Costa Rica, that in due time could function as institutional anchors capable of gathering and mobilising sectors from different social classes."[20]

Political parties were just staring to develop into what are now among the most important institutions in Costa Rica's democracy.

Third, another central element that permitted the party system to begin an institutionalisation process were several key electoral reforms. The process towards electoral openness began when President González-Víquez broke with the tradition and allowed his opposition to campaign freely for the 1909 elections.[21] Later, in 1913, direct popular elections of public officials (president by absolute majority and the legislature by proportional representation) were instituted, and economic and education restrictions for voting—although not the gender and race ones—were

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[19] Maybe the most important consequence of the leftist influence on banana workers was a general strike organised in 1934. This incident was resolved through negotiations, establishing an important precedent for the relationship between the government and the unions thereafter.
[20] Vega-Carballo 1982, p. 102.
[21] González-Víquez's democratic conscience is captured in, González-Víquez 1978.

eliminated. In 1925 the first national election agency, the Consejo Nacional de Elecciones (National Electoral Council), was established. Two years later party printed ballots were replaced by government ones, and citizen photographic identification cards were issued. In 1928 the vote became secret and in 1936 mandatory.[22] In this same year parties were given the monopoly on the nomination of candidates for office, and the legislative branch received authority to scrutinise and validate elections.[23] The latter measure was taken in order to reduce the executive's electoral manipulation and the resulting fraud, which prior to 1936 was, in Yashar's words, "an integral part, rather than an aberration or imperfection of the electoral process in Costa Rica."[24]

However, notwithstanding those steps, fraudulent practices continued, as denounced during 1942, 1944, and especially during the 1948 elections. Bruce Wilson has pointed out that:

> "During the fifty-eight years from 1890 to 1948, the use of non-democratic means to change the chief executives was still common. Of the twenty presidents who served during this period, four were installed through force, four were imposed by incumbent presidents, and four more took office through elite-level compromises that circumvented or subverted the electoral process...[Furthermore] during the 1890-1948 period, at least four unsuccessful coup attempts and eleven revolts against the government took place."[25]

Hence, in spite of the electoral reforms, electoral stability was still far from a reality in Costa Rican politics.

Nonetheless, Costa Rica's electoral dynamics did acquire some stability with one final electoral reform. Indeed, the country's electoral and party system was drastically altered when the percentage needed to win the presidential election in the first round

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[22] Nevertheless, no judicial sanctions were instituted for those abstaining to vote. Thus, in practice voting was and still is a matter of personal choice.
[23] Booth 1999, pp. 435-436.; Booth 1998, pp. 44-47.; Lehoucq 1998, pp. 45-50.; Chacón-Pacheco 1975, pp. 164-169.; Villegas-Antillón 1986, pp. 19-20.
[24] Yashar 1995, p. 73. For a recent study about electoral fraud in Costa Rica see, Molina and Lehoucq 1999.
[25] Wilson 1998, pp. 22-23.

was reduced from 50 to 40 per cent in 1936. This was clearly a reaction of the political elite against the commotion caused by different elections (those in 1913, 1923, and especially 1932) where none of the candidates reached the 50 per cent threshold, and third parties' support for one of the two most voted parties became the decisive factor. From here on, second round negotiations and the influence of third parties in determining winners in the final round were eliminated. In fact, once the threshold was reduced, 16 out of the 17 presidential elections that have taken place have been defined in the first round. The 2002 presidential election, the last one considered in this study, is the only exception.

As a result, since 1936 the Costa Rican party system has mainly been characterised by the existence of some kind of bipolar confrontation, as two major parties or coalitions with real possibilities of getting to power oppose each other. This trend consolidated in 1983 with the formation of the PUSC, which joined the PLN as the members of the prevailing two-party system. The 40 per cent threshold needed to win the presidency has been regarded as one of the central elements responsible for the development of the country's current bipartism.[26]

One would have expected that these profound electoral reforms, as well as the institutional and ideological strengthening of political parties would have increased electoral participation. Graph 3.1 shows the percentage of the Costa Rican general population participating in national elections from 1897 to 2002. In the 1905-1948 period (with the exceptions of 1919 and 1944) this percentage stabilised in a relatively low 13.1-15.7 range. The remaining voting restrictions and the general idea—still latent among citizens in those years—regarding politics as a rather distant activity proper of the elite, probably hindered electoral participation. This was about to change once the civil war and its political outcomes radically transformed the country's political setting. As demonstrated with a black line in the same graph, it is from then on that popular participation has registered a permanent increasing trend.

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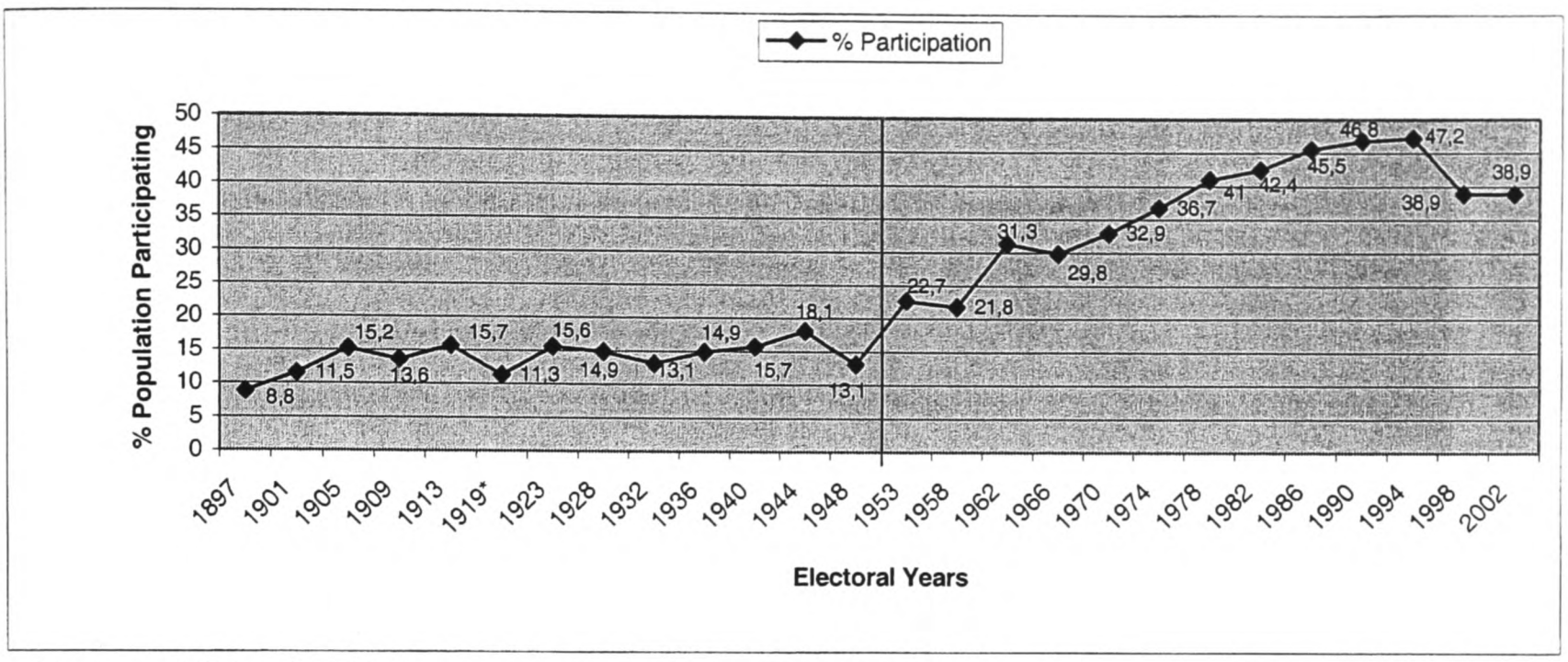
[26] Fernández 1991, pp. 71-72.; Fernández 1992, p. 29.; Fernández mayo-junio 1994. For an assessment of the specific effects of a 40 per cent threshold on presidential elections see, Shugart and Carey 1992, pp. 289-292.; Jiménez 1996, p. 1006. This point is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 4.

This trend terminated in the 1998 elections for reasons that will be explained in Part IV of this thesis.

Graph 3.1. Voter Participation in the Costa Rican Elections, 1897-2002[27]




* Between 1914 and 1917 the country was ruled by the Tinoco brothers' dictatorship.
Sources: Based on TSE 2002b; INEC 2002; Stone 1975, p. 236.; Thibaut 1993a, pp. 183-209.; Núñez and Rosales 1999, p. 13.

## *2.2 New Party Identities and the Eight-Year Regime*

The 1940 election marked the beginning of the so called "eight-year regime," and with it, of an escalating political and social conflict that finally resulted in what has been considered the most important political event in Costa Rica's modern history: the 1948 Civil War. During the 1940s, the governing oligarchy's control over the electoral arena and the state resources was challenged. A division within the elite, and progressive social reforms compounded with serious political and economic flaws by the government (electoral fraud, corruption, nepotism, persecution of political adversaries, fiscal mismanagement, etc.). This created an "explosive" political ambience, and precipitated a scramble for allies that ultimately produced two contending groups racing to obtain political control. Access to power was the main reason for the confrontation.

One of the groups—the one in office—was the movement headed by the PRep, whose leader was reform-oriented President Rafael Angel Calderón-Guardia (1940-1944). It also included the Communist Party under the name of Partido Vanguardia Popular (PVP)—headed by Manuel Mora—as well as the Church, represented by Monsignor Víctor Manuel Sanabria.[28] The opposition alliance was integrated by the new Partido Social Demócrata (PSD), whose central figure was José Figueres-Ferrrer (known in Costa Rica as don Pepe), and the most conservative members of the oligarchy (bankers, entrepreneurs, *cafetaleros*, etc.), represented by the Partido Demócrata (PD) and the Partido Unión Nacional (PUN). These coalitions were formed on the basis of common enemies rather than because of shared social, economic, or political objectives and, in the case of the opposition alliance, overlooked the existence of fundamentally conflicting projects. In any case, as stated by Deborah Yashar, this period constitutes a "critical juncture" in the country's political history.[29] The centrality of the events leading into the civil war deserve a detailed analysis in order to understand the causes of the armed conflict and the rationale of its outcomes.

The 1940 elections resulted in the appointment of Dr. Rafael Angel Calderón-Guardia, the new leader of the PRep, by an overwhelming 83.4 per cent of the total vote.[30] Clearly influenced by years of social christian formation while studying in Belgium, Calderón-Guardia is regarded as the first Costa Rican President to make genuine social reforms the primary goal of his administration.[31] The PRep, now under Calderon's control, supported a controversial legislative agenda. It is worth noting that the new PRep leader policies were not only "revolutionary" for Costa Rica, but also for his party, that until then was a conservative movement basically representing the oligarchy's interests.

This party's new agenda included, most saliently, the establishment of a social security system (1941) (offering unemployment, health, accident, and old-age benefits), and

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[27] For the calculations see Appendix 1.
[28] The Left agreed to changed its name in order to mask the obvious contradictions between the catholic and communist members of the coalition.
[29] Yashar 1995, p. 74.
[30] The leftist candidate, Manuel Mora, running for a party called Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos occupied the second place with 10.2 per cent of the votes. Thibaut 1993a, p. 200.
[31] Rinehart 1984, p. 38.

the creation of the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) (1941).[32] As expected, it was not long before Calderón lost the support of the conservative groups that used to back his party. Having lost the support of the oligarchy and facing the opposition of a rising middle class, the PRep was unable to retain its congressional majority in the 1942 mid-term elections. However, it re-strengthened after forming a coalition with the Left and the progressive Monsignor Sanabria. Both the leftists and the priest identified with the reform-oriented government.

Their previous reforms and the new alliance granted the PRep support among the lower working classes in San José (Costa Rica's capital), the banana plantations workers—sectors loyal to the Left—and amongst certain sectors of the catholic community. The Left's influence rapidly increased in the PRep's governments (members of the alliance came to be known as *caldero-comunistas*). This permitted the reform agenda to continue. Constitutional reforms were approved establishing a set of social guarantees (Capítulo de Garantías Sociales [1942]), and providing a labour code (1943) that guaranteed a minimum wage, an eight-hour workday, the right to unionise, the right to housing, basic safety and sanitation conditions in the workplace, and the priority of national workers over foreigners.[33] These progressive reforms have played a central role in Costa Rica's current social development and political stability. However they also inflicted a heavy financial burden on the state. From 1941 to 1944 government expenditures almost doubled, causing the budget deficit to grow more than twenty times during this period (see Table 3.1). Fiscal mismanagement—among others—generated significant opposition against the eight-year regime.

The support of the Communist Party proved to be crucial in Teodoro Picado's—the PRep candidate handpicked by Calderón—electoral victory in 1944. Fraud claims were persistently made by the losing candidate, and Ex-President, León Cortés (1936-1940).[34] Cortés' party, the PD, was supported mainly by the disgruntled conservative

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[32] For more details see, Carey 1997, p. 200.; Wilson 1998, pp. 30-32.; Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 21-76.; Lehoucq 1998, pp. 100-115.
[33] Carey 1997, p. 200.; Salazar 1981.
[34] Picado won with 64.9 per cent of the votes against 35.1 per cent obtained by Cortés. Thibaut 1993a, p. 201.

oligarchy that resented PRep's reforms and distrusted its coalition with the Left. At the same time, the government was strongly criticised for what was considered an irresponsible and populist management of the economy, for its systematic repression against political opponents, and for its unfair treatment, violent assaults and property confiscation against German, Italian, and Spanish citizens or their descendants—most of them land owners or businessmen.[35] The assaults against citizens of these international communities started after the government declared war on the Axis powers.[36] The eight-year regime was also accused of corruption, nepotism, and, especially, of the manipulation of electoral processes.[37] Despite the mounting opposition against the government, Caderón's progressive social reforms as well as his repressive policies were continued by his successor, Teodoro Picado, until 1948.

Nonetheless, Picado's administration should be credited for the establishment of the country's first progressive income tax and, particularly, for the creation of a new Electoral Code, both in 1946. The PVP supported these reforms, which certainly did not favour Calderón's future presidential aspirations.[38] The code brought about several key changes. First, it created a new Tribunal Electoral (Electoral Tribunal) responsible for the organisation of the presidential, congressional, and municipal elections, as well as for issuing a provisional declaration of the elected president and deputies. Yet, the final assertion remained a congressional prerogative. Second, it instituted the Registro Electoral (Electoral Register) responsible for generating and updating a database of all parties and voters. And third, it sanctioned the establishment of the Juntas Electorales (Electoral Units) in every place where votes were emitted. They were responsible for maintaining the order and purity of the process, and for communicating the partial results of the Unit to the Tribunal Electoral.[39] Far from perfect, this Electoral Code was a major development for the country's democracy, and later served as the starting point of a general electoral

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[35] For details concerning the repression suffered by citizens of these countries and their descendants see, Figueres-Ferrer 1987, pp. 51-121.
[36] This happened in 1941, after the Pearl Harbor attack.
[37] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993; Wilson 1998, pp. 32-33.
[38] For an analysis of the political conditions that prompted the 1946 electoral reform see, Lehoucq 1995.
[39] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993; Lehoucq 1998, pp. 50-53.

reform which took place in 1952. However, these electoral improvements were not enough to settle the popular unrest.

In the midst of fraud and corruption accusations, strong protests from the conservative oligarchy and the rising middle classes (which considered the reforms demagogic and lacking any economic content), and a general restlessness due to the violent repression and the increasing influence of the Left in the government, an opposition alliance started to form. A group of students and law professors created a study group that later evolved into the Centro para el Estudio de los Problemas Nacionales (Centre for the Study of National Problems [Centro]). This group articulated a general critique of the government's political and economic project, and developed a new intellectual framework of social democratic orientation. This framework has shaped Costa Rican political discourse and public policy since 1949.[40]

In 1945 the Centro merged with the Partido Acción Demócrata (PAD)—a rather small political organisation whose main figure was José Figueres-Ferrer—and formed the Partido Social Demócrata (PSD). The PSD was able to generate an ideologically coherent and politically feasible project by integrating the intellectual framework of the Centro and the political ability of the PAD.[41] When Calderón ran again as presidential candidate of the PRep in the 1948 elections, the three groups opposing the government, the PUN, the PD (both supported by the conservative agro-export elite),[42] and the PSD (representing the young professional and entrepreneurial sectors) formed an electoral alliance. They supported the candidacy of the conservative journalist Otilio Ulate-Blanco. As a result the party system underwent structural changes. The previous one-party dominance—that one of the PRep—and the notorious ideological

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[40] In general terms, the Centro voiced three main objectives: 1) they wanted to modernise, institutionalise, and democratise the political system, 2) they denounced the social ills of an unregulated free-market economy (APRA's influence was obvious in their discourse), and 3) they promoted an economic development based on state participation in the economy (Keynesian influence was clear). Yashar 1995, pp. 76-77. For a detailed description of the formation of the Centro see, Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 76-117.

[41] For analyses of the process that permitted the formation of the Social Democratic Party and eventually the PLN see, Araya-Pochet 1982, Chap. 1.; Salom 1991; Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1981, pp. 29-59.; Sánchez 1992, pp. 8-28. For a general account of Costa Rica's political parties see, Salazar-Mora and Salazar-Mora 1993.

affinity between political contenders that characterised Costa Rica since the beginning of the 19th century, evolved into the prevalence of two equally strong but unstable coalitions with distinctive—yet not irreconcilable—ideological differences.

Nevertheless, these ideological differences proved not to be the central reason for the creation of opposing alliances. Fabrice Lehoucq, for instance, has claimed that Costa Rican politics during the 1940s was characterised by the disputes of political groups trying to retain or win power, not by antagonistic class projects.[43] In fact, there was a more substantial conflict between the social democratic program of the PSD and the anti-statist stance the PUN (its coalition partner), than between the PSD's ideas and the social christian/socialist project, supported by the government alliance. However, the urge to oppose a shared electoral enemy that was trying to monopolise power masked the conflicting agendas in the opposition alliance. As explained by Yahar:

> "The PUN wanted to maintain the existing socio-economic structure and limit state intervention. [While] the PSD was committed to modernizing the agro-export economy, to limit the power of the agro-export elite, and to providing the potential for middle-class social mobility, positions that required the growth of the state and its increased intervention."[44]

As expected, the conflicting objectives terminated the alliance right after the civil war ended. Not surprisingly, from then on the Social Democrats and the conservatives became political adversaries.

Ulate won the 1948 elections with 55.3 per cent of the votes against 44.7 obtained by Calderón.[45] However the Republican-Communist coalition retained the majority in congress. There were charges of fraud from both sides. The Tribunal Electoral declared Ulate as the winner, but later, due to significant irregularities,[46] the new congress nullified the presidential elections. After the failure of several attempts by the Tribunal Electoral, Monsignor Sanabria, PRep and PUN officials, and even by

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[42] Both the PUN and the PD were parties that represented Costa Rica's conservative oligarchy. Once in the alliance one cannot really distinguish between them. Thus, from now on references to the PUN, the stronger of the two parties, will include members of both movements.
[43] Lehoucq 1998, p. 23.
[44] Yashar 1995, p. 78.
[45] Thibaut 1993a, p. 201.
[46] The next section analyses the 1948 electoral fraud in detail.

various members of the oligarchy to reach an agreement, the civil war started. Claiming to fight in order to re-establish the country's democratic tradition, Figueres and his Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army [ELN])—consisting of approximately 600 men—engaged in an armed confrontation with the government. Following six weeks of warfare and about 2000 deaths, Figueres' army overthrew the regime.[47]

At the end of the war, the losing alliance successfully negotiated to prevent the reversal of their reforms. At the same time, the PUN supporters wanted Ulate to be declared president at once, fearing a Figueres dictatorship. Furthermore, PSD members were ready to take advantage of the war outcome and eager to get into office and start implementing their social democratic project. This general post-war uncertainty came to an end when Figueres and Ulate signed a pact in 1948. It appointed Figueres to head a *de facto* Governing Junta for at least eighteen months, and stated that afterwards Ulate would assume office. Eighteen months later, after having called for a Constituent Assembly—dominated mainly by PUN members[48]—Figueres kept his word.

The fact that Figueres signed and respected the pact when he had complete military control of the country shows not only the veracity of his democratic principles,[49] but also the significance of other contextual factors and political pressures that surely influenced his decision. Among them one finds: 1) the logical contradiction of leading a dictatorship after claiming to fight to rescue democracy, 2) the fact that most of his supporters were indeed Ulate's followers (they had voted for him in the 1948 election and were later recruited by the ELN to fight against the fraud), and 3) political pressures from the U.S. demanding Figueres not to continue with the Legión Caribe's plan (one he had agreed on) to get rid of other dictatorships in the region.

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[47] There is a vast array of literature assessing the 1948 Civil War. For thorough descriptions and different interpretations of the causes and events that led to it see, Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993; Schifter 1981; Figueres-Ferrer 1987; Rojas-Bolaños 1979; Bell 1979; Salazar 1981; Lehoucq 1998, pp. 97-123.; Wilson 1998, pp. 9-39.

[48] The forty-five seats of the Constituent Assembly were allocated as follows: 36 for the PUN, 6 for the Partido Constitucional, 4 for the PSD, and 1 for the Partido Confraternidad. Salom 1991, p. 85.

[49] Peeler 1996, p. 78.

Ceding power to Ulate would have been a strategic move not to involve Costa Rica in this enterprise.[50]

In any case, at that moment the country presented all the ingredients needed for the establishment of a military dictatorship. This, however, did not happen. On the contrary, one of the most important democratic precedents of Costa Rica's political history was settled when the winning candidate of the 1948 elections assumed office in 1949. This opened the door to a long succession of free and fair democratic elections that continue to this day.

## 3 The 1948 Civil War: Reasons for the Conflict

The 1948 Civil War is been the most influential social and political event in modern Costa Rican history. No conflict in the country's history has so strongly polarised political life and taken as many lives. Nor has any other social or political event had as much influence on the way in which academics analyse and understand the development of Costa Rica's democratic institutions.[51] It would not be possible to understand the country's current political configuration, and certainly its party system, without previously analysing the 1948 Civil War. Mitchell Seligson has highlighted the importance of this cleavage when he claims that:

> "Despite numerous studies attempting to discover the socio-economic correlates that explain party votes, historical party loyalties, most likely dating from the Civil War of 1948, remain the most important factor."[52]

It is after the civil war that the country began an uninterrupted process of democratic rule and institutional maturity. This central rift in the country's political life certainly deserves an in-depth analysis.

The previous section assessed the main events leading to the civil war. However, it is still not clear why the contending bands were unable to negotiate a peaceful solution

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[50] La Legión Caribe and its connections with Figueres are assessed in the coming section.
[51] Lehoucq 1998, p. 97.
[52] Seligson 1987, p. 173. Susanne Jonas-Bodenheimer and Constantino Urcuyo also support this thesis. However the latter argues that after fifty years and almost a complete generational change, the political

which could have prevented the 1948 political crisis from ending in an armed conflict.[53] Why have commentators claimed that war would have taken place sooner or later?[54] This section will analyse the main causes that motivated the battle.

Generally, the reasons acknowledged as the causes of the war include: economic mismanagement, corruption and political repression by the government, a class conflict due to the eight-year regime's progressive social reforms influenced by the Left, and, most importantly, the electoral fraud in 1948.[55] As it will be shown, these elements were enough of a reason for a political opposition to emerge and even for the civil war to get started. Nevertheless, the armed confrontation could have been prevented or stopped (with no major loss of lives), had the contending bands not been divided—particularly the opposition group—while they were trying to reach an agreement after the election. Other factors such as, Figueres' conviction that warfare was the only way to end the eight-year regime, as well as the position taken by international actors (especially the U.S. Government) and the feebleness of the military, added the necessary elements for the political crisis to develop into a civil war.

### *3.1 Economic Mismanagement and Corruption*

To begin with, one of the common explanations for the mounting popular discontent against the government was its economic failures, and the constant corruption and nepotism charges levelled against Calderón, his public officials, and friends. As revealed by Aguilar-Bulgarelli, instead of undertaking the fiscal reform that was promised, Calderón's government had no restrains in terms of public spending, and used it to benefit his supporters.[56] Among the corruption charges were a series of contracts for public works (construction of roads, schools, governmental buildings, etc.) that were granted to companies owned by Calderón's friends without public auction processes, and the government's direct financing of the PRep's candidate

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identities dating from 1948 are losing their centrality. Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, p. 37.; Urcuyo-Fournier 2000, p. 4. The erosion of partisan loyalties in Costa Rica is analysed in Chapter 6.

[53] This same question has been posed by Fabrice Lehoucq. Lehoucq 1998, pp. 97-123.

[54] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 258.

[55] See for example, Cerdas-Cruz 1992a, pp. 284-285.; Schifter 1981, p. 75.

during the 1948 elections. Commentators have even defined the eight-years regime as a failed attempt to establish a corrupt dictatorship.[57]

Furthermore, the eight-year regime was censured for not having any economic plan to ease the recession that the country was enduring due to the Second World War, and for its failure to develop new products in order to diminish the country's dependency on coffee exports. Finally, businessmen were very irritated by the governmental inefficiency in controlling illegal trafficking of all sorts of goods.[58] In Aguilar-Bulgarelli's words, "the country was suffering a real economic crisis."[59] The mismanagement of the public budget is shown in Table 3.1, where the government's revenue, its expenditures, and its deficit from 1940 to 1943 are illustrated.

Table 3.1. Costa Rican Government Revenue, Expenditures, and Deficit, 1940-1943
(millions of Costa Rican *colones*)

| Year | Government Revenue | Government Expenditure | Government Deficit |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1941** | 41.7 | 43.2 | -1.5 |
| **1942** | 42.6 | 53.0 | -10.4 |
| **1943** | 36.9 | 62.1 | -25.2 |
| **1944** | 50.4 | 80.9 | -30.5 |

Note: The exchange rate statistics for Costa Rica exist from 1950 on, after the Central Bank was created. However, before that year and until 1974 Costa Rica had a fixed exchanged rate. In fact from 1950 to 1962 it was established at 5.60 *colones* per U.S. dollar. Thus, it is possible to assume that no substantial changes occurred between the 1940s and 1950.
Sources: Based on Salazar 1981, pp. 79-80.; Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 119-122.

## *3.2 Class Division and Political Repression*

In addition to economic failures and corruption, a so-called "class division" prompted by the government's progressive reforms, PRep's alliance with a Communist Party, and the repression against members of the oligarchy (especially those of German, Italian, or Spanish descent), is regarded as another element that motivated the war.[60]

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[56] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 119.
[57] See for example, Cañas 1982.
[58] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 122-128.
[59] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 125.
[60] See for example, Rojas-Bolaños 1979.

This materialistic explanation of the armed conflict understands the political crisis as a class struggle in which the government and the Left, bolstered by urban and rural working classes, confronted an opposition alliance. This alliance was supported by the members of repressed foreign communities, by international and local "capital" disgruntled by the social reforms and the influence of the Left in the government's policies, and by a growing middle class, frustrated by the insufficient economic development in the country.[61] The social and economic contradictions of these two contending bands, and the systematic repression of the government against its opponents, would have made it impossible for the 1948 political crisis to find a peaceful way out.

It is true that most members of the oligarchy opposed the government in one way or another, and that the PRep was supported by many members of the working class. As demonstrated by Jacobo Schifter, during the electoral processes in 1946 (mid-term legislative elections) and 1948, the PRep got the majority of its support in San José (where most of the urban working class lived), and in the poor rural provinces of Puntarenas, Limón (both holding the country's banana plantations) and Guanacaste. On the other hand, the opposition alliance received most of its support in Heredia, Alajuela, and Cartago, provinces prominent in those days for their coffee plantations and its corresponding oligarchy.[62] In fact, the 1940s ought to be regarded not only as time of political reform and crisis, but also as a social turning point, marked by the massive incorporation of the working class into the political system.

However, it would be misleading to consider the 1948 cleavage solely as a class-conflict war. As proved by Lehoucq, members of the "dominant class" did not show a decisive opposition against the government, as their interests were both positively and negatively affected by its policies.[63] The oligarchy's disagreement with the social reforms and the new progressive tax policy, by no means a generalised position in the sector, was surely eased by the governmental decisions of guaranteeing a minimum price and eliminating the tax on coffee exports. At the same time, local entrepreneurs

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[61] Schifter 1982, p. 134.
[62] Schifter 1981, pp. 82-87.
[63] Lehoucq 1998, pp. 104-123.

were surely satisfied with Calderón's decision to pass a law protecting new local industry from international competition. Moreover, the contending bands cannot be regarded as pure class movements as members of different "classes" could be found fighting for both sides. In Shifter's words:

> It is inadequate to regard the civil war as a product of class polarisation...The working class and the middle-high class were certainly polarised during the battle. However, they were not categorically divided. Members of different classes could be found in both bands.[64]

Certainly, the 1948 episode cannot be regarded as a social cleavage.

In fact, Costa Rica's central cleavage was basically political in nature. As contended by Jonas-Bodenheimer, Costa Rica's civil war was not a social revolution, but a struggle between two groups which battled over the control of the political apparatus.[65] Backing this conclusion, war veteran Omar Zumbado categorically asserted that, "in 1948 we fought for political reasons, not for ideological or social differences."[66] The 1948 Civil War divided the country between *calderonistas* and *figueristas* or *ulatistas*, not among the "capital" and the "proletariat."

It should be stressed that this type of "leader-centred political cleavage" tends not to inherit such strong or resilient partisan loyalties as social or religious cleavages do,[67] as they depend to a greater extent on particular figures. Once these leaders or *caudillos* disappear, it is much harder to sustain voters' loyalties, than if they responded to a general social or a religious position.[68] It is worth noting that the pre-eminence of leader-centred political cleavages seems to be a differentiating feature between most of Latin American countries and Western European democracies.[69] In this regard, Deborah Norden has underlined the importance of historical political conflicts as central events for political identifications and rivalries between competing

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[64] Schifter 1981, p. 109.
[65] Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, pp. 30-31.
[66] Zumbado 22 January 2002.
[67] For a theoretical approach regarding the formation and consolidation or party systems as a result of different cleavages see, Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Ware 1996, pp. 185-202.
[68] Urcuyo-Fournier 26 February 2002; Bravo 27 February 2002.
[69] Chile's party system, and the Unión Cívica Radical in Argentina, are interesting exceptions. For a sound analysis of the peculiarities of cleavage structures in Latin American countries see, Dix 1989.

parties in Latin America.[70] As will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, the political nature of Costa Rica's cleavage has played a central role in the eroding process of partisan loyalties in the country.

In any case, and returning to our previous argument, it is not accurate to claim that members of the oligarchy—"the capital"—functioning as a class presented a coherent opposition against the eight-year regime. And even if most of them consistently criticised the government, supported the opposition alliance, and were unquestionably worried by the Left's influence on the PRep's policies, it would certainly be a mistake to claim that the oligarchy, acting as a "conscious class," organised a political movement ready to use force in order to overthrow a regime that was governing against its interests. In fact, as will be shown, members of the PUN (the party representing the oligarchy) were always willing to negotiate a peaceful solution with the government in order to avoid an armed conflict.

### *3.3 Electoral Fraud*

In addition to the government's "mistakes" and the opposition of the oligarchy, another important catalyst to the civil war was the significant irregularities in the 1948 election. Bruce Wilson reflects the views of many commentators when he asserts that the central causes of the war were the violence and the rampant electoral fraud surrounding this election.[71] Fraud claims were made by the opposition both during the presidential election in 1944 and the mid-term legislative election in 1946. Even the Left's leader, Manuel Mora, admitted that, "a real fraud school had been established in Costa Rica."[72] However, contrary to what had happened before, the 1948 electoral fraud was not tolerated.

The denounced fraud in 1944 and 1946 led the opposition group to organise a commercial "lockout" general strike ("Huelga de los Brazos Caídos") in 1947, in order to demand that Picado's administration guarantee a fraud-free electoral process in the

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[70] Norden 1998, especially, p. 439.
[71] Wilson 1998, p. 34.
[72] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 142.

coming year.[73] The opposition succeeded when Picado accepted their demands. Without the support of the Left, the government and the opposition signed a pact which stated that: 1) both sides would accept the decision of the Electoral Tribunal (the final declaration still remained a congressional prerogative), 2) the two groups would share the responsibility for the fairness of the election (the opposition appointed the three members of the Electoral Tribunal and the president of the National Register, while the government stayed in control of the police and the armed forces), and 3) the armed forces would be under the control of the winning candidate twenty-four hours after the Electoral Tribunal announces its decision.[74] The fact that the government signed such a disadvantageous agreement reveals its systematic loss of popularity, and the strength of the opposition alliance.

On the 28th of February 1948 (two days after the date stipulated by law) the Electoral Tribunal declared Otilio Ulate, the PUN/PSD coalition candidate, winner of an election riddled with irregularities. The PRep members, having renounced control over the electoral institutions, were very suspicious of the low turnout. It declined, as shown in Table 3.2, from 78 per cent in 1940 and 1944, to 56 per cent in 1948. At the same time, they were not prepared to accept that most citizens who abstained in 1948 lived in provinces they had won in 1946 (Limón, Puntarenas, and Guanacaste). The electoral results, as well as the reduction in turnout for each province between 1946 and 1948 are presented in Table 3.3.

Additionally, the *calderonistas* accused the National Register of favouring the opposition by delaying the identification documents to its supporters and speedily granting them to Ulate's followers.[75] Moreover, they strongly questioned the Electoral Tribunal, as it based its resolution—arguing time restrictions—on the results of telegrams sent by its delegates around the country, instead of counting all the votes. The decision of one of the members of the Electoral Tribunal to openly express his

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[73] According to Jacobo Schifter, the strike was supported by 95 per cent of the commercial establishments and banks in San José. Schifter 1981, p. 108.
[74] Schifter 1981, p. 76.
[75] The government claimed that this accusation was confirmed when the President of the National Register, Benjamín Odio, joined Figueres' army even before the Electoral Tribunal declared Ulate's triumph.

disagreement when Ulate's victory was declared, finally led the government-controlled congress to nullify the presidential election.

Table 3.2. Turnout in the Costa Rican Elections, 1923-1948

| Electoral Year | Registered Voters (1) | Actual Votes (2) | Turnout (2/1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1923** | 96,551 | 71,545 | 74% |
| **1928** | 116,993 | 70,281 | 60% |
| **1932** | 117,641 | 70,447 | 60% |
| **1936** | 129,700 | 88,324 | 68% |
| **1940** | 139,219 | 108,145 | 78% |
| **1944** | 163,100 | 126,606 | 78% |
| **1948** | 176,979 | 99,369 | 56% |

Sources: Based on Schifter 1981, p. 81., citing Picado unpublished; Stone 1975, p. 236.

Table 3.3. Winner and Turnout Reduction per Province in the Costa Rican Elections, 1946 and 1948

| Province | Party with largest vote in 1946 | Party with largest vote in 1948 | Turnout Reduction |
|---|---|---|---|
| **San José** | PRep | Opposition Alliance | -3.6% |
| **Alajuela** | Opposition Alliance | Opposition Alliance | -0.9% |
| **Heredia** | Opposition Alliance | Opposition Alliance | — |
| **Cartago** | Opposition Alliance | Opposition Alliance | -2.1% |
| **Guanacaste** | PRep | PRep | -9.2% |
| **Puntarenas** | PRep | Prep | -20.7% |
| **Limón** | PRep | Prep | -20.4% |

Source: Based on Schifter 1981, p. 82.

The congressional decision produced an immediate reaction from the opposition, which accused the government of not honouring the pact signed in 1947. Furthermore, the *ulatistas* blamed Calderón's supporters for a mysterious fire that destroyed part of the votes, and denounced systematic repression and constant intimidation by the police and armed forces against its supporters and leaders during the electoral process.[76] These complaints acquired national notoriety when Ulate was imprisoned, and Dr.

[76] Güell 23 January 2002.

Carlos Luis Valverde, one of the most prominent opposition supporters, assassinated.[77] Commentators have argued that even though the electoral fraud existed, it only affected the margin by which Ulate won and not the final result.[78] By this time, however, the government was not willing to respect the electoral result, nor the opposition prepared to accept the congressional resolution. Hence, the possibility of resolving the 1948 political crisis via elections vanished.

### *3.4 Internal Division and Failed Negotiation*

The aforementioned reasons were more than enough for a strong political opposition to form and even to initiate the hostilities, as indeed happened.[79] However, as acknowledged by several authors, both the PRep and the PUN were ready to negotiate a peaceful way out of the ongoing armed conflict.[80] In fact, at the end of March 1948, when the war was already under way, Calderón and Ulate reached an agreement. Exhorted by Monsignor Sanabria, they accorded that the congress would appoint an honourable and mutually accepted person, Dr. Julio Cesar-Ovares—a Calderón supporter—to govern as an interim president for two years. After that, a new electoral process would have been organised. Thus, a peaceful way out of the crisis was still possible.

This compromise not only would have ended the hostilities, but also would have granted the PUN and the PRep a new chance to race for power. The Left did not have major objections with this arrangement as they were satisfied with their majority in congress and were even ready to admit the electoral defeat in order to prevent the imminent war.[81] However, this was not the case of Figueres, the PSD, and his ELN, the ones actually fighting to put an end to the eight-year regime. They did not accept the pact and carried on with the hostilities.

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[77] For detail descriptions of the irregularities in the 1948 election see, Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 248-294.; Schifter 1981, pp. 75-85.
[78] See for example, Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 255.
[79] The civil war began on the 12th of March 1948, twelve days after the congress decided to nullify the elections, when Figueres' ELN attacked a government's battalion.
[80] See for example, Lehoucq 1998, pp. 115-116.; Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 318-319.
[81] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 159-160.

When the contending parties reached the mentioned agreement, the division in the opposition alliance was evident. The PUN's pact with the government clearly did not consider the PSD's position, for which any possibility of the continuation of the existing regime was unacceptable. Their idea of a complete transformation of the Costa Rican society through a social democratic programme would have been jeopardised by the proposed arrangement. Moreover, winning an armed confrontation would allow them to govern alone—as they later did for eighteen months—and implement their plan with no interference from the conservative PUN. Figueres' intentions were later made clear when, as the leader of the victorious ELN, he stated, "Don't think that I am going to hand over the presidency to Ulate or to any corrupt politician. I am coming to transform this country."[82] Figueres did hand over power to Ulate, but only after laying the foundations for his political project during an eighteen-month *de facto* government.

As a matter of fact, some authors have argued that the nullification of the elections was just the excuse Figures needed to start his "revolution."[83] It is true that the civil war was catalysed by the electoral fraud in 1948. Nonetheless, it could have been prevented, or at least peacefully ended, had the contending parties been able to negotiate a solution acceptable to the different groups. Figueres' conviction that war was the only way to end the existing regime, in conjunction with favourable internal and international conditions to carry out his plan, generated the setting needed to start the hostilities.

### 3.4.1 Figueres' Intransigence and the Legión Caribe

When analysing the failed negotiations one needs to bear in mind that Figueres had long been planning an armed revolution to depose the eight-year regime. Since 1942, when he was expelled from the country by Calderón's administration,[84] Figueres

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[82] Acuña 1974.
[83] See for example, Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 313.; Schifter 1981, pp. 83-84.
[84] José Figures was imprisoned and then expelled from the country after pronouncing a heated speech in a local radio station where he strongly criticised the government. He lived in El Salvador and Guatemala for a while and finally stayed for two years in Mexico. Figueres was allowed to return to

launched several initiatives to acquire money and weapons in order to organise an insurrection.[85] While in Mexico, he signed the Pacto del Caribe (Caribbean Pact) with other Central American "revolutionaries." The signers, leaders of the so-called Legión Caribe (Caribbean Legion), aimed to free the region from its dictatorships through an armed struggle. They decided that Costa Rica was the best place to start the liberation process, due to its weak military forces and the existence of more civil liberties, in comparison with other countries such as Nicaragua, Honduras, or Panama.[86] The Legión Caribe was strongly supported by the reformist Guatemalan President Juan José Arévalo, who allowed them to supply Figueres with men, weapons, ammunition, and fuel using his country's territory. John Patrick Bell has claimed that without the support of the Legión Caribe, Figueres would never have been able to organise a successful revolution.[87]

With the support of the Legión Caribe, Figueres was ready for war. His revolutionary plans are confirmed by his own words:

> "When I left Guatemala to live in Mexico, I was convinced that the Costa Rican situation could only be sorted out through an armed confrontation, for all the other ways were closed. This was my firm position in the following years, when dealing with politicians used to electoral manipulation or with the prudent notables of my country[88]...I was convinced that the embryonic dictatorship (referring to the eight-year regime) could not have been eliminated through votes, but only with the strength of bullets...When I left Mexico, everything was ready to start the liberation revolution if the electoral rights, as I expected, were violated again...For me, the armed struggle seemed inevitable."[89]

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Costa Rica in 1944, after Calderón finished his administration. For the complete transcription of Figueres' speech see, Figueres-Ferrer 1987, pp. 80-85.

[85] A detailed description of Figueres' efforts to organise the revolution is narrated by Figueres himself. Figueres-Ferrer 1987, pp. 51-121.

[86] For a complete transcription of the Pacto del Caribe see, Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 307-312.

[87] Bell 1979, p. 208.

[88] This was how Figures ironically used to call many PUN leaders.

[89] Figueres-Ferrer 1987, pp. 89-119.

The support of the Legión Caribe and Figueres' conviction that warfare was the only way to end the eight-year regime, should be regarded as another central factor explaining the 1948 Civil War.

### 3.4.2 The U.S. Government and a Weak Military

Figueres' crusade fuelled with a rising popular unrest that characterised Costa Rica throughout the 1948 electoral process, especially after the annulment of the elections. The restlessness in the country is well illustrated by the comments of an anonymous ELN soldier, "The country was ready to follow the first one who fired a weapon."[90] Additionally, Figueres' movement also benefited from the position taken by the U. S. government, as well as by the weakness of the Costa Rican army.

In terms of the international influence in the crisis, one central factor bolstering the "revolutionary" movement was the position taken by the American Embassy. At a time when the Cold War was gathering momentum, the United States was not comfortable with the influence attained by the Left in the Costa Rican government. The U.S. took several actions in order to eliminate this influence and prevent Costa Rica from becoming "the Czechoslovakia of the Western Hemisphere."[91] Firstly, they decided to appoint Nathaniel Davis as the new American Ambassador in the country. Mr. Davis came to San José from the U. S. Embassy in Moscow and was considered an expert on Communism. Davis adopted an energetically anti-communist posture, hostile to Picado's government and favourable to the opposition.

Secondly, the Department of State demanded that Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza, stop his interference in Costa Rica's internal affairs. Somoza had decided, with Picado's approval, to send his Guardia Nacional (National Guard) into Costa Rica in order to protect the border between the two countries and support the government. The Nicaraguan dictator had grounds to fear a possible victory of revolutionary movement, as it was reasonable to believe that with Figueres in power

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[90] Figueres-Ferrer 1987, p. 114.

his regime would be the next target of the Legión Caribe. Finally, the United States not only knew and did nothing to obstruct the military aid received by the ELN, but also blocked the Costa Rican government's efforts to acquire military provisions.[92] As explained by Teodoro Picado in a letter communicating Mora and Calderón his resignation to the presidency, "incontestable forces are absolutely determined to make us lose the battle."[93] It is hard to deny that the U.S.A. was happy to clear the way for a revolutionary movement seeking to unseat a coalition government with leftist participation.[94]

The revolutionary movement also benefited from the vulnerability and the internal division of the armed forces. It is worth noting that the Costa Rican army started a progressive weakening process since the end of the First World War. Rodolfo Cerdas-Cruz acknowledges that in 1922 the U. S. State Department reported that a civilian police was gradually substituting the country's army. By 1931, American authorities in Costa Rica indicated that the nation's army was practically non-existent.[95]

On top of its feebleness and its inability to get weapons due to the American blockade, the government forces were divided into three distinct groups. One group, denominated the Unidad Móvil (Mobile Unit), responded to Picado's orders, the civil police was loyal to Calderón, and what were known as the Brigadas de Choque (Hit Brigades) or the *"linieros"* were led by Manuel Mora and the Communist Party. It was this last group, mainly integrated by banana plantation workers, the one that presented the greatest resistance to Figueres' ELN. Furthermore, there is evidence that the government did not fully trust the armed Left. Mora's accusations regarding Picado's unwillingness to supply them with weapons were confirmed when Figueres' army captured munitions still in their original boxes stored in various government quarters.[96] The weakness and internal division amongst the government's armed

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[91] That was how Víctor Haya de la Torre described Costa Rica in a speech at Yale University in 1948. For more details see, Cerdas-Cruz 1992a, pp. 293-294.; Schifter 1981, p. 133.
[92] For further details on the American participation in the 1948 Costa Rican Civil War see, Schifter 1982, pp. 135-201.
[93] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, p. 383.
[94] Booth 1998, p. 22.
[95] Cerdas-Cruz 1997, p. 321.
[96] Aguilar-Bulgarelli 1993, pp. 321-322.; Schifter 1982, p. 183.

forces should be taken into consideration, not only as a factor that eased the ELN victory, but also as an element that may have convinced Figueres to start his crusade in the first place.

### *3.5 Recapitulating*

The relevance of the civil war requires a detailed explanation of the reasons why the political crisis at the end of the 1940s ended as an armed struggle. As explained, among the commonly noted factors responsible for the civil war are: the government's economic failures, its corrupt practices, the opposition of the oligarchy, the mounting social violence and constant repression against the government's political adversaries and, as a catalysing factor, the subsequent electoral frauds, especially the one in 1948. These elements motivated the formation of a strong political opposition and even the outset of the armed hostilities.

Nevertheless, a peace agreement that would have stopped the civil war could have been reached if it had not been for the division in the opposition alliance and the inability of negotiators to satisfy the objectives of Figueres and the PSD. This was no easy task, as it involved terminating the eight-year regime, a position that most certainly would not have been accepted by Calderón. At the same time, it entailed convincing Figueres to retreat from a war that he regarded as the only way out of the crisis and that, if successful, would have given him and his group the chance to govern alone—with no PUN interference. Moreover, the aid he was receiving from the Legión Caribe, the position of the United States, and the weakness of the government's armed forces, were elements that surely convinced him to carry on with his plan, and provide reasons for his final victory. Given all these factors, and the mutual hatred of the two most important leaders of the contending parts (Calderón and Figueres), the only expected result was a civil war.

Costa Rica's political setting and party alignment was drastically altered after these events. In the first place, it is only after the civil war that one can safely claim that the country started its democratic history and that popular, competitive, transparent elections became part of the national political culture. In the second place, not only

had the oligarchy lost its political monopoly having to share power with the working sectors and, particularly, the rising middle class, but also these social sectors found effective representation in new political parties (Calderón's PRep, the PSD, and the Left). As usual, strong leaders headed these parties, but they also had some ideological grounding—social christian, social democratic, and communist.

Finally, party alignments and popular affiliation were strongly marked by the 1948 cleavage. Specifically, the main national division rose among followers of the two central figures of the civil war, José Figueres-Ferrer and Rafael Ángel Calderón-Guardia, and their different political movements. Further electoral reforms and the creation of distinctive political parties followed the post-war settlement. From here on, the country's democracy and its party system—nowadays not surprisingly a two-party system—accelerated their institutionalisation process.

## 4 The Second Republic: Political Legacy of the Civil War

Indeed, the 1948 cleavage marked the starting point for Costa Rica's democratic regime. It was after the armed conflict that popular support for political leaders and their parties was strongly defined, and that solid electoral laws and institutions were established. As argued by Booth, "Liberal democracy in Costa Rica has roots that go back centuries, but the regime consolidated itself only in the aftermath of the 1948 Civil War."[97] In order to analyse the main effects of the civil war and its repercussions on the party system, this section will be divided into three parts. The first one studies the most important political reforms relevant to the party system that were approved after the battle, either by the Governing Junta or by the 1949 constituents. The second part concentrates on the formation and evolution of the main "party families" that emerged after 1948. Finally, the section ends with a brief summary.

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[97] Booth 1999, p. 460.

## *4.1 Political Reforms*

The civil war victorious group respected the social reforms of the previous regime. Moreover, other reforms of economic and political nature—including the nationalisation of the banking system—followed the armed conflict. The party system was mainly influenced by four of these reforms: 1) the weakening of the presidency and strengthening of the assembly, 2) the abolition of the army, 3) the implementation of more electoral reforms—including a reinforced electoral tribunal—and 4) the banning of communist parties from electoral activities. This last measure—and its implications—which countered with the general democratic transition prompted by the other reforms, will be analysed in the coming section. The present section assesses the other three.

In the first place, the 1949 Constituent Assembly protected the institutional interests of the legislative branch and weakened the powers of the presidency. This contrasts with the cases of most Latin American countries and can be explained as a constituents' reaction against the presidential power abuses (particularly electoral manipulation) characteristic of pre-1948 Costa Rican politics.

The key measures taken to weaken the presidency were: 1) subjecting presidential emergency powers to assembly approval by a two-thirds majority, 2) eliminating the president's veto on national budget, 3) mandating an eight-year intervening period before an ex-president could serve again,[98] 4) commanding that all conventions and treaties be subject to assembly approval, 5) explicitly prohibiting the pocket veto and any executive refusal to sign legislation passed over presidential objections, 6) providing for the interpellation and censure of cabinet members, 7) removing any presidential prerogative in the election of the Supreme Court judges, making it an undisputed congressional responsibility, and 9) demanding the president ask the assembly's permission before leaving the country.[99] In the words of John Booth, "The

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[98] Presidential reelection was ultimately banned by a constitutional reform in 1969. However the Constitutional Court struck down this reform in 2003, and the country went back to the original 1949 rule. For details see, *La Nación* 26 de junio 1969; *La Nación* 5 de abril 2003.
[99] Carey 1997, p. 201.; Yashar 1995, pp. 91-92.

1949 Constitution grants the Legislative Assembly powers that makes it one of the strongest legislatures in Latin America."[100]

The weakening of the presidency and the strengthening of the congress meant a single capable leader was no longer enough to lead a party, let alone a government. The support of competent party members, able to integrate a coherent and efficient party caucus in parliament became crucial. The aforementioned reforms led to the reinforcement of parties' cadres and resulted in stronger, more participatory parties, where it was not so common—as used to happen—for single figures to gain complete control. Politics thus became more a collegiate rather than a personalistic business.

In the second place, the Governing Junta headed by Figueres decided to abolish the armed forces—his own ELN. Later, the 1949 Constitution prohibited a standing army. According to Figueres himself, "Never a winning army was so promptly disbanded and retired to civilian life after successfully carrying out its duty."[101] The proscription of the armed forces distinguishes Costa Rica from most other Latin American countries,[102] making it impossible for military groups to develop into political actors and for *coups d'état* to become part of the country's political dynamics.[103] As a result, the monopoly of the political arena was left to civilian groups whose only legitimate vehicles to access power were political parties. The absence of an army has not only limited the struggle for political power to parties via democratic elections, but has also shaped the national democratic culture.

In the third place, the post-war years witnessed the approval of significant electoral reforms. To begin with, in 1949 the mid-term legislative elections were eliminated, concentrating the presidential, legislative, and municipal contests into a single process. This increased the influence of the presidential candidate and his party over

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[100] Booth 1998, p. 59. However commentators have indicated that in the last three decades the executive's power has re-strengthened. See for example, Rodríguez 1984, 153-165.; Guier-Esquivel 1984, pp. 20-22.; Gutiérrez 1984, pp. 28-30.; Gutiérrez 1979, pp. 139-142. For an analysis of the prerogatives of the Costa Rican executive, legislative and judicial branches see, Booth 1998, pp. 59-66.
[101] Figueres-Ferrer 1987, p. 345.
[102] Following the results of a plebiscite, a constitutional reform in 1995 also abolished the armed forces in Panama.
[103] Urcuyo-Fournier 1990, p. 166.

the legislative and municipal elections results. This phenomenon, defined by Shugart and Carey as "electoral concurrence,"[104] not only produced stronger party discipline in congress,[105] but also has become one of the central elements reinforcing the formation of a two-party system in Costa Rica.[106]

Additionally, in 1949 the Costa Rican electorate was expanded when voting restrictions against blacks and women—the only ones remaining—were eliminated. In that same year the voting age was set at twenty (in 1971 it was lowered to eighteen).[107] Graph 3.1 clearly depicts the increasing trend in citizens' electoral participation resulting from these reforms in the post-war period (marked with a black line).

With the exception of the aforementioned banning of Leftist movements from electoral politics, the historical process of political "inclusiveness" resulting from Costa Rica's subsequent electoral reforms since the beginning of the 1900s can very well be explained by Robert Dahl's observations when he acknowledges that:

> "In countries where the practice of electing representatives already existed, democratic reformers saw a dazzling opportunity. They saw no need to discard the representative system, despite its dubious origins and the narrow, exclusionary suffrage on which it rested. They believe that...broadening the electoral base...will serve democratic purposes...In essence the broadening process eventually led to a more representative government based on an inclusive demos..."[108]

A broader and more geographically dispersed electorate[109] left no alternative to parties but to create stronger internal organisations, and to start a process of decentralisation

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[104] Shugart and Carey 1992, pp. 221-239.
[105] However, John Carey has highlighted that the Costa Rican major parties' legislative factions still lacked the copartisan cohesion that they ought to have. The absence of punitive sanctions in order to enforce party lines may be a reason for this phenomenon. Carey 1996, pp. 148-153.
[106] The specific effects of electoral concurrence in the Costa Rican party system are discussed in Chapter 4. See also, Sánchez 2001.
[107] Lehoucq 1998, pp. 53-55.
[108] Dahl 2000, pp. 104-105.
[109] Most of the black population in Costa Rica lives in the province of Limón, on the Atlantic coast in the southeastern part of the country.

which would permit the mobilisation of voters throughout the country. More voters meant further organisation and important logistic efforts for political parties.

For example, the PLN and the PUSC, the country's two main parties since 1983, have developed a complex permanent structure headed by a National Assembly and a three-member Executive Committee. Likewise, these parties have established powerful political directorates and a variety of subsidiary organisations such as youth and women movements.[110] However, as it will be shown in Chapter 7, due to the parties' strong electoral orientation, these structures remain largely dormant and under-funded until the start of the internal electoral campaigns. These processes, open to all party supporters in the country, start with assemblies in five hundred and ten districts, then in eighty-one cantons and finally in seven provinces, in order to choose the members of the National Assembly. Once the internal nomination process has taken place, and the party's candidate has been appointed—in an open electoral process—both parties essentially become electoral machines, controlled by the presidential candidate and his advisors. At this moment, the creation or reinforcement of local branches and electoral committees in each canton turns to be one of the most important duties of each party, as local organisations capable of mobilising large numbers of voters have proven to be a crucial winning factor.

Finally, another central electoral reform took place when the 1949 Constitution reconstituted the Tribunal Electoral, creating the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). This entity, defined by Deborah Yashar as "the real novelty of Costa Rica's political institutions,"[111] was given exclusive responsibility and absolute political and financial independence for the organisation, direction, and vigilance of acts relating to suffrage.[112] TSE magistrates are appointed by the Supreme Court of Justice.[113] The TSE operates the Civil Registry, the other central electoral entity in Costa Rica—also

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[110] For further details see, TSE 2002a, Arts. 60-61.; Estatutos Partido Liberación Nacional updated until May 2002; Estatutos Partido Unidad Social Cristiana updated until August 2001.
[111] Yashar 1995, p. 93.
[112] Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica 1999, Art. 99.
[113] The TSE is integrated by three magistrates and six deputies (*suplentes*) designated for six-year terms. During the electoral processes the TSE expands to five magistrates by incorporating two of the *suplentes*. Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica 1999, Arts. 100-101.

reconstituted in 1949.[114] This latter institution keeps and updates the general citizens register, elaborates the electoral roll,[115] and issues a mandatory national identity card that serves as the identification document during elections.[116] This institutional engineering has proven highly efficient for organising transparent electoral processes in the country.

The TSE may also investigate charges of political partiality by public employees, file criminal charges against persons violating electoral laws, scrutinise and validate electoral results, and control the police forces during elections. Furthermore, it regulates campaign organisations' compliance with the electoral law, monitors executive branch campaign neutrality, and disburses public campaign subsidies.[117] The TSE's effectiveness in conducting elections has virtually eradicated the incidence of fraud. This provides the country with elections globally reputed for their fairness and honesty.[118] It is no wonder that the TSE—referred to in Costa Rica as the "fourth branch of government"—has served as a model for most electoral institutions in Latin America.

An efficient, trustworthy, and independent electoral institution generates stability for political parties. According to Mainwaring and Scully, stability in the rules and nature of inter-party competition is the most important condition for the institutionalisation of a democratic party system.[119] Regularly organised, pristine elections with clear and generally accepted rules, dissuade party leaders from investing time in searching for ways to manipulate or circumvent the processes. They also motivate parties to generate longer-termed political strategies and institutions capable of accomplishing them. There is no doubt that the electoral reforms of 1949 (especially the TSE) have played a central role providing the conditions for electoral stability, and therefore for the progressive institutionalisation of the party system in Costa Rica.

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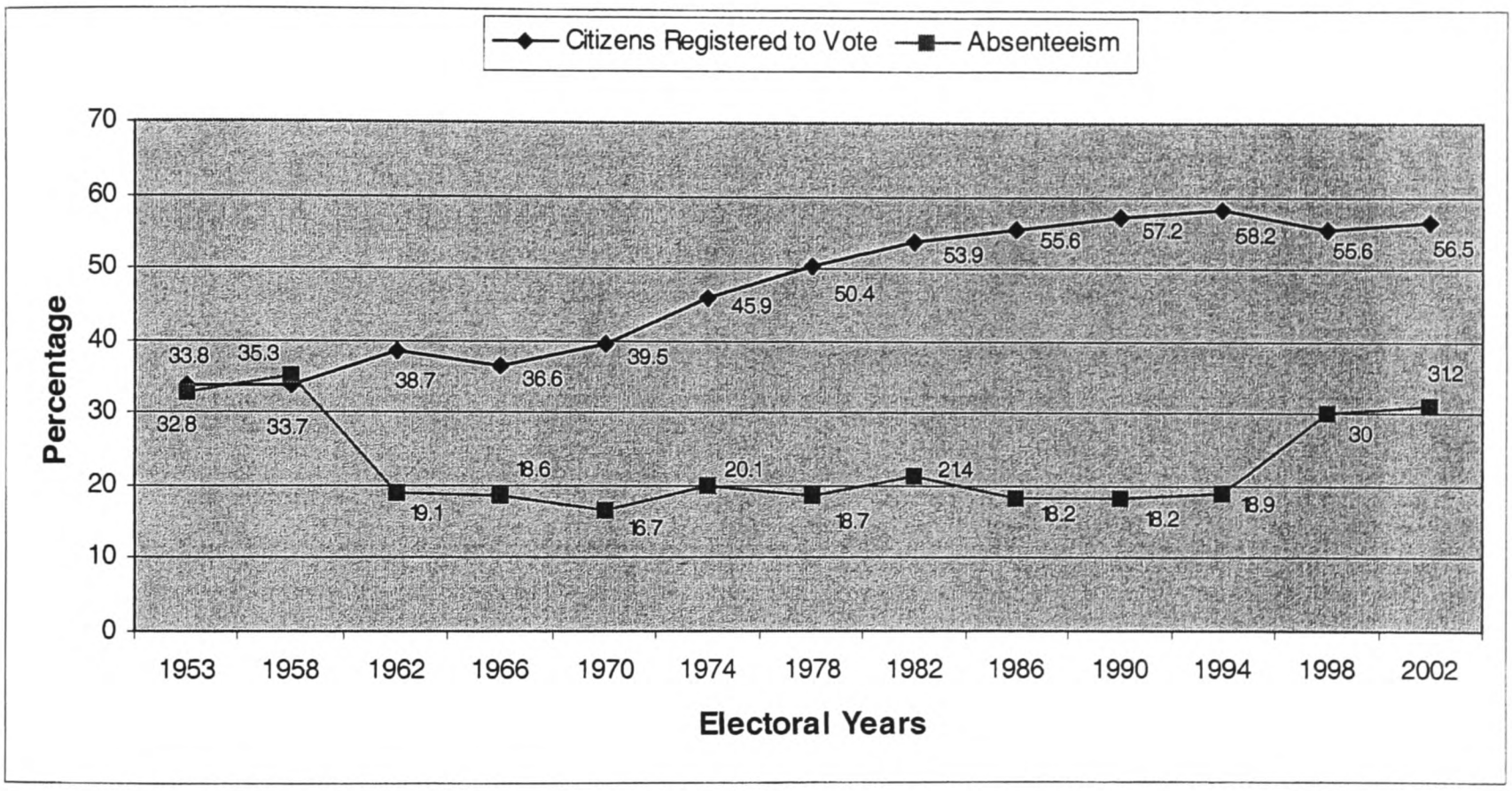
[114] For further details about the Costa Rican Civil Registry see, Castro-Dobles 1997.
[115] In 1998, 94 per cent of all Costa Ricans that had reached the voting age were registered to do so. Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, p. 16.
[116] Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica 1999, Art. 104.
[117] For more details about the prerogatives and responsibilities of the TSE see, Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica 1999, Arts. 99-104. For analyses of the role of the TSE in the Costa Rican political system see, Villegas-Antillón 1987; Murillo 1983.
[118] Ameringer 1982, p. 51.
[119] Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, pp. 4-5.

Graph 3.2 illustrates how the percentage of citizens registered to vote has been increasing since the 1953 elections, the first ones organised by the TSE. It also shows how low and stable levels of absenteeism have prevailed in the Costa Rican elections until 1994. As indicated, this trend was altered in 1998 for reasons that will be discussed in the chapters ahead. In any case, the strengthening of political parties, the reforms that permitted the expansion of the electorate, and a reliable TSE, should be given due credit for the country's political stability.

Graph 3.2. Citizens Registered to Vote and Absenteeism in the Costa Rican Elections, 1953-2002[120]




Sources: Based on TSE 2002b; Núñez and Rosales 1999, p. 13.

## *4.2 Party Families*

The weakening of the presidency—and the strengthening of the parliament—the abolition of the army, and the electoral reforms that followed the civil war were all central elements that influenced political parties and accelerated the institutionalisation

[120] For the calculations see Appendixes 2 and 3.

process. Nevertheless, the armed conflict left another nuclear legacy of socio-political dimensions: it divided the country into two conflicting political bands. This division, acknowledged by Oscar Fernández in various works as the "foundational conflict" of the Costa Rican party system,[121] was later transformed into popular support for distinctive parties or party coalitions.

Deborah Yashar correctly observes that:

> "Partisan alliance in the post-1948 period in large part reflects affinities for the main political figures who emerged during the 1942-1948 reform period and for positions adopted during the civil war itself. To this day, the two major party blocks identify with the individuals around whom 1940s politics revolved: Calderón...and Figueres..."[122]

Indeed, Costa Rica's main parties have developed around the leading figures of the 1948 battle.

So strong has been the political influence of these two leaders that both of their sons have recently occupied the presidency—Rafael Ángel Calderón F. (1990-1994) and José María Figueres O. (1994-1998). This has led Fernández to argue that the main parties in contemporary Costa Rica (the PLN and the PUSC) are administering an electoral machinery based on "inherited charismas."[123] Even though they constitute one of the better institutionalised party systems in Latin America, the historical origins of Costa Rican parties do not allow them to escape their share of personalism.[124]

From an ideological perspective, the two political movements organised around Figueres F. and Calderón G., together with the Left—whose historical leader was Manuel Mora—integrate the three "party families" that formed after the 1948 cleavage. It is only then, in Wilson's words, that modern programmatic parties became a reality in the country.[125] In order to understand the relevance of the political

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[121] Fernández 1996, p. 155.; Fernández 1992, pp. 28-29.; Fernández 1991, pp. 67-68.
[122] Yashar 1995, p. 82.
[123] Fernández 1992, p. 36.
[124] For details on the significance of personalism in Costa Rican parties (especially in the case of the PLN) see, Sánchez March and April 2003.
[125] Wilson 1998, p. 58.

movements emerging in this period, their historical evolution, ideological position, and electoral performance, will be assessed in the final part of this section.

### 4.2.1 Partido Liberación Nacional

The first important party family to emerge during this period was the social democratic one, blended in the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN). Having its historical roots in the PSD, the PLN was formed in 1951 under Figueres' leadership. The PLN is the oldest party in Costa Rican politics. Strongly influenced by former Centro members since its creation, it was conceived as a social democratic party, advocating state-led economic growth, social welfare guarantees, and redistributive economic policies.[126] This well organised, permanent party controlled the country's politics from 1953 to 1986. The profound influence of the PLN in Costa Rican politics has induced analysts to argue that since 1953 the country's political dynamics have been defined by a struggle between *liberacionistas* and *anti-liberacionistas*.[127] Its pre-eminence from 1953 to 1986 (somehow resembling that one of the PRep prior to the 1940s) led academics to characterise Costa Rica's party system during this period as a dominant party-system,[128] as a multi-party system dominated by one party,[129] or, more precisely, as a "bipolar system with one strong party and a series of shifting ad hoc opposition coalitions."[130]

Ideologically speaking, these opposition coalitions (composed by PRep and PUN members) had a conservative orientation. Nonetheless until the beginning of the 1980s they lacked the internal cohesion to posit a viable alternative ideological project to that of the PLN. Therefore, from the 1950s until the beginning of the 1980s the political situation in Costa Rica was characterised, if not by an ideological affinity, by

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[126] The PLN belongs to the Socialist International. Former President, Daniel Oduber, was Vice-President of this organisation. For more details about the influence of social democracy and the PLN in Costa Rica see, Romero-Pérez 1982; Araya-Pochet 1982; Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984.
[127] See for example, Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, especially p. 24.; Núñez and Rosales 1999, p. 12.; Wilson 1998, p. 64.; Yashar 1995, p. 82.
[128] Vega-Carballo 1989.
[129] Mcdonald 1971, pp. 154-163.
[130] Peeler 1998, p. 174. For a discussion about the methodological and theoretical particularities of party system classifications in Central America see, Bendel 1993.

the inability of the opposition to seriously challenge the social democratic model. Thus, no major ideological confrontations were present in the party system during this period. The PLN's hegemony allowed them to develop a project that defined the country's economic and social evolution during the second half of the twentieth century. Some even name the Second Republic in Costa Rican politics the "Social Democratic Republic."[131]

After 1986 the PLN continues to be regarded—not without disputes—as a centre-left party. Despite the fact that its last two administrations (1986-1990 and 1994-1998) have been more receptive to neoliberal reforms, the PLN has succeeded in incorporating members of diverse ideologically backgrounds. An amalgam of ideological positions going from hard core social democrats to non-doctrinary neoliberals, are represented in a party that has proven to enjoy an astounding ideological flexibility.[132] As stressed by former Vice-President and PLN member Alberto Fait:

> "Ideologically speaking, the only social democratic belief that we all share in this party is that the economy should be at the service of society and not the other way around. We are all looking for ways to generate a better distribution of wealth, but no one is doing it by defending a dogmatic position."[133]

This phenomenon, typical of Kirchheimer's "catch-all" parties integrating a well-established two-party system,[134] has surely hampered Costa Rica's moderate Left electoral performances, and permitted the PLN to go through a rather smooth ideological transition towards the centre of the ideological spectrum since the mid-1980s.

The PLN has participated in the thirteen national elections that have taken place since 1953, winning the presidency on seven occasions (1953, 1962, 1970, 1974, 1982, 1986, and 1994). Furthermore, it obtained a congressional majority in nine

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[131] See for example, Vega-Carballo 1992, p. 204.
[132] Building on Sartori's work, Oscar Fernández has even described the PLN after 1994 as a "confederation of groups." Fernández 1996, p. 159.; Fernández 14 February 2002.
[133] Fait 20 May 1992.
[134] Kirchheimer 1966.

elections—six absolute majorities and three relative majorities—two of them (1958 and 1966) even after losing the presidency.[135] It is worth noting that until 1982 all the PLN's national presidents were also founding members of the party, showing the significance the civil war had on the party's leadership. In fact, as revealed by Alberto Cañas (one of the surviving founders of the party and a former deputy) the PLN's strongest leader—Figueres senior—retained power for almost thirty years after the armed conflict. One of Cañas' anecdotes is quite illustrative:

> "After we lost the presidential elections in 1966 don Pepe [Figueres] decided that he wanted to be the party's candidate again, even though it was Daniel's [Oduber] turn. After encountering some internal opposition, he settled things by threatening to leave the PLN and forming a new party if things were not done as he wanted. After that, all the opposition vanished."[136]

Don Pepe and the PLN won the 1970 election in what was Figueres-Ferrer's third time as Head of State. The influence of strong personalities has been abated but by no means extinguished by the institutionalisation process undergone by the PLN.

On three occasions has the PLN witnessed the departure of central figures that later formed new parties. The first one took place in 1958. In that year Jorge Rossi, who was disputing the party's candidacy with Francisco Orlich, denounced irregularities in the internal election process and left. He formed the Partido Independiente (PI), which participated in the 1958 elections. The PI disappeared shortly after this electoral contest, when its founders—most notably Rossi—returned to the PLN.[137]
The second one took place in 1974, when another party leader, Rodrigo Carazo, departed from the PLN, condemning corruption by party officials and disgruntled after being denied the Social Democrat's presidential candidacy. Carazo formed the Partido Renovación Democrática (PRD) and had a rather successful performance in the 1974 electoral contest.[138] He never returned to the PLN. On the contrary, after

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[135] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, p. 23.
[136] Cañas 17 May 1992. Daniel Oduber was the PLN's presidential candidate in 1966 and in 1974. He lost the first election and won the second one.
[137] For more details on Rossi's rupture see, Rossi 2002, Chap. VIII.; Rossi 7 August 2002; Sánchez 1992.
[138] The PRD got 9.1 per cent of the vote in the presidential contest and 7.7 in the legislative one. TSE 2002b.

coalescing with and heading the groups that opposed the PLN, he was elected president in 1978.[139] As it would be shown, the PRD was one of the parties that later formed the PUSC.

Finally, in 2001, denouncing personal attacks and claiming that is was impossible to set right a party that was dominated by corrupt leaders, former deputy and minister, Ottón Solís, abandoned the PLN. Solís created the Partido Acción Ciudana (PAC), and participated in the 2002 elections claiming to represent a different, new option for voters tired of traditional parties and politicians.[140] This strategy proved right. Supported by former voters of different parties,[141] the PAC got the best result a third party has ever achieved in Costa Rican elections since 1953.[142] Even though it is still too early to say, after the PAC's performance in the last electoral process it seems unlikely that Solís will return to the PLN.

In any case, as indicated, the Social Democrats had an overwhelming electoral dominance in Costa Rican politics until the mid-1980s. This electoral dominance was followed by a period of alternation in power with the PUSC, which lasted until 1998. As will be shown in Chapter 5, the 1998 elections marked the beginning of an evident erosion in the PLN's electoral support. This phenomenon was confirmed in the 2002 electoral process, when they not only lost the presidency for the first time ever after being in opposition, but also got the lowest support in history. After the 2002 electoral fiasco, PLN members are bitterly trying to explain the reasons for their decline, and hoping that the process can be reversed. Table 3.4 summarises the PLN's performance during the last thirteen elections.

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[139] For further details on Carazo's departure see, Carazo-Odio 1989, Chaps. V-VI.; Carazo-Odio 7 August 2002; Sánchez 1992.
[140] Solís 22 February 2002.
[141] See Appendix 6.
[142] The PAC got 26.2 percent of the popular support in the presidential election and 22 per cent in the legislative one. TSE 2002b. For more details on the 2002 elections and the performance of the PAC, see Chapter 5.

Table 3.4. Electoral Performance of the Partido Liberación Nacional, 1953-2002

| Electoral Year | Presidential Candidate | % Votes Pres. Elect. | Real % Votes Pres. Elect. (a) | Pres. Results | % Votes Leg. Elect. | # Seats Leg. Elect. | Leg. Results (c) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | José Figueres F. | 64.7 | 42.0 | Won | 64.7 | 30 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1958** (PLN and PI participated separately) | PLN: Francisco Orlich | 42.8 | 26.7 | Lost | 41.7 | 20 | Rel. Maj. |
| | PI: Jorge Rossi | 10.8 | 0.7 | Lost | 9.8 | 3 | Minority |
| **1962** | Francisco Orlich | 50.3 | 39.8 | Won | 48.9 | 29 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1966** | Daniel Oduber | 49.5 | 39.4 | Lost | 49.1 | 29 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1970** | José Figueres F. | 54.8 | 43.8 | Won | 50.7 | 32 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1974** | Daniel Oduber | 43.4 | 33.7 | Won | 40.9 | 27 | Rel. Maj. |
| **1978** | Luis A. Monge | 43.8 | 34.4 | Lost | 38.9 | 25 | Minority |
| **1982** | Luis A. Monge | 58.8 | 45.1 | Won | 55.2 | 33 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1986** | Oscar Arias | 52.3 | 41.7 | Won | 47.8 | 29 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1990** | Carlos M. Castillo | 47.2 | 37.6 | Lost | 41.9 | 25 | Minority |
| **1994** | José M. Figueres O. (b) | 49.6 | 39.3 | Won | 44.6 | 28 | Rel. Maj. |
| **1998** | José M. Corrales | 44.6 | 30.2 | Lost | 34.8 | 23 | Minority |
| **2002** | Rolando Araya | 31.1 | 20.8 | Lost | 27.1 | 17 | Minority |

(a) Percentage of votes considering absenteeism.
(b) Son of José Figueres-Ferrer.
(c) From 1953 to 1962 the assembly had 45 deputies. Afterwards, the number was extended to 57.
Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

### 4.2.2 The "Conservative Alliance" (CA)[143]

The political movements that emerged in the post-war period as the PLN's opposition constituted the second of the party families. Ironically, previous electoral and war enemies, Calderón's PRep and Ulate's PUN joined forces after the PLN's overwhelming victory in 1953. This alliance was possible because, first, the PUN distanced itself from the PLN and the PRep from the Left, and second, due to their common opposition against the PLN. The two parties remained personalistic organisations, revolving around the leadership of Calderón and Ulate until their

deaths. With this alliance, Calderón's social christian orientation and the strong loyalty of his followers, blended with PUN's old elite support and their conservative and anti-state interventionist ideological credo.

The two parties gathered around the Social Democrat's opposition in the 1953 elections, the Partido Demócrata (PD), and allied for the 1958 presidential elections when they were able to beat the PLN.[144] Their electoral defeat in 1962, after the PRep (headed by Calderón G.) and the PUN (controlled by Ulate) decided to participate separately, convinced them that the only way to successfully confront the PLN was to coalesce. Hence, they created a stable coalition (Coalición Unificación Nacional [CUN]) that succeeded in 1966. The CUN was later substituted by the Coalición Unidad (CU) (formed by the Partido Renovación Democrática [PRD], the Partido Unión Popular [PUP], the Partido Demócrata Cristiano [PDC], and the Partido Republicano Calderonista [PRC]), which headed by former PLN member Rodrigo Carazo won the 1978 elections.

Finally, in 1983, led by Rafael Ángel Calderón F. the CU members integrated into a permanent and coherent party, the Partido Unidad Social Cristiana (PUSC). A negotiation between President Monge—from the PLN—and the opposition leader Calderón F. allowed for the PLN to pass several controversial projects in congress. In turn, the PLN permitted the Electoral Code to be reformed so that the four parties that formed the CU could unite under the banner of the PUSC without losing their access to state funding.[145] President Monge justified his decision by indicating that:

> "The consolidation of the opposition would serve as a challenge and stimulus for the PLN and the party system as a whole, strengthen democracy by lessening factionalism, and build a classic two-party system."[146]

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[143] I borrowed this name from Deborah Yashar. This is how she called the political groups that opposed the PLN before the 1986 elections. Yashar 1995.
[144] In 1953, the PRep participated as the Partido Republicano Nacional Independiente (PRNI).
[145] For narrations of the events and political elite pacts that permitted the creation of PUSC see, Hernández-Naranjo 1999, pp. 142-175.; Pérez-Brignoli 1999; Corrales-Ulloa 1995; Rovira-Mas julio-setiembre 1994, p. 40.
[146] Chalker 1995, pp. 112-113.

Monge's words were almost prophetic, only overlooking PLN's and PUSC's "catch-all" behaviour and their progressive transit towards the centre of the ideological spectrum.[147] The latter can be regarded as an expected result of a political system generally characterised by the absence of relevant parties with radical ideological positions.

The PUSC has quickly become the other important political party in Costa Rica. Its first electoral appearance in 1986 marked the beginning of what Jorge Rovira-Mas has named "the two-party era." According to this author, from then on the Costa Rican party system has undoubtedly taken a bipartisan configuration.[148] Contrasting with the CA's previous electoral alliances, the PUSC promptly grew into a nationally organised and stable political group. Furthermore, it efficiently positioned itself as a centre-right party, keen to implement neoliberal reforms.[149] However, by no means can one say that the PUSC assumes neoliberalism as a doctrine. This would not be politically feasible in a party system characterised by ideological moderation. In fact, a political setting dominated by two parties with no major ideological differences—PLN at the centre-left and PUSC at the centre-right—is one of the leading characteristics of Costa Rica's party system since 1983.[150] This has been regarded as one of the reasons for the country's democratic stability, especially during the 1980's economic and political turmoil in Central America.

Since its creation the PUSC has accomplished steady electoral gains. In 1990 it won the presidential election for the first time. In this same year they were able to acquire a legislative majority, a privilege that had only been enjoyed by the PLN since 1953. Its second electoral victory came in 1998, obtaining a relative majority in congress; and its third in 2002, with similar results in the Legislative Assembly. As indicated, alternation in power between the PLN and the PUSC characterised Costa Rican

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[147] In an assessment of Costa Rica's political parties, and building on Kirchheimer's work, Oscar Fernández has indicated that both the PLN and the PUSC function as "catch all" parties. Fernández 1996, p. 157. Moreover, Jorge Rovira-Mas has demonstrated the "gravitation" of these two parties towards the centred of the ideological spectrum. Rovira-Mas 1990, pp. 55-60.

[148] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, pp. 10-14.

[149] Having an anti-state interventionist history (from the PUN's influence) facilitated PUSC's adoption of this ideological position.

[150] For the distance between the PLN and the PUSC in the ideological continuum see, Chapter 7, Table 7. 5.

electoral results between 1986 and 1998. This tendency, which according to John Peeler appeared to be firmly entrenched,[151] was broken in 2002 when the PUSC was able to re-elect itself in office for the first time in the history of PLN opponents. The political performance of the Conservative Alliance (the PUSC since 1983) is illustrated in Table 3.5.

[151] Peeler 1998, p. 174.

Table 3.5. Electoral Performance of the Conservative Alliance, (PUSC since 1983), 1953-2002

| Electoral Year | Party or Alliance | Pres. Candidate | % Votes Pres. Elect. | Real % Votes Pres. Elect. (a) | Pres. Results | % Votes Leg. Elect. | # Seats Leg. Elect. | Leg. Results (b) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | PD+PRNI+ PUN | Fernando Castro | 35.3 | 22.9 | Lost | 35.3 | 11 (PD) 3 (PRNI) 1 (PUN) | Minority |
| **1958** | (PUN+PD)+ PRep | Mario Echandi | 46.4 | 29.0 | Won | 43.7 | 11 (PRep) 10 (PUN) | Minority |
| **1962** (PRep and PUN participated separately) | PRep | Rafael A. Calderón G. | 35.3 | 28.0 | Lost | 33.5 | 18 | Minority |
| | PUN | Otilio Ulate | 13.5 | 10.7 | Lost | 13.3 | 9 | Minority |
| **1966** | CUN= (PRep+PUN) | José J. Trejos | 50.5 | 40.2 | Won | 43.3 | 26 | Minority |
| **1970** | CUN= (PRep+PUN) | Mario Echandi | 41.2 | 32.9 | Lost | 35.9 | 22 | Minority |
| **1974** | CUN= (PRep+PUN) | Fernando Trejos | 30.4 | 23.6 | Lost | 24.7 | 16 | Minority |
| **1978** | CU= (PRD+ PUP+PDC+ PRC) & [CUN] | Rodrigo Carazo | 52.2 | 39.7 | Won | 46.2 | 27 | Rel. Maj. |
| **1982** | CU= (PRD+ PUP+PDC +PRC) | Rafael A. Calderón F. (c) | 33.6 | 25.8 | Lost | 29.1 | 18 | Minority |
| **1986** | PUSC | Rafael A. Calderón F. (c) | 45.8 | 36.5 | Lost | 41.4 | 25 | Minority |
| **1990** | PUSC | Rafael A. Calderón F. (c) | 51.5 | 41.1 | Won | 46.2 | 29 | Abs. Maj. |
| **1994** | PUSC | Miguel A. Rodríguez | 47.7 | 37.8 | Lost | 40.4 | 25 | Minority |
| **1998** | PUSC | Miguel A. Rodríguez | 47.0 | 31.9 | Won | 41.2 | 27 | Rel. Maj. |
| **2002** | PUSC | Abel Pacheco | 38.9 | 25.9 | Won (d) | 29.8 | 19 | Rel. Maj. |

(a) Percentage of votes considering absenteeism.
(b) From 1953 to 1962 the assembly had 45 deputies. Afterwards, the number was extended to 57.
(c) Son of Rafael Ángel Calderón-Guardia.
(d) Won in a runoff. The results in the second round were 57.9 per cent for Pacheco (PUSC) and 42.1 for the Araya (PLN). TSE 2002b.
Note: (_+_): Coalition, _+_: Alliance only for the presidential election, [ _ ]: coalition that participated but did not elect any representatives.
Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

### 4.2.3 The Left

Finally, the Left composes the last of the party families. The origins of the Leftist movements need to be traced back to 1924, when Jorge Volio formed and led the Partido Reformista (PRef). Afterwards, in 1931, the Partido Comunista de Costa Rica (PCCR) was organised under the leadership of Manuel Mora. Before the 1940s, leftist groups had limited influence on governmental policy. As shown, this changed dramatically between 1942 and 1948 after the Left—renamed Partido Vanguardia Popular (PVP)—coalesced with Calderón's PRep.

Even though it became an official party well before the armed conflict, the Left reached a major turning point after the civil war. Deviating from the other post-war democratic reforms, the 1949 Constituent Assembly decided to ban communist movements from electoral politics. Along with the proscription of the Left came the closure of many worker unions that supported the party. In fact, from 1948 to 1953 the number of unions registered with the Ministry of Labour fell from 204 to 74.[152] This prohibition lasted until 1975. The abrupt hindrance of an ascendant political party which played a central role in governmental policy during the 1940s, hampered the consolidation of what could have been a third strong party, easing the ideological debate in the country. Ironically, this undemocratic reform benefited the development of one of the pillars of Costa Rica's democratic stability: a strong, ideologically moderated two-party system.

While banned from electoral participation the Left ran candidates under different party names in order to circumvent the prohibition. It succeeded in electing one deputy in 1962 with the Partido Acción Democrática Popular (PADP). Absent in the 1964 elections, the Left participated again in 1970 with the Partido Acción Socialista (PAS), and in 1974 with the PAS and the Partido Socialista Costarricense (PSC). The PAS elected two deputies in each election. From 1978 onwards—once the constitutional ban was lifted—the PVP restored its old name and implemented a series of electoral coalitions with other leftist parties that emerged in the 1970s (the PSC and the Partido

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[152] Yashar 1995, p. 80.

de los Trabajadores [PT]). These three parties formed the Coalición Pueblo Unido (CPU). The CPU participated in the 1978 elections along with the Partido Frente Popular Costarricense (PFPC) and the Partido Organización Socialista de los Trabajadores (POST), and as the only leftist organisation in the 1982 elections. It was during this period that the Left achieved its best electoral performance since 1948, obtaining four deputies in both elections. In 1978 three of them were elected by the CPU and one by the PFPC. In 1982 the four deputies belonged to the CPU.

However, in 1986 the CPU divided into two different coalitions, Coalición Pueblo Unido and Coalición Alianza Popular (CAP), and their performance worsened thereafter. Each coalition elected one deputy in that election, and only the CPU was able to obtain a legislative representative in 1990. Other smaller parties also participated in that year, namely, the Partido del Progreso (PP) and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores en Lucha (PRTL). In 1994 the PVP offered a Left wing option; while in 1998 the Partido Pueblo Unido (PPU)—no longer a coalition—and the Nuevo Partido Democrático (NPD) entered the electoral race. In those same elections (1994 and 1998) the newly formed Partido Fuerza Democrática (PFD) elected two and three representatives respectively.[153]

The PFD does not present itself as a leftist movement, yet members from different sectors of this tradition make up the party. This political group started to show some signs of stability, which suggested that it might have initiated an institutionalisation process. However, it was seriously weakened by internal disputes prior to the 2002 elections, and by the emergence of other more appealing third parties—most notably the PAC. Certainly, PAC's appearance also hindered the performance of the Coalición Cambio 2000 (CC2000) and of the Partido Independiente Obrero (PIO), two other Left wing parties that participated in these elections.[154] As a result, the Left ended with no congressional representation after the 2002 electoral process. This has never happened since the 1966 elections (when no Leftist party participated). The

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[153] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, pp. 26-28.; TSE 2002b. For further discussion on the history of the Left in Costa Rica see, Salom 1987; Merino del Río 1996.
[154] As indicated by CC2000 leader, Walter Coto-Molina. Coto-Molina 5 August 2002.

Left's disappointing results in 2002 seem to be the expected outcome of a long-standing tradition of internal conflicts and fragmentation.

In general terms, the Costa Rican Left—the PFD included—has proposed a moderate, reformist agenda instead of revolutionary goals.[155] Among the factors that have contributed to its unimpressive electoral performance (summarised in Table 3.6) are: the political repression suffered after 1948, the lack of ideological and organisational unity, a highly anti-communist press, and constant tensions with Revolutionary Nicaragua during the 1980s.[156] Other factors hampering the Left's electoral results surely include Duverger's "mechanical" and "psychological" effects characteristic of two-party systems,[157] the PLN's ideological flexibility, the progressive transition of the majority of voters and of the two main parties towards the centre of the ideological spectrum, and, in the case of the 2002 elections, the emergence of a more appealing centre-left third party (the PAC). Consequently, after the 1948 Civil War and until the 2002 elections, leftist movements have not posed a serious threat to the PLN and the CA—later the PUSC—political hegemony.

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[155] This moderation has driven other regional Left movements to question whether the Costa Rican Left is communist at all.
[156] Chalker 1995, pp. 113-114., Booth 1999, p. 442.
[157] Duverger 1987, p. 252. Duverger's effects and their bearing to the Costa Rican case are discussed in Chapter 4.

Table 3.6. Electoral Performance of the Left, 1962-2002

| Electoral Year | Party or Coalition | % Votes Pres. Elect. | Real % Votes Pres. Elect. (a) | Pres. Results | % Votes Leg. Elect. | # Seats Leg. Elect. | Leg. Results (b) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1962** | PADP | 0.9 | 0.7 | Lost | 2.5 | 1 | Minority |
| **1966** (c) | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| **1970** | PAS | 1.3 | 1.1 | Lost | 5.5 | 2 | Minority |
| **1974** | PAS & [PSC] | 2.9 | 2.2 | Lost | 5.3 | 2 | Minority |
| **1978** | CPU= (PVP+PSC +PT) & PFPC [POST] | 3.0 | 2.3 | Lost | 9.7 | 4 | Minority |
| **1982** | CPU | 3.3 | 2.6 | Lost | 6.4 | 4 | Minority |
| **1986** (CPU and CAP participated separately) | CPU | 0.6 | 0.4 | Lost | 2.7 | 1 | Minority |
| | CAP | 0.8 | 0.6 | Lost | 2.4 | 1 | Minority |
| **1990** | CPU & [PP, PRTL] | 0.9 | 0.8 | Lost | 3.9 | 1 | Minority |
| **1994** | PFD & [PVP] | 1.9 | 1.5 | Lost | 6.7 | 2 | Minority |
| **1998** | PFD & [PPU, NPD] | 3.4 | 2.3 | Lost | 7.8 | 3 | Minority |
| **2002** | [PFD, CC2000, PIO] | 0.6 | 0.4 | Lost | 3.4 | 0 | — |

(a) Percentage of votes considering absenteeism.
(b) From 1953 to 1962 the assembly had 45 deputies. Afterwards, the number was extended to 57.
(c) No leftist party participated in the 1966 elections.
Note: (_+_): Coalition, [ _ ]: parties or coalitions that participated but did not elect any representatives.
Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

### *4.3 In summary*

The 1948 Civil War profoundly influenced Costa Rica's political development. In the first place, it is only after the end of the armed conflict that one can safely claim that the country started its democratic history and that popular, competitive, fraud-free elections became part of the national political culture. In the second place, once the battle was over, it was clear that the oligarchy had lost its political monopoly, having to share power with the working sectors and, in particular, with the rising middle class. In the third place, it is after the civil war that central political reforms like the

weakening of the presidency and the strengthening of the congress, and the abolition of the army were accomplished. Moreover, it is during this period that key electoral reforms (which included the expansion of the electorate, the establishment of concurrent elections, and the reconstitution of the TSE and of the National Register) provided a stable political environment suitable for strong political parties to develop.

In the fourth place, it is after 1948 with a divided country, that the main figures of the civil war—Figueres-Ferrer and Calderón-Guardia—created political parties or party coalitions in order to canalise their popular support. Even if centred around their leaders, these political groups had clear ideological groundings (social democratic and social christian). Later, the two main parties—first the PLN and then the PUSC—developed the capacity to integrate under their banners diverse social, economic, and political groups.[158] Finally, on a darker note, it is during this period that the Communist Party was temporarily banned from electoral competition, losing its historical momentum and its organisational strength. Nonetheless, the Left's exclusion certainly eased the way for ideological moderation and bipartism, two features greatly responsible for Costa Rica's political stability during times of regional turmoil.

A stable political and institutional climate, a politically divided country, two confronted leaders guiding different broad political options, and the prohibition of the third relevant political organisation, provided an ideal scenario for the "birth" of a strong party system, progressively evolving towards bipartism. As a way of summarising the historical development of the country's electoral institutions and the performance of the main parties or coalitions of its party families, Table 3.7 shows the results of the Costa Rican elections from 1953 to 2002.

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[158] This is, according to Sartori, a central characteristic of two-party systems. Sartori 1992, p. 244.

Table 3.7. Costa Rican Elections Results, 1953-2002

| Electoral Year | Party or Coalition | Pres. Elect. (% of votes and elected President) | Leg. Elect. (% of seats) | Absenteeism | % Population Registered to Vote |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1953 | PLN | 64.7 (José Figueres F.) | 66.7 | 32.8 | 33.8 |
| | PD | 35.3 | 24.4 | | |
| | PRNI | — | 6.7 | | |
| | PUN | — | 2.2 | | |
| 1958 | PLN | 42.8 | 44.4 | 35.3 | 33.7 |
| | PUN | 46.4 (Mario Echandi) | 22.2 | | |
| | PI | 10.1 | 6.7 | | |
| | Prep | — | 24.4 | | |
| | Other | — | 2.2 | | |
| 1962 | PLN | 50.3 (Francisco Orlich) | 50.9 | 19.1 | 38.7 |
| | Prep | 35.3 | 31.6 | | |
| | PUN | 13.5 | 15.8 | | |
| | PAD | 0.9 | 1.7 | | |
| 1966 | PLN | 49.5 | 50.9 | 18.6 | 36.6 |
| | CUN | 50.5 (José J. Trejos) | 45.6 | | |
| | Other | — | 3.5 | | |
| 1970 | PLN | 54.8 (José Figueres F.) | 56.1 | 16.7 | 39.5 |
| | CUN | 41.2 | 38.6 | | |
| | PAS | 1.3 | 3.5 | | |
| | Other | 2.7 | 1.7 | | |
| 1974 | PLN | 43.4 (Daniel Oduber) | 47.4 | 20.1 | 45.9 |
| | CUN | 30.4 | 28.1 | | |
| | PAS | 2.4 | 3.5 | | |
| | Other | 23.8 | 21.0 | | |
| 1978 | PLN | 43.8 | 43.9 | 18.7 | 50.4 |
| | CU | 50.5 (Rodrigo Carazo) | 47.4 | | |
| | CPU | 2.7 | 5.3 | | |
| | Other | 3.0 | 3.4 | | |
| 1982 | PLN | 58.8 (Luis A. Monge) | 57.9 | 21.4 | 53.9 |
| | CU | 33.6 | 31.6 | | |
| | CPU | 3.3 | 7.0 | | |
| | Other | 4.3 | 3.4 | | |
| 1986 | PLN | 52.3 (Oscar Arias) | 50.9 | 18.2 | 55.6 |
| | PUSC | 45.8 | 43.9 | | |
| | CPU | 0.6 | 1.7 | | |
| | CAP | 0.8 | 1.7 | | |
| | Other | 0.5 | 1.7 | | |
| 1990 | PLN | 47.2 | 43.9 | 18.2 | 57.2 |
| | PUSC | 51.5 (Rafael A. Calderón F.) | 50.9 | | |
| | CPU | 0.7 | 1.7 | | |
| | Other | 0.6 | 3.4 | | |
| 1994 | PLN | 49.6 (José M. Figueres O.) | 49.1 | 18.9 | 58.2 |
| | PUSC | 47.7 | 43.9 | | |
| | PFD | 1.9 | 3.5 | | |
| | Other | 0.8 | 3.5 | | |
| 1998 | PLN | 44.6 | 40.3 | 30.0 | 55.6 |
| | PUSC | 47.0 (Miguel A. Rodríguez) | 47.4 | | |
| | PFD | 3.0 | 5.1 | | |
| | Other | 5.4 | 7.0 | | |
| 2002 | PLN | 31.1 | 29.8 | 31.2 | 56.5 |
| | PUSC | 38.6 (Abel Pacheco) (a) | 33.3 | | |
| | PFD | 0.3 | 0 | | |
| | Other | 30.0 | 36.8 | | |

Note: Due to rounding, totals for each election may not add to 100 per cent.
(a) This presidential election was decided in a runoff where Abel Pacheco (PUSC) got 58 per cent of the vote, defeating Rolando Araya (PLN) who obtained 42.
Sources: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b; Núñez and Rosales 1999, pp. 9-17.

## 5 Final Observations

More than a hundred years since the appearance of the first political parties and more than fifty since the crucial cleavage of 1948, parties have proven to be at the base of Costa Rica's democratic evolution. Throughout this process, political parties have undergone a process of institutional development, evolving from unstable and personalistic institutions, to fairly strong members of a stable two-party system. A comprehensive analysis of political parties' historical development revealed the main structural elements responsible for this process. In order to do this, the present chapter was presented in three parts. The first one dealt with the most important events during the First Republic (1889-1948), the second one assessed the reasons of the 1948 Civil War, and the third one evaluated the main political outcomes of this political cleavage.

The first fifty years of the First Republic were characterised by the formation of unstable, personalistic parties, highly dependent on the oligarchy. Parties were mainly vehicles used by charismatic leaders to access power. Nevertheless, it is during this period that the first steps towards their institutionalisation were taken. These steps included: parties using the same name in subsequent elections, the formation of an ideological, coherent leftist party, and several electoral reforms (including direct voting, the elimination of educational and economic voting restrictions, lowering the presidential election threshold to 40 per cent, the creation of an electoral tribunal, and the granting of a monopoly on the nomination of candidates to the parties). Furthermore, it is during this period that the first strong political party, the PRep, appeared. The political confrontation between a dominant party and other unstable political movements distinguished the country's party system during most of these years. A considerable ideological affinity existed between the contending groups.

The next eight years (1940-1948) were characterised by the creation of the 1946 Electoral Code (which established an electoral tribunal, a national register, and electoral units) and, especially, by the loss of PRep's hegemony. This party's dominance was replaced by the emergence of two unstable and equally strong coalitions (the PRep, the Left and Monsignor Sanabria in one hand, and the PSD and the PUN in the other). Parties in these coalitions appealed to and represented different

social classes—not only the oligarchy—in order to increase their electoral base. This, plus the previous electoral reforms, permitted the expansion of the "vote market." Strong leaders headed the different parties in the coalitions (Calderón, Mora, Figueres, and Ulate). As we will see in Chapter 7, regardless of forming part of one of Latin America's better institutionalised party systems, their personalistic origins have very much moulded Costa Rican parties' internal dynamics. However, it should also be said that by this time parties already had—maybe with the exception of the PUN—some ideological grounding (social christian, communist, or social democratic). There were clear conflicting projects in each coalition (especially among the PSD and the PUN), yet they were masked by the 1948 electoral dispute, and later by the civil war.

In sum, this period saw the appearance of political parties with strong individual leaderships, but also with distinctive ideological projects. These parties integrated alliances which formed a party system characterised by the struggle of two strong, nonetheless, unstable coalitions formed mainly on the basis of common electoral enemies rather than on shared political beliefs. The confronted coalitions had ideological differences. However, they were more pronounced within the opposing coalition than between the two contesting alliances.

The post-war period witnessed several crucial political events. These included: central institutional reforms like the weakening of the presidency and the strengthening of the assembly, the abolition of the army, and key electoral reforms (among them: the establishment of concurrent elections, the expansion of the electorate, and the reconstitution of the TSE and of the National Register). These achievements provided a stable political environment, apt for political parties to speed up their institutionalisation process. Likewise, it is during this period that two of the three main party families in Costa Rican politics were formed. Two of them, the social democratic family as the PLN, and the social christian one as the PUSC, evolved into the main parties in the country's actual two-party system.

During this same period the third party family, the communist one, was politically repressed and electorally weakened. The PLN clearly dominated Costa Rica's politics from 1953 to 1983, an interval in which the party system was characterised—as in the

first part of the First Republic—by the prevalence of one dominant party opposed by an unstable coalition. The organisational weakness of the conservative opposition prevented their ideas from challenging the PLN's social democratic credo. Thus, the existing ideological differences were not enough to generate an alternative project. Finally, the formation of the PUSC in 1983 and its participation in the 1986 elections started the two-party era, and the progressive movement of the two main parties towards the centre of the ideological spectrum. Even if with some reservations after the 1998 elections, bipartism characterises the country's politics until present days.

It is worth noting that, independently of the strength of the parties or coalitions, the Costa Rican party system has been characterised by some kind of bipolar confrontation since the 1936 elections. This dual-shaped confrontation process in party competition has been influenced by particular political decisions, as well as by general electoral reforms.[159] Indeed, internal forces like the ability of central political actors to promote or influence political reforms, have certainly induced the party system toward a dual form. Clear examples of this were the political negotiations and elite pacts that permitted the creation of the PUSC, the banning of the Left, and the reduction of the threshold needed to win the elections in the first round.[160]

These three examples support Sartori's claim regarding the capacity of two-party systems to promote their own favourable conditions.[161] They also endorse Mainwaring's argument concerning the governing elite's ability to reshape the party system "from above."[162] Nevertheless, the fact that this phenomenon is observed in Costa Rica disputes with this author's idea of it being basically a third-wave democracy characteristic.[163] In any case, the formation of the PUSC, the weakening of the Left, and the lowering of the threshold in the presidential elections are clear

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[159] The influence exerted by the electoral system on the party system is analysed in Chapter 4.
[160] Another example of internal forces enhancing bipartism in Costa Rica are the inter-party negotiations regarding party finance that have been taking place since 1956. Oscar Fernández has studied this process in several of his works. See for example, Fernández 1993; Fernández 1996, pp. 151-154.; Fernández 1993a, pp. 178-180.; Fernández 1991, pp. 69-71.
[161] Sartori 1992, p. 246.
[162] Mainwaring 1999, pp. 54-58.
[163] Mainwaring 1999, pp. 54-58.

examples of endogenous forces acting on the formation process of Costa Rica's party system.

Another salient characteristic of the historical development of the country's party system is the absence of major ideological confrontations. Mainwaring and Scully have argued that democratic stability is facilitated when limited or moderate ideological polarisation enhances the prospects for stable party competition.[164] Having no profound ideological differences among the major political groups competing for power in the development process of the party system (a feature surely enhanced by the weakening of the Left after 1948) can be regarded as one of the reasons for Costa Rica's democratic stability.

In fact, a study published in 1995 by the previously cited authors demonstrates that among Latin American countries, Costa Rica's party system presents one of lowest levels of ideological polarisation.[165] This ideological centrism, especially prominent during the two-party era, is a product of what Rovira-Mas regards as, "very similar programmatic offers from the two main parties due to extremely concentrated and close electoral outcomes."[166] As contended by a highly ranked PUSC official, "Ideologically speaking the PLN and the PUSC have quite similar positions".[167] The progressive development of what local academics defined as "ideological mimetism"[168] in the Costa Rican party system has surely supported the country's peaceful transit towards democratic maturity. Nonetheless, being able to distinguish parties' agendas when choosing between them is central for the democratic process. As it will be shown in Chapter 7, significant ideological similarities between Costa Rica's main parties after the mid-1980s have caused some kind of an "identity crisis" amongst their members and followers, especially those of the PLN.

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[164] Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, p. 2.
[165] Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, p. 31.
[166] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, p. 34.
[167] Madrigal 12 January 2002. This claim has also been posited by several academics and politicians. See for example, Hernández-Rodríguez 15 February 2002; Ordóñez 7 February 2002; Arias-Sánchez 19 January 2002; Bravo 27 February 2002.
[168] Fernández diciembre 1994, pp. 56-57.; Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, p. 34.

Finally, it should be highlighted that even if the nature of the electoral confrontation in the country since 1936 has been essentially bipolar, it took a civil war and thirty-five years (from 1948 to 1983, when the PUSC was created), for the 1948 political cleavage to formally adopt a two-party system structure. Indeed, it is not until the beginning of the 1980s that Costa Rica's party system finally evolved from a multi-party system with a dominant party, to its actual bipartism. While the PLN was established right after the civil war ended (in 1951), the PUSC, even if one could trace its roots all the way back to 1948, was not created until four decades later. As we will see in Chapter 6, this phenomenon produced observable differences in the way the 1948 battle has influenced PLN and PUSC followers' partisan loyalties. Table 3.8 illustrates the evolution of the country's party system from 1889 to 2002.

Table 3.8. Historical Development of the Party System in Costa Rica, 1889-2002

| Period | General Characterisation of the Party System | Nature of Electoral Confrontation | Ideological Differences |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1889-1940** | Multi-party system with a dominant party | Multi-party (1889-1932) / Bipolar (1936-1940) | Low |
| **1940-1948** | Two strong but unstable coalitions opposing each other | Bipolar | Moderate |
| **1948-1983** | Multi-party system with a dominant party | Bipolar | Moderate |
| **1983-** | Two-party system | Bipolar | Low |

Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

In conclusion, Costa Rica's democratic development has been characterised by the progressive institutional and ideological evolution of its political parties. Promoted by the constant development of electoral reforms and by policies agreed by a proficient civilian political elite, the country's parties went from personalistic and dependant parties of notables to more stable and modern political institutions. During this process the party system evolved, without major ideological confrontations, through different phases of bipolar configurations until developing into the current two-party system. This process has historical roots dating back to the end of the 19$^{th}$ century, and was profoundly influenced by the 1948 Civil War and its political consequences. Indeed, regardless of reaching a high level of institutionalisation for Latin American

standards, the imprint of the central figures leading Costa Rica's democratic development after the civil war is well embedded in this country's main political parties. All in all, Costa Rica's democracy and the configuration and strength of its party system are a product of a long process of sustained political transformations. This process—still a work in progress—was catalysed by individuals who found in the development of institutions the most efficient way to accomplish their political goals.

# Chapter 4

## The Electoral System: Institutional Incentives for a Stable Two-Party System

## 1 Introduction

The electoral system, or "the method by which the citizens elect their representatives,"[1] is a central institutional factor with a direct influence on the outcomes of democracy. Following Sartori, electoral rules determine "how votes are translated into seats" and consequently, "they shape the party system and affect the spectrum of representation."[2] By nature, institutional incentives should aim for stability. However, as demonstrated by Bartolini and Mair, changes in electoral rules (namely, the incorporation of newly enfranchised voters and changes in electoral systems) have a strong impact on electoral dynamics, associated with high levels of volatility.[3] In fact, possible modifications to the "rules of the game" should be one of the first explanations to test when analysing electoral change processes.

Nevertheless, this has not been the case in Costa Rica. As explained in Chapter 1, changes in the country's electoral dynamics have been evident since 1998. However, no major modifications capable of varying national voting patterns have taken place in the country's electoral rules prior to this election.[4] And, as illustrated in Chapter 3, when this happened years before, they supported the consolidation of a two-party system. More than an element inducing electoral change, Costa Rica's electoral system seems to be a factor maintaining stability. This has led many local analysts to claim that Costa Rica's electoral system is at the base of its party system.[5]

Certainly, the electoral system is one of the institutional elements that exert greatest influence on political parties and on the configuration of their system.[6] As acknowledged by Dahl, "probably no political institutions shape the political

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[1] Nohlen 1995, p. 9.
[2] Sartori 1997, p. 3.
[3] Bartolini and Mair 1990, Chap. 6.
[4] The most important recent changes in terms of electoral rules had taken place in the internal electoral processes of the PLN and the PUSC. Among these changes are: 1) electing the presidential, legislative, and municipal candidates via an open direct election (the winners of the legislative and municipal processes are then included in the parties' lists), and 2) the appointment, by law, of at least 40 per cent female candidates in eligible positions.
[5] See for example, Urbina 2000, pp. 63-97.; Niehaus 2000, pp. 99-119.; Castro diciembre 1999, pp. 35-50.; Hernández-Naranjo 1999.
[6] For two good analyses of electoral systems in Latin America and the Caribbean see, Molina 2000b; Jones 1993.

landscape of a democratic country more than its electoral system and its political parties."[7] It certainly can be stated, as has Duverger, that the relationship between electoral rules and party systems is not "mechanical and automatic: A particular electoral regime does not necessarily produce a particular party system."[8] However, as this author argues, electoral rules do exert pressure over the party system towards a particular direction, they are "accelerators or brakes."[9]

The previous chapter assessed the historical factors that influenced the country's party system. This chapter concentrates on the main effects that the electoral rules have on voters and, through them, on the party system's configuration. Specifically it deals with the analysis of those "accelerators or brakes" present in the Costa Rican electoral system which have induced the formation of a party system taking a dual form.

The chapter is divided into five sections. After an introduction posing its main objective, the second section analyses the relationship between the presidential elections and the two-party system. The third section attempts a similar analysis focusing on legislative elections. The fourth section slightly changes the note, as it studies the possibility of party system change, in light of the varying electoral dynamics in Costa Rica. Finally, the fifth section consists of a set of final observations regarding the influence of the electoral system on both elections and the consolidation of a two-party system in the country.

## 2 Presidential Elections

Costa Rica is ruled by a presidential government.[10] As explained in Chapter 3, the country's central electoral body is the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE). The Electoral Code was first established in 1946 and underwent a general reform in 1952.

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[7] Dahl 2000, p. 130.
[8] Duverger 1986, pp. 71-73.
[9] Duverger 1986, pp. 71-73.
[10] According to Shugart and Carey a presidential government is characterised by: 1) the popular election of the chief executive, 2) the terms of the chief executive and assembly are fixed, and are not contingent on mutual confidence, 3) the elected executive names and directs the composition of the government and 4) the president has some constitutionally granted lawmaking authority. Shugart and

Now, with several changes, it is the main legal instrument governing electoral processes in the country. It is worth noting that the voting age was reduced from 20 (the age that applied from the 1953 to the 1970 elections) to 18 years in the early 1970s, and that although voting is compulsory, there are no legal mechanisms to penalise those who abstain.

The Costa Rican President and his two Vice-Presidents are elected to four-year terms by direct national voting—the whole country is considered as a single constituency—among all political parties that field candidates in the national election. The winner is the party that obtains more than 40 per cent of all the valid votes registered. In other words, a single district, relative majority system is implemented to elect the president and the vice-presidents.[11] If none of the contenders obtains more than 40 per cent, a runoff, where participation is restricted to the two most voted candidates, is organised two months after the first electoral process. Established in 1936, the 40 per cent threshold was a rather easily attainable goal for parties until the 2002 elections. In that year, and for the first time in the country's modern political history, none of the presidential candidates reached the threshold and a runoff was needed to elect the president. As mentioned in the previous chapter, until 1969 presidential reelection was permitted only after an eight-year intervening period. In that year the act was repealed by a constitutional reform. However, in 2003 the Constitutional Court reinstated the pre-1969 rule.

### *2.1 The Majority Rule*

Two central elements of the presidential elections rules seem to have driven the Costa Rican party system towards a dual form: the constraining nature of the majority system itself and the 40 per cent threshold needed by candidates to win the elections in the first round. To begin with, the majority system—characteristic of

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Carey 1992, p. 19. For different analyses regarding the perils and advantages of presidentialism see, Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997.

[11] In elections where the *majority* rule is applied (as in Costa Rica) if no candidate reaches a percentage of the votes previously stipulated by law (the legal threshold), a second round is held to determine the winner. Alternatively, when the *plurality* rule is used the party that obtains most of the votes in the first

presidentialism—is one the main factors "pushing" Costa Rican voters to support a two-party system. Maurice Duverger was probably the first one that described the effect of single-majority vote used in conjunction with single-member districts, as an electoral combination that favours the formation of two-party systems. He characterised this relationship as "nearly a sociological law."[12]

According to Duverger, bipartism is a result of two factors that he labelled the "mechanical" and the "psychological" effects. The mechanical effect refers to the under representation—or in the case of presidential elections non-representation—of second and third parties due to the "winner takes all" nature of the majority system. The psychological effect is explained as the decision of citizens, even of those who may support third parties, to vote for one of the two major parties with a real chance to win in order not to "waste" their vote.[13] This "rational" selection of a party by citizens, regardless of whether one of them is their most preferred alternative, is known as "sophisticated voting."[14] Aside from the debate that Duverger's observations have provoked[15] (not assessed in this analysis), other authors such as Dahl, Ware, and Sartori (this last one with a reformulation of Duverger's laws) have agreed with the general principle that majority voting is likely to reduce the number of parties.[16] This type of system tends to handicap third parties and, by doing so, it enhances the development of two-party systems.

As demonstrated in Table 4.1, until 1998 Costa Rican citizens had privileged dualism in their voting behaviour. This table also shows that with three exceptions (1962, 1974, and the most recent 2002 election), the two main political forces have been favoured by nearly or more than 90 per cent of the votes. This phenomenon is especially salient during the 1986, 1990, and 1994 contests. It is also worth noting that during this period (1986-1994) the differences between the two major parties tended to drop. This trend ended in 1998 and was followed by a significant rise in the

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and only round wins. Shugart and Carey 1992, pp. 209-210. In some countries the plurality system is also known as FPTP or *First Past The Post.*

[12] Duverger 1987, p. 145.

[13] Duverger 1987, p. 252.

[14] Duverger 1986, p 34. For further details on "sophisticated" or "strategic voting" see, Cox 1997, Chaps. 2-3.

[15] See for example, Grofman and Lijphart 1986.

[16] Dahl 2000, pp. 130-141.; Ware 1996, pp. 190-196.; Sartori 1997, pp. 27-52.

2002 contest. Altogether, from 1953 to 1998, Costa Rica's presidential elections illustrate the evolution of a two-party system. Likewise, the results of the last four electoral processes in this period show clear evidence of the consolidation of this system.

The 2002 elections, which witnessed the participation of the PAC (the most successful third party in Costa Rican modern political history),[17] put into question the strength of the country's bipartism. Nevertheless it is still early to say whether this newly formed party, now basically an electoral movement,[18] will grow into a stable party capable of altering the two-party dominance that have characterised local politics since 1953.

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[17] Several PAC officials and local analysts argue that this party's electoral support started to grow once citizens believed it had real chances of winning the presidential election, or at least forcing a runoff. In other words, the PAC was able to overcome Duverger's psychological effect. Feoli 14 February 2002; Arce 12 February 2002; Fernández 14 February 2002. Chapter 5 examines the PAC's electoral performance.

Table 4.1. Electoral Results of the Costa Rican Presidential Elections, 1953-2002

| Electoral Years | Political Party or Coalition | % Votes by Contestant | % Votes by two Major Contestants | % Difference Winner and Second Place |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | Liberación Nacional | 64.7 | 100.0 | 29.4 |
| | Demócrata (a) | 35.3 | | |
| **1958** | Unión Nacional (b) | 46.4 | 89.2 | 3.6 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 42.8 | | |
| | Independiente | 10.8 | | |
| **1962** | Liberación Nacional | 50.3 | 85.6 | 15.0 |
| | Republicano | 35.3 | | |
| | Other (2 parties) | 14.4 | | |
| **1966** | Unificación Nacional (c) | 50.5 | 100.0 | 0.96 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 49.5 | | |
| **1970** | Liberación Nacional | 54.8 | 96.0 | 13.6 |
| | Unificación Nacional | 41.2 | | |
| | Other (3 parties) | 4.0 | | |
| **1974** | Liberación Nacional | 43.4 | 73.8 | 13.0 |
| | Unificación Nacional | 30.4 | | |
| | Other (6 parties) | 26.2 | | |
| **1978** | Coalición Unidad (d) | 50.5 | 94.3 | 6.7 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 43.8 | | |
| | Other (5 parties) | 5.7 | | |
| **1982** | Liberación Nacional | 58.8 | 92.4 | 25.2 |
| | Coalición Unidad | 33.6 | | |
| | Other (4 parties) | 7.6 | | |
| **1986** | Liberación Nacional | 52.3 | 98.1 | 6.6 |
| | Unidad Social Cristiana | 45.8 | | |
| | Other (4 parties) | 1.9 | | |
| **1990** | Unidad Social Cristiana | 51.5 | 98.7 | 4.3 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 47.2 | | |
| | Other (5 parties) | 1.3 | | |
| **1994** | Liberación Nacional | 49.6 | 97.3 | 1.9 |
| | Unidad Social Cristiana | 47.7 | | |
| | Other (5 parties) | 2.7 | | |
| **1998** | Unidad Social Cristiana | 46.9 | 91.5 | 2.3 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 44.6 | | |
| | Other (11 parties) | 8.5 | | |
| **2002 (e)** | Unidad Social Cristina | 38.6 | 69.7 | 7.5 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 31.1 | | |
| | Acción Ciudadana | 26.2 | | |
| | Other (10 parties) | 7.1 | | |

(a) Allied with the Partido Unión Nacional.
(b) Allied with the Partido Demócrata and supported by the Partido Republicano.
(c) Coalition integrated by the Partidos Republicano and Unión Nacional.
(d) Coalition integrated by the Partidos: Renovación Democrática, Unión Popular, Demócrata Cristiano, and Republicano Calderonista.
(e) A runoff was needed to elect the president. In it the PUSC won with 58 per cent of the votes, over 42 per cent obtained by the PLN.

Sources: Hernández-Naranjo 2001, p. 257.; TSE 2002b.

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[18] Fernández 14 February 2002; Borge 11 March 2002; Carazo 28 February 2002; Rodríguez 1 March 2002; Trigueros 1 March 2002.

## 2.2 *The 40 per cent Threshold*

The other central feature of presidential elections rules that have driven the Costa Rican party system towards dualism is the 40 per cent threshold needed to win the race in the first round. This is a unique feature of the Costa Rican presidential elections, as it cannot be found anywhere else in the region.[19] This rather low threshold drove Shugart and Carey to define the Costa Rican electoral system as an "effective plurality."[20] According to these authors:

> "The 40 per cent threshold may be likened to a safety valve, encouraging broad coalitions, like plurality, but with a built-in mechanism that prevents a winner with very limited endorsement in a multi-candidate race."[21]

As contended by Oscar Fernández when dealing with the Costa Rican case, the 40 per cent threshold is an efficient incentive to conceive political parties or build coalitions big enough to win elections in the first round.[22]

Indeed, this objective (more than 40 per cent of the valid votes) seems to be attainable in the first round by strong enough political movements. This was certainly the case in Costa Rica until the 2002 elections. Thus, when such a threshold is applied, most of the coalition formation—if needed—happens before the first election.[23] This is not the case in majority-elections (which tend to coexist with multi-party systems, when there are provisions for a runoff) where political parties do not have an incentive to build strong coalitions until the period between elections in order to race for the final round. Plurality elections—effective plurality in Costa Rica—exert a centripetal force that "pushes" the party system towards dualism. This claim, first posited for the

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[19] Politicians in Nicaragua were influenced by the Costa Rican case while reforming their electoral laws. In January 2000 a political pact between the right wing, Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC), and the leftist, Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), permitted the lowering of the threshold for the election of the president without a runoff from 45 to 40 per cent (or to 35 if the winner has a five point advantage over the runner-up). Close March and April 2003. Local analysts defined this political manoeuvre as, "An irrational move towards a two-party system." Team 2000. Other Latin American countries that apply variants of the majority rule in their presidential elections are Argentina (with a mixed formula) and, since 2002, Ecuador. For further details see, Molina 2000b, pp. 39-45.

[20] Shugart and Carey 1992, p. 209.

[21] Shugart and Carey 1992, p. 217.

[22] Fernández 1991, p. 71.

[23] Shugart and Carey 1992, pp. 289-292.

Costa Rican case by Fernández,[24] is supported by Shugart and Carey by explaining that the two main features of plurality systems are: 1) a tendency of forming a broad coalition behind the front-runner and 2) the opposition's tendency to coalesce behind one challenger.[25]

Table 4.1 shows that the winning parties in all the elections from 1953 to 1998 have easily exceeded the 40 per cent threshold. As explained, this was not the case in 2002. This table also reveals that in general terms (with the exception again of the 2002 contest) voters' support has concentrated around two main political forces. The social democratic PLN raced against different party alliances or coalitions from 1953 to 1982.[26] These opposition forces eventually merged to form a single permanent social christian political party (the PUSC) in 1983, and participated as a single party for the first time in 1986. From then on, as has been thoroughly demonstrated by Rovira-Mas,[27] a two-party system has characterised Costa Rican politics.

Additionally, Graph 4.1 demonstrates that the plurality system does not seem to prevent other political parties from presenting candidates in the presidential race. The increase in the number of parties participating in these elections is particularly notable after the electoral process of 1970, and unusually high in the 1998 and 2002 elections. Nevertheless, the Effective Number of Parties at the presidential level (ENPpres),[28] with the exceptions of 1974 and 2002 when it reached 3.3 and 3.2 respectively, has consistently been around 2. Or, in other words, in 11 out of 13 presidential elections studied voters' support has concentrated around two main political groups. In fact, the average ENPpres for the thirteen elections is 2.3, while the average number of parties participating in presidential elections in this period is 6.5. This may well be a sign of Costa Ricans implementing sophisticated voting.

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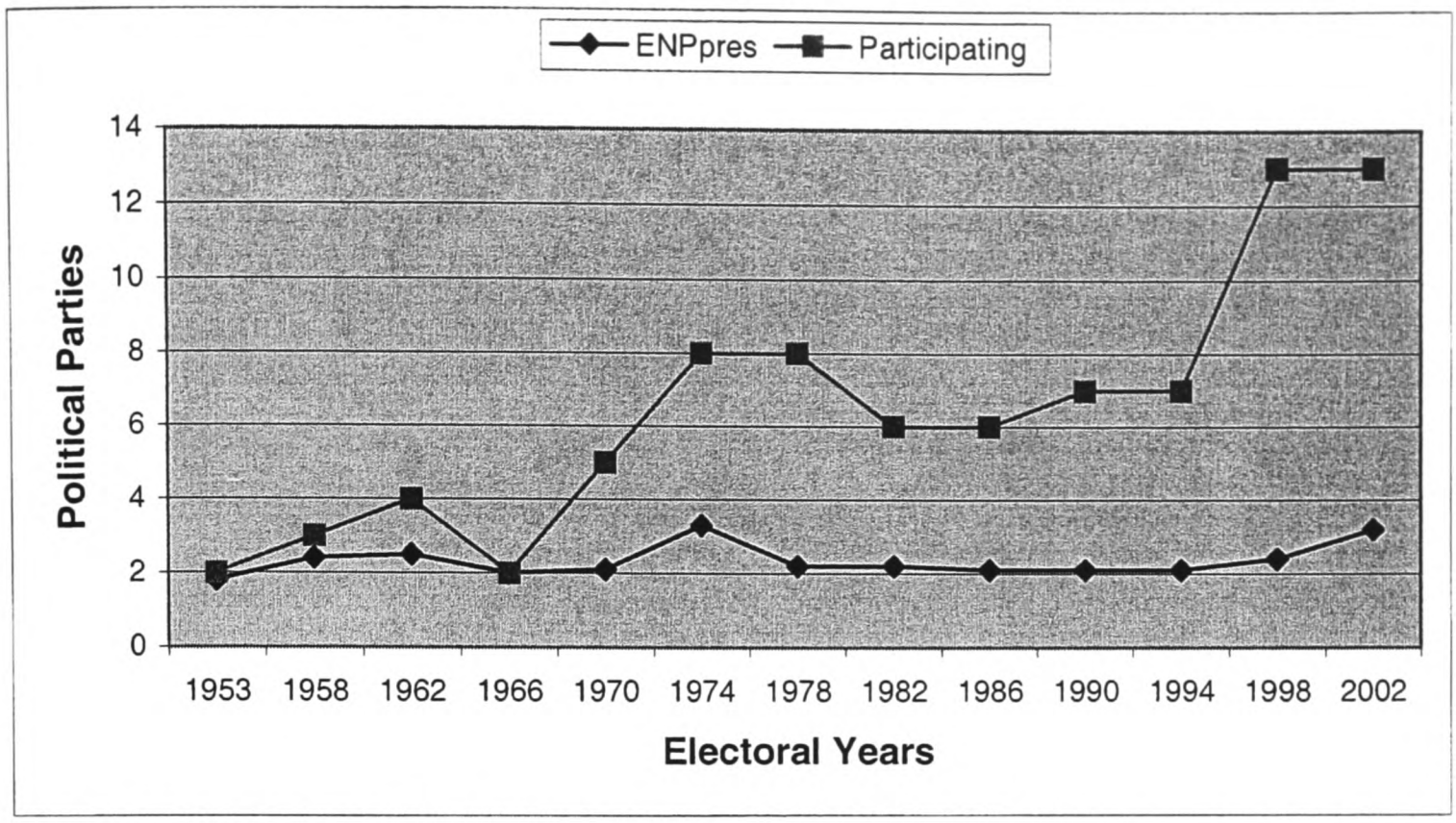
[24] Fernández 1991, pp. 71-72.; Fernández 1992, p. 29.; Fernández mayo-junio 1994.
[25] Shugart and Carey 1992, p. 209.
[26] Strictly speaking, the Costa Rican party system cannot be defined as a two-party system until 1983, but the main characteristics of a dual party behaviour—as explained in Chapter 3—can be found in the country's political setting years before.
[27] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998; Rovira-Mas 1990.
[28] "The effective number of parties is the number of hypothetical *equal*-size parties that would have the same total *effect* on the fractionalization of the system as have the actual parties of *unequal* size." Italics in the original. ENP: $1/(\Sigma p_i^2)$, where "p" is the share of votes obtained by each party. Laakso and Taagepera 1979.

Graph 4.1. ENPpres and Number of Political Parties Participating in the Costa Rican Presidential Elections, 1953-2002




Sources: Hernández-Naranjo 2001, p. 261.; TSE 2002b.

In conclusion, a single-district, relative majority electoral system, working in conjunction with a 40 per cent legal threshold, are the two main elements of the presidential electoral rules that have driven Costa Rican politics towards bipartism. The outcome of this "formula" has been defined as effective plurality. As demonstrated by the electoral results between 1953 and 1998, the centripetal force generated by this effective plurality has pushed citizens towards sophisticated voting and political parties towards dualism. Even though the 2002 elections certainly changed this pattern, it is still too early to say whether the emergence of the PAC in these elections will terminate the two-party dominance characteristic of Costa Rican presidential contests since 1953.

## 3 Legislative Elections[29]

The Costa Rican legislative branch is a unicameral body. The fifty-seven deputies (*diputados*) elected to the Legislative Assembly (Asamblea Legislativa) are chosen using proportional representation (PR) in seven multi-member constituencies.[30] These electoral districts correspond to the country's administrative organisation.[31] According to the number of citizens living in each province, 21 seats used to be allocated to San José, 10 to Alajuela, 5 to Heredia, 6 to Cartago, 5 to Guanacaste, 6 to Puntarenas, and 4 to Limón. Demographic changes may alter these numbers. In fact, based on a 2000 census, the TSE reassigned the number of seats per electoral district. Thus, for the 2002 elections San José elected 20 representatives (lost 1), Alajuela 11 (gained 1), Cartago 7 (gained 1), Heredia 5 (stayed the same), Guanacaste 4 (lost 1), Puntarenas 5 (lost 1), and Limón 5 (gained 1).[32] In the case of municipal elections, members of the local councils are elected in 81 different cantons.

Deputies and municipal authorities (*munícipes*) are elected to four-year terms from closed lists previously defined by the participating political parties. Legislative and municipal elections take place in a single process, along with the presidential election.[33] Three different ballots are used, one for each election, and citizens cast only one vote in each. In order to translate votes into seats, the specific type of PR implemented is the LR (largest remainder) Hare or LR-Hare method. This is applied by dividing the total number of votes by the available number of seats in each constituency. The resulting number is defined as the "electoral quotient" (*cociente electoral*). Seats are distributed among the parties by dividing their individual votes by the electoral quotient. The remaining seats are allocated using the "largest remainder" method. However, parties need to obtain at least 50 per cent of the

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[29] Many of the effects discussed also applied to municipal elections. Thus, even though this section concentrates on legislative processes, references and examples of municipal processes are also included.

[30] The Costa Rican parliament is constituted by 57 deputies since 1962, before that it had 45 members.

[31] Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces (*provincias*): San José, Alajuela, Heredia, Cartago, Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and Limón.

[32] TSE 2002b.

[33] In the case of municipal authorities this was the case until 1998. However, starting in 2002, apart from the *munícipes*, most of the other local authorities and their deputies (*alcaldes* [mayors], *síndicos*, *concejales*, and *miembros de consejo de distrito*), are elected in a separate electoral process the first Sunday of December after the general elections—which take place the first Sunday of February.

electoral quotient, a figure known as the "sub-quotient" (*subcociente*), in order to participate in this second part of the process.[34] Congressional and municipal reelection is permitted but not in consecutive periods.

As was the case with the majority system, Duverger may have been the first author who tried to systematise PR's effects on party systems. He argued that PR generates a tendency towards multi-partism.[35] Likewise, authors such as Robert Dahl have emphasised this system's proportionality benefits, when he explains that:

> "[PR] is designed to produce a close correspondence between the proportion of total votes cast for a party in elections and the proportion of seats the party gains in the legislature."[36]

Nevertheless, as accepted by Duverger himself, "pure" PR is an oddity in the real world.[37] Different types of PR in conjunction with other electoral features may alter the patterns described by Duverger and Dahl. The Costa Rican case is a good example of how an "impure" type of PR combined with other electoral rules can reduce PR's centrifugal force and its proportionality benefits.

### *3.1 The Dragging Effect*

Presidential elections in Costa Rica have a significant influence on the outcome of legislative and municipal elections. This occurs not only because of the nature of the regime—presidentialism—but also as a consequence of three distinctive elements: 1) the concurrence of the presidential, legislative, and municipal elections, 2) the strength of the party system, and 3) the "voting mechanics" applied in the country (closed list voting). The combination of these three elements have produced what local analyst have called, the "dragging effect" (*efecto de arrastre*) of presidential elections over legislative and municipal processes.[38]

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[34] This mechanism is illustrated with an example later on.
[35] Duverger 1987, p. 266.
[36] Dahl 2000, p. 131.
[37] Duverger 1987, p. 279.
[38] Rojas-Bolaños 1995, pp. 24-25.; Hernández-Naranjo 1999, pp. 88-93.

In the first place, one of the central characteristics of the Costa Rican electoral system is, as explained, that presidential, legislative, and municipal elections take place simultaneously. They are "concurrent elections." Similar to most electoral processes in presidential systems, the race for the presidency is the one that gets most of the attention from voters and the press. In fact, Costa Rican citizens are "bombarded" with propaganda and opinion polls years before the elections day.[39] As a result, the presidential contest, with its reductive and dual characteristics, has a direct effect over the other two electoral processes—congressional and municipal. As reported by Shugart and Carey:

> "If concurrent elections by PR are employed along with plurality for the president, those wishing to articulate minority viewpoints might find themselves forced either to join a large presidential contender's party or else suffer electorally as a third party. Then perhaps, the degree to which the system represents diversity may be undercut...Given the concurrence of the congressional election with the presidential election, voters are likely to perceive that voting for the president's party is a means of confirming the endorsement given to the presidential candidate...Holding others [elections] along with the presidential [election] is sufficient enough to induce the maintenance of the two-party dominance."[40]

Electoral concurrence is one element that has promoted the hegemony that, in general terms, two political forces have exerted in the Costa Rican parliament and in the local councils.

Nevertheless, the concurrence factor does not work alone. In addition the two other elements of the dragging effect (the strength of the party system and the voting mechanics) work together to magnify the influence of the two dominant parties on parliamentary and local elections. On the one hand, the strength or "structural consolidation" of the party system is more a result than a specific feature of the

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[39] Even if since 1988 the Electoral Code formally limits campaigns to six-months prior to the elections day, it is common for the presidential candidates of the PLN and the PUSC ("precandidates") to start campaigning for their internal primary elections right after the national contest ends. Chapter 7 assesses this point.

[40] Shugart and Carey 1992, pp. 221-239.

electoral system.[41] However, on the other hand, it may also exert an effect of its own on legislative and municipal elections. Hence, Sartori has insisted that party system strength is a decisive variable under any electoral arrangement. He has concluded that when PR encounters a structured party system the voter is *restrained* by the potency of party channelling. In this case the electoral system is counteracted by the party system. He called this a *blocking* or *countervailing effect.*[42] The influence of a structured party system over the legislative and local elections may well be another factor that explains the formation of two dominant factions during most of the constitutional periods since 1953 in the Costa Rican assembly and in the municipal governments.

The third element of the dragging effect, regarded as the voting mechanics, refers to the options citizens have when casting their votes. In every election Costa Ricans are given three ballots: in the first one they elect the president and the two vice-presidents, in the second one they choose the members of congress, and in the third one the municipal authorities. In the latter two tickets citizens choose between closed party lists. This means that voters decide between a set of lists, which cannot be altered, previously ranked by the parties.[43] As illustrated in Graph 4.2, the fact that presidential and parliamentary candidates are elected on different ballots allows split-ticket voting. However, this does not seem to counter the centripetal force generated by the concurrence and the blocking factors, and by the voting mechanics themselves. When citizens vote using closed lists they are more likely to vote for parties, which present themselves as "teams,"[44] rather than for individuals. It is worth noting that this dynamic further validates Fernández's assertion regarding legislative voting in Costa Rica—given the possibility of ticket splitting—as a suitable indicator of party identification.[45] The relevance of this finding will be studied in detail in Chapter 5.

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[41] Sartori defines a "structured party system" as "the party system that becomes perceived as a natural *channelling system* for the political society." He explains that, "when the electorate takes a given set of political routes and alternatives for granted...then the party system has reached the stage of structural consolidation." Italics in the original. Sartori 1997, p. 37.

[42] Sartori 1997, pp. 20, 36-37, 43.

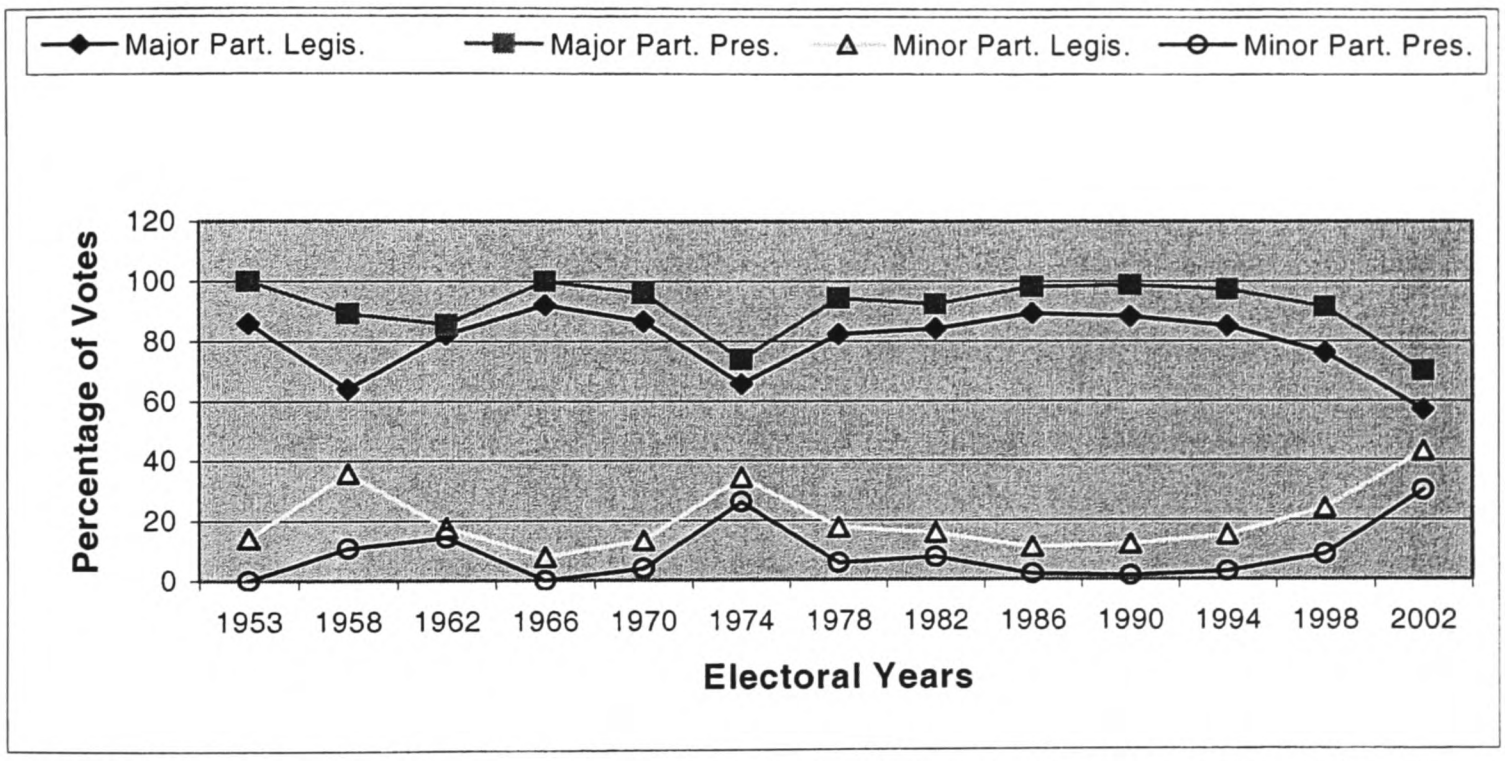
[43] Dieter Nohlen defines concurrent elections in which different tickets are used as "low simultaneity elections" (*elecciones de baja simultaneidad*). Nohlen 1993.

[44] Shugart and Carey 1992, p. 239.

[45] Fernández 1996, pp. 150-151.

In any case, closed lists not only increase the parties' influence over voters, but also magnify their control over parliamentary candidates. In return, legislative aspirants are directly benefited by the entire propaganda and political mobilisation efforts organised by the party to support its presidential nominee. Clearly this has been the case in Costa Rica.[46] It can even be suggested that this "convenient relationship" between parties and congressional aspirants is one of the main reasons why an electoral reform that would allow voters to choose individual candidates in national legislative elections has encountered strong opposition.[47]

Graph 4.2. General Results and Split-Ticket Voting between the Two Major and Other Minor Parties in the Costa Rican Elections, 1953-2002[48]




Note: Not all the minor parties that participated in the legislative elections presented candidates for the presidential one. Yet, this factor does alter significantly the general results.
Source: Based on Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 257, 262-265.; TSE 2002b.

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[46] This could change as the two main parties have started to implement direct elections to choose congress and municipal candidates in their internal electoral processes. The PUSC started in 1994, while the PLN implemented the system for the first time in 1998. Nonetheless, the negative outcomes on party discipline that resulted from this reform, have led several leaders from both parties to recommend its elimination. Solís 7 June 2002; González 15 January and 18 June 2002; Calderón-Fournier 13 March 2002; Vásquez 26 June 2002; *La Nación* 18 de mayo 2003; *La Nación* 22 de julio 2003.

[47] The main argument used by members of the PLN and the PUSC to justify their opposition to this electoral reform is that it will reduce presidential control over the parliament and the governance benefits resulting from this situation. González 15 January and 18 June 2002; Sánchez 26 June 2002.

[48] For the split-ticket voting differences between presidential and legislative elections see Appendix 4.

Electoral concurrence, the influence of a structured party system, and closed list voting are the three main elements of the so-called "dragging effect" of presidential contests over legislative and municipal elections. The strength of this effect is clearly depicted in Table 4.2. This table shows that in general terms, parties' results in the legislative and municipal elections tend to be very similar to those they obtain at the presidential level. In fact, the same table indicates that the average differences in the thirteen elections between presidential-legislative and presidential-municipal elections are 5 and 4.1, respectively. Hence, the country's two main political parties or coalitions (those that do better in the presidential process) have dominated most of the legislative and municipal contests since 1953. As illustrated in Graphs 4.2 and 4.3, a bipolar congressional hegemony is clear between 1978 and 1994. Up until then, one can observe two very even political forces competing in what appears to be a consolidated two-party system.

Nevertheless, both graphs also demonstrate that the overwhelming supremacy exerted by the PLN and the PUSC at the legislative level started to erode in 1998 and was surely absent in 2002. The unprecedented results obtained by third parties (the PAC got 22 per cent of the vote [good to elect 14 representatives] and the Partido Movimiento Libertario [PML] got 9.2 per cent of the popular support [enough to get 6 deputies]) changed this pattern.[49] However, as in the case of the presidential elections, it is still not clear whether the PAC and the PML will be able to consolidate as stable parties and permanently alter the two-party system configuration that has formally characterised the country's political arena since 1983.

[49] TSE 2002b.

Table 4.2. Dragging Effect of Presidential Elections over Legislative and Municipal Elections in Costa Rica, 1953-2002

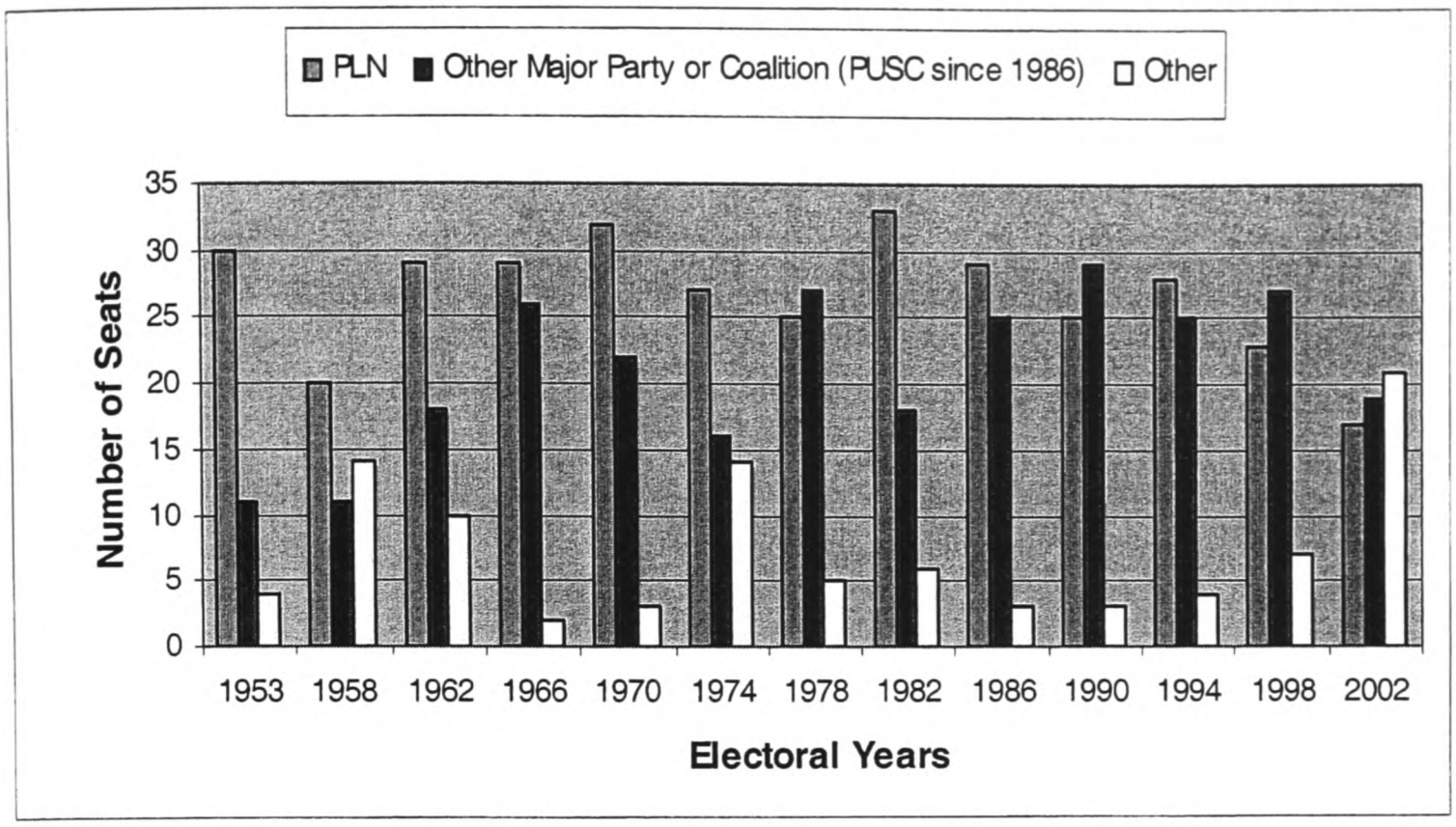
| Electoral Years | Two Main Political Parties or Coalitions | Pres. Elections | Leg. Elections | Dif. Pres.-Leg. Elections (absolute values) | Mun. Elections | Dif. Pres.-Mun. Elections (absolute values) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | Liberación Nacional | 64.7 | 64.7 | 0 | 64.6 | 0.1 |
| | Demócrata(a) | 35.3 | 21.2 | 14.1 | 23.5 | 11.8 |
| **1958** | Unión Nacional(b) | 46.4 | 21.4 | 25 | 24.1 | 22.3 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 42.8 | 41.7 | 1.1 | 42.5 | 0.3 |
| | Independiente | 10.8 | 9.8 | 1.0 | 10.2 | 0.6 |
| **1962** | Liberación Nacional | 50.3 | 48.9 | 1.4 | 49.9 | 0.4 |
| | Republicano | 35.3 | 33.5 | 1.8 | 33.8 | 1.5 |
| | Unión Nacional | 13.5 | 13.3 | 0.2 | 13.6 | 0.1 |
| **1966** | Unificación Nacional(c) | 50.5 | 43.3 | 7.2 | 48.4 | 2.1 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 49.5 | 49.1 | 0.4 | 47.4 | 2.1 |
| **1970** | Liberación Nacional | 54.8 | 50.7 | 4.1 | 52.1 | 2.7 |
| | Unificación Nacional | 41.2 | 35.9 | 5.3 | 36.4 | 4.8 |
| **1974** | Liberación Nacional | 43.4 | 40.9 | 2.5 | 42.5 | 0.9 |
| | Unificación Nacional | 30.4 | 24.7 | 5.7 | 26.1 | 4.3 |
| | Nacional Independiente | 10.9 | 10.0 | 0.9 | 10.2 | 0.7 |
| | Renovación Democrática | 9.1 | 7.7 | 1.4 | 8.6 | 0.5 |
| **1978** | Coalición Unidad(d) | 50.5 | 43.4 | 7.1 | 44.0 | 6.5 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 43.8 | 38.9 | 4.9 | 39.7 | 4.1 |
| **1982** | Liberación Nacional | 58.8 | 55.2 | 3.6 | 57.7 | 1.1 |
| | Coalición Unidad | 33.6 | 29.1 | 4.5 | 28.2 | 5.4 |
| **1986** | Liberación Nacional | 52.3 | 47.8 | 4.5 | 49.3 | 3.0 |
| | Unidad Social Cristiana | 45.8 | 41.4 | 4.4 | 43.2 | 2.6 |
| **1990** | Unidad Social Cristiana | 51.5 | 46.2 | 5.3 | 46.7 | 4.8 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 47.2 | 41.9 | 5.3 | 42.7 | 4.5 |
| **1994** | Liberación Nacional | 49.6 | 44.6 | 5.0 | 46.4 | 3.2 |
| | Unidad Social Cristiana | 47.7 | 40.4 | 7.3 | 41.6 | 6.1 |
| **1998** | Unidad Social Cristiana | 46.9 | 41.2 | 5.7 | 40.9 | 6.0 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 44.6 | 34.8 | 9.8 | 35.4 | 9.2 |
| **2002(e)** | Unidad Social Cristina | 38.6 | 29.8 | 8.8 | 30.9 | 7.7 |
| | Liberación Nacional | 31.1 | 27.1 | 4.0 | 29.2 | 1.9 |
| | Acción Ciudadana | 26.2 | 22.0 | 4.2 | 20.4 | 5.8 |
| **Averages** | — | — | — | **5.0** | — | **4.1** |

Note: Only parties getting around 10% of the vote or more in the presidential elections were included.

(a) Allied with the Partido Unión Nacional.
(b) Allied with the Partido Demócrata and supported by the Partido Republicano.
(c) Coalition integrated by the Partidos Republicano and Unión Nacional.
(d) Coalition integrated by the Partidos: Renovación Democrática, Unión Popular, Demócrata Cristiano, and Republicano Calderonista.
(e) A runoff was needed to elect the president. In it the PUSC won with 58 per cent of the votes, over 42 per cent obtained by the PLN.

Sources: Author's own estimations based on Zeledón 2001-2002; TSE 2002b.

Graph 4.3. Number of Seats by Political Party in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

As noted, major parties' dominance over the legislative elections is replicated in the municipal electoral processes. From 1953 to 1998, the PLN has consistently received at least 40 per cent of the votes in the local elections.[50] This changed in 2002, when it only obtained 29.2 per cent of the popular support.[51] Furthermore, once in what Rovira-Mas has rightly named the two-party system era (from 1986 onwards),[52] the PLN's and the PUSC's added electoral results, with the only exception—again—of the 2002 election, have always totalled more than three fourths of the popular vote.

Even if quite high, it should be stressed that the sum of their vote has suffered a consistent decline since the mid-1980s: 92.5 per cent in 1986, 89.4 in 1990, 88.0 in 1994, 76.2 in 1998 and 60.1 in 2002.[53] The general two-party dominance, and its eroding trend in the last elections—especially since 1998—is clearly depicted in Graph 4.4. The main recent changes in the country's electoral dynamics will be analysed in Chapter 5. For now, in terms of the local elections, suffice to say that

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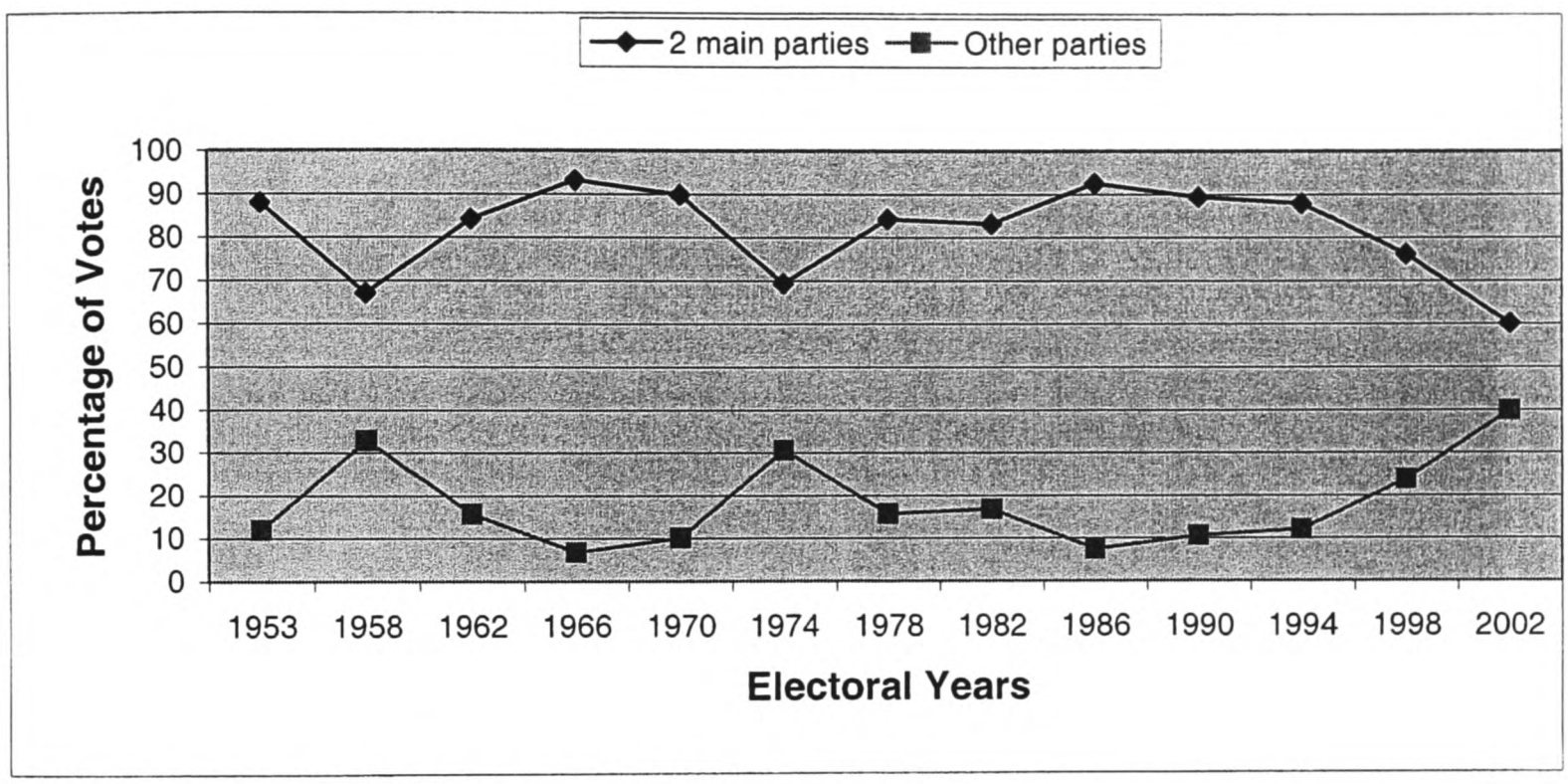
[50] Blanco-Lizano 2001, pp. 298-299.
[51] TSE 2002b.
[52] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, pp. 11-14.
[53] TSE 2002b.

major parties' loss of support could be partially explained as a result of successful attempts by an increasing number of parties which are participating only in municipal elections. These political groups can concentrate their electoral efforts in only one constituency, and often succeed in obtaining some representation.[54]

Graph 4.4. Added Results of the Two Main Parties and of Other Minor Parties in the Costa Rican Municipal Elections, 1953-2002




Sources: Based on Zeledón 2001-2002; TSE 2002b.

Finally, it is noticeable how the dragging effect seems to be influencing the municipal elections as well. As illustrated in Table 4.2, with the only exceptions of 1958 (in other words, in 12 out of 13 elections) the major party winning the presidential contest also prevails in the municipal electoral process. For example, once in the two-party system era the PLN won the elections in 1986 and 1994. In both cases it succeeded in the municipal process with a 6.1 and 4.7 per cent difference over the PUSC. The latter won the 1990, the 1998, and the 2002 presidential elections, and in those three years the PUSC prevailed in the municipal contests with a 4.0, 5.5, and 1.7 per cent margin over the PLN.[55] As acknowledged by Lizano-Blanco in his study of Costa

[54] For further details about municipal parties and local elections in Costa Rica see, Blanco-Lizano 2001; Zeledón 2001-2002; Alfaro 2002.
[55] TSE 2002b; Zeledón 2001-2002.

Rican cantonal parties, bipartism has also been present at the local level.[56] Following the same pattern as in the presidential and legislative elections, there is an evident decline in the electoral support for the PLN and the PUSC and a growing support for third parties, in the municipal electoral processes since 1998 (see Graph 4.2). As we will see in the next section, this has raised serious doubts regarding the strength of the country's two-party system at the present.

### *3.2 Electoral Obstacles*

The dragging effect in the legislative elections combines with three additional elements, defined here as "electoral obstacles." These electoral obstacles are: 1) the size of the constituencies, 2) the vote percentage legal threshold applied in the seat allocation process and, 3) the laws that have ruled the distribution of public funding to political parties. All these elements have tended to benefit major parties in Costa Rica.

In the first place, the constituencies' size is an electoral feature that certainly has an effect on PR's proportionality ideal. Discussing this aspect Sartori has argued that:

> "...[T]he major factor in establishing the proportionality or disproportionality of PR is the *size of the constituency*—where 'size' is measured by the number of members that each district elects...the larger the constituency, the greater the proportionality...Conversely, the smaller the constituency, the less the proportionality. Thus countries with very small (from two- to five-member districts) or small-medium (...maximum of nine-ten member districts) constituencies, are for this very reason countries of least-proportional proportionality."[57]

Six out of the seven constituencies in Costa Rica elect ten or less deputies. Therefore, according to Sartori, the pre-eminence of small districts has distorted proportionality in this country's legislative elections.

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[56] Blanco-Lizano 2001, pp. 293-305.
[57] Sartori 1997, pp. 8-9. Italics in the original.

Costa Rican deputies are elected in seven constituencies of different sizes. Until the 1998 elections, one elected 21 members, one elected 10, two elected 6, two elected 5, and one elected 4. Following Nohlen's classification,[58] six of the country's constituencies were small or medium and only one was large. With the changes implemented for the 2002 elections and according the same taxonomy, the country now has two large constituencies, one medium, and four small ones. Even with the addition of another large constituency in the 2002 electoral process, in general terms its legislative elections characterises Costa Rica as one of Sartori's "least-proportional proportionality" countries. In fact, a recent study by Ronald Alfaro concluded that the size of Costa Rica's constituencies is the central reason for the disproportionality in its legislative elections.[59] Explaining this phenomenon, Nohlen reports that PR used in small constituencies produces the same centripetal effect generated by plurality.[60] As demonstrated in Table 4.3 and Graph 4.5, Costa Rica's two major political parties have benefited or, most precisely, third parties have been negatively affected by the disproportionality induced by small constituencies.[61]

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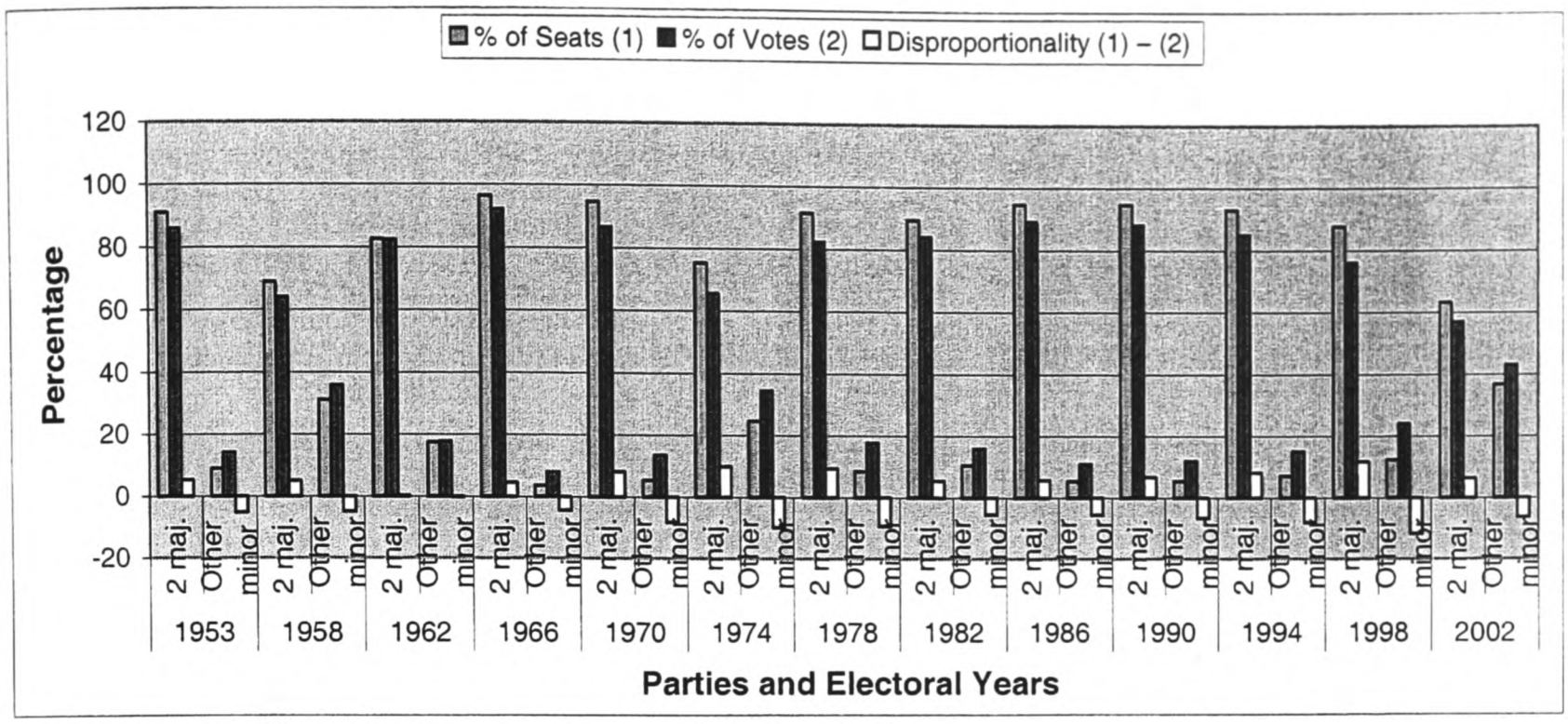
[58] Nohlen classifies 1 to 5 member constituencies as small, 6 to 10 as medium, and from 10 on as large. Nohlen 1995, p. 53.
[59] Alfaro 2002.
[60] Nohlen 1995, p. 98.
[61] Reacting to the disproportionality caused by Costa Rica's small constituencies, many local politicians and analysts have proposed several electoral reforms. Most of them prescribed electing part of the deputies using the whole country as one big electoral district. See for example, *La Nación* 1 de octubre 2002; Alfaro 2002; Niehaus 2000, pp. 110-113.; Castro diciembre 1999, pp. 40-44.; Asamblea Legislativa diciembre 1994.

Table 4.3. Seats to Votes Ratio by the Two Major and Other Minor Parties in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-2002

| Electoral Years | Parties | % of Seats (1) | % of Votes (2) | Seats:Votes Ratio (1/2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | Two major | 91.1 | 85.9 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 8.9 | 14.1 | 0.6 |
| **1958** | Two major | 68.9 | 64.0 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 31.1 | 35.9 | 0.9 |
| **1962** | Two major | 82.5 | 82.3 | 1.0 |
| | Other minor | 17.5 | 17.7 | 1.0 |
| **1966** | Two major | 96.5 | 92.1 | 1.0 |
| | Other minor | 3.5 | 7.9 | 0.4 |
| **1970** | Two major | 94.7 | 86.6 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 5.3 | 13.4 | 0.4 |
| **1974** | Two major | 75.4 | 65.6 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 24.6 | 34.4 | 0.7 |
| **1978** | Two major | 91.6 | 82.3 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 8.4 | 17.7 | 0.5 |
| **1982** | Two major | 89.5 | 84.1 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 10.5 | 15.9 | 0.7 |
| **1986** | Two major | 94.7 | 89.1 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 5.3 | 10.9 | 0.5 |
| **1990** | Two major | 94.7 | 88.1 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 5.3 | 11.9 | 0.4 |
| **1994** | Two major | 93.0 | 85.0 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 7.0 | 15.0 | 0.5 |
| **1998** | Two major | 87.7 | 76.0 | 1.2 |
| | Other minor | 12.3 | 24.0 | 0.5 |
| **2002** | Two major | 63.2 | 56.9 | 1.1 |
| | Other minor | 36.8 | 43.1 | 0.9 |

Sources: Author's own estimations based on Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 262-265.; TSE 2002b.

Graph 4.5. Votes, Seats, and Disproportionality by the Two Major and Other Minor Parties in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-2002[62]




Sources: Based on Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 262-265.; TSE 2002b.

It is suggestive how third parties tend to do better at legislative elections than at presidential contests (see Graph 4.2). One logical explanation may be that in parliamentary elections citizens do not apply, or apply to a lesser extent, "sophisticated voting." Hence, many third party supporters vote for their most preferred-alternative since they believe minor parties have a better chance of getting some representation. That is not the case in the presidential elections, where, as explained, electors decide to support one of the major parties in order not to "waste" their vote.[63]

However, having better chances in legislative elections does not mean that minor parties stand real possibilities in all constituencies. Given the effect of district magnitude on proportionality, third parties are less likely to gain representation in small constituencies. For example, most of third parties' deputies in Costa Rica are normally elected for San José, the 21-seat constituency (20-seat starting in 2002). As demonstrated in Table 4.4, from 1953 to 2002, 52 out of 96 (54.2 per cent) of the congressmen elected by third parties ran for San José, a constituency where minor

[62] For the exact numbers see Appendix 5.
[63] Fernández 1996, p. 149.; Fernández mayo-junio 1994.

parties have elected representatives in all thirteen elections. Table 4.4 also shows that the median of congress members elected by small parties in the thirteen electoral processes when all the seven constituencies are considered is 5. This number in the specific case of San José is 3. It is no wonder that third parties tend to concentrate their electoral efforts on San José, where they consistently obtain better results.

Nevertheless, the hypothetical political influence associated with these results is largely reduced given that seats are distributed among many parties. As presented in the same table, the 96 seats that corresponded to third parties during the period studied were distributed among 25 different political groups. In fact, the average number of small parties electing deputies in each election is almost 3, out of which, in average, almost 2 were new parties. Commenting on the Costa Rican elections until 1998, Rovira-Mas contended that:

> "Bipartism in Costa Rica is not threatened...as, until now, none of the small parties, individually or as part of a coalition, have demonstrated enough electoral strength to challenge the dominance of the two main parties. Fragmentation among small parties conspires against their intentions of threatening the major ones."[64]

Aside from rules hampering their electoral performances, fragmentation was surely another reason for the rather poor political results of third parties in Costa Rican politics. Nonetheless, this changed in the 2002 elections.

Minor parties ascending support since 1990 (see Graph 4.2), shows that "the door was opening" for a third party capable of integrating all or some of these disperse small political movements, and/or their supporters, and actually become a new important political force in Costa Rica. It would certainly not have the strength—at least initially—to challenge the dominance of the PLN and the PUSC. But it could prove to be more *relevant*—in Sartori's terms—especially due to the even distribution of forces between the dominant parties (none of them with a parliamentary majority) during the last three elections.[65] Ideological differences and leadership struggles

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[64] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, p. 67.

[65] Fernández 1996, p. 156. According to Sartori, political parties are *relevant* when they have the possibility of influencing government either because of their *coalition potential*, or *blackmail potential*. Sartori 1997, pp. 33-34.

among small parties hampered this possibility, until the emergence of the PAC and the strengthening of the PML[66] in the 2002 electoral process.

Table 4.4. Third Parties' Results in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-2002

| Electoral Years | # Parties Electing Representatives | Total # of Seats | Seats for San José |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | 2 (2 new ones) | 4 | 4 |
| **1958** | 3 (2 new ones) | 14 | 6 |
| **1962** | 2 (1 new one) | 10 | 4 |
| **1966** | 1 (0 new ones) | 2 | 2 |
| **1970** | 2 (2 new ones) | 3 | 3 |
| **1974** | 6 (5 new ones) | 14 | 7 |
| **1978** | 3 (2 new ones) | 5 | 3 |
| **1982** | 3 (2 new ones) | 6 | 2 |
| **1986** | 3 (1 new one) | 3 | 3 |
| **1990** | 3 (1 new one) | 3 | 2 |
| **1994** | 2 (2 new ones) | 4 | 2 |
| **1998** | 5 (4 new ones) | 7 | 5 |
| **2002** | 3 (1 new one) | 21 | 9 |
| **Total** | 38 (25 new ones) | 96 | 52 |
| **Average/Median** | 2.9 (avg.) (1.9 [avg.]) | 5 (median) | 3 (median) |

Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

The other elements inducing disproportionality in the legislative elections are the legal threshold used in the seat allocation process and the parties' public finance rules. As previously described, the specific type of PR implemented in the Costa Rican legislative elections is the LR-Hare method. First, an electoral quotient (the figure resulting from dividing the total number of votes by the available number of seats in each constituency) is used to translate the votes into seats. Then the rest of the seats are distributed using the largest remainder method. However, parties need to have at least 50 per cent of the electoral quotient, what is known as the sub-quotient, in order to participate in this last process. The sub-quotient restriction is what is interpreted as a legal threshold.[67] Table 4.5 explains with a hypothetical example how the quotient, sub-quotient, and largest remainder system works. In the example Party A takes the

[66] The PML participated for the first time in the 1998 elections. It got 3.2 per cent of the vote in the legislative contest and elected 1 representative. TSE 2002b.

last seat with a remainder of 147 votes, while Parties C and D are not able to elect any representatives with 423 and 231 votes, respectively. This table allows us to understand third parties' recurring complaints against this seats allocation system.

Table 4.5. Hypothetical Example of the Application of the Seat Allocation System in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections

| System / Parties | Party A | Party B | Party C | Party D | Party E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Votes (a)** | 1870 | 1730 | 423 | 231 | 102 |
| **Seat by Quotient: party votes / 861.4 (b)** | 2.2 = 2 | 2.0 = 2 | — | — | — |
| **Sub-quotient: 430.7 is applied (c)** | Carries on | Carries on | Eliminated | Eliminated | Eliminated |
| **Remainder** | 147.2 (d) | 7.2 (e) | — | — | — |
| **Seats by Largest Remainder** | 1 | 0 | — | — | — |
| **Total Seats** | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

(a) Elections in a 5-member district with a total of 4307 registered votes.
(b) 861.4 = 4307 / 5
(c) 430.7 = 861.4 x 50%
(d) 147.2 = 1870 – (2 x 861.4)
(e) 7.2 = 1730 – (2x 861.4)
Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

Most of third party leaders and many local politicians and political analysts have argued against the sub-quotient barrier, indicating that it is unfair, discriminatory, and certainly an element that handicaps the interests of small political movements.[68] As contended by Fernández when referring to Costa Rica's legislative elections disproportionality:

> "...[O]ur position will be notably enhanced, and we will stand side by side with other highly developed democracies like the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, if our PR system aimed for more consistency,

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[67] The term "legal threshold" is used when parties' participation in the allocation of seats (and of money as it will be shown for the Costa Rican case) depends on the attainment of a previously stipulated percentage of votes. Nohlen 1995, p. 65.

[68] See for example, Urcuyo-Fournier 1998, pp. 40-41.; Urcuyo-Fournier 1992, p. 52.; Urbina 2000, pp. 78-79.; Fernández 2001; Fernández 1996, p. 149.; Fernández 1995; Trejos diciembre 1994; Rodríguez diciembre 1994; Coto-Molina diciembre 1994.

excluded the sub-quotient barrier, and applied, exclusively, the quotient and highest remainder systems..."[69]

In fact Fernández has demonstrated that, at least in the 1990, 1994, and 1998 elections, the sub-quotient rule has indeed benefited the two major parties to the detriment of minor political groups. Table 4.6 illustrates the magnitude of the effect of this rule on the results of these three elections.

Table 4.6. Effect of the Sub-Quotient Rule on the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1990, 1994, and 1998

| Electoral Years | Parties | # Deputies with Present System (1) | # Deputies without Sub-quotient Rule (2) | Effect of the Sub-quotient Rule (1-2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1990** | Two major | 54 | 52 | 2 |
| | Minor | 3 | 5 | -2 |
| **1994** | Two major | 53 | 50 | 3 |
| | Minor | 4 | 7 | -3 |
| **1998** | Two major | 50 | 46 | 4 |
| | Minor | 7 | 11 | -4 |

Source: Fernández 2001, p. 568.

These and other data demonstrate that on several occasions the sub-quotient legal threshold has benefited major parties at the expense of the small ones.[70] Certainly, it can be argued that in specific cases this electoral rule has hindered the interest of third parties. Nonetheless, further research needs to be done in order to conclude that it has been an electoral feature systematically distorting proportionality in the Costa Rican legislative elections.

Finally, it should be noted that many authors have claimed that the mechanism by which political parties are financed (the other legal threshold), is another—rather central—element of the electoral system "pushing" the party system towards

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[69] Fernández 2001, p. 567.

[70] For example, in the 1986 elections the PUSC got one seat in Alajuela with a remainder of 4220 votes while the Partido Acción Democrática Alajuelense was not able to elect any candidates with 4324 votes. Likewise in 1990, the PUSC elected a candidate in San José with a remainder of 8206 votes, while the Partido Alianza Nacional Cristiana having 9853 votes did not obtain any representatives. Something similar happened in 1994, when the PUSC got the ninth seat for San José with a remainder of 9555 votes and the PLN the tenth with a remainder of 7785. Yet, the *partidos* Vanguardia Popular,

dualism.[71] In fact, arguing that the public subsidy to political parties is the main factor responsible for consolidating bipartism, is almost a common place among local analysts. The Costa Rican State provides public funding (0.10 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product [GDP][72]) to all political parties that obtain at least 4 per cent of the electoral support. From 1971 until 1991 this public subsidy was partially distributed before the electoral process. The funds that corresponded to each party were calculated using the results from the previous election. Parties' public funding went back to its original post-election nature in 1991 after the pre-election disbursement was struck down by the Constitutional Court.[73]

Critics of this subsidy argue that it has strongly induced the consolidation of a two-party system by providing important economic advantages to the major parties, while denying minor political movements access to these benefits. Three regulations are deemed responsible for this "unfair treatment": 1) the percentage of votes required to obtain the subsidy (considered too high especially before 1997[74]), 2) the previously existing pre-election disbursement of part of the funds, and 3) the parties' dependence on their "electoral past" in order to obtain public financial support. These norms were even considered by the Court as central factors in "fossilising" the political options for the Costa Rican people.[75]

Nonetheless, a suggestive study by Kevin Casas-Zamora demonstrates that the influence of the public subsidy on the Costa Rican party system may have been exaggerated. He defines as "doubtful" the arguments commonly accepted regarding the effects of public funding on the configuration of the party system. Casas-Zamora concludes that:

> "...[W]ith or without the benefits of the pre-election public subsidy, the major parties have huge economic advantages that have nothing to do with

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Alianza Popular Cristiana, and Nacional Independiente were excluded from the seat allocation having 10546, 8750 and 8585 votes, respectively. Hernández-Naranjo 1999, pp. 112-113.

[71] See for example, Cerdas-Cruz 1986; Cerdas-Cruz 1998; White-Gómez 1997; Fernández 1993b; Lehoucq 1998, pp. 164-165.; Urbina 2000, p. 69.; Hernández-Naranjo 1999, pp., 127-135.

[72] A legislative amendment to the Electoral Code set this number in July 2001. Previously the public subsidy for parties was 0.19 per cent of the GDP.

[73] Casas-Zamora 2001, pp. 308-311.

[74] The legal threshold was 10 per cent of the vote until 1972 when it was changed to 5 per cent. It was reduced again to 4 per cent in 1997.

[75] Resolución de la Sala Constitucional 24 de mayo 1991.

> legal dispositions. These advantages stem from their electoral history and future electoral prospects, from a high 'brand recognition,' and from all the benefits derived from holding power for a long time. Their overwhelming economic superiority during the electoral campaigns, more than a direct cause of their electoral hegemony—as normally stated—seems to be its consequence."[76]

This assertion calls into question one of the "truisms" of Costa Rican politics.

The significance of the influence of public funding rules on the Costa Rican two-party system is unclear. However, Casas-Zamora's study has at least proven that it is not as prominent as hitherto assumed. For the purposes of the present analysis, it is sufficient to conclude that the parties' public financing laws should be considered as an element that has certainly not assisted small parties and that most likely has benefited the major ones. However it should not be regarded as the central feature responsible for perpetuating Costa Rica's two-party system.[77]

Graph 4.6 shows how the dragging effect combined with the aforementioned electoral obstacles to generate a centripetal force that tends to counteract the centrifugal force characteristic of PR. The average Effective Number of Parties Parliamentary (ENPP) for the thirteen legislative elections is 2.5.[78] The Costa Rican parliament certainly shows a tendency towards dualism. However, this tendency is not as strong as in the presidential elections and, like in the case these contests, it seems to have ended in 2002. In any case, the average ENPP contrasts with the average number of parties participating in the legislative elections throughout the whole period: 12.4. Especially salient is the general ascending trend followed by the number of parties participating in these elections and, even more, the large amount that took part in 1998 and 2002 (23 and 18 respectively). As explained, the realisation that their chances were better than in the presidential race may be a reason for this phenomenon.

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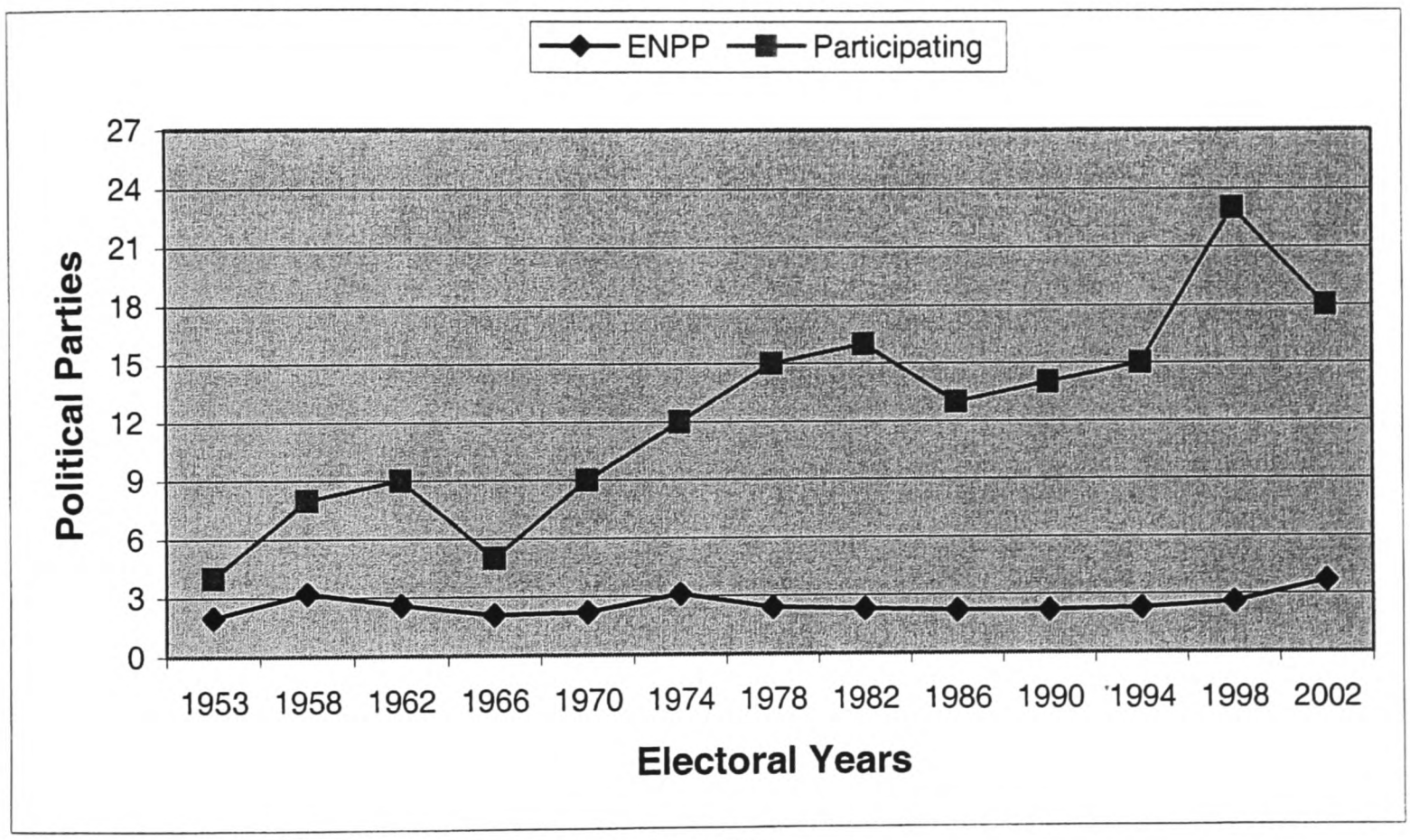
[76] Casas-Zamora 2001, p. 324.
[77] Casas-Zamora 2001, pp. 308-332.
[78] The ENPP is calculated using the percentage of seats allocated to each political party, instead of votes.

Paradoxically, this incentive is in part responsible for third parties' poor results in most of the period studied, as "non-traditional" votes were diluted among the growing number of political groups that decided to participate. This was especially true in 1998 when small parties obtained 24 per cent of the votes but only 12.3 per cent of the seats (a total of 7 seats) distributed among five parties. As explained, this situation—at least until the 1998—hindered the consolidation of alternative political options and created the conditions for the co-optation of minor forces by major parties.

Graph 4.6. ENPP and Political Parties Participating in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-2002

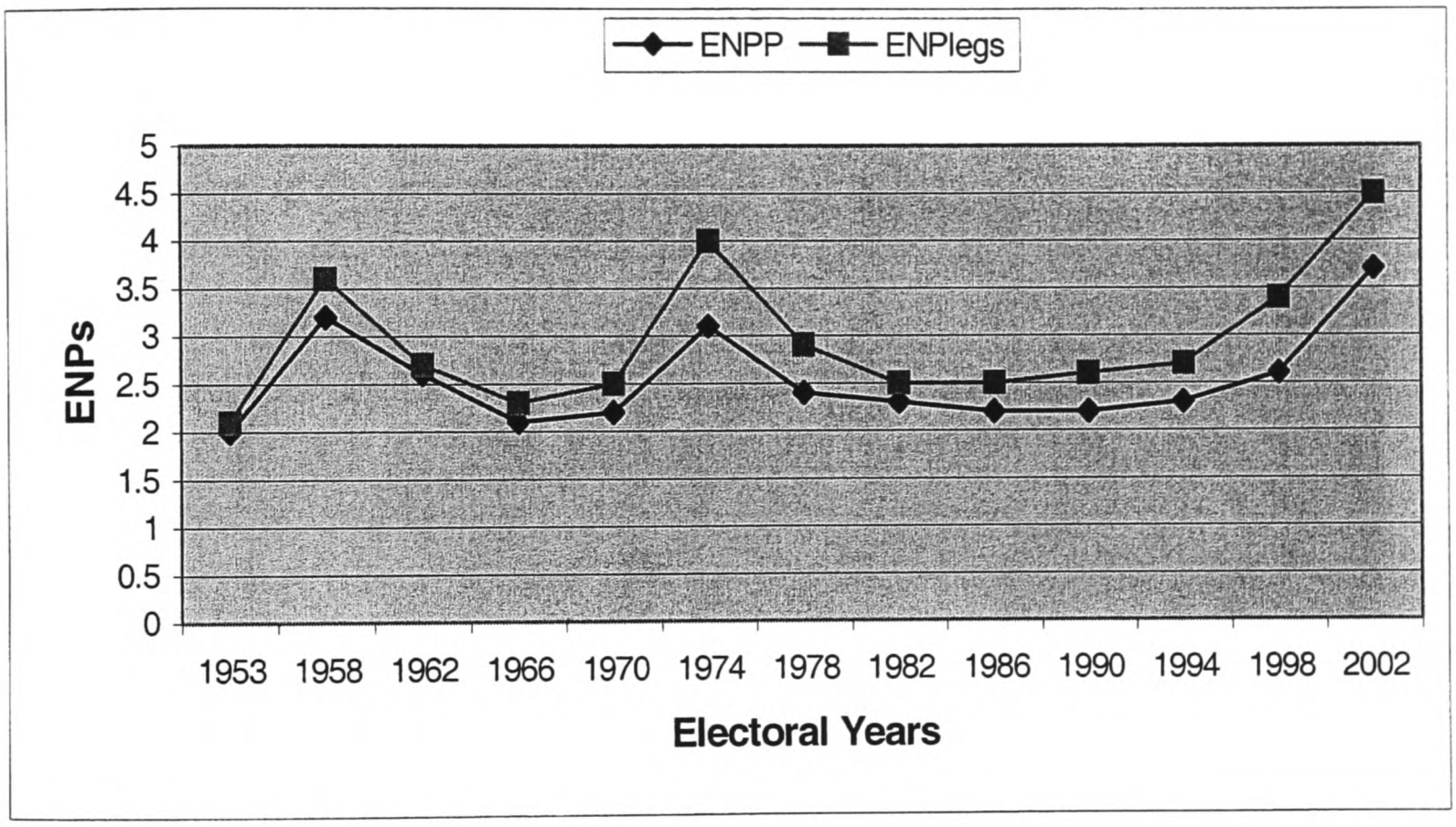



Source: Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 265-266.; TSE 2002b.

Graph 4.7 illustrates the influence of the reductive forces acting on the legislative elections by comparing the ENPP with the Effective Number of Parties in the legislative elections (ENPlegs).[79] As can be seen, the ENPP is always lower than the ENPlegs, because not all parties that receive votes are allocated seats. This graph depicts the impact of the dragging effect and the electoral obstacles on Costa Rica's PR system. Finally, Graph 4.8 compares the ENPpres with the ENPP. This graph, as

well as the previous one, shows that between 1978 and 1994 low fragmentation proper of a two-party system characterised Costa Rican politics. This trend started to change in 1998, and in 2002 presents figures that clearly illustrate the erosion of the two-party dominance, and may perhaps (provided that the new parties are able to consolidate) signal the end of the two-party system.

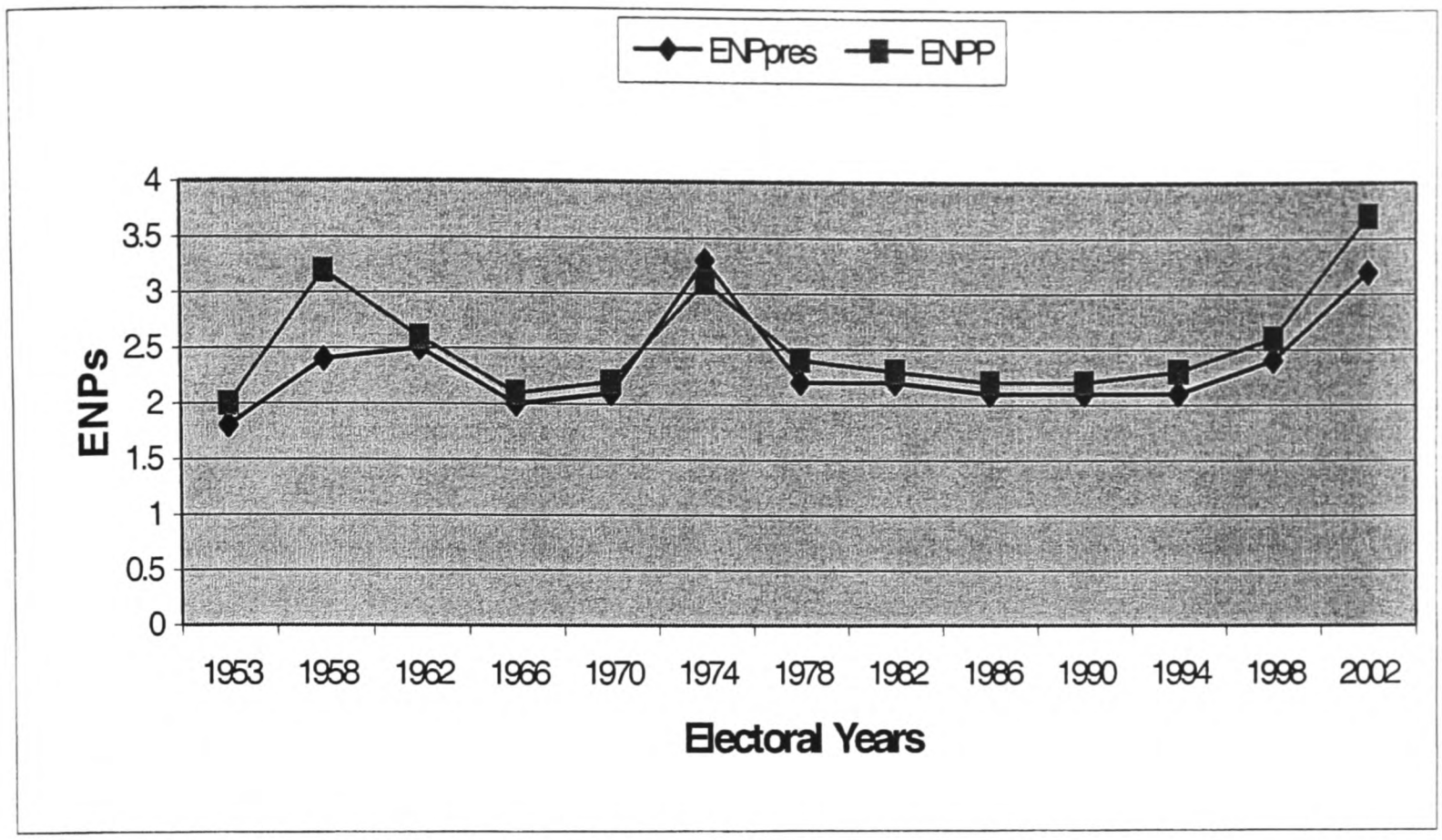
Graph 4.7. ENPP and ENPlegs in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Hernández-Naranjo 2001, p. 266.; TSE 2002b.

[79] The ENPLegs is calculated using the percentage of votes received by each party.

Graph 4.8. ENPpres and ENPP in the Costa Rican Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 260-261, 266.; TSE 2002b.

The natural centrifugal force that PR is supposed to generate has clearly been counterbalanced by six distinctive electoral factors present in the Costa Rican legislative elections. Three of them—the concurrence of the presidential and the legislative elections, the strength of the party system, and closed list voting—have combined to produce the dragging effect. The other three elements—the pre-eminence of small size constituencies, the sub-quotient legal threshold, and (to a lesser extent) parties' public finance laws—add up to create what was defined as electoral obstacles. The dragging effect and the electoral obstacles work together to generate a reductive influence on the legislative electoral system. As a result, the Costa Rican parliament (and also its local councils) has generally been characterised—at least until 1998—by the dominance of two major political forces that share the legislative arena with various minor parties. The emergence of the PAC and the outstanding performance of the PML in the 2002 elections changed the prevailing panorama, forcing the PLN and the PUSC to share their power in the assembly. Nevertheless, is still too early to affirm that Costa Rica's two-party system has reached its end.

## 4 A Changing Party System?

Even though I have specifically indicated (see Chapter 2) that this study will not analyse party system change as a result of modifications in the country's electoral dynamics, the evident weakening of the two-party dominance since the 1998 elections in Costa Rica deserves at least a brief comment.

In the present chapter I have insisted on the fact that, even if the erosion of the PLN's and PUSC's hegemony is clear, it is still too risky to start talking about a permanent structural change in the party system configuration. This is true as the new parties that excelled in the 2002 process, the PML and the PAC, are still "developing political movements." In fact, especially in the case of the newly formed PAC (the third party that did better in 2002),[80] it is just starting to evolve from a very successful electoral movement, to a stable political institution. In the words of one of its founders and deputy, Humberto Arce, "The PAC, more than a party, is still an electoral phenomenon."[81] As local analysts such as Manuel Formoso, Jorge Guardia, and Rodolfo Cerdas have indicated, PAC's main objective and challenge at the present should be, bluntly, to work towards its consolidation as a party.[82]

It is worth noting that, even if the main parties' electoral support has been eroding since 1998, prior to the 2002 elections very few analyst would have supported a proposition suggesting any serious structural change in Costa Rica's party system.[83] In fact, there seemed to exist a general consensus regarding the stability of this country's two-party system. For example, right after the 1998 elections, Jorge Rovira-Mas correctly asserted that, bipartism in Costa Rica was weakened, but not threatened.[84] As shown in this chapter, the general electoral results prior to the 2002 electoral process backed his claim. Nevertheless this consensus ended after these elections. Since then, and even if some commentators still defend its political

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[80] The PAC was formed 14 months before the national elections in February 2002.
[81] Arce 12 February 2002. Arce's position is shared by party colleagues Rodrigo Alberto Carazo and Margarita Penón. Carazo 28 February 2002; Penón 15 March 2002.
[82] *La Nación* 7 febrero 2002; *La Nación* 12 febrero 2002; Cerdas-Cruz 20 February 2002.
[83] Making the case for a general loss of support for the whole political system, Michael Seligson did qualify electoral transformations in Costa Rica in 1998 as part of a structural change. Seligson 2001b; Seligson 2002.
[84] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, p. 67.

convenience,[85] very few analysts dare to describe Costa Rica's bipartism as strong, stable, or monolithic—all adjectives that were used before. Now the debate seems to be between those openly declaring the end of the country's two-party system,[86] those posing it as a sound possibility,[87] and, as tends to happen when political change issues are discussed, those claiming that this debate is irrelevant or premature.[88]

I have explicitly indicated my endorsement to the second position in this debate. This is not because the loss of support of the PLN and the PUSC is unclear. To the contrary, as it will be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, this is one of the most important changes in Costa Rican politics in the last twenty-four years. When a previously traditionally dual congress is divided into four blocks and a third party gets more than 25 per cent of the votes in the presidential race (the most notorious results of the 2002 elections), one cannot talk about a stable two-party system. However, it is still early to announce the end of bipartism in Costa Rica. As indicated, this is true simply because the new parties that have obtained important electoral support during the last elections, are still not stable political institutions. And also because one cannot underestimate the adaptation capacity of the country's traditional parties: the PLN and the PUSC.

In this regard, and taking a cautious stance, it is worth remembering that party system stability does not necessarily mean the absence of change. As Peter Mair has noted when describing the Irish case: "parties have been obliged to run a great deal in order to end up in the same place—no easy task given the striking transformation of both economy and society."[89] Parties and party systems should simultaneously be regarded as *objects*, or agents affected by external circumstances, and as *subjects*, or transformable entities capable of responding, adapting, and influencing those external

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[85] *La Nación* 9 de enero del 2002.
[86] See for example, *La República* 27 de marzo 2002; *La Nación* 15 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 5 de febrero 2002; *La Prensa Libre* 1 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 25 de enero 2002; Ordóñez 7 February 2002; Serrano 20 February 2002; Urcuyo-Fournier 26 February 2002; Chinchilla 26 February 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002.
[87] See for example, *La Nación* 29 de abril 2002; *La Nación* 10 de febrero 2002; *Semanario Universidad* 8 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 2 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 20 de enero 2002; Rojas-Bolaños 25 June 2002.
[88] See for example, Colburn September/October 2002, p. 12.; Fernández 14 February 2002; Rovira-Mas 23 January 2002.

forces.[90] That is why Mair claims that, "party systems cannot simply be described as *either* changing *or* persisting, but both change and persist at the same time, depending on the particular dimension of the analysis."[91]

Following this argument, it is not surprising that some local analysts, despite accepting the erosion of their supporters' loyalty and the popular "uneasiness" or "indisposition" (*malestar*) with the PUSC and the PLN, still underline their successful efforts adapting to a new social and political reality, responding to voters changing demands, and upholding their dominance.[92] Indeed, both parties have been quite successful adapting to new circumstances and maintaining popular support, at least until the middle of the 1990s.[93] According to Zeledón, "The PLN and the PUSC are enduring a transformation crisis, not one of extinction."[94] Traditional parties' adaptation capacity should not be ruled out, even with the clear signs of institutional crisis evident in the case of the PLN.[95] Moreover, analysts have also emphasised the importance of institutional incentives, especially those of the electoral system presented above, in maintaining the country's bipartism.[96] The capacity of the two main parties to adapt and respond to the changing demands of the electorate, and the institutional incentives provided by the electoral system could also prevent a party system change in Costa Rica.

Therefore, all we can say at this point is that electoral changes in the country may suggest that a party system change process might have started since 1998; and that this process could result in the configuration of a new multi-party system in the future. Nonetheless, the actual realisation of this phenomenon depends both on the institutional strengthening of the new parties and on the response and adaptation capacity of the traditional ones.

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[89] Mair 1987, pp. 3-4.
[90] Sartori 1969. A similar argument has been presented by, Przeworski 1985, pp. 99-132.; Mainwaring and Scully 1995b, p. 3.
[91] Mair 1987, p. 6. Italics in the original.
[92] Fernández diciembre 1994; Fernández 5 April 2001; Aguilar 6 April 2001; Rovira-Mas 4 April 2001. The same argument has been posited by Webb when analysing British parties. Webb 1995.
[93] As we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, this started to change after 1994.
[94] Zeledón 6 April 2001.
[95] Sánchez March and April 2003.
[96] See for example, Hernández-Naranjo 1999.

# 5 Final Observations

Electoral change in Costa Rica is not to be explained as a result of alterations in the electoral rules. On the contrary, institutional incentives have exerted a strong stabilising influence on voters and worked as anchors for the party system. Indeed, it has been shown that distinctive features of the electoral system have actually pushed the country's party system towards a dual form. Costa Rica's bipartism has its roots in the historical development of its main political parties (as demonstrated in Chapter 3). However it formally consolidated thanks to specific rules of the electoral system. The present chapter has analysed these rules and their influence on voters and parties. It is worthwhile underlining the relevance of this analysis for future electoral reforms in the country. The presidential and congressional elections were assessed separately due to the different electoral systems applied in each one.

The Costa Rican President and his two Vice-Presidents are elected using a relative majority system. At this level, two main elements have pushed the party system towards bipartism: the reductive nature of the majority system itself and the 40 per cent threshold needed by the parties to win the elections in the first round. These two elements create an effective plurality which, in turn, generates a centripetal force that has driven the country's political groups to organise around two main parties or coalitions. Since the 1953 elections the PLN has competed for power against another major contending group. First it opposed different coalitions formed by its principal adversaries and then, starting in 1986, the PUSC. In ten out of the thirteen elections organised after 1948, the two main competing political groups have obtained roughly 90 per cent of the votes. It is also worth noting how balanced the forces were between the PLN and the PUSC throughout the 1990s. In fact, in the last two elections of this era the difference between the winning and the losing party was less than 2.5 per cent. With an average ENPpres of 2.3 in the period studied, and even with the unprecedented results attained by the PAC in the 2002 elections, Costa Rica's presidential elections since 1953 have mainly been a "two-party business."

Congressional representatives are elected implementing an "impure" type of proportional representation. Six electoral features were analysed as factors

influencing the party system towards a dual form. Three of these elements, the concurrence of presidential and the congressional elections, the strength of the party system—in an indirect way—and the use of closed list voting (voting mechanics), combine to generate what was defined as the dragging effect. The other three elements: the pre-eminence of small constituencies, the sub-quotient legal threshold and—to a lesser extent—political parties' public funding laws, constitute what were labelled as electoral obstacles. The dragging effect in conjunction with the electoral obstacles have counteracted and almost "extinguished" PR's natural centrifugal force in most of the elections organised after 1948. Once again, with the exception of only four electoral processes, in the last thirteen elections the PLN and its main contender have obtained approximately 90 per cent of the seats in congress. The average ENPP during the period studied (2.5) has almost been the same as the average ENPpres (2.3). Overall, a two-party dominance has characterised parliamentary elections in Costa Rica.

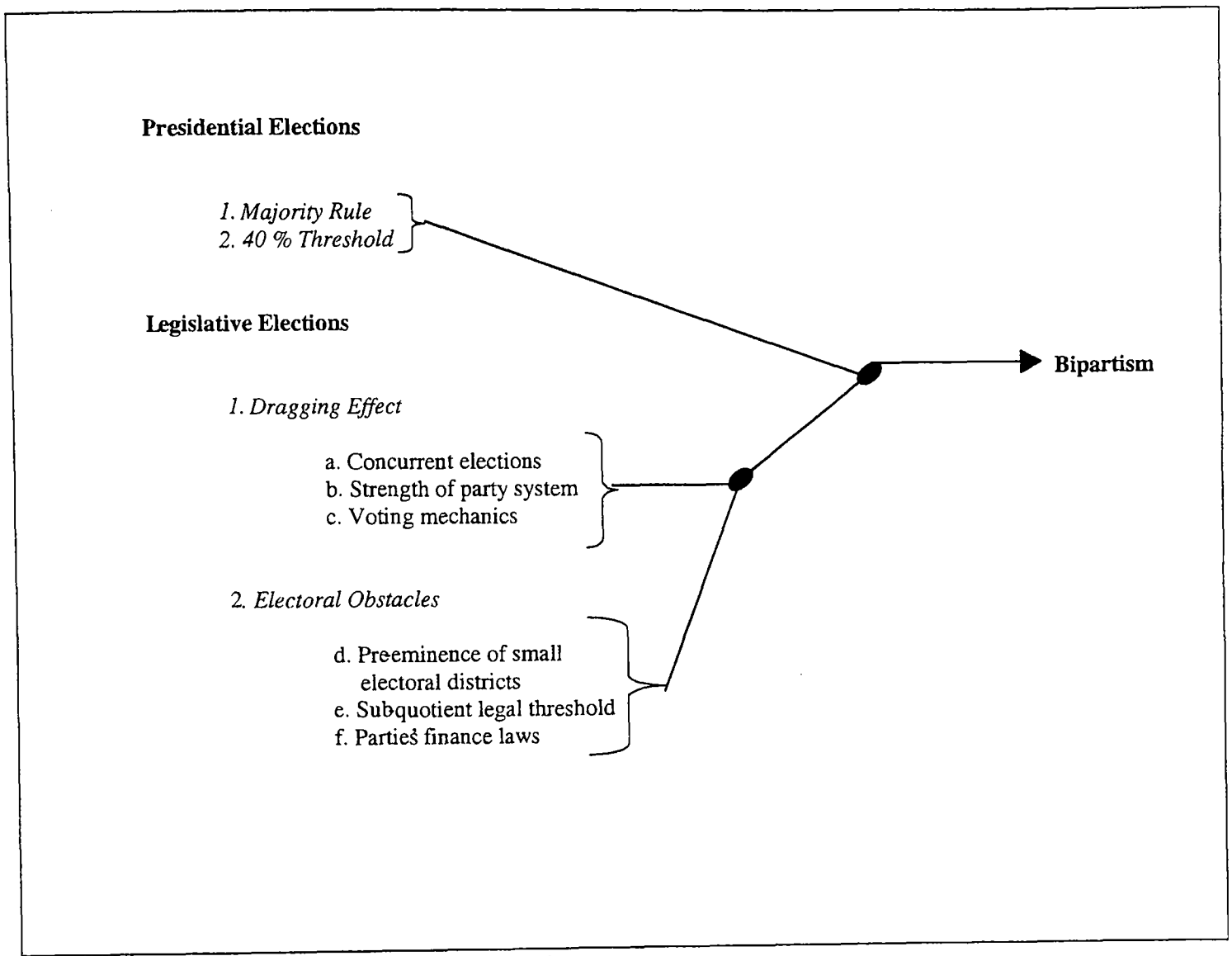
Nonetheless, the presidential, legislative, and even municipal two-party dominance in Costa Rica was not as clear in 1998, and it was certainly absent in the 2002 elections. No modifications in the electoral rules before the 1998 contest have underpinned this phenomenon. However, and even if the declining supremacy of the two main parties (the PLN and the PUSC) is evident, it is still not clear whether the new parties (the PAC and the PML) would be able to consolidate as stable political options, capable of transforming the prevailing two-party system. In spite of the fact that the erosion of the electoral support for the PLN and the PUSC is clear since 1998, definite structural changes at the party system level in Costa Rica are a sound possibility rather than a reality at the present moment.

In conclusion, specific elements of the electoral system at the presidential and at the legislative (and municipal) levels have influenced voters and driven the party system towards a dual form. This relationship is synthesised in Figure 4.1. The Costa Rican electoral system could even be classified, following Sartori, as a *strong* system for it generates a *constraining effect* on the voters and a *reductive effect* on the number of political parties.[97] Further research needs to be undertaken in order to determine the

[97] Sartori 1997, p. 32.

relative importance of each of the dualism driving factors of the electoral system. Even so, for the purposes of this study it can be concluded that: 1) the electoral changes in Costa Rica observable since 1998 are not to be explained as a result of modifications in the electoral rules, 2) there are distinctive, identifiable elements in the Costa Rican electoral system that have influenced the formation and consolidation of a two-party system, clearly dominant until 1994, and 3) the country's bipartism has certainly weakened since the 1998 elections, when a party system change process may have started. It is still to be seen whether the lack of response of the traditional parties, and the emerging parties' capacity to consolidate as stable institutions would actually end the dual party configuration that has prevailed in Costa Rica since the civil war.

Figure 4.1. Electoral System and Bipartism in Costa Rica




Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

# Part III

## The Changing Process: From Partisan to Electoral Dealignment

# Chapter 5

## Electoral Dealignment: The Evident Outcome

## 1 Introduction

Democracy, in political terms, is a defining characteristic of Costa Rica's way of life. Being democratic is not an aim, but rather a sound characteristic of the country's political culture. As argued by Charles Ameringer:

> "*Ticos*[1] know that their democracy is not perfect, but they cherish their freedom: democracy is not merely a system of government, but a deep feeling. The system has worked long enough and well enough to have acquired legitimacy."[2]

The strength of Costa Rica's democratic tradition and culture is exceptional for Latin America and even for much of the developing world.

Central to Costa Rica's democracy has been the strength of its institutions, most notably, the electoral processes and the political parties. "Stable" is the best word to describe Costa Rica's democracy after the 1948 cleavage, and its elections, especially after 1978. Nevertheless, the results of the last two electoral processes (1998 and 2002), when substantial increases in absenteeism, in ticket splitting, and in the support for "third parties" were registered, suggest that the country's electoral dynamics have abandoned their apparent stability and entered a process of change. This process seems to be what Hagopian defines as "electoral dealignment," or the progressive loss of electoral support by the main political groups.[3] As it would be shown, electoral dealignment in Costa Rica appears to be the result of a process of "partisan dealignment." Partisan dealignment, understood as "the weakening of affective, habitual and stable party loyalties among the electorate"—following Norris' definition[4]—has been taking place in the country during the last decade.[5]

As explained by Dalton and Wattenberg, this temporal sequence (partisan dealignment followed by electoral dealignment) reflects the fact that party

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[1] *Ticos* is the way Costa Ricans are called because of their fondness for using diminutive speech in order to soften expressions and avoid giving offence.
[2] Ameringer 1982, p. 1. Italics in the original. For different studies about Costa Rica's political culture see, Seligson 2001a; PEN 2001, Chap 13.; Biesanz et al. 1999; Booth and Seligson 1993.
[3] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-119. For more details on the concept of electoral dealignment see Chapter 2.
[4] Norris 1997, p. 86. For more details on the concept of partisan dealignment see Chapter 2.

identification is an attitude, while voting—or abstaining from doing so—is a form of behaviour. While attitudes may shift gradually over time, it takes a major shock or a relevant change in attitudes to modify a habitual behaviour.[6] In the case of Costa Rica, it seems that the erosion of partisan attachments, which started to manifest in the early 1990s, has finally started to be reflected in citizens' voting behaviour.

It is after the observed changes in the 1998 and 2002 elections that questions about electoral change and its reasons strongly emerged among the country's politicians, political analysts, and the media. The present chapter will assess the main changes that have been experienced in the country's electoral arena, those that constitute central signs of electoral dealignment (i.e. changes in electoral behaviour). Later, Chapter 6 will analyse the erosion of partisan loyalties (i.e. changes in political attitudes), which seems to be at the root of it. Although focused on the Costa Rican case, the analysis also takes a "horizontal" comparative perspective by referring to similar trends in other Latin American and, especially, other Western developed countries. This is a necessary assignment in order to contextualise the Costa Rican case in what appears to be a general feature of developed democracies: growing electoral fluidity.

This chapter is divided into three central sections. Firstly, a brief introduction outlines this part of the thesis and the chapter's main objectives. Secondly, following a longitudinal comparison approach, the central indicators of electoral dealignment observed in the last elections are evaluated. Finally, a set of observations regarding the main indicators of electoral dealignment evident in Costa Rica's electoral change process is presented.

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[5] See Chapter 6.
[6] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000b, p. 264.

## 2 Signs of Electoral Dealignment

As indicated by David Close, "Compared with its neighbours, Costa Rica's political life is either reassuringly normal or desperately boring."[7] Nevertheless, this changed after the 1998 elections when electoral stability and the general support for the main political parties were called into question. Following Frances Hagopian, electoral dealignment is marked by rising rates of absenteeism, and by noticeable changes and increasing volatility in voting patterns.[8] In accordance with this author's prescription, four particular elements illustrate the irruption of this process in Costa Rica: an increase in absenteeism, the rising support for third parties, mounting levels of ticket splitting, and an increasing electoral volatility.

### *2.1 Increase in Absenteeism*

The first observable element of a process of electoral dealignment that captured the attention of local analysts, media members, politicians, and certainly worried TSE officials, was an increase in the historical level of absenteeism.[9] The first sign of change in the Costa Rican electoral arena seems to be the emergence of more citizens that just refuse to participate in electoral processes. In this regard, several local analysts have suggested that the rise in absenteeism is a result of the citizens' dissatisfaction with the two traditional parties: the PLN and the PUSC.[10] As indicated by Dalton and colleagues, "...[T]hroughout history when parties have failed to perform their functions, electoral participation has declined."[11] Costa Rica is certainly not an exception.

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[7] Close 1991, p. 66.
[8] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-119. Ludolfo Paramio has also highlighted this type of electoral changes as signs of dealignment. Paramio 1996, pp. 51-52.
[9] *Al Día* 16 de setiembre del 2000; *La Nación* 19 de enero 2001; *Semanario Universidad* 8 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 2 de marzo 2002; *La Nación* 16 de marzo 2002; *La Nación* 24 de marzo 2002; *La Nación* 1 de abril 2002; *La Nación* 3 de abril 2002; *La República* 3 de abril 2002; *La Nación* 4 de abril 2002; *La Nación* 7 de abril 2002; *La Nación* 8 de abril 2002.
[10] See for example, Urcuyo-Fournier 2000, p. 7.; *La Nación* 21 de febrero 1998; *La Nación* 5 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 16 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 28 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 7 de abril 2002; *La Nación* 13 de abril 2002.
[11] Dalton et al. 2002, p. 15.

According to Graph 5.1, in all the electoral processes since 1962 absenteeism had been in the 16-21 per cent range.[12] However, starting in 1998 and following with the 2002 elections this pattern changed as absenteeism rose to 30 and 31.2 per cent, respectively. Due to the non-existence of an absentee voting system, 5 to 10 per cent of the historical absenteeism is generally caused by citizens travelling or living abroad. Those who consciously decide not to vote complete the rest.[13] The decline in turnout is more striking when one considers that no abnormal travelling or migrating figures were present before the 1998 or the 2002 elections. Thus, the amount of "conscious non-voters" suffered a dramatic increase (50 per cent).[14] The fact that turnout registered similar levels in the last two elections, even with the participation of two new, rather strong parties (the Partido Acción Ciudadana [PAC] and the Partido Movimiento Libertario [PML]) in the 2002 process, demonstrated that, contrary to what some local analysts contended,[15] an abnormally high absenteeism for Costa Rican standards in 1998 was not a conjunctural event.[16]

Graph 5.1 also shows how from 1962 and until 1994, absenteeism was always well below the percentage of votes obtained by the winning party/coalition both at the presidential and at the legislative level. However, this was no longer the case in the 1998 elections when it came really close to the percentage of votes received by the winner of the presidential election and actually surpassed it in the legislative contest. In the 2002 elections absenteeism "prevailed" over the winner at both levels, becoming the country's "most important party." This situation has its only precedent in Costa Rica's modern political history in 1958, the second electoral process organised after the 1948 Civil War, when the country was still constructing the bases of its democratic stability.

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[12] The levels registered in 1953 (32.8 per cent) and in 1958 (35.3 per cent) are rather low considering that those were the first two elections organised after the 1948 Civil War, when the country's main democratic instutions were still far from developed.

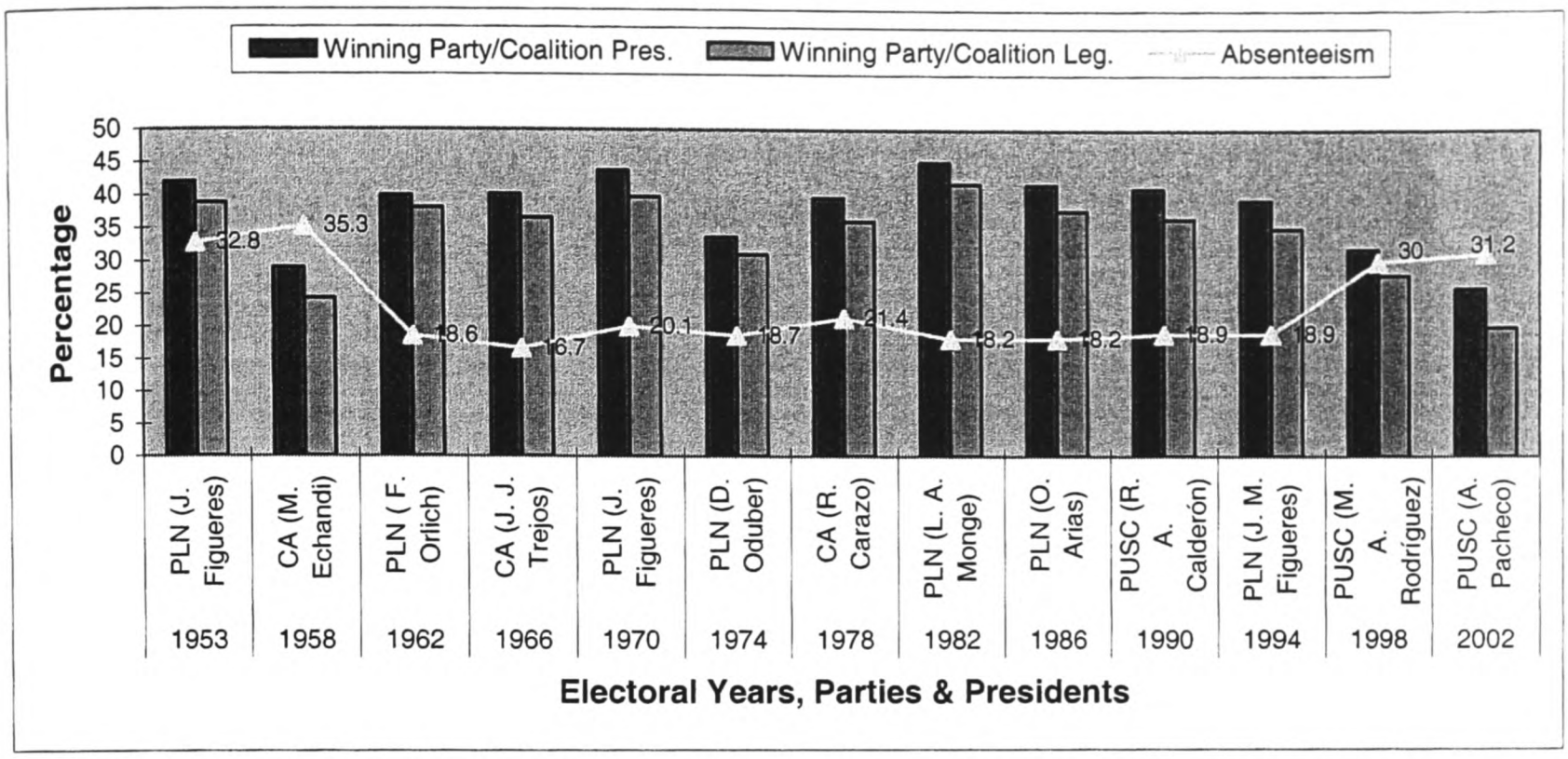
[13] Urcuyo-Fournier 1990, pp. 176-177. For a thorough analysis of absenteeism in Costa Rica see, Hernández-Rodríguez 1990-1991.

[14] Following Óscar Hernández, the increased in absenteeism between 1994 and 1998 was even higher, as the electoral roll was updated prior to the 1998 elections and several outdated identity cards and some even belonging to dead citizens, were eliminated. Hernández-Rodríguez 15 February 2002.

[15] Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, pp. 68-69.; Borge 19 March 2001.

[16] In fact other local analysts have even forecasted its secular rise in future elections. See for example, Sojo 25 June 2002.

Graph 5.1. Absenteeism and Results of Winning Party/Coalition in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1953-2002
(votes considering all register)




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that increasing levels of absenteeism is by no means a Costa Rican peculiarity. Frances Hagopian has reported a "precipitous" turnout decline in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, and Peru.[17] Furthermore, Table 5.1 illustrates the change in turnout levels in 17 established democracies without compulsory voting in the last 40 years. In all of them turnout has declined. This table also demonstrates that the negative percentage of change in Costa Rica (-15.8%) is more pronounce than the average (-13.3%), and the median (-12.6%) for the whole set of countries. In a similar vein, and after studying turnout changes in 19 OECD nations, Martin Wattenberg has concluded that countries with weak party systems had the most pronounced drops in electoral participation, whereas the presence of strong party systems appeared to have dampened the decline.[18] This suggests that the erosion in turnout in the Costa Rican case could have been bigger. In any case, Wattenberg describes turnout decline as a "widely generalizable trend;"[19]

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[17] Hagopian 1998, pp. 115-120.
[18] Wattenberg 2000.
[19] Wattenberg 2000, p. 71. For an insightful analysis of absenteeism's general causes see, Heath and Taylor 1999.

a trend that, as showed, includes Costa Rica. Therefore, dropping turnout levels seem to be a general feature of established democracies, and a suggestive sign of voters' declining support for political parties in different polities around the world.

Table 5.1. Change in Turnout in Established Democracies Without Compulsory Voting in Recent Years

| Countries | Average of first two elections in the 1960s | Average of two most recent elections (a) | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Switzerland | 53.4 | 35.3 | -33.9% |
| Canada | 74.2 | 54.8 | -26.2% |
| United States | 62.4 | 50.1 | -19.7% |
| Netherlands | 90.1 | 72.7 | -19.3% |
| Finland | 85.3 | 69.3 | -18.8% |
| United Kingdom | 74.5 | 62.4 | -16.2% |
| Austria | 90.1 | 75.7 | -16.0% |
| **Costa Rica** | **82.4** | **69.4** | **-15.8%** |
| Japan | 70.0 | 61.2 | -12.6% |
| Germany | 83.9 | 73.8 | -12.0% |
| France | 66.0 | 60.6 | -8.2% |
| New Zealand | 83.3 | 77.1 | -7.4% |
| Norway | 81.4 | 75.7 | -7.0% |
| Italy | 94.2 | 89.1 | -5.4% |
| Denmark | 85.4 | 82.4 | -3.5% |
| Ireland | 72.7 | 70.2 | -3.4% |
| Sweden | 81.9 | 80.7 | -1.5% |
| **Average / Median** | **78.3 / 70.0** | **68.3 / 61.2** | **-13.3% / -12.6%** |

(a) As of June 2001, except for Costa Rica which considers the February 2002 elections.
Notes: Turnout rates are calculated based on the percentage of the voting age population. With the exceptions of the United States and Costa Rica, where presidential elections are used, all elections are for the lower House of the legislature. The Netherlands practiced compulsory voting in the 1960s, but abolished this requirement after the 1967 election. Italy and Costa Rica have long had a compulsory voting law, but it has not been enforced. For further information on the practice of compulsory voting around the world see, http://www.idea.int/voter_turnout/Compulsory_Voting.htm. Dalton et al. 2002, Table 4, p. 26.
Sources: For Costa Rica, TSE 2002b; for the rest, Dalton et al. 2002, Table 4, p. 26.

## 2.2 *Rising Support for Third Parties* vis à vis *Traditional Parties*

The rising support for third political options and the declining vote for Costa Rica's two main parties (the PLN and the PUSC) has been another evident sign of electoral dealignment. Voters seem to be changing their electoral preferences. This is

noticeable both at the presidential and, especially, at the legislative level. The declining support for the winning party in the last two elections at both levels (depicted in Graph 5.1) already suggested this phenomenon.

### 2.2.1 Presidential Elections

In general terms two major political forces have enjoyed the monopoly of power in the Costa Rican presidential elections. Minor political groups had very rarely been able to challenge the predominance of the two main parties.[20] However, this situation seems to have changed in 2002. As shown in Graph 5.2, in that year third parties "tied" with the PLN, and were not far away from the winning PUSC. The only precedent to this event happened in 1974. Nevertheless three basic elements differentiate that election from the one in 2002.

First, the 1974 electoral process happened before the formation of Costa Rica's two-party system in 1983. It is harder to conform and launch a successful third party once a strongly institutionalised two-party system, with their corresponding mechanic and psychological effects (following Duverger),[21] has been in place for twenty years. Second, in 2002 one single newly formed, big party, the PAC—a centre-left movement—was able to capture 26.2 per cent of the total vote. That was not the case in the 1974 elections when votes were divided among four small and two "medium size" parties: the Partido Renovación Democrática (PRD), which got 9.1 per cent of the vote, and the Partido Nacional Independiente (PNI), which received 10.9 per cent of the popular support.[22] And third, the 1974 presidential elections were resolved in one round; while in 2002, for the first time in the country's political history, a runoff was needed to elect a president. The unprecedented support obtained by the PAC was

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[20] The electoral system has played a decisive role hampering the electoral possibilities of third parties, especially at the presidential level. For further details on this topic see, Chapter 4 and Sánchez 2001.
[21] Duverger 1987, p. 252. For details regarding the application of these effects on the Costa Rican case see, Chapter 4 and Sánchez 2001.
[22] TSE 2002b.

very much responsible for preventing the winning party (the PUSC) from reaching the 40 per cent needed to win the elections in the first round.[23]

Indeed, the emergence of the PAC was one of the most salient features of the 2002 electoral process. This party was formed fourteen months before the general elections in February 2002. Its leader is former minister, deputy, and PLN member: Ottón Solís. Solís left the PLN denouncing personal attacks and claiming that is was impossible to set right a party that was dominated by corrupt leaders. The PAC participated in the 2002 elections claiming to represent a different, new option for voters tired of traditional parties and politicians. The central issues it voiced during the campaign were: accountability and transparency in the public sector (Solís "declared war" on corruption), enhancing citizens' participation in politics (hence the name of the party: Citizens Action Party), and providing fair treatment for economic sectors—especially the agricultural one—most affected by the global economy.[24] The PAC's followers were predominantly urban, educated, young and middle age citizens, who supported this party (at least that is what they claimed) as a way to "protest" against the failures and the lack of transparency of the country's established political groups.[25] It is still early to know whether the PAC, now an electoral movement, will grow into a stable party and structurally alter the predominant two-party system. Nonetheless it is clear that its meteoric emergence is a sign of Costa Rican voters fatigue with the two traditional parties.

Graph 5.2 also illustrates how the period of alternation in power between the PLN and the PUSC that started in 1986—the first election of the two-party era—ended in 2002. Moreover, it demonstrates how, starting in 1998, support for the two main parties started to diminish. This phenomenon is clearly depicted in Graph 5.3, which shows how since 1986 the support obtained by the party that had won the presidential election (the PLN in 1986 and 1994, and the PUSC in 1990, 1998, and 2002) follows a descending pattern. This trend became evident in 1998 and registered its lower

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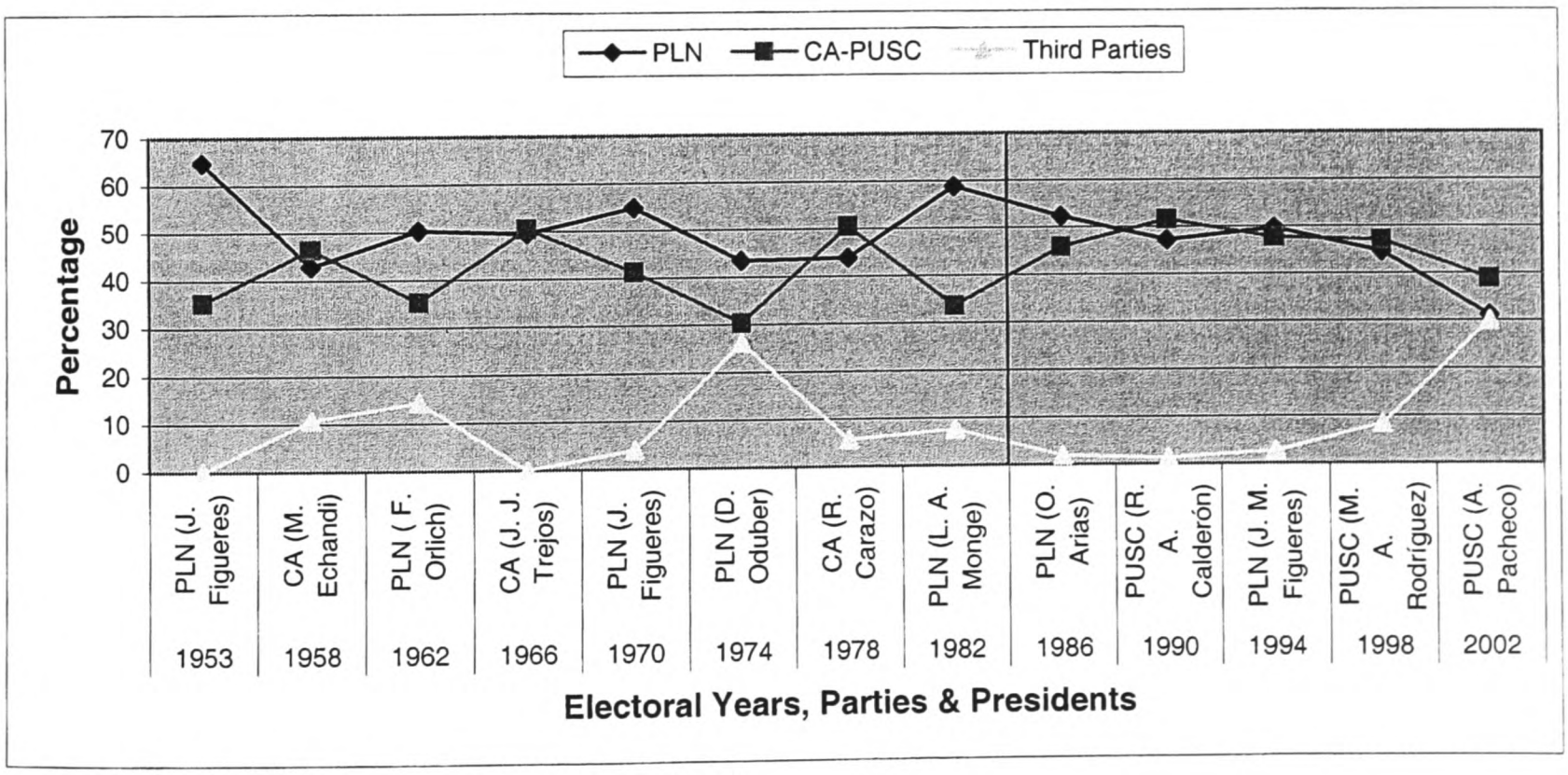
[23] In 1974 the PLN's candidate, Daniel Oduber, won the election, while in 2002 Abel Pacheco of the PUSC was elected president after defeating Rolando Araya of the PLN in a runoff. The results of the second round were 57.9 per cent for the PUSC and 42.1 for the PLN. TSE 2002b.
[24] Solís 22 February 2002. For further details on the PAC's manifesto see, PAC 2002.
[25] Demoscopía S.A., 16 de enero 2002; Unimer RI-La Nación, enero 2002.

level in 2002, when—as mentioned—the winning party did not receive enough support to triumph in the first round.

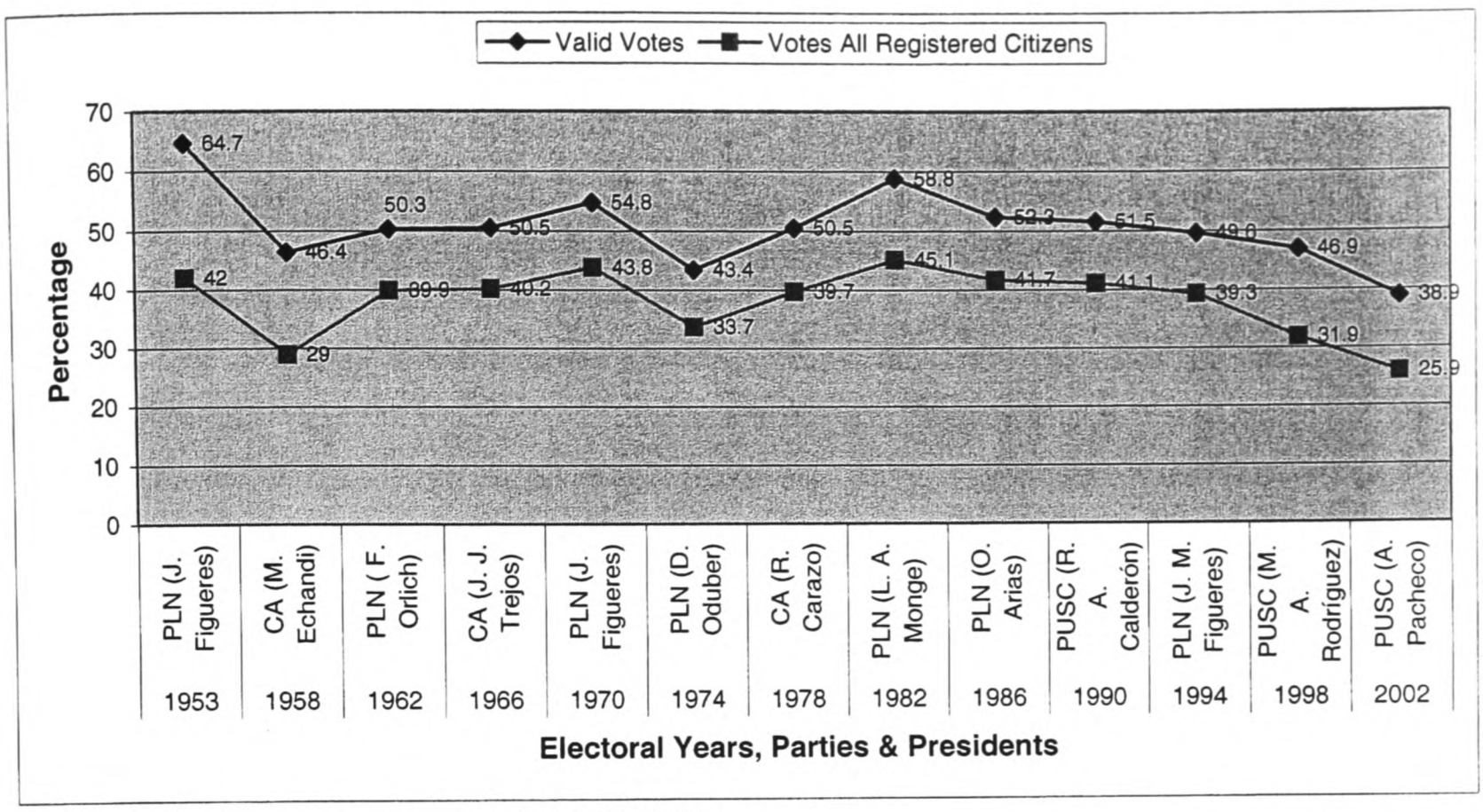
It is also noteworthy that in this election and for the first time since 1953, the PLN lost the presidential battle after being in opposition. Moreover, in 2002 the PUSC was re-elected in office for the first time since its creation in 1983. And finally, as demonstrated in Graph 5.2, it was in the 2002 presidential election that both the PLN and the PUSC got the lowest vote since their formation (1951 the PLN and 1983 the PUSC). An analysis focusing only on the 2002 presidential election could very well attribute its results to the appearance of a very successful, new party and to poor performances by the PUSC and, especially, the PLN. However when studied together with other electoral changes, more than a conjunctural event, they seem to be part of a process of electoral dealignment.

Graph 5.2. Presidential Elections Results in Costa Rica, 1953-2002
(valid votes)




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Graph 5.3. Winning Party/Coalition Results in Costa Rica's Presidential Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

2.2.2 Legislative Elections

As happened at the presidential level, third parties are also doing better in the legislative contests. However, as shown in Graph 5.4, their ascending trend started much earlier—since 1990—becoming evident in 1998. Third parties received 10.9, 11.9, and 15 per cent of the vote in 1986, 1990, and 1994, respectively. In 1998 their support almost doubled rising to 24 per cent, and almost doubled again in 2002, reaching an unprecedented 43.1 per cent. In this election, similar to what took place at the presidential level, the PAC got 22 per cent of the vote and turned into the most important emerging political group. The other party worth mentioning is the Partido Movimiento Libertario (PML), a rightist political movement that was able to capture 9.3 per cent of the vote. Formed by former PUSC member, Otto Guevara, and defending non-interventionist policies—proper of the libertarian credo—the PML

participated for the first time in the 1998 elections obtaining 3.1 per cent of the vote in the legislative contest, good enough to elect one deputy (Guevara himself).[26]

The 1958 and 1974 elections (when third parties got 36 and 34 per cent of the vote respectively) appear as the only two precedents to the 2002 phenomenon.[27] However, again, both elections took place before the conformation of bipartism in the country. Graphs 5.4 and 5.5 demonstrate the declining support for traditional parties at the legislative level. In the case of the PLN, the loss of support is perceptible since 1986, and became pretty obvious since 1998. As for the PUSC, it is not until 2002 when a decline in its historical electoral support is evident.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, when citizens vote in legislative elections using closed lists (as they do in Costa Rica) they are more likely to vote for parties, which present themselves as "teams,"[28] than for individuals. As indicated in that same chapter, this dynamic further validates Oscar Fernández's assertion regarding legislative voting in Costa Rica, given the possibility of ticket splitting,[29] as an "interesting" indicator—a proxy measure—of party identification.[30] Thus, the eroding electoral support in the legislative elections for the country's main parties—the PUSC and, especially, the PLN—should be regarded as the first clear suggestion of what seems to be at the base of electoral dealignment in Costa Rica: the erosion of partisan loyalties (partisan dealignment).[31]

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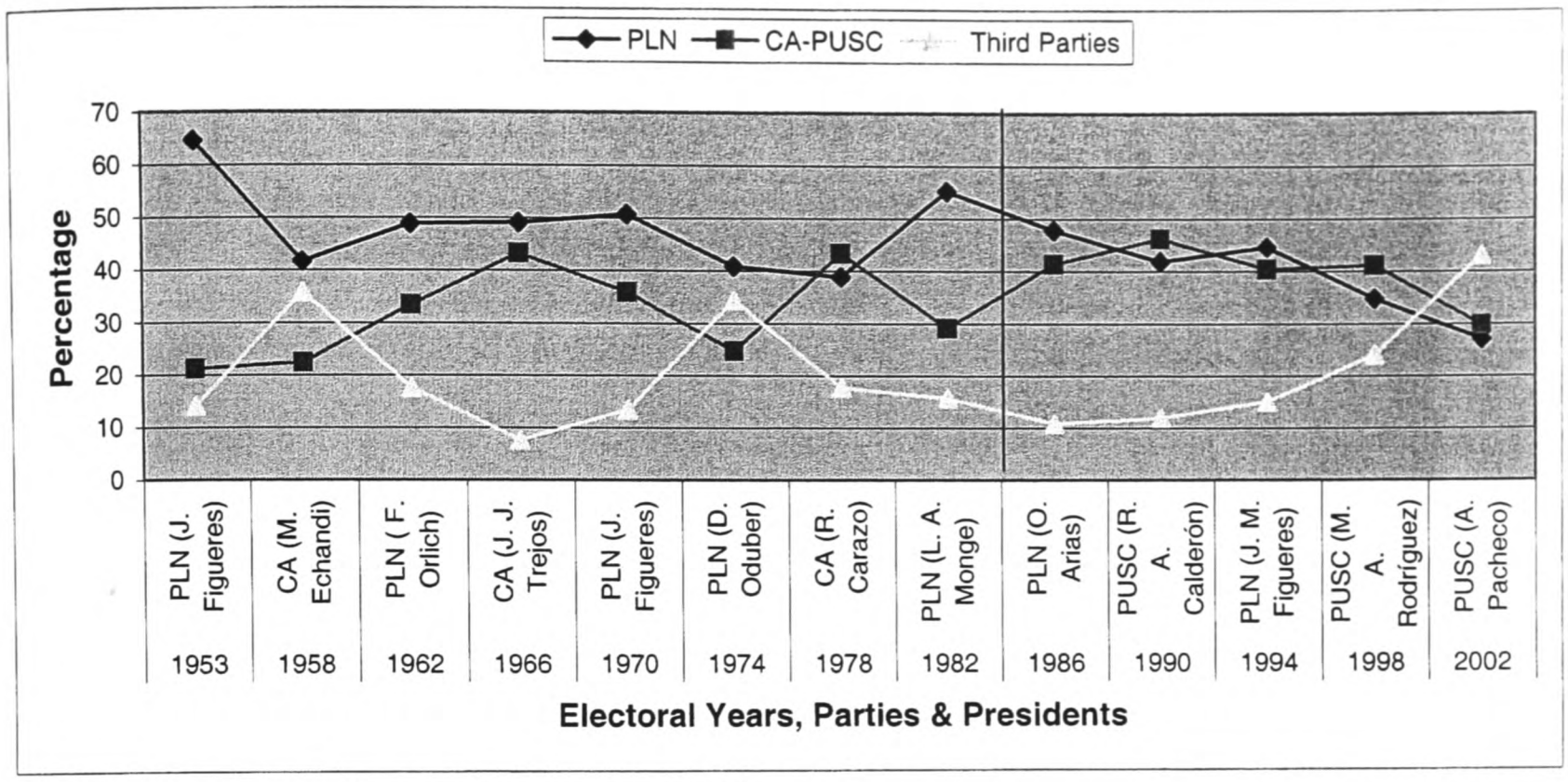
[26] TSE 2002b; Guevara 12 February 2002.
[27] TSE 2002b.
[28] Shugart and Carey 1992, p. 239.
[29] Ticket splitting is possible in the Costa Rican elections given that the president and vice-presidents, the deputies, and the local authorities are elected in three different ballots. See Chapter 4.
[30] Fernández 1996, pp. 150-151.; Fernández 14 February 2002. For a theoretical assessments of the concept of party identification see, Chapter 6.
[31] This conclusion is also validated by the electoral results in the municipal elections, where the same electoral rules as in the legislative contests apply. Graph 4.4 in Chapter 4 clearly depicts the eroding support for Costa Rica's two main parties since 1994 at this level.

Graph 5.4. Legislative Elections Results in Costa Rica, 1953-2002
(valid votes)




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

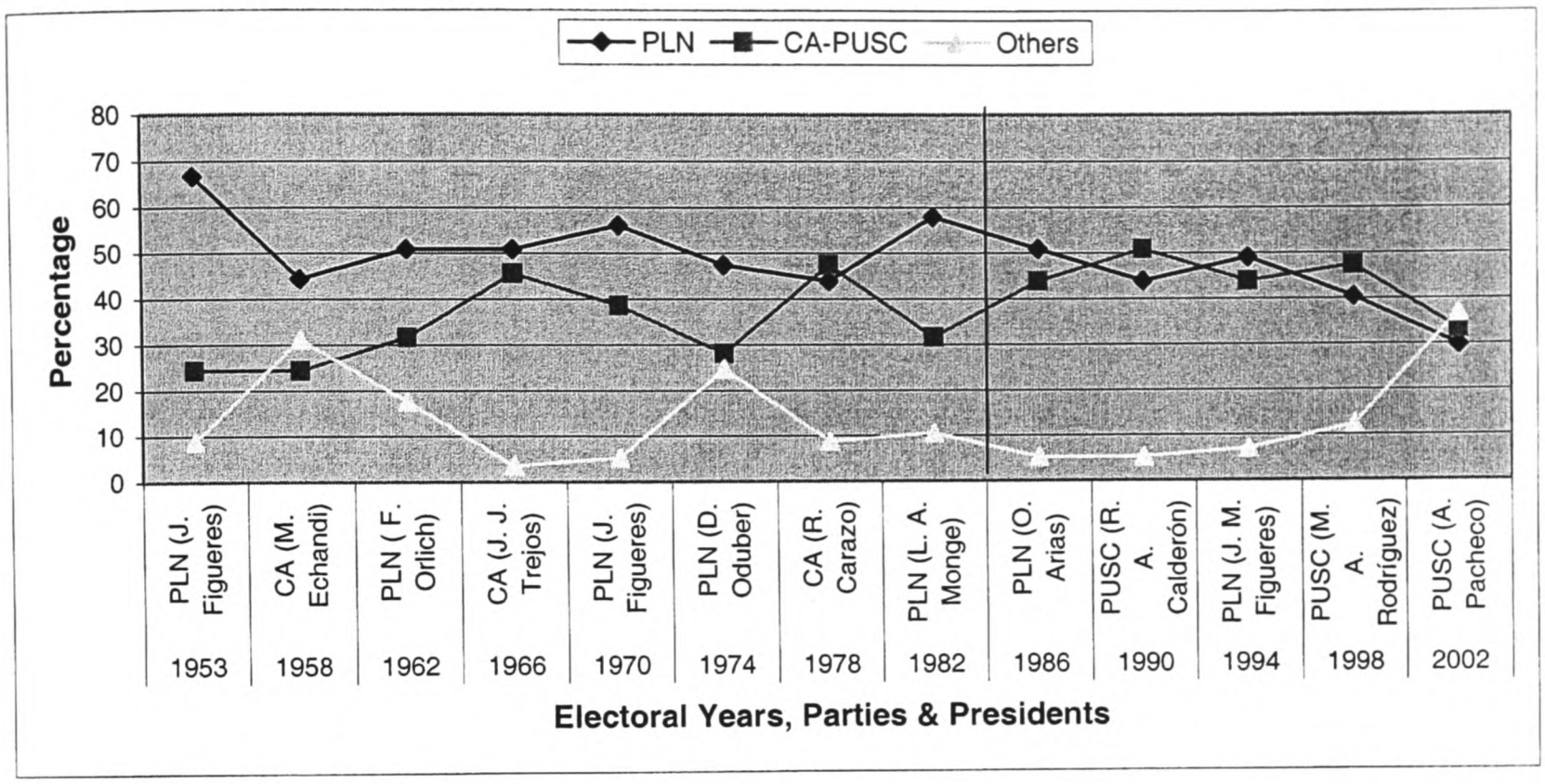
Furthermore, Graph 5.5 demonstrates that the 2002 legislative election—joining the presidential one—also marked the end of a sixteen-year period of alternation of the PLN and the PUSC as the dominant factions in congress. This graph also shows that, even with the explained obstacles that the electoral system presents to third parties,[32] they have been expanding their parliamentary representation since 1990. Once in the two-party era, three elections of rather modest results (5.3 per cent [3 seats] in 1986 and 1990, and 7 per cent [4 seats] in 1994) have been followed by a respectable 12.3 per cent (7 seats) in 1998, and an unprecedented 36.8 per cent (21 seats) in 2002.

As what happened with turnout decline, this phenomenon is not a Costa Rican peculiarity. Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg have reported a tendency towards an increasing representation of different parties in parliaments in 21 advanced industrial democracies, most of them undergoing electoral change processes.[33] The rising representation of third parties in assemblies in developed polities is another sign of a

[32] See Chapter 4 and Sánchez 2001.
[33] Dalton et al. 2000, pp. 41-42.

general trend characterised by electoral fluidity and declining support for traditional parties. This trend is now also evident in Costa Rica.

Graph 5.5. Percentage of Seats in Costa Rica's Legislative Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

The 2002 elections certainly transformed Costa Rica's political scenario. Not only did they register the meteoric emergence of a new relevant party—the PAC—but also the election results drastically altered the dynamics of the Costa Rican congress. They ended the "two-block" legislative scenario that had predominated until 1998. Now the PAC with 24.5 per cent of the seats (14 seats) and the PML with 10.5 per cent (6 seats), join the PLN and the PUSC to form a new "four-block" legislative configuration.[34] It is worth noting that during this election the PLN obtained the lowest percentage of seats in its political history: 29.8 per cent (17 seats). On the

[34] However, by the beginning of 2003 the PAC and the PML had already suffered internal fractures. The legislative faction of the PAC divided into two groups and the PML lost one deputy that now claims to be independent. This not only has increased even more the fragmentation in the assembly, but also posits serious doubts regarding the institutional strength of these parties and their ability to transform the country's party system.

other hand, the results for the PUSC were not at all good. They got 33.3 per cent of the seats in congress (19 seats), their lowest percentage during the two-party era.[35]

In a similar vein, another interesting phenomenon that demonstrates the fluidity of the last electoral processes is the rise and demise of the Partido Fuerza Democrática (PFD)—whose behaviour somehow resembles a "flash party." The PFD, a reformed leftist party, participated for the first time in the 1994 elections obtaining 5.3 per cent of the total vote, good enough to elect 2 representatives. Things seemed to be going well for this party and in 1998 it attained 5.8 per cent of the popular support, securing 3 representatives. However, in 2002 the PFD only received 2 per cent of the total vote and lost all its representation in congress. Virulent internal disputes prior to the 2002 elections, and the emergence of a more appealing third option (the PAC) are amongst the main causes for their disappointing performance.[36] In any case, the meteoric emergence of the PAC, the "political history" of the PFD, and the new configuration of congress after the 2002 elections are sound examples of the electoral changes that have characterised the last electoral processes in Costa Rica.

In conclusion, electoral results both at the presidential and, especially, at the legislative level illustrate the changing dynamics of the Costa Rican political situation. After a period of electoral stability and of clear dominance by the two main political parties which distinguished the first twelve years of the two-party era, the 1998 elections and—more evidently—the 2002 ones have marked the initiation of a stage of electoral flux. This new stage has been characterised, among others, by a rising support for third parties and the diminishing electoral strength of the traditional ones. Graph 5.6 clearly depicts this phenomenon. It is interesting to see how the stability stage of the two-party era can be traced back to the 1978 elections. This makes sense as the Coalición Unidad (CU), the coalition that opposed the PLN both in 1978 and 1982, was integrated by the same four parties that later merged to create

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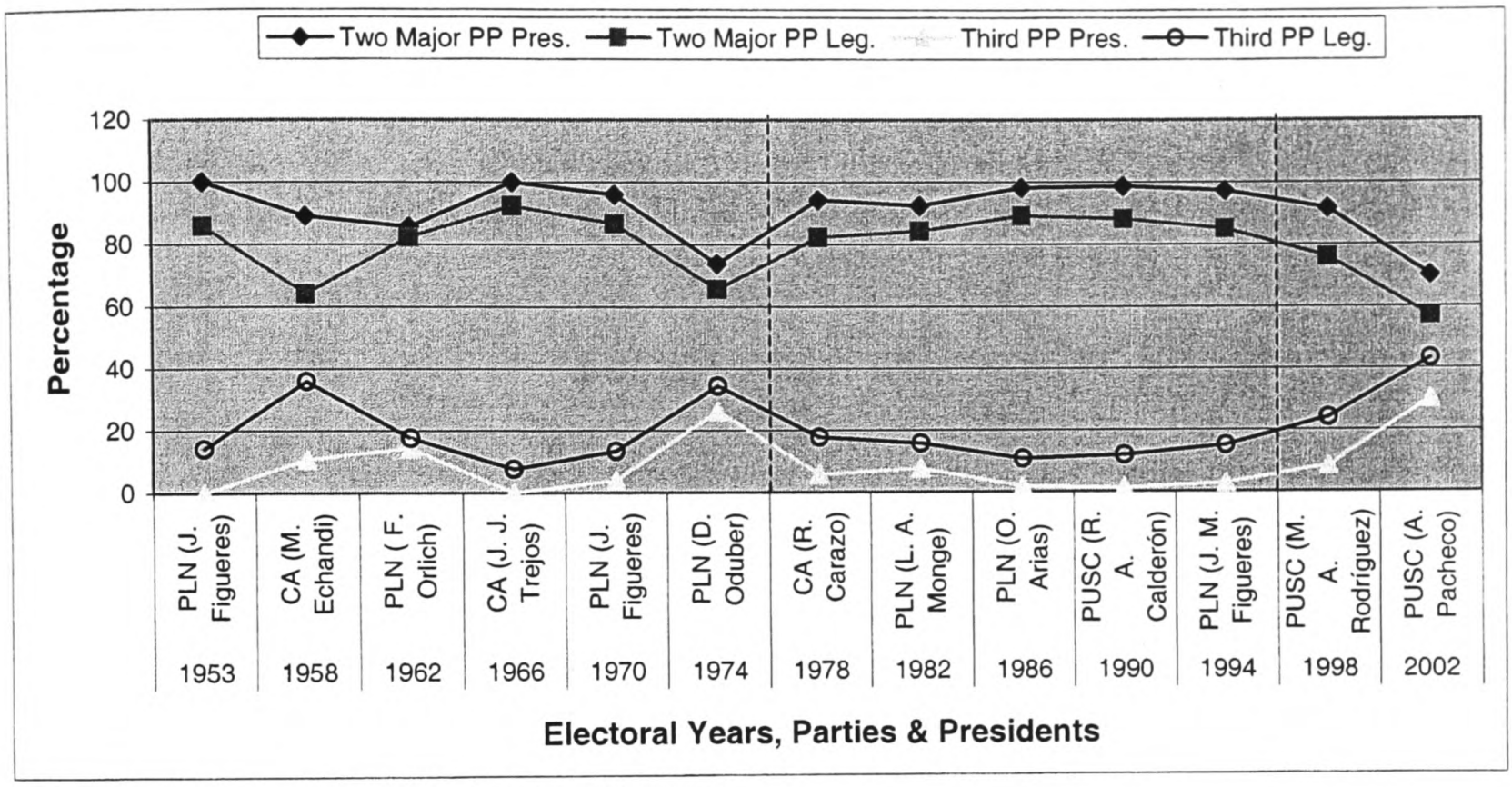
[35] TSE 2002b.

[36] For further details about the Left's historical electoral results and the reasons for its terrible performance in the 2002 process see, *La Nación* 17 de febrero 2002 and Chapter 3.

the PUSC.[37] This finding will prove to be useful in the other sections of this and the following chapters.

Graph 5.6. Added Support for the Two Major Parties and for Third Parties in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

## *2.3 Rise in Split-Ticket Voting*

A third sign of electoral dealignment present in Costa Rica's political arena is a secular rise in split-ticket voting. This is a revealing sign of electoral flux as it shows the percentage of voters that decide not to support the same party in both the presidential and the legislative elections. As explained by Miller and Shanks, high ticket splitting figures are indicative of low party loyalty.[38] According to Graph 5.7, split-ticket voting has followed an ascending trend in Costa Rica since 1986, the first elections of the two-party era. It was 8.8 per cent in 1986, 10.6 per cent in 1990, 12.4

[37] Those parties were: Partido Renovación Democrática (PRD), Partido Unión Popular (PUP), Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC) and Partido Republicano Calderonista (PRC).

per cent in 1994, 15.5 per cent in 1998, and 17 per cent in 2002.[39] Again, a cross-national study of electoral change by Dalton and colleagues provide evidence of similar trends in Australia, Canada, Germany, Sweden, and the USA.[40] Indeed, a growing electoral flux seems to be a generalised characteristic in developed democracies.

It is noteworthy that the levels of ticket splitting registered in the last two elections in Costa Rica have only been higher in 1958 (27.1 per cent), the second electoral process organised after the 1948 Civil War. However, in those elections the opposition to the PLN (the Partido Unión Nacional [PUN] and the Partido Republicano [PRep]) decided to coalesce only for the presidential battle.[41] This "forced" a saliently high level of ticket splitting. Hence, if one disregards these elections given the "artificial nature" of the split-ticket voting results, the 2002 contest atop the record.

Graph 5.7 also shows that since 1978 and until 1990, the PLN and the CU—the PUSC since 1986—registered levels of ticket splitting that hovered around 5 per cent. This situation changed in 1994, and starting in 1998 they have followed a seesawing trend. Therefore, not only has split-ticket voting strongly increased in the last two elections, but also, adding to the "changing mood" of the country's electoral panorama, the two major parties have alternated their contribution to its rise. As a result and for the third election in a row (1994, 1998, and 2002), neither of the two main parties achieved a parliamentary majority. Legislative gridlock and constant struggles between the executive and the congress have been the most notorious results of this phenomenon.

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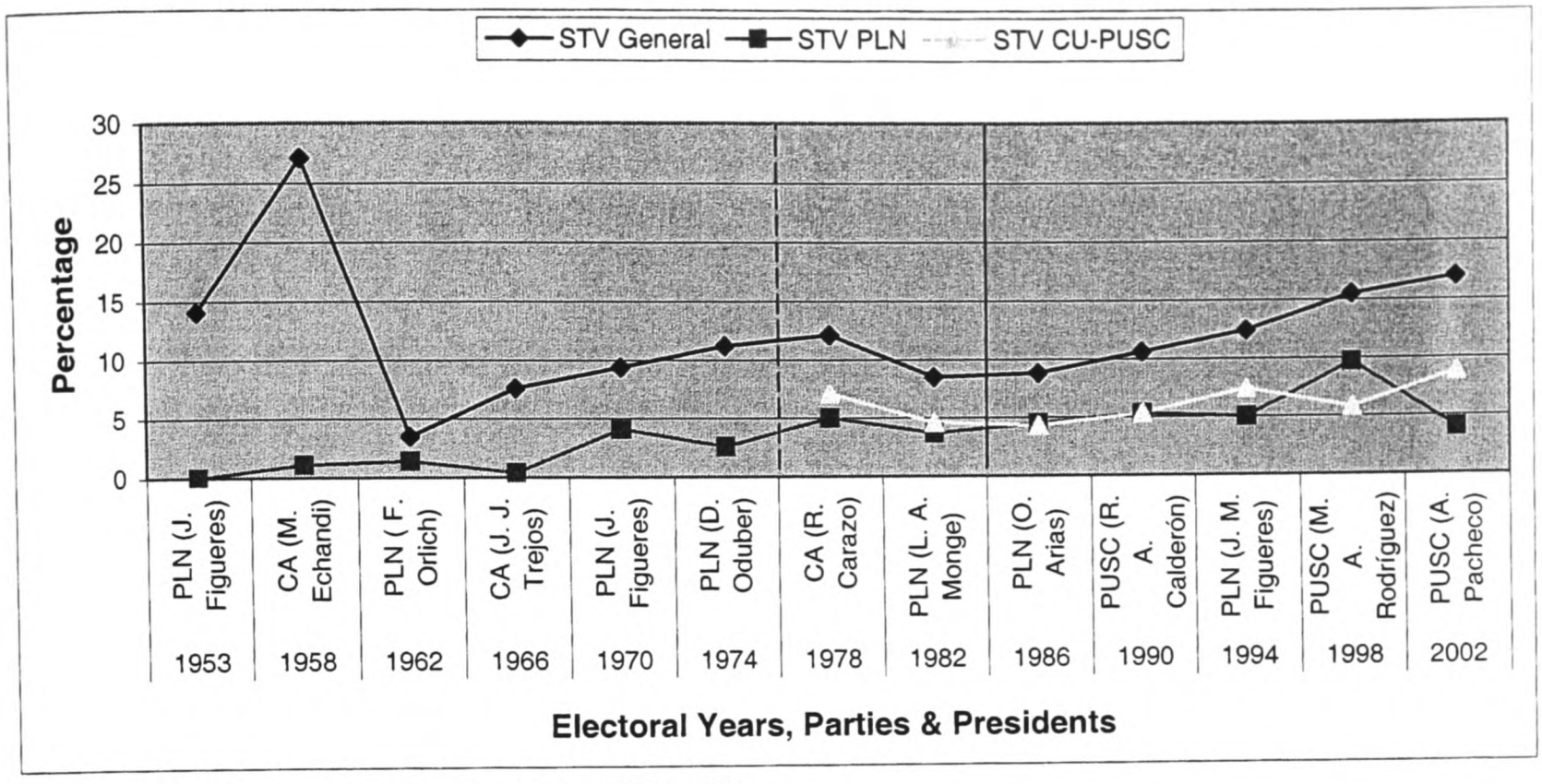
[38] Miller and Shanks 1996, pp. 123-124. This same argument was posited by Federico Malavassi when analysing the Costa Rican electorate. Malavassi 6 March 2002.

[39] For an in-depth analysis of ticket splitting in the Costa Rican elections see, Hernández-Rodríguez 2001.

[40] Split-ticket voting was measured in elections between the House and the Senate in Australia, Federal and Provincial in Canada, 1st and 2nd vote in Germany, County Parliament and Local Parliament in Sweden, and Presidential and House, House and Senate, and State and local in the USA. Dalton et al. 2000, pp. 45-47.

[41] They supported the PUN's candidate, Mario Echandi.

Graph 5.7. Split-Ticket Voting (STV) in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

## *2.4 Increasing Electoral Volatility*

### 2.4.1 Total Volatility

The total electoral volatility (total volatility [TV]), or the added net percentage of vote gains and losses experienced by all political parties from one election to the next, is probably the most widely used indicator of electoral fluidity.[42] This indicator has proved to be very useful for analysing electoral change in Costa Rica. Following a similar pattern as the other indicators, Graph 5.8 clearly depicts an increase in the level of the TV—in aggregate terms—both at the presidential and at the legislative

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[42] For different definitions and applications of the concept of electoral volatility see, Pedersen 1983; Crewe 1985; Bartolini and Mair 1990, Chap. 1.; Mair 1997, pp. 27-33.; Ersson and Lane 1998, pp. 29-33. Following Bartolini and Mair, the basic formula for total volatility measured at the level of the individual party and summed for the party system as a whole is:
TV= ½ ( | PiV | + | PjV | + | PkV | + | PeV |... + | PnV | ), where PiV represents the change—in absolute terms—in the aggregate vote for party i between two consecutive elections. In calculating this index, votes are normally measured in terms of percentages, although there is no necessary reason why the formula cannot be applied to actual votes. In addition, the votes measured are usually taken as a proportion of the total valid votes (as I have), although, again, there is no reason why the formula could

level since the 1998 elections. Moreover it shows that, as expected, the most volatile period of Costa Rica's modern electoral history happened before the formation of the two-party system in 1983. TV in this period reached its apex in the 1978 elections, when the opposition to the PLN was finally able to integrate a solid coalition (the CU) that later evolved into the PUSC. The same graph demonstrates how between 1978 and 1990, TV followed a descending pattern. This pattern terminated between 1990 and 1994, and took the opposite direction in 1998. Table 5.2 presents the values registered at the peak and at the bottom of this unstable trend, both in presidential and legislative elections.

From the same table one learns that the average TV in the Costa Rican legislative elections is 27 per cent, a number that, according to Kevin Casas-Zamora, is much higher than the top averages reported in 17 developed democracies between 1945 and 1996.[43] Graph 5.8 also shows that in most elections (11 out of 12 cases) the TV register is higher in the legislative elections than in the presidential contests. This makes sense given the better chances third parties have always enjoyed in the former.[44] This phenomenon is also reflected in the number of parties that have participated in each election, as demonstrated in Graph 5.9. Furthermore, this graph also shows that the number of parties participating has followed an ascending pattern. Similar to what happened with TV, it declines when the two-party era starts and "jumps" again in 1998. Even if not as compelling as TV, the number of parties participating in both elections is another interesting indicator of changes in the country's political arena.

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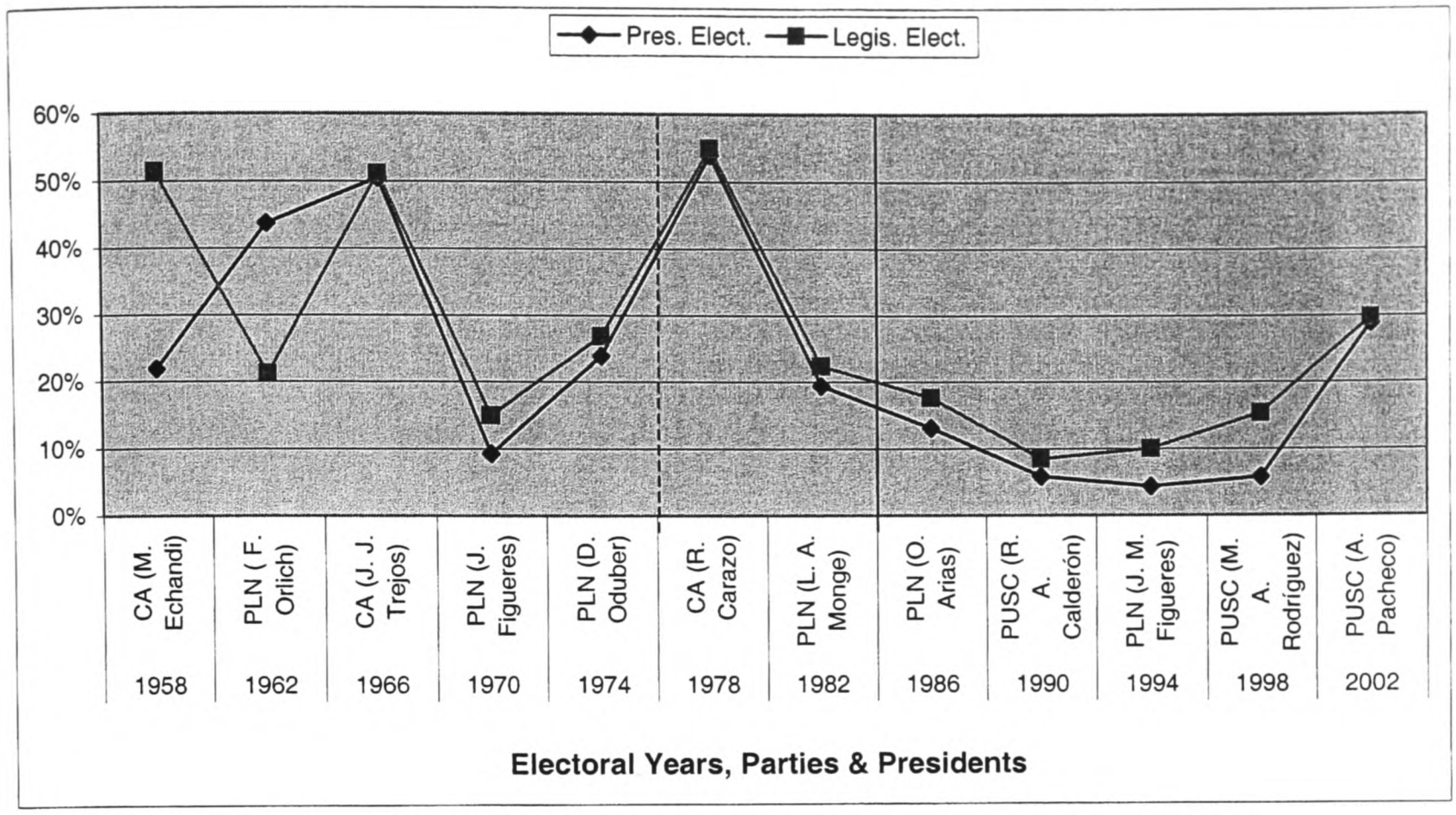
not incorporate measures of spoiled or bank ballots, as well as abstentions. Bartolini and Mair 1990, p. 20.

[43] The alluded countries are: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK, Sweden, and Switzerland. Israel (14.5 per cent) and France (14.3 per cent) registered the highest TVs, while Switzerland (5.4 per cent) and Austria (5.5 per cent) registered the lowest. Casas-Zamora 2001, pp. 320, 327-328.

[44] See Chapter 4 and Sánchez 2001.

Graph 5.8. Total Electoral Volatility in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1958-2002



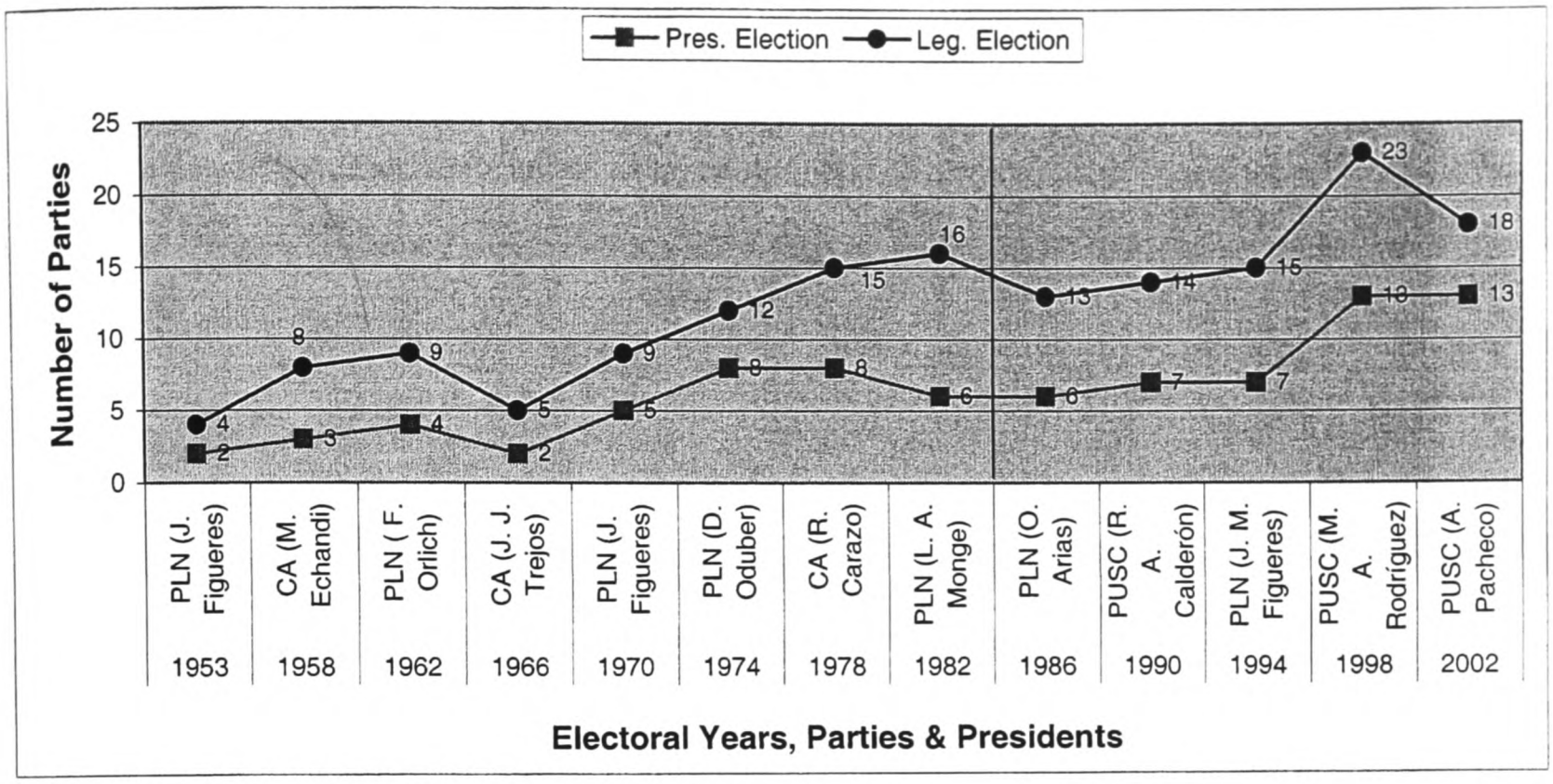

Note: This indicator was constructed following the parties and coalition guidelines explained in Tables, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, in Chapter 3. All the parties that obtained at least 1 per cent of the total valid vote were considered individually. The rest were included in the "Other" category. Given that the same 4 parties that integrated the CU in 1978 later turned into the PUSC, the CU and the PUSC were handled as the same party. These guidelines apply for the calculation of TV both at the presidential and legislative level.
Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Table 5.2. Total and Block Volatility Selected Results in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1958-2002

| | **Total Volatility (TV)** | | **Block Volatility (BV)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Elections** | Presidential | Legislative | Presidential | Legislative |
| **Average** | 23.4% | 27.0% | 12.9% | 13.2% |
| **Lowest** | 4.4% (1994) | 8.5% (1990) | 1.6% (1966) | 5.5% (1962) |
| **Highest** | 53.9% (1978) | 54.9% (1978) | 28.5% (2002) | 26.3% (1978) |

Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Graph 5.9. Number of Political Parties Participating in Costa Rica's Elections, 1953-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

## 2.4.2 Block Volatility

The two previous graphs demonstrate that the period of electoral stability that seemed to have started with the formation of the two-party system ended in 1998. Given the late formation of Costa Rica's bipartism, 35 years after the 1948 cleavage, we have only been able to draw conclusions from these and the rest of the indicators from trends starting in 1986 or in 1978, in the best of cases. However, by integrating in blocks the three groups in which the 1948 cleavage divided the country's political parties, we can trace their electoral volatility all the way back to 1958 and draw relevant and comparable conclusions for the whole period.

Following Costa Rica's political history and the guidelines posed in Chapter 3 (especially in Tables 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6), parties were divided into four blocks or families: the PLN (Table 3.4), the Conservative Alliance (CA, [PUSC since 1983]) (Table 3.5), the Left (Table 3.6), and the category of "Other," where all the parties

that did not belong to any of the previous blocks were included.[45] This variant of TV, referred to as block volatility (BV) has been used by Bartolini and Mair to carry out a cross-national electoral study with thirteen Western industrialised democracies.[46] They have convincingly justified its application given the fact that central cleavages do not always divide political groups into distinctive, monolithic political parties, but they could be—and many times are—divided into different political blocks.[47] As presented in Chapter 3, that was the case in Costa Rica.

Graph 5.10 illustrates the BV for both the legislative and the presidential elections. Obviously it follows a similar trend as the TV, but registers lower general values. A comparison between TV's and BV's main values is presented in Table 5.2. Nonetheless, it is more interesting to note that the 2002 elections had the highest level of BV ever at the presidential level (28.5 per cent) and the second highest—after 1978—in the legislative contest (23.4 per cent). The salient performance of the PAC (a member of the "Other" block), which, as demonstrated by public opinion polls captured the support of former voters of the other three blocks,[48] is reflected in these elections' BV values. Moreover, as a result of this third party (the first to have a real chance at victory in the presidential race) the BV measure for the presidential election exceeded that of the legislative one for the first time since 1978. There is no doubt that the emergence of the PAC precipitated a dramatic increase in electoral volatility in the 2002 elections.

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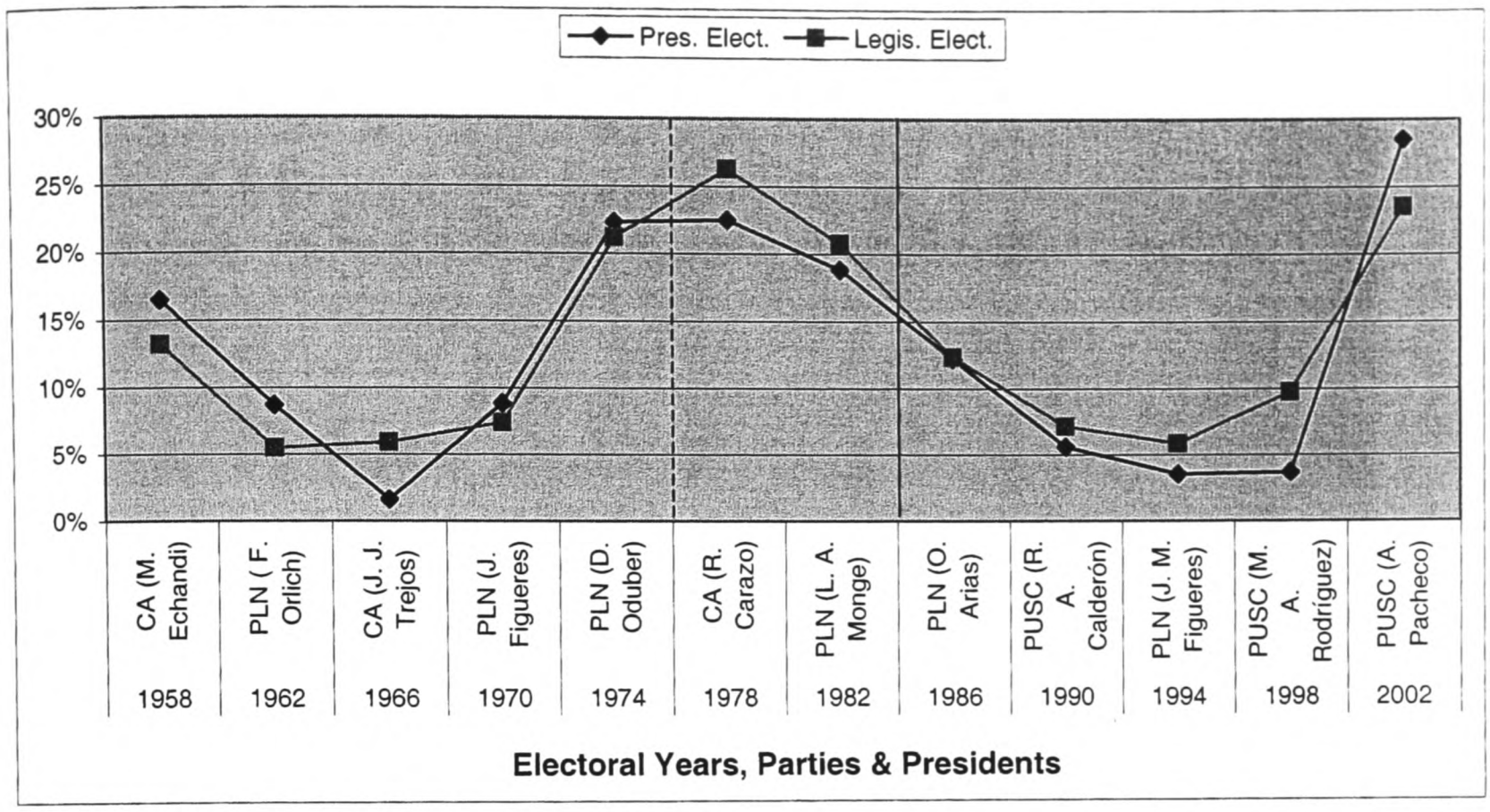
[45] All the parties that could not be directly or indirectly related to any of the three blocks formed after the 1948 cleavage were included in this category. Parties that splintered from any of the parties that were members of another block, were included in the "Other" block only if they did not return to their original party and if there is evidence that their current supporters have a different nature from that one of the supporters of the original party. This is the case, for example, of the PAC and PML. These two parties were not only able to obtain electoral support from voters that used to back parties from different blocks (see Appendix 6), but also, given their success in the 2002 elections, it seems very unlikely that their leaders would return to their original parties (the PLN in the case of the PAC and the PUSC in the case of the PML).

[46] Bartolini and Mair 1990.

[47] According to these authors, block volatility is calculated using the following formula:
$BV = \frac{1}{2} ( |P(iV + jV + kV)| + |P(oV + mV + nV)| )$, where $P(iV + jV + kV)$ represents the net change—in absolute terms—in the aggregate vote for parties i, j, and k, all of which come from the same block, between two consecutive elections. In their words, "To apply the index of aggregate volatility to blocks of parties rather than to individual parties, and then to take the overall measure for the party system as a whole, does not change the constitutive logic of the measure: what simply happens is that two or more parties which share a common property are aggregated in terms of their electoral results, and it is only the net electoral changes between these blocks which enter the calculation of the index." Bartolini and Mair 1990, p. 22.

Graph 5.10. Block Electoral Volatility in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1958-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Following again Bartolini and Mair, TV is the result of the sum of BV, or the volatility observable *between* the blocks, and the within block volatility (WBV), or the amount of volatility that occurs *inside* the blocks—or party families—in which parties were divided by the central cleavage.[49] Given that it is not until 1978 that the CA was able to integrate into one single political group (the CU and later, in 1983, the PUSC), we would expect that the TV corresponding to the 1958-1974 period, clearly depicted in Graph 5.8, but not in Graph 5.10, was caused mainly by WBV. Likewise, we would anticipate that the TV observable between 1978 and 2002 was primarily produced by BV. Graphs 5.11 and 5.12 confirm this suspicion both for the presidential and the legislative contests, especially in the highly volatile elections. Those two graphs also demonstrate that the 1978 process, having high levels of WBV and BV, should be regarded as a "transitional election" and not included in the second

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[48] Unimer RI-La Nación, 3 de febrero 2002. For further details see Appendix 6.
[49] If TV=BT+WBV, then WBV can easily be calculated using the same formula: WBV=TV-BV. Bartolini and Mair 1990, p. 23.

period. This was not at all surprising given that the 1978 elections were the first ones in which the CU participated.

Consequently, in terms of the nature of TV the 12 elections studied can be divided into two different periods. As illustrated in Graphs 5.11 and 5.12 and also in Table 5.3, the first period, 1958-1974, happening during the first elections after the country's central cleavage (when the political setting was characterised by a multi-party system with a dominant party—the PLN[50]), is more volatile. It presents an irregular pattern in which TV is primarily caused by WBV. The second period, 1982-2002, occurring, with the only exception of 1982, during the two-party system dominance, is—as expected—less volatile. In this period TV is mainly produced by BV, and follows a descending pattern until 1998, when the trend is reversed.

Therefore, one can conclude that the nature of the electoral volatility observed in the 1958-1974 period is different from that one experienced between 1982 and 2002. The electoral volatility of the latter period, especially in 1998 and 2002, is basically caused by movements *between* the blocks. Or, in other words, by voters that decided to support a party that is not part of the block they had traditionally supported. Hence, the increase in TV in the last two elections, not only confirms the state of flux that has characterised Costa Rican politics in the last two elections, but also sheds some light on what seems to be its cause: the erosion of historical partisan loyalties, or partisan dealignment. As in the case of the declining electoral support for the main parties in the legislative contests, the rise in TV mainly produced by BV in the last elections are two clear hints of the existence of partisan dealignment, a phenomenon that seems to be at the base of the electoral dealignment process in Costa Rica. An in-depth analysis of partisan dealignment in the country is the main objective of the next chapter.

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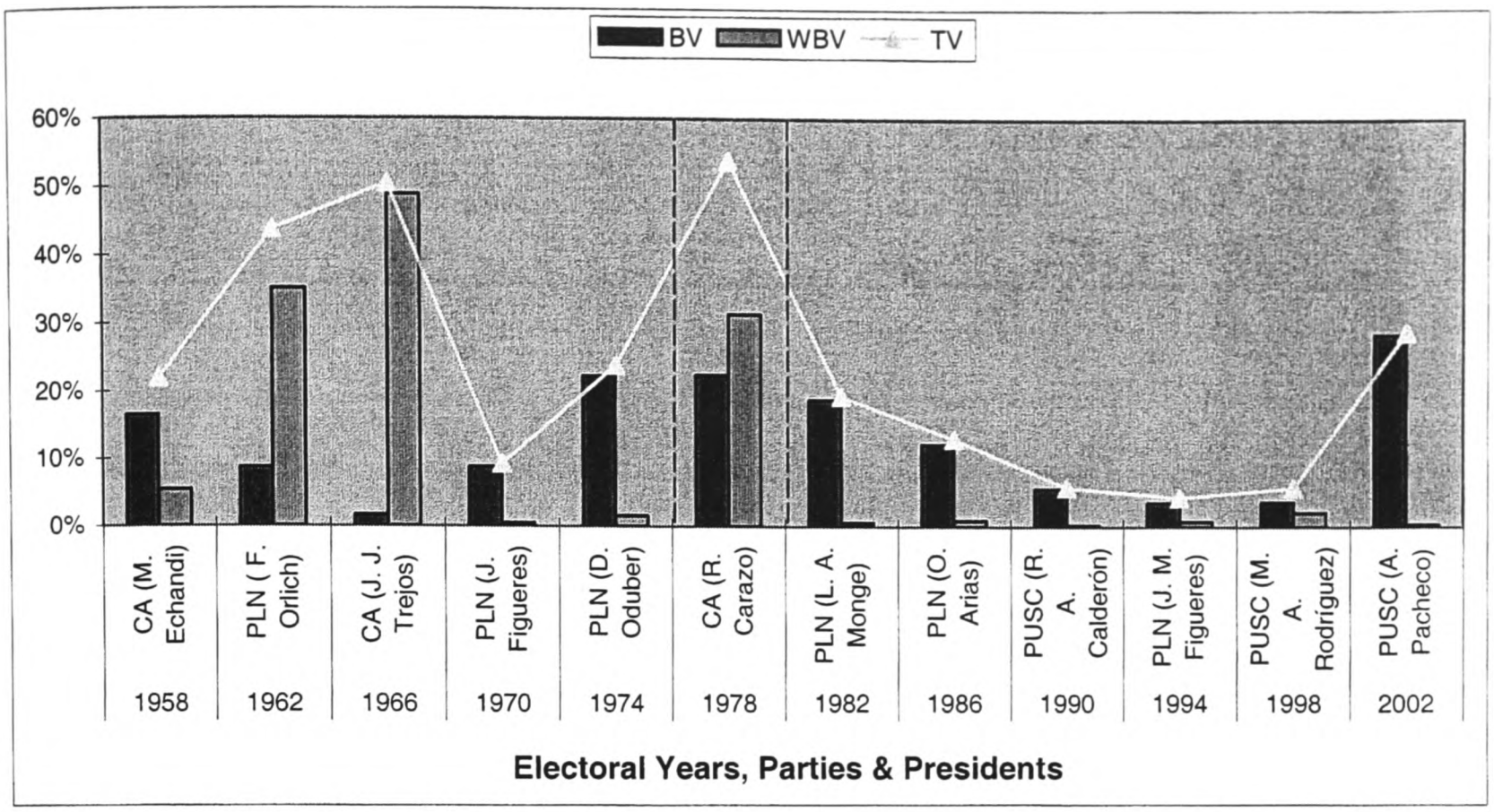
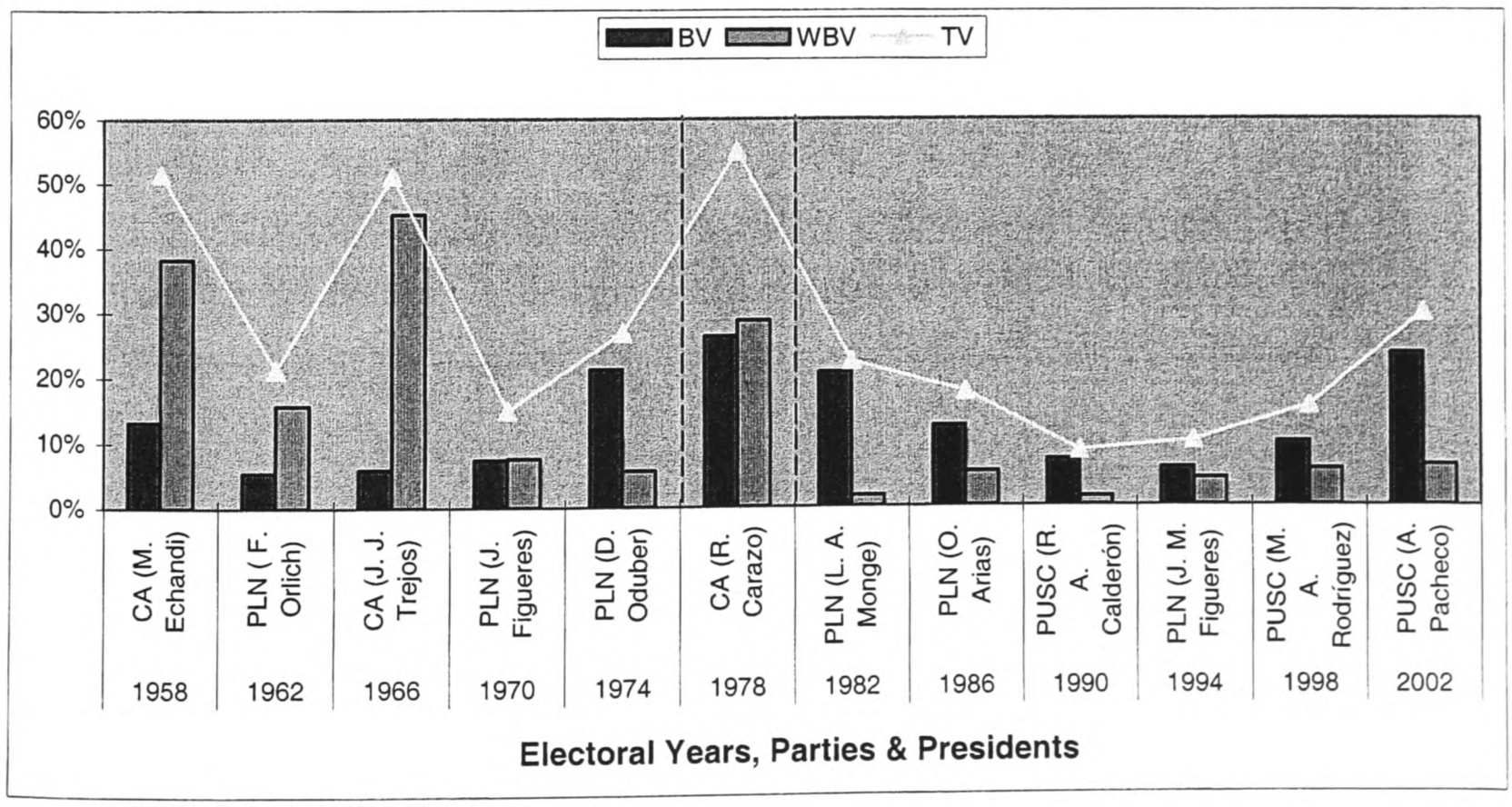
[50] See Chapter 3.

Graph 5.11. Volatilities in Costa Rica's Presidential Elections, 1958-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Graph 5.12. Volatilities in Costa Rica's Legislative Elections, 1958-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

Table 5.3. Volatility Periods in Costa Rica's Presidential and Legislative Elections, 1958-2002

| | 1958-1974 | | 1982-2002 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Elections** | Presidential | Legislative | Presidential | Legislative |
| **Average TV** | 29.9% | 33.1% | 12.9% | 17.3% |
| **Lowest TV** | 9.3% | 15.0% | 4.4% | 8.5% |
| **Highest TV** | 50.5% | 51.4% | 28.9% | 29.8% |
| **Prevailing type of Volatility** | WBV | WBV | BV | BV |
| **Prevailing Party System** | Multi-party system with a dominant party | Multi-party system with a dominant party | Two-party system | Two-party system |

Source: Author's own estimations based on TSE 2002b.

## 3 Final Remarks

Until the 1994 elections Costa Rica's electoral arena could best be described as stable. That stability was mainly represented by the strength of its political parties, and by the predictability of its electoral results. This seems to have changed, however, since the 1998 contest. Countering Close's assertion, the country's political situation since then has been neither normal, nor boring. In fact, the results of the last two elections suggest that Costa Rica's electoral panorama is in a state of flux.

Since the 1998 elections and, especially, after the 2002 contest, questions about the magnitude and the reasons for Costa Rica's political transformations started to emerge. Building on Hagopian's and Norris' ideas, we have suggested that the country's changing political setting should be defined as electoral dealignment, which is an expected result of partisan dealignment. In order to demonstrate this, the present chapter offered an in-depth analysis of the central indicators of electoral dealignment in the Costa Rican context.

First, the rise in absenteeism in 1998 and its continuation in 2002 emerged as the initial sign of electoral change. Second, the eroding support for the main parties in the presidential and legislative elections, and the significant gains made by third political groups—especially in the 2002 contest—corroborated the electoral

dealignment process. The meteoric emergence of the PAC, the respectable results of the PML, the discouraging political history the PFD (which meant the disappearance of the Left from the Legislative Assembly), the disappointing results of the main parties—most notably the PLN—and the end of their alternation in power, the need of a runoff for the first time ever to elect the president, and the new multi-partisan configuration of congress, are among the most salient results of the 2002 electoral process. Third, the fluidity of the Costa Rican political setting was confirmed by rising levels of ticket splitting since 1990, with saliently high records since 1998. Finally an increasing TV in the last elections mainly caused by BV, was an explicit sign of the existence of an electoral dealignment process in the country.

This last indicator, and the declining support for the traditional parties at the legislative level, not only corroborated the existence of electoral dealignment, but also shed some light on what seems to be the central reason for its emergence: the erosion of historical partisan loyalties, or partisan dealignment. Following the route proposed in the introduction of this part of the thesis, the next chapter will provide a comprehensive study of the decay of party loyalties in Costa Rica. However, as far as the present chapter is concerned, after a thorough analysis of the country's electoral situation, one can conclude that this Central American nation—famous for its political stability—has entered, as other Western developed democracies, a period of electoral change. This process can be characterised as electoral dealignment.

# Chapter 6

## Partisan Dealignment: The Hidden Process

## 1 Introduction

After a thorough analysis of Costa Rica's electoral results, and building on Hagopian's and Norris' ideas, Chapter 5 concluded that the country's changing electoral setting should be defined as a process of electoral dealignment. In the same chapter it was indicated that electoral dealignment, or the progressive loss of electoral support by the main political parties,[1] is an expected result of partisan dealignment. Following Pippa Norris, partisan dealignment was defined as "the weakening of affective, habitual and stable party loyalties among the electorate."[2] As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the presence of electoral dealignment in Costa Rica is clear since 1998. Now, the present chapter will concentrate on a systematic analysis of the main evidence regarding the existence of a more subtle phenomenon that, as posited by theory and as suggested in Chapter 5, seems to be at the base of electoral dealignment: partisan dealignment. The veracity of the proposed argument depends not only on the presence of partisan dealignment in Costa Rica's political scenario, but also on the fact that it is evident before the 1998 electoral process.

In general terms, progressive dealignment is a phenomenon that seems to be occurring in many industrialised countries. It has been reported in different comparative studies that the proportion of the public expressing a partisan attachment has declined in 17 out of 19 developed democracies.[3] Similarly, in the Latin American context, Frances Hagopian has provided evidence of what appears to be partisan dealignment in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and also in countries with a longer democratic traditional such as Colombia and Chile.[4] Moreover, Schmitt and Holmberg concluded that the only consistent trend in the so-called "crisis of democracy" was a general weakening in attachments to political parties.[5] This evidence has driven Russell

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[1] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-119.
[2] Norris 1997, p. 86.
[3] The countries undergoing dealignment processes are: Austria, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. Belgium and Denmark were the two nations where no evidence of dealignment was found (for more details see Table 6.1). Dalton 2000, pp. 23-29.; Dalton 1999, pp. 65-66.; Putnam et al. 2000, p. 17.
[4] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-116.
[5] Schmitt and Holmberg 1995.

Dalton to claim that the collapse in citizens' engagement with political parties is close to a universal generalisation.[6]

According to Dalton and Wattenberg the decline in partisan identification is a result of various factors, which include urbanisation and the emergence of a better educated electorate which possesses the political skills and resources to become self-sufficient in politics. At the same time voters are better informed by the development of mass media which, in conjunction with the increasing relevance of pressure groups, have pre-empted part of parties' central roles regarding delivering political information and representation. These changes of a more sociological nature combine with other factors of a political character to reinforce the erosion of partisan loyalties. Among them the authors highlight, first, the growing number of parties that have accepted primaries, or other methods of candidate selection that actually weaken their influence in choosing its leadership and on its members' decisions when elected or appointed in public posts. And, second, the failure of parties to fulfil popular expectations and demands when they are in government.[7] An analysis of the central reasons for the erosion of partisan loyalties in Costa Rica will be presented in Chapters 7 and 8.

Even though it never received much attention among local analysts, partisan dealignment has already been briefly discussed in Costa Rica's academia. Apart from a number of newspaper articles on the topic,[8] Enrique Gutiérrez-Dermissien anticipated, although never proved, "a party identification crisis" sixteen years ago.[9] Likewise, Oscar Fernández has claimed that even if an intense partisan identification was still noticeable in the 1990 elections,[10] partisan loyalties have eroded in Costa Rica. According to this author, some signs proper of a "less loyal" voter in local politics are: the alternation in power—or "pendulum effect"—that characterised the country's electoral dynamics from 1986 to 1998,[11] the declining support for traditional parties in legislative and municipal elections since 1986,[12] and the main

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[6] Dalton 1999.
[7] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000c, pp. 10-14.
[8] See Chapter 2.
[9] Gutierrez-Dermissien 1985.
[10] Fernández 1992, p. 25.
[11] See Chapter 5.
[12] See Chapters 4 and 5.

parties' evident efforts during electoral campaigns to reach a more sceptical, independent voter.[13] Finally, based on survey studies since 1995, William Furlong has concluded that loyalty towards Costa Rica's main parties (the PLN and the PUSC) has decreased. He characterised the phenomenon as a "moderate dealignment."[14] The coming sections will allow us to see whether partisan dealignment is at the base of electoral dealignment in Costa Rica and, if so, to include this Central American country among the nations with mature, stable democracies undergoing similar processes.

In order to accomplish this objective, the chapter is divided into five main sections. Its central goal is stated in the introduction, which is followed by a discussion on the concept of party identification. The third section studies the measurement of this concept in the Costa Rican context, while the fourth section uses survey data to analyse the erosion of party identification, or partisan dealignment, in Costa Rica. Finally, the chapter ends by summarising the main conclusions of this and the previous chapter and evaluating the validity of the proposed argument.

## 2 Party Identification: The Concept

It is necessary to examine the concept that is at the heart of this chapter, and at the base of this study: party identification. There is a general consensus among a number of academics engaged in electoral studies, regarding party identification as a concept of central value for the understanding of the evolution of electoral behaviour.[15] Russell Dalton has even argued that "...the concept of partisan identification is the most important development in modern electoral behaviour research."[16] Coined in the mid-1950s by American academics, most notably by pundits at the University of Michigan,[17] this concept has been exported and used—not without debate—in electoral studies in other latitudes. In spite of the controversy regarding the suitability

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[13] Fernández 1992, pp. 31-33.; Fernández 1993a, p. 185.; Fernández 1996, p. 150.
[14] Furlong 2001, pp. 122-123, 127.
[15] See for example, Dalton 1984a; Miller 1976; Budge et al. 1976; Crewe 1976.
[16] Dalton 2000, p. 20. For general assessments of the main developments in electoral studies research see, Katz and Warshel 2001a; *Electoral Studies* 2002.
[17] Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell et al. 1966; Campbell et al. 1954.

of the concept of party identification outside the United States,[18] Harop and Miller have acknowledged that party identification "remains a valuable guide to long-term electoral trends...[It] helps to explain patterns of turn-out and electoral volatility as well as providing a uniquely sensitive indicator of partisan decay."[19] The coming section examines how this concept has been measured in the Costa Rican political scenario.

In general terms, party identification has been defined as the sense of personal attachment which an individual feels towards the party of his or her choice.[20] According to Converse and Pierce, there are "two elements that are absolutely central to the whole notion of party identification: an extended time horizon and some engagement of partisan feelings with self-identity."[21] Thus, party identification should be regarded as a long-term, enduring political attitude,[22] which is built on the assumption, following Campbell and colleagues:

> "[T]hat many people associate themselves psychologically with one or other of the parties, and that this identification has predictable relationships with their perceptions, evaluations, and actions."[23]

Similar to the sense and consequences of the identification that an individual may profess towards a religious denomination or a sports team, party identification should be regarded as a long-term, affective, psychological identification with one's preferred political party.[24]

Developing an affinity to or identifying with a specific party, is one of the central results of political socialisation. Even if some research has signalled either students'

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[18] For instance, Butler and Stokes talk about "partisan self-image" instead of "party identification," when applying the concept in the British political scenario. Butler and Stokes 1969. For different discussions about the suitability of the concept of party identification in countries other than the United States see, Heath and Pierce 1992; Cain and Ferejohn 1981; Borre 1984; LeDuc and Clarke 1984; Baker et al. 1981; Norpoth 1978; Crewe 1976; Thomassen 1976; Kaase 1976; Butler and Stokes 1969, p. 43.
[19] Harrop and Miller 1987, p. 139.
[20] Campbell et al. 1954, pp. 88-89.
[21] Converse and Pierce 1985, p. 143.
[22] Miller and Shanks 1996, p. 117.
[23] Campbell et al. 1954, p. 90.
[24] Campbell et al. 1960, Chap. 6.; Miller 1991; Dalton 1996b.

associations with secondary school peers and teachers,[25] or policy preferences,[26] to be at the base of the acquisition of party loyalties, familial transmission of political values, preferences, and a sense of political identity, is the prime source of party identification among young citizens.[27] In fact, studies by Hess and Torney have reported that children develop basic partisan orientations at a very early age, normally during their primary school years.[28]

This means, as Dalton has correctly asserted, that children learn party loyalties before they can understand what the party labels stand for. Parents' formative influence normally occurs years before their children become active in the political process. Most parents have strong partisan attachments that endure across elections, so children are consistently and continuously exposed to cues on which party their parents prefer. Either through explicit reinforcement or subconscious internalisation of political values, many children learn their parents' or close relatives' political values and take them as their own. Parents' party identification has a central influence on the early-life formation of the party identities of their offspring.[29]

Once individuals establish party ties, future partisan experiences tend to conform with their early predispositions. Political experiences tend to reinforce partisan first identities.[30] Consequently, party identification strengthens with age (the life cycle-effect),[31] given—most importantly—to political socialisation and the continuous electoral support for the same party.[32] As concluded by Russell Dalton, "Partisan attachments...are learned in early life, become deeply embedded in a child's belief system, and are normally reinforced by later partisan experiences."[33]

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[25] Jennings and Niemi 1974.
[26] Jackson 1975.
[27] This is a widely accept conclusion. See for example, Miller 1976, p. 23.; Heath and McDonald 1988, p. 95.; Dalton 1996b, pp. 200-204.; Budge et al. 1976, p. 12.
[28] Hess and Torney 1967.
[29] Dalton 1996b, p. 200.
[30] Dalton 1996b, p. 202.
[31] Heath and McDonald 1988, p. 95. For details see Chapter 2.
[32] Converse 1969; Converse 1976.
[33] Dalton 1996b, p. 203.

This is why Ivor Crewe has indicated that party identification tends to be self-reinforcing and self-strengthening over time. This political attitude persists long after the occurrence of the "originating event"—the fundamental party cleavage—given that it is normally passed down among generations.[34] As explained in Chapter 2, party identification is built as parties are formed, and strengthens in the years following the party system's foundational cleavage. Thus, the erosion of partisan identification (partisan dealignment) and the resulting state of flux that happens in the electoral scenario can also be explained or characterised, following Lipset and Rokkan,[35] as the "unfreezing" of a country's central cleavage.

Moreover, and given that partisan loyalties take time to develop among citizens, one would expect to find stronger partisan loyalties for parties with a long tradition. For the same reason, it is only possible to talk about partisan dealignment if it is suffered by parties that have been present in the electoral arena long enough to have enjoyed the loyalty of at least two generations of voters.[36] It would be risky to make the case for partisan dealignment when considering a newly formed party. When young parties start losing their "voters' loyalties" or, should we say, their "supporters' sympathy," more than partisan dealignment, it is better to explain the phenomenon as the parties' inability to consolidate their followers' support. Thus, one can only explain electoral changes in terms of dealignment if it is taking place in countries with long-standing democracies where stable parties and party systems had developed. As indicated in Chapter 1, this is one on the central reasons why the Costa Rican case provides a unique scenario in Latin America to carry out the present study.

It should be stressed that party identification is different from voting preferences. Actually, it is the conceptual independence of voting and party identification that gives the latter its theoretical significance and its long-term nature.[37] An individual

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[34] Crewe 1985, pp. 2-3.
[35] Lipset and Rokkan 1967.
[36] Phillip Converse has even argued that in a new regime three generations would be needed before partisan identification would reach a self-sustaining equilibrium level. Converse 1969. However, most democracies and/or their parties are "too young" to have experienced many complete generational cycles. Thus, in terms of the present project, two generations (between 24 and 30 years [roughly 12 to 15 years per generation]) will be considered sufficient to satisfy the criteria.
[37] Dalton 1996b, p. 199.

can vote for a party that he or she does not identify with on particular occasions and for specific cojunctural reasons, without this meaning that he or she lost his or her party identification. However, in the long run, he or she will tend to prefer voting for "his" or "her" party. Miller and Shanks have even indicated that individuals' voting records are a measure of a sense of "partisanship," not of party identification.[38] In fact, party identification is the psychological basis of stable party alignments, which tends to influence other attitudes and behaviours—including voting.[39] As acknowledged by Dalton:

> "[O]nce an individual becomes psychologically attached to a party, he or she tends to see politics through a partisan perspective...[Party identification is] a 'perceptual screen'—through it one sees what is favourable to one's partisan orientation and filters out dissonant information. The stronger the party bond, the stronger are the selection and distortion processes."[40]

As a result, when politics is seen and evaluated through this "perceptual screen," when citizens are wearing the "glasses" of party identification, the objective evaluation of partisan activities is very seldom possible and the predictability of their future political decisions quite high.

Therefore, in terms of party identification functions, the first one that should be stressed is that it works as an organising device for citizen's political evaluations and judgments. Faced with different positions on a certain issue, with contending candidates, with the evaluation of governmental performances, or with any type of political controversy, the "identifier" will tend to support the position taken or the candidate field by his or her party.[41] Thus, as asserted by Fiorina, in terms of information and political decision-making, party identification is a very effective cost-saving device.[42] As indicated, this cue-giving function is especially important for voting behaviour, where citizens make explicit partisan choices. In this regard, Phillip Converse has described party identification as the basis for what he defines as

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[38] Miller and Shanks 1996, p. 123.
[39] Dalton 1996b, p. 199.
[40] Dalton 2000, pp. 20-21.
[41] Borre and Katz 1973; Miller 1976; Shanks and Miller 1990; Abramson et al. 1994, Chap. 8.
[42] Fiorina 1990.

"normal vote," or the vote expected when other factors in the election are evenly balanced.[43] Partisan identification and the resulting repeated experience with one's preferred party provides a clear and low-cost cue for voting.[44]

Likewise, party identification performs a mobilising function. Those attached to a political party are keener to participate in political processes such as campaign activities, and party rallies, and tend to have higher turnout levels.[45] Finally, party identification also influences citizens' positions regarding the role that parties should play in a democratic system, and their support for parties and for the institution of the party system in general.[46] Hence, esteem and trust for political parties and for the party system as a whole is normally higher amongst identifiers. The absence or the erosion of party identification has a direct impact on all these political decisions and attitudes, resulting in a growing state of electoral change due to the emergence of a more "independent" and unpredictable voter.

In summary, party identification is a central concept for electoral research and certainly for the present study. This psychological, long-term political attitude, is normally built after a country's central cleavage takes place, and adopted by citizens in the early years of age through political socialisation mainly by family members. Party identification tends to be reinforced by future political activities (most notably voting) and has a direct influence on citizens' electoral decisions and political evaluations. Given the time partisan loyalties take to develop, party identification is a feature proper of parties with long traditions. By the same token, the erosion of these loyalties—partisan dealignment—is an "illness" that can only be suffered by such parties. Partisan dealignment relaxes voter-party bonds. As a result the number of independent voters starts to increase, and rising levels of electoral flux can hardly be avoided.

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[43] Converse 1966.
[44] Dalton 2000, p. 21.; Converse 1975.
[45] Verba 1967 Chap. 6.; King 1969, pp. 212-221.; Budge et al. 1976, p. 12.; Dalton et al. 2000, p. 21.

## 3 Measuring Party Identification in Costa Rica

In order to evaluate the behaviour of party identification and its possible decay in Costa Rica, I looked at two types of information. As explained in Chapter 2, given that party identification reflects a long-term standing decision to support a party, partisan dealignment is easily identified as it manifests in a decrease in the party-affiliated portion of the electorate, and the appearance of a more independent, less loyal and more individualistic voter. Thus, first, I went directly to a question that has been asked consistently since 1978 in CID-Gallup polls, regarding the electorate's party of preference. Second, and to corroborate the results, I looked at other "circumstantial evidence" (also using survey studies by both CID-Gallup and Unimer RI-La Nación[47]) normally present in partisan dealignment processes.

As mentioned, party identification in Costa Rica has been measured since 1978 by CID-Gallup survey studies. To do it, this firm has asked, using semi-open questions, either: "To which political party do you belong?," or "which is the political party of your preference?"[48] Normally four options were given: "PLN," "PUSC," "None," and "Other." If the last option was chosen, the subject was instructed to specify the name of the party. The first question was asked basically from 1978 to 1987. They changed to the second question since February 1988, the first survey they did that year. Before analysing the results, a couple of comments regarding these questions should be made.

First, it is not ideal to have your question changed at the middle of the time series. However, CID-Gallup's Director in Costa Rica, Luis Roberto Haug, has pointed out that the answers to the two questions could be compared, given that, "The results we have got using both of them are almost identical."[49] As we will see, the major

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[46] Weisberg 1980; Norris forthcoming, Chap. 6.
[47] For information about these two polling firms and the survey data used in the present research, see Chapter 1.
[48] These are translations from the original Spanish versions: ¿A cúal partido político pertenece usted? o ¿Cuál es el partido político de su preferencia?
[49] Haug, 11 January 2002.

changes in party identification data from 1978 to 2002 did not happen when the question was changed, between November 1987 and February 1988, but years later. Second, neither of the two questions is the generally used or "standard" question applied to measure party identification. As claimed by Miller and Shanks, the most widely accepted measures of party identification rest fundamentally on self-classification, inviting each individual to state the direction and the strength of his or her partisan orientation. This is usually provided, at least in the USA, by answers to the question: "Generally speaking...", or "In politics as of today...", "...do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" Those who chose any of the two parties are then normally asked to classify themselves, using five or three-point ordinal scales,[50] as very strong or strong (Republicans/Democrats) to very weak or weak (Republicans/Democrats).[51]

Given that Costa Rica, like the USA, has a two-party system working under the rules and peculiarities of presidentialism, it would have been wise to use the same question wording to measure party identification in the former. Nonetheless this was not the case. Alternatively, citizens were asked to classify themselves not as "thinking of themselves as" but as "belonging" or "preferring" a particular party or none of the above. Certainly, this is not a standard way to measure party identification. However, both verbs can be used to assess party identification in the country. As it is rightly alleged by the PUSC's Treasurer, Fernán Guardia:

> "After a long time participating in active politics, I have reached a conclusion. In terms of their relations with parties, Costa Ricans can be divided into three general categories. In the first place we have all those who are members of a party, participate actively in politics, in party organised activities and, when it is unavoidable, pay their monthly

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[50] For an instructive discussion about the nature and types of scales used in statistical analyses see, Agresti and Finlay 1997, pp. 13-14.

[51] Miller and Shanks 1996, pp. 123-128. Green and Schickler have proven that a seven-point self-placement continuum enhances the prediction accuracy of the party identification question. Green and Schickler 1993. Likewise, researchers working outside the USA, not necessarily with two-party systems, have reworded the question. One alternative commonly used question is: "Which political party do you feel closest to?" If a party is mentioned, they proceed to ask, using again different types of ordinal scales, if they feel very close or close, to very distant or distant, to the alluded party. See for example, Barnes and Kaase 1979; Barnes et al. 1988. For an interesting assessment of the influence of question wording on the results of party identification studies in Britain see, Sanders et al. 2002.

> membership fees. In the second place we have the citizen that openly accepts to *belong*, follow, sympathise, or *prefer* a specific party. This type of citizen will not participate in any party activity other than, perhaps, helping in campaigns and voting. Finally, there are the sceptics, the self-proclaimed 'independents.' These citizens do not support any of the parties, and their participation in politics normally does not go any further than, and not always, voting."[52]

Guardia's classification clearly responds to the classic tripartite division of citizens in relation to parties: members, sympathisers, and independents.

Following his classification, party identification in Costa Rica can very well be measured either by asking citizens for the party they *belong* to or for the party they *prefer*. Those choosing a specific party will certainly include the first and the second type of citizens acknowledged by Guardia (the members and the sympathisers). Those choosing "None" can be regarded as independents, Guardia's third group. What neither of these questions can assess is the strength of the citizens' identification. Unfortunately, this has not been measured systematically by any of the polling firms doing survey studies in Costa Rica.

It is fortunate that data on partisan identification is available since 1978—even if only since the last 4-month period in that year. As explained in Chapter 5 (specifically depicted in Graph 5.6), electorally speaking, the "stability stage" of Costa Rica's two-party era can be traced back to 1978.[53] In these elections the Coalición Unidad (CU), the coalition that opposed the PLN both in 1978 and 1982, was integrated by the same four parties that later merged to create the PUSC. This graph also illustrated that the period between 1986 and 1994 was clearly marked by a bipartisan dominance common to well-institutionalised two-party systems. Later, the 1998 elections started a period of electoral flux, that may mark the beginning of the end of the country's

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[52] Guardia 3 April 2002. Emphasis added. Similar statements were expressed by PUSC President, José Eduardo Sánchez, by former PLN Secretary General, Rolando González, and by former PLN President, Anna Gabriela Ross. Sánchez 26 June 2002; González 15 January and 18 June 2002; Ross 11 July 2002.

[53] The so-called "two-party era" in Costa Rican electoral history started in 1986, the first elections in which the PUSC opposed the PLN as a united party. Rovira-Mas enero-junio 1998, pp. 10-14. For further details see Chapter 3.

two-party pre-eminence.[54] Having data since 1978 will allow us to follow the behaviour of partisan loyalties throughout a good part of the two-party system's life-cycle: five years prior to its consolidation in 1983, to the moment of its apparent decline, after 1998. One may expect to find stronger partisan loyalties once the two-party system is formally functioning. As indicated above, party identification tends to strengthen in time, as citizens vote repeatedly for the same party. This register should not be as high both prior to the formation of the country's two-party system, and once the process of its apparent decline started.

## 4 Evidence of Partisan Dealignment

Traditionally, most analysts and even casual political observers, believed that the PLN relied on approximately 40 to 45 per cent of the electorate for consistent support. The PLN's opposition parties—the PUSC since 1983—fluctuated between 30 and 35 per cent. Independent voters made up from 15 to 20 per cent of the electorate, and support for "other" parties—normally including one of Leftist orientation—was added to complete the equation.[55] Since the last two elections (1998 and 2002), however, few political analysts will dare to endorse this observation. The electoral results in 1998 and, especially, in 2002[56] suggest that the cited figures were wrong or, if correct, that party identification in Costa Rica entered a significant state of flux. In order to study this phenomenon, I am first going to focus on the main changes in partisan identification. Then, additional circumstantial evidence will be analysed to corroborate the initial results.

### *4.1 The Erosion of Party Identification*

In terms of the central evidence of changes in party loyalties in Cost Rica, Graph 6.1 depicts the trend of party identification and of "independence" in the last 24 years. In

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[54] For further details regarding the debate around the decline of Costa Rica's bipartism see, Chapter 4.
[55] See for example, Gutiérrez-Saxe 21 March 2001; Furlong 2001, p. 122.; Rovira-Mas 23 January 2002.
[56] See Chapter 5.

order to calculate partisan identification I added the responses of all those citizens which identified either with the PLN, with the CA (the PUSC since 1983), and with a Leftist party. As analysed in Chapter 3, these three groups represent the three party families whose history and political background directly relates to the 1948 Civil War. In the case of the Left, however, its average party identification in the period studied (24 years divided into 71 4-month periods) is only 0.7 per cent.[57] Thus, from now on I will concentrate on the other groups: the PLN, the CA-PUSC, and the independents.

According to Graph 6.1, party identification shows a decreasing trend in the period studied. This negative trend is statistically significant at the 5 per cent significance level and its estimated slope is -.271 (i.e. a 0.27 per cent drop every 4-month period). As anticipated the party identification curve has lower registers both at the beginning and at the end of the time series. However, it is worth noting that party loyalty figures after the mid-1990s, when the country's two-party system was well consolidated, are lower than the figures registered in the years prior to the formation of the two-party system—at the end of 1983. Indeed, the average party identification in Costa Rica from 1978 to 1983 was 72.2 per cent, and the register from 1995 to 2002 was 67.5 per cent.[58] Moreover this graph clearly depicts the descending trend of partisan loyalties once the two-party era was in place, that is between 1986 and 2002.

Likewise, as expected, those claiming to be independent follow an upward trend. They actually form a sort of "mirror image" of the party identification curve. The independents' increasing trend is also statistically significant at the 5 per cent significance level and its estimated slope is .260 (i.e. a 0.26 per cent increase every 4-month period). Again, the independents' ascending tendency is more evident since the two-party era formally started, in 1986. Indeed, it seems that the 1948 cleavage is losing its bonding capacity, it has started to "unfreeze."

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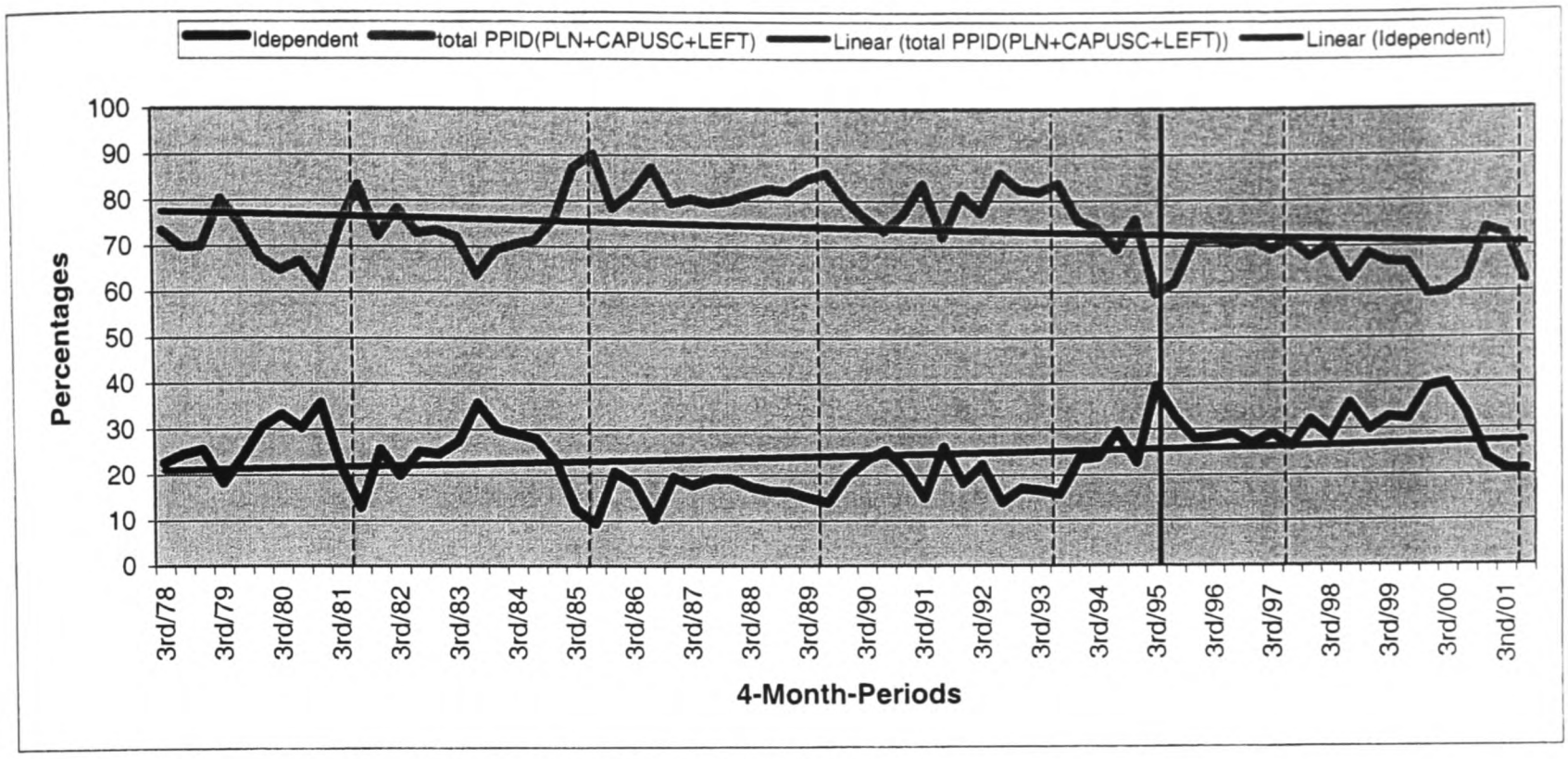
[57] The highest party identification figure registered for a Leftist party was 4 per cent in 1979. However in 49 per cent of the 4-month periods considered (in 35 out of 71), nobody indicated to identify with any Leftist party at all, or the percentage doing so was so small (less than 1 per cent) that CID-Gallup included the Left in the group of the "other" parties. CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

[58] CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-15, 58-89.

Between 1978 and the mid-1980s party identification is clearly volatile, and one cannot observe conclusive signs of erosion among Costa Rica's identifiers. On the contrary, during these years partisan loyalty seemed to have an upward trend, with the opposite results for the independents (this is corroborated by Graph 6.3). However, and central to the present study, this changed around 1986 when party identification started a secular descending trend that reached its lower point in 1995 (marked by a black line). Since then, and even if it shows some recovery afterwards, partisan loyalty never reached again its historical levels. So, party identification has declined since the mid-1980s, and the most significant erosion happened between 1993 and 1996, before the 1998 general elections. In other words, not only is partisan dealignment present in Costa Rican politics, but also the line of causation of the argument proposed in this part of the thesis (partisan dealignment being at the base of electoral dealignment) seems to be correct.

Graph 6.1 also shows the peaks (marked with doted lines) that the party identification curve reaches in the period prior to each election, during electoral campaigns. The impact of electoral campaigns on party identification is mainly captured by the 4-month period before each election. As expected, it is usually during electoral campaigns when political enthusiasm peaks, and individuals tend to manifest higher partisan identification. The "campaign effect" clearly influenced citizens' partisan loyalties during 1982 and 1986; and even if already starting to decline, it was still present in 1990 and 1994. By the 1998 and 2002 election campaigns, however, this was no longer the case. Those campaigns did not have much of an impact on partisan identification, which even tended to drop during the 2002 electoral process. Thus, Graph 6.1 demonstrates how popular enthusiasm generated by electoral campaigns, and its positive impact on party identification, have also eroded since the mid-1980s. Again, this phenomenon is particularly clear prior to the 1998 electoral processes.

Graph 6.1. Party Identification and Independents in Costa Rica, 1978-2002[59]
(4-month periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

One interesting phenomenon depicted in Graph 6.1, is how both party identification and independence tend to drop at the end of the time series. Graph 6.2 is a "close up" of this period. As it demonstrates, this phenomenon started to happen after the formation of the PAC, in December 2000.[60] Since then, both partisan identification and independence decreased due to a relevant number of citizens that claimed to identify with the newly formed PAC.[61] This may suggest, as posited by some analysts,[62] that partisan dealignment in Costa Rica has been followed by partisan realignment. This is, a significant electoral change marked by many people who

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[59] A linear regression was used to illustrate the behaviour of the trends of both party identification and independence. The same type of regression was utilised later when analysing partisan identification at the parties' level. As explained, given that these trends depict the behaviour of partisan loyalties since the period prior to the formation of Costa Rica's two-party system, the curves are not expected to follow consistent downward or upward trends. Thus, the fitted regression line should be regarded as an approximation to their actual behaviour.

[60] The PAC's "party identification" has been individually measured by CID-Gallup surveys since January 2001.

[61] This phenomenon has been highlighted by local academics and politicians. Fernández 14 February 2002; Arce 12 February 2002; Arias-Sánchez 27 February 2002.

[62] Carvajal 27 February 2002; Carazo 28 February 2002.

earlier would have been unaffiliated, or loyalist of one party, now affiliated with another."[63]

Strictly speaking, given the long-term nature of the concept (see section 2 in this chapter) one cannot talk about party identification for a newly formed party. If any, we could characterise citizens' affinity to the PAC as "sympathy" or "conjunctural support" that probably led them to vote for it in 2002 and that eventually may turn into long-standing party identification, after several years supporting and voting for this party. In fact, backing this argument, most of the PAC's followers (51 per cent) claimed to support it not because they endorsed its manifesto or liked its candidate, but because they wanted "a change."[64] For many of them, as reported by an opinion poll by Demoscopía S.A., voting for the PAC was an effective way to "protest" against the failures, disappointments, and lack of transparency of Costa Rica's two traditional parties: the PLN and the PUSC.[65]

Furthermore, CID-Gallup surveys done after the 2002 elections demonstrated how the PAC is losing a fair share of that "conjunctural support." Their surveys reported that PAC's "party identification" goes from its highest register, 12.6 per cent in January 2002, prior to the February elections, to 9.3 in March, and 7.7 in August, in the same year; finally descending to 5 per cent both in January and April 2003.[66] Therefore, even if it could be regarded as a possibility, it is not likely to witness a partisan realignment process in Costa Rica. At least, a partisan realignment that has the PAC as a central actor. Only time, the ability of the PAC's leaders to strengthen their party, and—why not—the capacity of the PLN and the PUSC to respond to voters' new demands, will prove whether the partisan dealignment observed in Costa Rica could evolve into a partisan realignment process.

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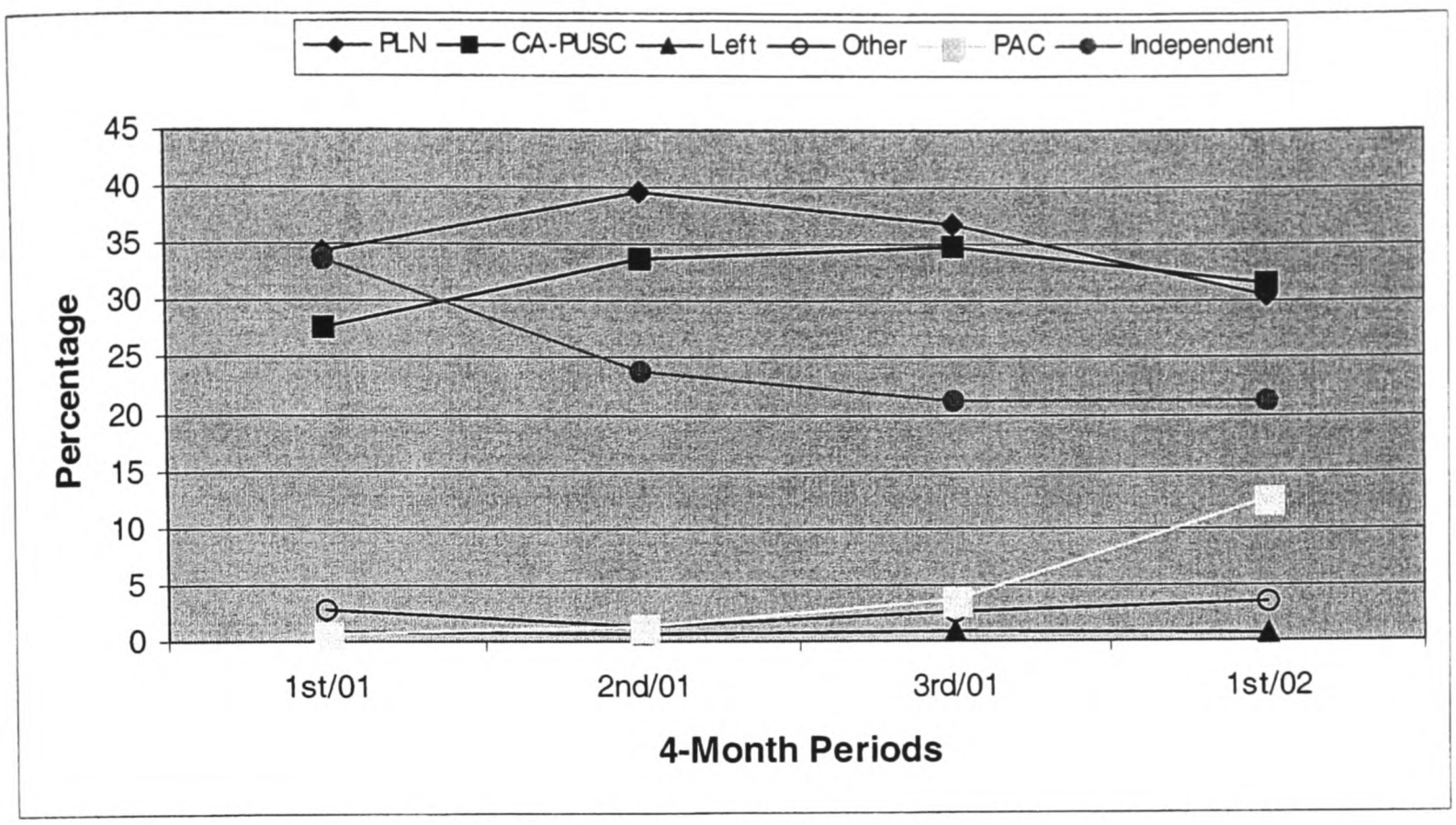
[63] Dalton et al. 1984a, p. 13. For more details on the concept of realignment see, Chapter 2.
[64] IIS et al. 20 de febrero 2002. Several highly ranked PAC officials are aware that this was the central reason that led many voters to support them. See for example, Solís 22 February 2002; Arce 12 February 2002; Aguilar 6 February 2002; Feoli 14 February 2002; Fonseca 18 February 2002.
[65] Demoscopía S.A., 16 de enero 2002. Directors of the country's leading polling firms agree with this claim. See for example, Ramírez 22 January 2002; Paniagua 17 January 2002; Araya 11 January 2002.
[66] CID-Gallup, OPs: 89-94.

Graph 6.2. Effect of the PAC on Party Identification in Costa Rica, 2001-2002 (4-month periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 85-89.

Going back to the partisan dealignment argument, the general upward trend followed by the independents, and the decreasing trend of party identification (particularly the strong plunge prior to the 1998 elections), are clearly illustrated by Graph 6.3. By using the 4-year averages (averages per administration) of party identification and of independence, this graph captures their trends avoiding the inherence of specific conjunctural events and of the alluded "campaign effect." As seen, the 1986-1990 period marked the end of party identification's growing tendency. Partisan loyalty registered a subtle decline in the 1990-1994 interval. Nonetheless, this was no longer the case between 1994 and 1998, when it lost almost ten points. Finally it lost another four points in the 1998-2002 period, reaching its lowest average in the six administrations studied. The register in this last period (66.1 per cent) is more than five points lower than the average party identification corresponding to the 1978-1982 interval (71.5 per cent), when Costa Rica's two-party system was still in its formation stage. The progressive erosion of party identification illustrated by these figures is

indicative of a *secular* type of dealignment, defined as a long-term, incremental and cumulative progressive weakening in party-voter bonds.[67]

Graph 6.3 also demonstrates that since the 1994-1998 period, around one third of the Costa Rican electorate claims to be independent. Supporting this conclusion, Idespo has reported that in March 2002, 27 per cent of Costa Rican citizens indicated not to identify with any party at all. Even though this poll included only citizens living in urban areas, it is still relevant, as the study was conducted right after the general election in February and the coming runoff in May—a time of high political activism.[68]

It is quite suggestive to have one third of the electorate claiming to be politically independent, especially after looking again at the absenteeism figures in the last two elections. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, they were 30 per cent in 1998 and 31.2 per cent in 2002. Even if an independent citizen is not necessarily one that does not vote, we do know that turnout figures are normally higher among those that support or identify with a party, and vice versa.[69] In fact, data provided by the IIS shows that 52.2 per cent of the independents can be characterised as "strong abstainers" (*abstencionistas duros*), or citizens that consistently decline to vote.[70] This further validates our use of rising levels of absenteeism as a sign of electoral dealignment in Costa Rica.

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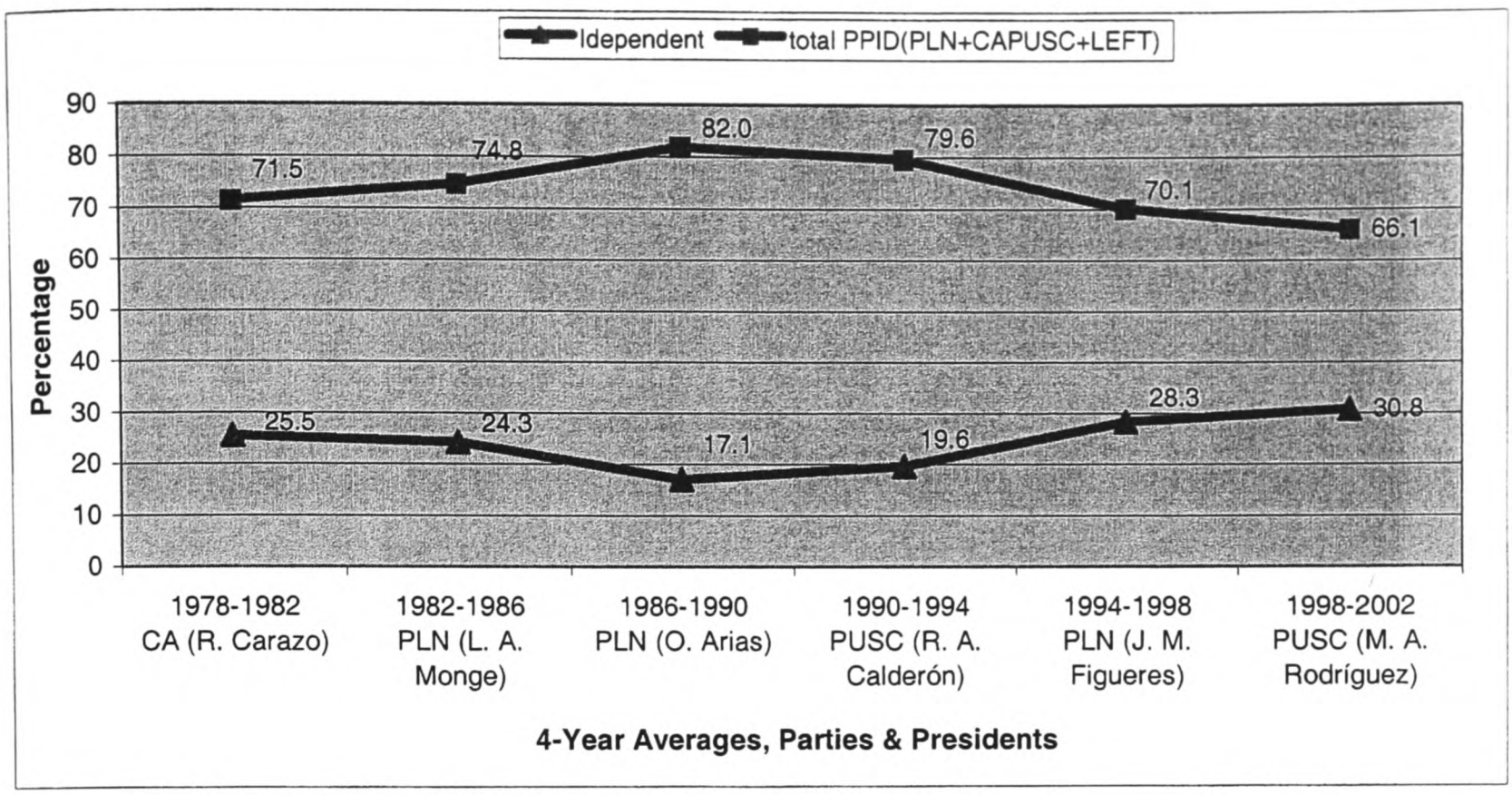
[67] Evans and Norris 1999c, pp. xxx-xxxi. For further details on the concept of dealignment see, Chapter 2.
[68] Idespo Marzo 2002.
[69] Norris forthcoming, Chap. 6.
[70] IIS 1982-2002; Fournier forthcoming.

Graph 6.3. Party Identification and Independents in Costa Rica, 1978-2002
(4-year averages)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

It is worth noting that the growth of "partisan independence" is by no means a Costa Rican peculiarity. Russell Dalton has reported similar trends in several Western democracies. In the case of the USA, between the 1950s and the 1960s less than a quarter of the electorate claimed to be independent. However by the 1980s a third of the American electorate considered themselves as "non-partisans." This register reached 41 per cent in 2000. Britons follow a similar pattern. In 1964 only 4 per cent declared to lack a standing partisan preference. By the 1980s this figure almost quadrupled, reaching roughly 14 per cent. In the case of Germany (the former West Germany[71]), non-partisans numbered 16 per cent of the public in 1976. In 1998 this figure rose to 38 amongst the westerners.[72]

Likewise, Frances Hagopian has reported rising trends of independent voters in several Latin American countries. For example, in 1974, 19 per cent of the Brazilian electorate claimed not to identify with any party. This figure rose to an average of

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[71] Dalton's research only considers figures of former West Germany, as ex-East German voters are just beginning to develop their partisan attachments. Dalton 2002, p. 185.

51.3 per cent in the 1989-1990 period. This was also the case in Ecuador where 47 per cent of citizens living in Guayaquil and 38 per cent of those living in Quito indicated not to identify with any party in 1989. This register went up to 67 per cent and 88 per cent, respectively, in 1993.[73] The emergence of more independent and politically sceptical citizens seems to be a widespread trend.[74]

Indeed, partisan dealignment is a phenomenon affecting a fair number of democracies. The data presented in Table 6.1 supports this conclusion, as eighteen out of twenty stable democracies considered have negative regression slopes in their partisan identification trends (see column 3). In other words, despite having different strengths in their statistical significance, in all of these countries the percentage of the electorate that claims to identify with a party is declining. Moreover, according to Dalton's research, partisan attachments in this diverse group of nations weakened during the latter half of the twentieth century.[75] Table 6.1 demonstrates that Costa Rica needs to be included among the "dealigning developed democracies." Not only is this Central American nation one of the countries—along with other seventeen—with negative regression slopes for overall party identification, but also it is one the thirteen nations whose results are statistically significant.

Moreover, Table 6.2 demonstrates that the erosion of partisan loyalties is not unique to Western democracies. This table illustrates that, with the sole exception of the Uruguayan case, there is a consistent decreasing pattern in partisan identification or in "partisan sympathy" (according to the institutionalisation level of the parties involved in each country) in Latin American, as well as in Western European states. Again, Costa Rica is one of the cases showing clear signs of dealignment. All in all, this data supports Dalton's assertion regarding citizens' disengagement with political parties as a near universal phenomenon.[76]

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[72] Dalton 2002, pp. 184-185.
[73] Hagopian 1998, p. 116.
[74] For a thorough analysis of the emergence of a more "critical" citizen in Western Democracies see, Norris 1999a.
[75] Dalton 2002, p. 185.
[76] Dalton 1999.

Table 6.1. Trends in Party Identification (PID) in Different Developed Democracies[77]

| Country | Starting point of PID (average of first two surveys in each series) | Regression Slopes (b) | Significance | Period | N (time points) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 92% | -.179 | 0.19 | 1967-1998 | 8 |
| Austria | 67% | -.916 | 0.00* | 1969-1999 | 7 |
| Belgium | 50% | .090 | 0.60 | 1975-1999 | 22 |
| Great Britain | 93% | -.202 | 0.00* | 1964-2001 | 10 |
| Canada | 90% | -.386 | 0.05* | 1965-1997 | 9 |
| Denmark | 52% | .001 | 0.95 | 1971-1998 | 9 |
| **Costa Rica** | **71.7%** | **-.271** | **0.02*** | **1978-2002** | **71** |
| Finland | 57% | -.293 | 0.49 | 1975-1991 | 4 |
| France | 59% | -.712 | 0.00* | 1975-1999 | 22 |
| Germany | 78% | -.572 | 0.00* | 1972-1998 | 8 |
| Iceland | 80% | -.675 | 0.02* | 1983-1999 | 5 |
| Ireland | 61% | -1.510 | 0.00* | 1978-1999 | 19 |
| Italy | 78% | -.979 | 0.00* | 1978-1999 | 19 |
| Luxemburg | 61% | -.317 | 0.12 | 1975-1999 | 22 |
| Japan | 70% | -.589 | 0.00* | 1962-2000 | 12 |
| Netherlands | 38% | -.329 | 0.13 | 1971-1998 | 9 |
| New Zealand | 87% | -1.530 | 0.00* | 1975-1999 | 9 |
| Norway | 66% | -.220 | 0.34 | 1965-1993 | 8 |
| Sweden | 64% | -.733 | 0.00* | 1968-1998 | 11 |
| United States | 77% | -.370 | 0.00* | 1952-2000 | 12 |

* Statistically significant at the 5 per cent level.
Sources: For Costa Rica CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89; for the rest of the countries, Dalton 2000, Table 2.1, p. 25. Data from Table 2.1 in Dalton's work has been updated, as the author has kindly sent me new information of his ongoing research.

[77] Given that polls in each nation apply different questions for measuring partisan identification, and that data for each country has been obtained using different points in time, the statistics in Table 6.1 should not be used to make direct comparisons of the levels and rates of change in party identification across nations. Dalton 2000, p. 25.

Table 6.2. Partisan Identification in Latin American and Western European Countries

| | Years | % Identifying with a Party (PID) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Latin American Cases** | | | |
| Argentina | 1989 | 44.4 | |
| | 1995 | 24.6 | |
| Chile | 1967 | 88.5 | |
| | 1988 | 80.0 | |
| | 1991-1994 (avg.) | 75.0 | |
| | 1996 | 50.0 | |
| Colombia | 1970's | 70.0 | |
| | 1980's | 60.0 | |
| Costa Rica | 1978-1982 (avg.) | 71.5 | |
| | 1982-1986 (avg.) | 74.8 | |
| | 1986-1990 (avg.) | 82.0 | |
| | 1990-1994 (avg.) | 79.6 | |
| | 1994-1998 (avg.) | 70.1 | |
| | 1998-2002 (avg.) | 66.1 | |
| Mexico | 1987 | 62.0 | |
| | 1990 | 49.0 | |
| Uruguay | 1966 | 79.0 | |
| | 1971 | 79.0 | |
| | 1994 | 74.0 | |
| | 1999 | 84.0 | |
| Venezuela (a) | 1973 | 45.9 | |
| | 1983 | 35.3 | |
| | 1993 | 27.8 | |
| | 1998 | 14.0 | |
| **European Cases** | | | |
| | | % PID | % strong PID |
| Britain (b) | 1964-1966 (avg.) | 90.6 | 43.8 |
| | 1970-1974-1979 (avg.) | 86.7 | 30.5 |
| | 1983-1997 (avg.) | 74.1 | 18.4 |
| | 1992-1997 | 82.9 | 15.4 |
| Germany | 1972-1980 (avg.) | 82.3 | |
| | 1983-1987 (avg.) | 75.0 | |
| Italy | 1976-1981 (avg.) | 72.7 | |
| | 1982-1989 (avg.) | 62.9 | |
| Sweden | 1968-1985 (avg.) | 90.0 | |
| | 1988 | 64.0 | |

(a) Venezuela's figures show the percentage of militants and/or sympathisers. For details see, Molina 2000a.
(b) Several analysts have articulated doubts regarding the validity of the standard British Election Studies (BES) question for measuring party identification, as it tends to overestimate the percentage of identifiers. Thus, a more accurate way to illustrate changes in partisan loyalties in Britain is by measuring the percentage of citizens that claim to have a strong partisan identification. For more details see, Sanders et al. 2002.
Sources: For Costa Rica, CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89; for Uruguay, Zuasnabar 2002, Cuadro 2; for Venezuela, Molina 2000a, Cuadro 1; for Britain, Sanders et al. 2002; for the rest of the countries, Hagopian 1998, p. 116.

*4.2 Partisan Dealignment at the Party Level*

After witnessing the decline in party identification in Costa Rica, the next thing to study is how this process has manifested at the party level. Is partisan dealignment affecting both the PLN and the PUSC, or is it just faced by one of them? The significance of this question should not be underestimated. As explained, given the long-term nature of party identification, one could only talk with certainty about partisan dealignment if it is suffered by a party with a long-standing tradition, "old enough" to have developed stable loyalties among its followers. These loyalties, deeply entrenched especially as a result of political socialisation by family members, need to have survived *at least* two generations, in order for their erosion to be defined as dealignment. Otherwise it would be difficult to differentiate between party identification as a whole and the partisan loyalties of a specific cohort, which may be influenced by common circumstantial events.

Given its direct influence on partisan loyalties, the dynamics of the foundational cleavage should also be considered when assessing partisan dealignment in a particular country. As discussed in Chapter 3, even if the nature of the electoral confrontation in Costa Rica since 1936 has basically been of a bipolar style, it took a civil war and thirty-five years (from 1948 to 1983), for the 1948 political cleavage to formally adopt a two-party system form. While the PLN was formed right after the civil war (in 1951); the PUSC, even if one could trace its roots all the way to back to 1948, was not created until four decades later (in 1983). In other words, it is not until the beginning of the 1980s that Costa Rica's party system finally evolved from a multi-party system with a dominant party to the actual two-party system. One would anticipate that the difference in terms of the proximity of the two parties' creation to the civil war, would have a dissimilar effect on the influence that the 1948 cleavage has on their followers. The civil war ought to have a stronger influence on the PLN's identifiers. Hence, the decay of this cleavage should primarily affect this party's supporters.

Therefore, we could talk about partisan dealignment unequivocally, only if it is suffered by the PLN, a political party that was formed right after the 1948 Civil War, and whose popular support and institutional stability has led it to prevail in seven out

the thirteen elections that have taken place since then. Whether the possible erosion of the party identification of the PUSC could be defined as dealignment is open to debate. This party, as explained, also has its roots in the 1948 Civil War, but formally united as a single party only in December 1983. Prior to 1983, social christian groups and various PLN adversaries (what I named the Conservative Alliance [CA]) gathered in different coalitions to oppose the PLN. In fact, they were normally referred to by the electorate and the press as *la oposición* (the opposition),[78] given that the most common feature of their leaders was their disagreement with the PLN's policies and politicians. The identity of these coalitions' members and of their followers was based partially on a shared political past, and on their common opposition to the Social Democrats.[79]

As discussed earlier, the four parties that formed the "opposition coalitions" in the 1978 and 1982 elections, integrated into the party known today as the PUSC. Thus, in terms of electoral results, one could draw some conclusions of this party since 1978 (as I did in Chapter 5). This has led PUSC Secretary General, Jorge Eduardo Sánchez to indicate that, "The PUSC is a party that 'was born old,' as many citizens relate us to the coalitions that participated in the 1978 and the 1982 processes."[80] However, in terms of party identification, using data since then is arguable. It is true that from 1978 and until the end of 1983, the CA's leaders and followers somewhat shared a common political past. Nonetheless, their-identity as a party, with all the symbols it involves (a steady name, a flag, an official ideology, shared political "heroes," etc.) only took place once they united as a single political movement. Consequently, definite conclusions regarding the PUSC's party identification can only be reached based on data gathered for this party since 1984.

This is a central problem for the present research given that this time span only gives us nineteen years to work with, hardly enough time to include at least two generations. To solve it, and based on their common past and on the availability of data, the CA-PUSC party identification figures were considered since 1978. From this year and until the end of 1983, these figures ought to be regarded not as exact

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[78] See for example, *La Nación* 13 de marzo 1977; *La Nación* 18 de marzo 1977.
[79] See Chapter 3.
[80] Sánchez 26 June 2002.

results, but as sound approximations to what could have been the PUSC's actual numbers, had it formed before. Having said that, considering data since 1978 was the best possible way to "expand" the PUSC's party identification curve so it could include responses of at least two generations—even if not two complete life cycles—of voters.

These methodological reservations were no longer an issue after observing the results depicted by Graphs 6.4 and 6.5. On the one hand, Graph 6.4 clearly demonstrates how the PLN's party identification is descending. This negative trend is statistically significant at the 5 per cent significance level and its estimated slope is -.446 (i.e. a 0.45 per cent drop every 4-month period). An interesting feature in the PLN's party identification curve is the rather low figures for 1978 and 1979. This could very well reflect the "loyalty contradictions" and the disillusionment that many PLN followers suffered when, in the 1978 elections, Rodrigo Carazo—a former PLN member—ran as the presidential candidate for a coalition that opposed the Social Democrats (the CU) and won. As demonstrated in Graph 6.4, by 1980 (only two years after the Carazo incident) the PLN's partisan loyalty returned to what analysts believed was its historical level—around 40 per cent. Following Evans and Norris, one could even classify the 1978 electoral process as a "deviating election," succeeded by what Harrop and Miller have called the "*homing* tendency."[81]

However, similar to what happened with the general party identification curve, the PLN's support began a sustained decline ten years later. The fall was particularly strong between 1993 and 1996. This group's partisan identification tends to recover afterwards but, as in the case of the general curve, it never again reached its historical level. It is important to keep in mind that the PLN's electoral support started to show clear signs of erosion (electoral dealignment) in the 1998 elections.[82] This was the first electoral process after the party began its precipitous decline. This, once more, is

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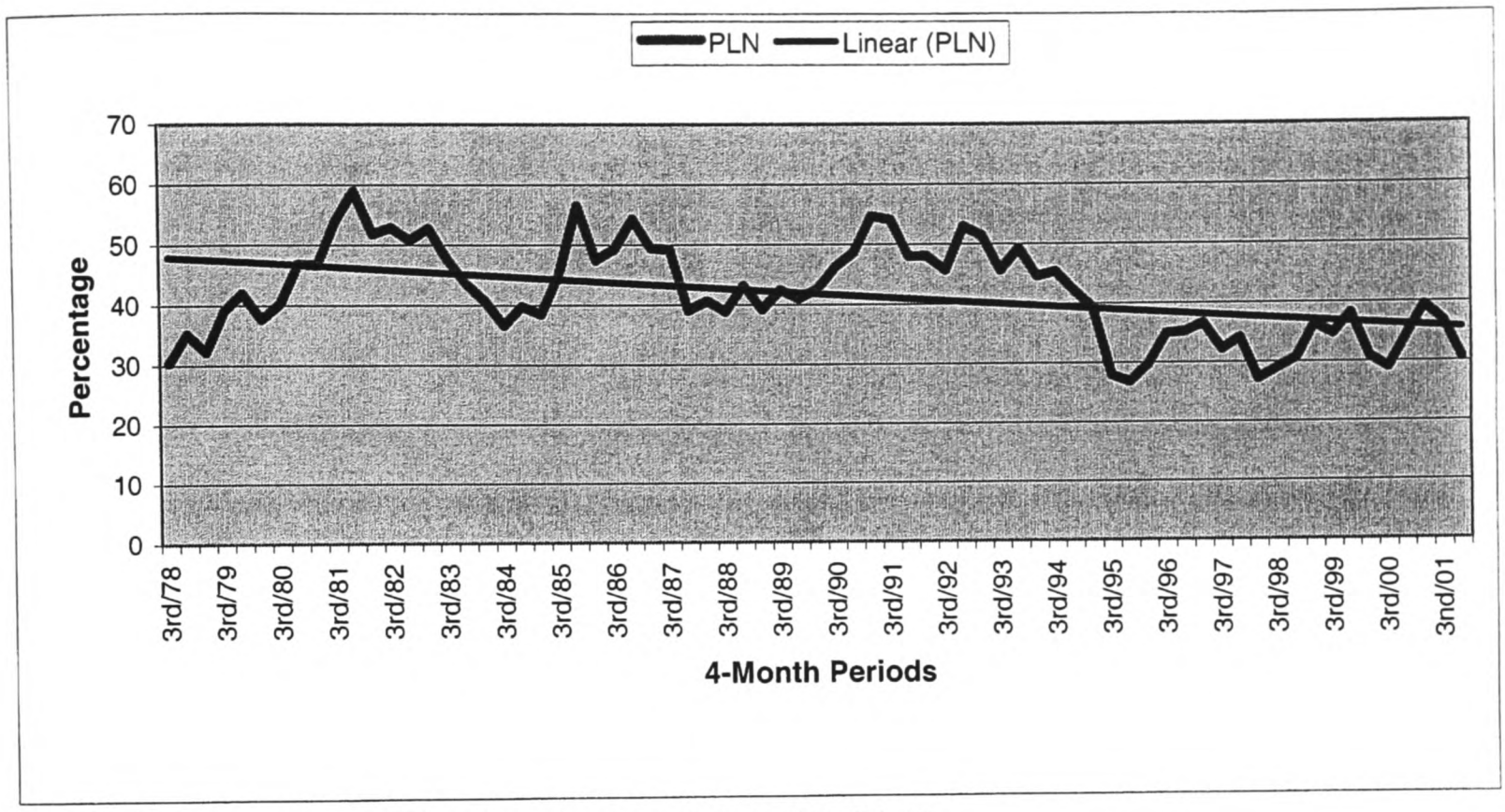
[81] In deviating elections, a short-term type of dealignment, particular personalities, issues, or events produce a temporary sharp reversal in the normal share of the vote for major parties. Dissatisfied voters, which made sudden and dramatic changes, tend to "return home" (the *homing* tendency) in subsequent contests. Evans and Norris 1999c, pp. xxx-xxxi.; Harrop and Miller 1987, p. 134. Italics in the original. For further details see Chapter 2.

[82] See Chapter 5.

consistent with the general argument which claims that partisan dealignment is at the base of electoral dealignment in the Costa Rican electoral change process.

Graph 6.4. Party Identification of the PLN, 1978-2002
(4-month periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

On the other hand, and even considering the variability that may have been added by the inclusion of data since 1978, there are no clear signs of erosion in the CA-PUSC's party identification. Its register suffered a visible decline between 1979 and 1981, and again between the beginning of 1990 and the end of 1992, but later it recovered. It is worth noting how volatile the CA-PUSC's party identification curve is. This was not a surprise as such unstable figures are a common phenomenon among young parties whose loyalties are still developing and depend, to an important extent, on the outcomes of conjunctural events (popular evaluation of the party's performance in government or as opposition, the candidate, positions on particular issues, specific controversies, etc.). In fact, even considering its volatile style, the Social Christian's party identification curve (data since 1978) shows an increasing trend. This trend is

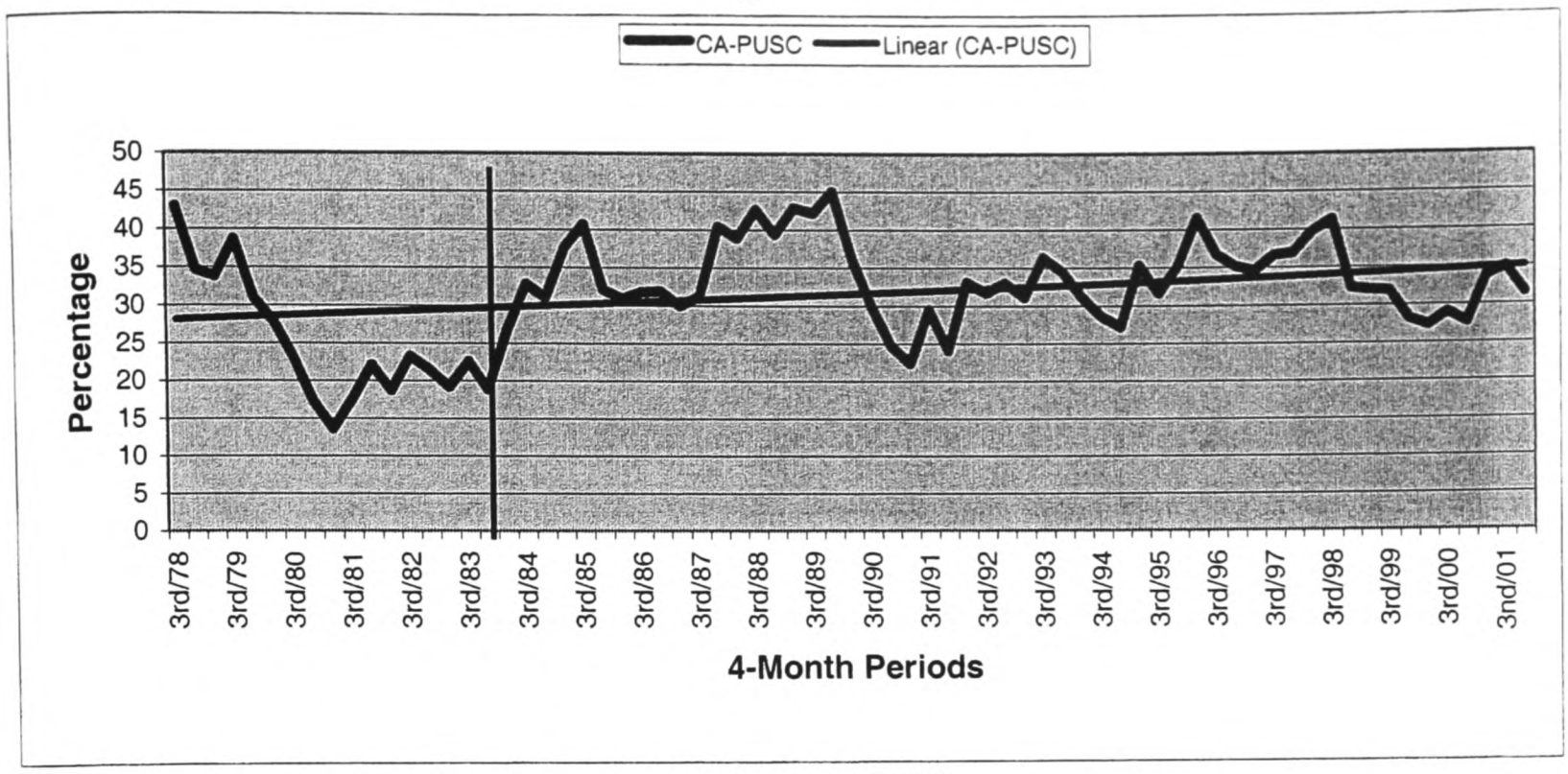
statistically significant at the 5 per cent significance level and its estimated slope is .292 (i.e. a 0.29 per cent increase every 4-month period).

This rising trend is something one would expect given that the time series considers the evolution of a coalition, the CU, to a party, the PUSC. Nevertheless when only data corresponding to the PUSC (since the first 4-month period of 1984 [marked with a black line]) was evaluated, a negligible—not statistically significant—decreasing trend was found.[83] Thus, even if one cannot conclude that the PUSC's party identification is actually increasing (and maybe start talking about partisan realignment), it is quite clear that it is not decreasing.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the decline in the PUSC's electoral support was not evident until the 2002 elections. Graph 6.5 shows a decrease in the CA-PUSC's party identification (not its most important one in the period studied) from the beginning of 1999 to the middle of 2001. Later, once the electoral campaign started, it recovered some of the lost support. One could suggest, following the proposed argument, that the PUSC's weakened electoral support in the last election was due to this decline in partisan identification. However, at least one more electoral result and a longer evaluation period will be needed to conclude that the PUSC, as the PLN, is enduring a partisan dealignment process.

[83] This trend's estimated slope is -.007. All the previous regressions were done considering 71 points in time. In the case of the regression of the PUSC's party identification since 1984, 55 points in time were considered.

Graph 6.5. Party Identification of the CA (PUSC since 1983), 1978-2002
(4-month periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

Finally, Graph 6.6 compares the curves of the PLN, the CA-PUSC, and the independents. This graph is complemented by the data in Table 6.3. Four central conclusions can be drawn by observing this graph and the table. First, in terms of party identification, the PLN was the dominant party in Costa Rican politics until 1994. Second, the PLN's party support is the only one following a clear descending trend. As indicated before, even if very volatile, one cannot conclude that the PUSC's loyalties are decreasing. In the case of the independents, they are evidently increasing. This conclusion is supported by the data in Table 6.3, and by a UCR survey which reported that 38.5 per cent of the Costa Rican electorate comes from a family of "PLN tradition" and 31 per cent from one of "PUSC tradition."[84] Both the PUSC and the PLN now hold about a third of partisan loyalties. Hence, while the PUSC is holding on to its traditional support, simple arithmetic proves that the Social Democrats are the ones that have not been able to maintain their traditional party loyalties.

Third, and directly related to the previous point, the descent of the general party identification curve is caused essentially by the PLN's diminishing partisan loyalties.

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[84] Fournier et al. diciembre 1999.

In fact, the trends of the three curves illustrated in Graph 6.6 and by data in Table 6.3 suggest that former PLN identifiers are basically the ones contributing to the growth of political independence in Costa Rican politics. Backing this claim, a survey study by Unimer RI-La Nación proved that between April and May 1997—when political independence had almost reached a third of the electorate (28.9 per cent)—62.8 per cent of the independents that used to support a party before (55. 3 per cent of them), were PLN identifiers.[85] And fourth, as briefly stated above, after 1995 (marked with a black line) the country's "political market" is divided into three "forces"(the PLN, the PUSC and the independents) each of them representing around a third of the electorate.

This last conclusion is supported by Marco Vinicio Fournier's findings. Building on a survey study conducted by the UCR which analysed voting and general political behaviour from 1982 to 1998 in Costa Rica,[86] Fournier constructed a typology of the Costa Rican electorate. According to his results, 33.8 per cent of the electorate can be classified as "strong PLN followers" (*liberacionistas duros*), and 31.8 percent as "strong PUSC followers" (*socialcristianos duros*). Following this author and coincidental to what party identification theory posits, strong PLN followers and strong PUSC followers, show a high proclivity to vote and, specifically, to do so for their respective parties. Furthermore, both of these groups tend to positively evaluate bipartism as an institution in local politics. And finally, PLN's "strong followers" were the only ones who claimed that the 1948 Civil War still exerts some influence on their vote decision. In consonance with the rather short history of their party, this was not the case with PUSC's "strong followers." The declining party identification in the case of the PLN, whose followers still claim to be influenced by the 1948 events, and the absence of this influence on the PUSC supporters, confirm our prediction, and provide further evidence of the "unfreezing" of the 1948 political cleavage.

The rest of the electorate (34.4 per cent) was classified in six different categories, following their voting habits ("strong third party supporters" [*emergentes duros*], "strong abstainers" [*abstencionistas duros*], "intermittent abstainers" [*abstencionistas*

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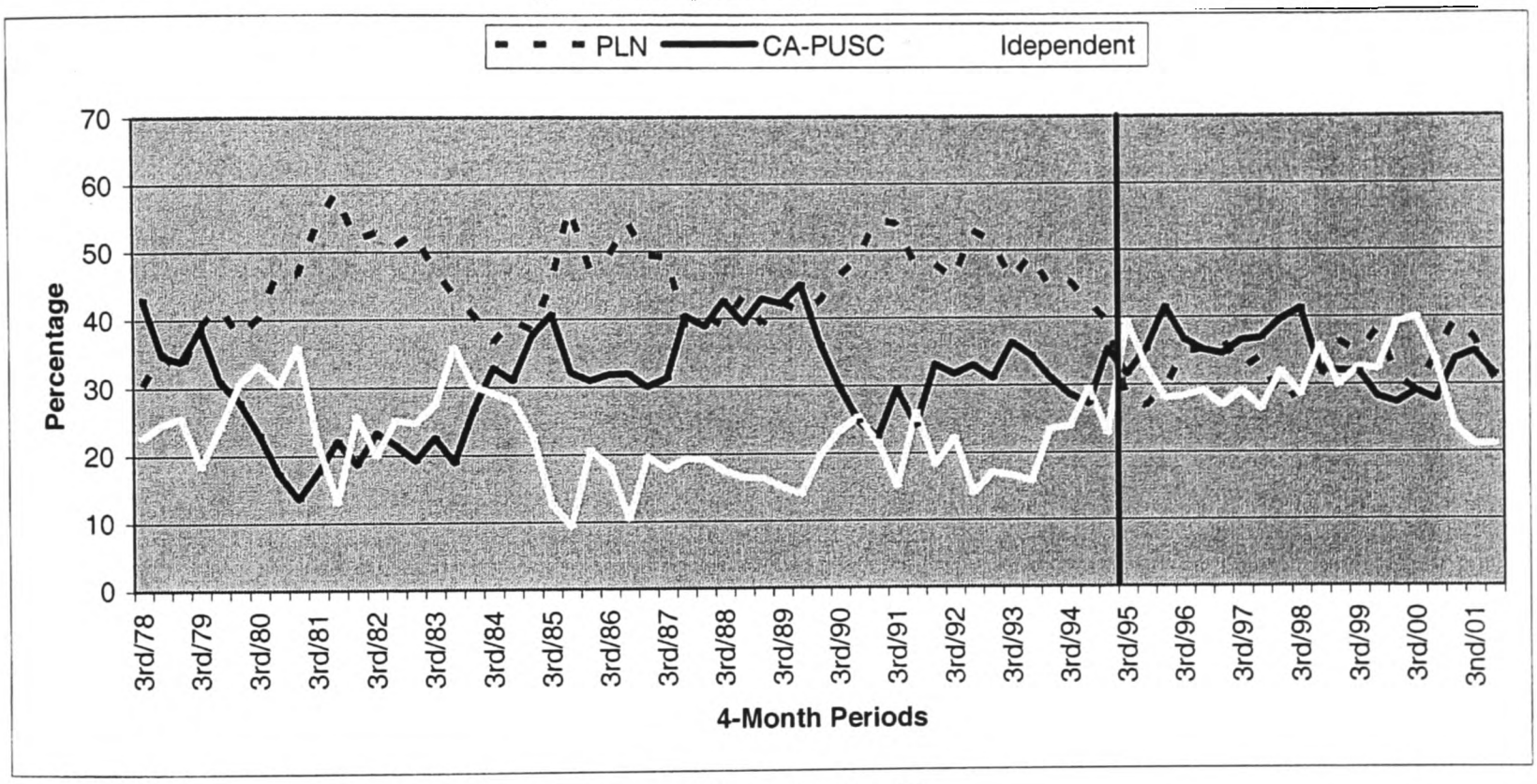
[85] Unimer RI-La Nación, abril-mayo 1997.
[86] Fournier et al. diciembre 1999.

*intermitentes*], "passive voters" [*pasivos*], "moderate voters" [*moderados*], and "active voters" [*activos*]). Even though there were differences between them, in general terms members of this "third group" have a low tendency to vote either for the PLN or the PUSC, are keener to support "third parties" or to abstain, and give bipartism rather "low marks." Moreover, all of them claim that the 1948 episode has little or no influence on their voting decisions.[87] As indicated before, Costa Rica's political market seems to be divided into three distinctive political forces whose political behaviour is evidently determined by their levels of party identification.

Graph 6.6. Party Identification of the PLN, the CA (PUSC since 1983), and Independents, 1978-2002
(4-month periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

Table 6.3. Trends in Party Identification and Independence in Costa Rica

| Trend | General PID | Independents | PLN PID | CA-PUSC PID (1978-2002) | PUSC PID (1984-2002) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Slope** | -0.271 | 0.260 | -0.446 | 0.292 | -0.007 |
| **Significance** | 0.022 | 0.029 | 0.00 | 0.014 | 0.961 |

Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

[87] Fournier forthcoming.

*4.3 Circumstantial Evidence of Partisan Dealignment*

Party identification is responsible for long-term psychological affinities between the electorate and its party, and because of that, it is one of the most important predictors of political behaviour. Hence, stable, long-term electoral choices are expected in the presence of deeply entrenched party loyalties. For the same reason, when party identification begins to erode, other short-term, conjunctural events start to become central for making electoral decisions. One cannot unmistakably conclude the existence of partisan dealignment when conjunctural events predominate or grow in importance as decision factors in an electoral scenario. However, once the erosion of party identification has been demonstrated, the increasing influence of short-term aspects on electoral behaviour and the electoral flux that normally results from it, can serve a key function corroborating the existence of the phenomenon.

Chapter 5 clearly demonstrated the extent to which Costa Rica's electoral setting has changed, especially since 1998. In this section I am going to concentrate on additional evidence from survey studies that is indicative of the existence of partisan dealignment. Electorally speaking, three phenomena of short-term nature corroborate the erosion of party identification in the country: the growing relevance of specific campaign issues and events—most notably the candidate—when making electoral choices, rising levels of change in vote decisions taking place during electoral campaigns, and decreasing levels of vote consistency among the electorate.

4.3.1 Growing Relevance of Short-Term Reasons to Vote

In the first place, issues, manifestos, campaign promises and, most importantly, the candidate—his or her image—have been growing in relevance amongst the electorate as aspects they consider when voting. As with the case of partisan dealignment, this phenomenon is not a Costa Rican peculiarity. Martin Wattenberg, and Max Kaase,

among others, have analysed this shift toward the so-called "candidate-centred" politics in advanced democracies.[88]

Focusing on the Costa Rican case, Graph 6.7 shows how programmes, campaign promises, and—essentially—the candidate, have been growing in relevance; and, at the same time, how the party's influence has consistently eroded, when Costa Ricans were asked for the most important reason they considered when voting. In other words, as demonstrated in Graph 6.8, the influence of short-term reasons on the vote (the candidate, parties' programmes, and campaign promises) is becoming increasingly significant, while long-term reasons (basically loyalty to a party), are losing importance.[89] According to the PUSC's political advisor, Víctor Díaz-Mora:

> "As in many other democracies around the world, in Costa Rica candidates are becoming more important than parties. It is quite simple, now the best candidate, regardless of the party, is the one that wins elections."[90]

Costa Rica seems to be moving in the direction of what authors such as David Farrell, and Roustetsaari and Mattila have rightly called, "candidate-centred campaigns,"[91] as the candidate's image is overshadowing the party's tradition as the main vote deciding element.

This conclusion is supported by a recent poll by UCR academics which suggested that the "tradition" (defined as the attitude of voting always for the same party regardless of the candidate, as a result of familial influence) is losing importance among Costa Rican citizens.[92] They reported that 68.7 per cent of the electorate claimed to vote influenced to some extent by "tradition" in 1990; the register was 69 per cent in 1998,

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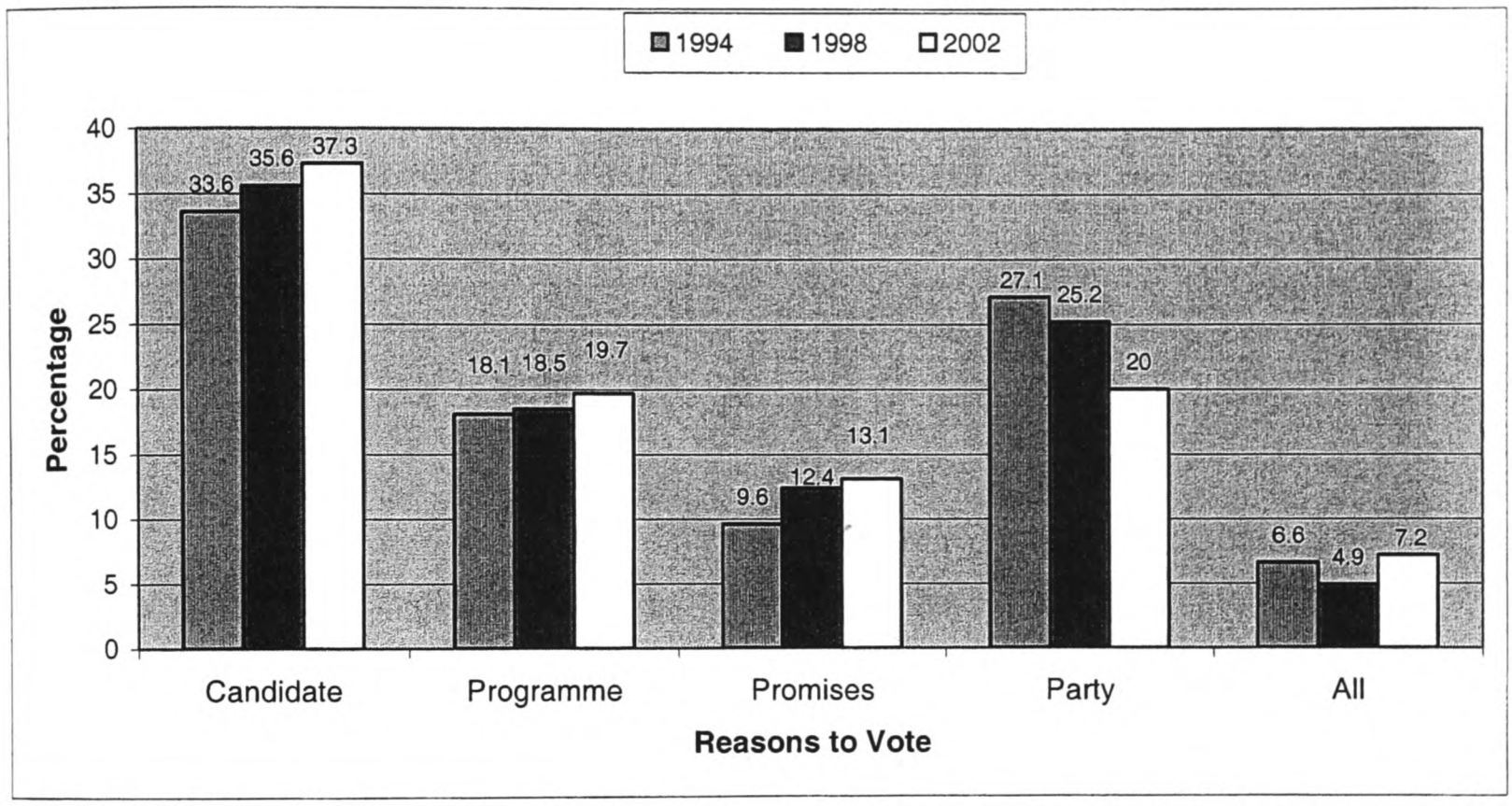
[88] Wattenberg 1991; Kaase 1994. For an interesting study on the importance of candidates in New Zealand's elections results see, Karp et al. 2002.
[89] This phenomenon has also been discussed in the local newspapers. See for example, *La Nación* 4 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 29 de enero 2002; *La Nación* 6 de enero 2002.
[90] Díaz-Mora 13 March 2002. This idea is generally accepted by Costa Rican politicians and analysts. See for example, Arias-Sánchez 19 January 2002; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002; Arias-Sánchez 27 February 2002; Álvarez-Desanti 5 March and 16 April 2002; Laclé 12 March 2002; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002; Ramírez 22 January 2002; Borge 11 March 2002; Araya 11 January 2002; Carballo 22 March 2002; Carazo-Odio 7 August 2002.
[91] Farrell 1996; Roustetsaari and Mattila 2002.
[92] This claim has also been posited by several local analysts. See for example, Fournier 23 January 2002; Varela 25 January 2002; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002.

but then collapsed to 11.5 per cent in 2002.[93] The decline of the party and of the family's political tradition as reasons to vote are clear signs of the erosion of partisan identification in Costa Rica.

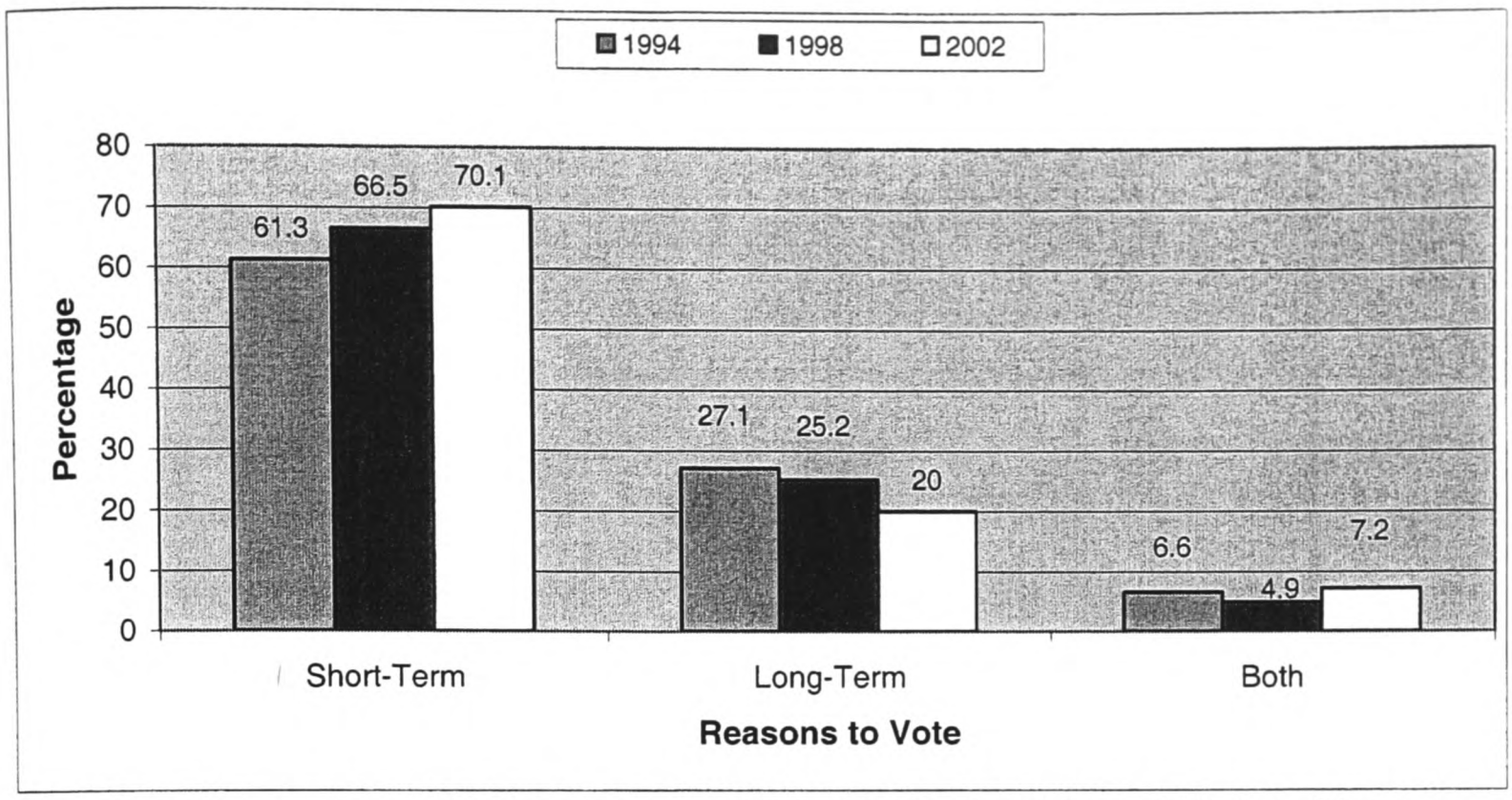
Graph 6.7. Most Important Reason to Vote Claimed by Costa Rican Citizens, 1994, 1998 and 2002 Elections




Source: Author's own estimations based on Unimer RI-La Nación, 6 de febrero 1996, 1 de febrero 1998, 3 de febrero 2002.

[93] IIS et al. 20 de febrero 2002. No data was available for the 1994 elections.

Graph 6.8. Short-Term versus Long-Term Reasons to Vote in Costa Rica's Elections, 1994, 1998 and 2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on Unimer RI-La Nación, 6 de febrero 1996, 1 de febrero 1998, 3 de febrero 2002.

Moreover, Graph 6.9 illustrates the relevance of short-term and long-term reason in vote decision amongst PLN and PUSC followers. It is among the PLN's identifiers that one can clearly discern a pattern of short-term reasons increasing in relevance *vis à vis* long-term ones. This is worrisome for this party's leadership. As stated by a former PLN Secretary General, "Contrasting with the PUSC, we have always depended on the party, not on the candidate, to win elections."[94] The pattern in the case of the PUSC is not as obvious. Graph 6.9 shows how, being a newer party, the PUSC depends to a greater extent on conjunctural events and on the candidate's image to obtain popular support.[95] In fact, a survey conducted by the UCR reported that 53 per cent of the citizens that voted for the PUSC in the 2002 elections, did so because they liked its candidate better.[96] In the words of former Vice-President,

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[94] González 15 January and 18 June 2002. This claim was also made by former PUSC minister, Erick Thompson. Thompson 16 January 2002.

[95] This conclusion has also been posited by PUSC Secretary General, Jorge Eduardo Sánchez, and by its President, Lorena Vásquez. Sánchez 26 June 2002; Vásquez 26 June 2002.

[96] IIS et al. 20 de febrero 2002.

German Serrano, "In 2002 we won only because of the popularity of our candidate."[97] Thus, contrasting with the PLN, one cannot really say that there has been an observable change in the PUSC's followers voting behaviour.

These observations are consistent with the conclusions posed in the previous sections of this chapter. In fact, and after winning the last two elections (1998 and 2002) consecutively, it is evident that the PUSC is actually benefiting from the state of flux that is affecting mainly the PLN supporters' loyalty, and driving parties to compete basically on short-term "platforms." As contended by a disappointed ex-PLN follower during the 2002 elections:

> "Years before I would have voted for the PLN without even considering who the candidate was. In fact, I could have supported a 'monkey' if they had fielded it as their candidate. Those days are over. Now I support the candidate I like better, regardless of the party he is running for."[98]

The growing relevance of short-term reasons to vote and, especially, of "candidate-centre voting" is a clear indicator of the decay of party loyalties among the PLN's supporters.

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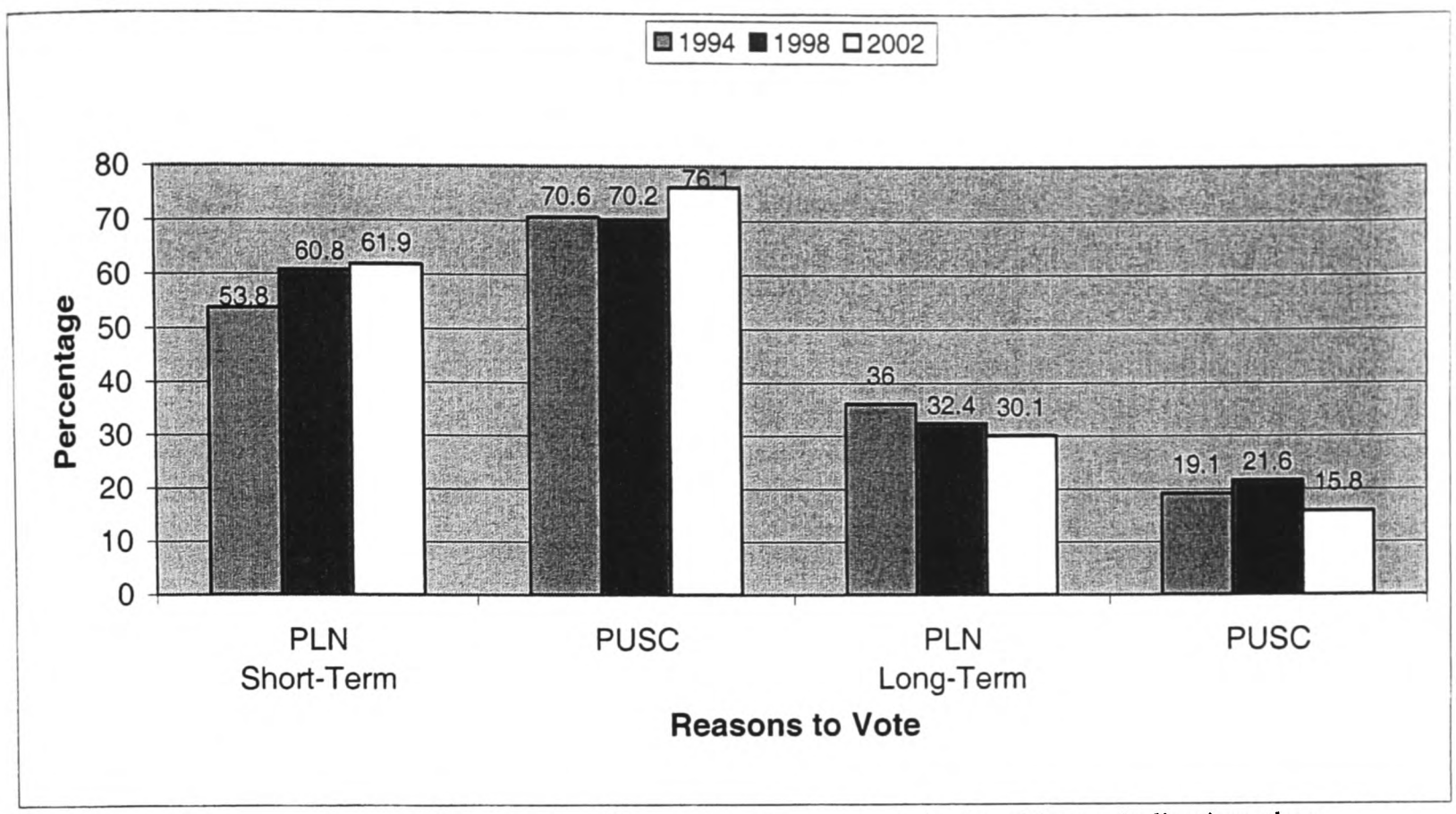
[97] Serrano 20 February 2002. This position was shared by other PUSC members. See for example, Laclé 12 March 2002; Díaz-Mora 13 March 2002; Vásquez 26 June 2002; Serrano 25 June 2002.
[98] Conejo 3 February 2002.

Graph 6.9. Short-Term versus Long-Term Reasons to Vote Among PLN and PUSC Identifiers, 1994, 1998 and 2002 Elections




Note: The missing data needed to reach 100 per cent corresponds to citizens indicating they considered both long-term and short-term reasons when voting.
Source: Author's own estimations based on Unimer RI-La Nación, 6 de febrero 1996, 1 de febrero 1998, 3 de febrero 2002.

4.3.2 Rising Levels of Change in Vote Decision during Campaigns

The data of the previous three graphs was drawn from Unimer RI-La Nación survey studies, all conducted on election day before the official results were released. It would have been useful to study data from more elections in order to corroborate whether parties' influence on voting, as suggested in Graphs 6.1 and 6.3, was higher before 1994. Unfortunately, this type of survey was only available since the 1994 electoral process. Nonetheless, the figures in Graphs 6.7, 6.8, and 6.9 give us a clear idea of the changes in Costa Ricans electoral behaviour, and fortunately they can be complemented by Graph 6.10.

This graph shows the relevance of electoral campaigns as "decision-making periods" in the last five elections in Costa Rica. Working with data from CID-Gallup surveys,

Graph 6.10 illustrates the trend followed by an index of change in vote decision during campaigns. I defined this measurement as the Total Campaign Effect index (TCE), or the aggregate percentage of change that takes place in the electorate between the beginning and the end of the election campaign.[99] It is expected that in polities where parties enjoy deeply entrenched loyalties, electoral campaigns play a minor role in the vote decision process. In this type of polity citizens normally follow their party identification, and decide who to support well before the campaign starts. As a result, parties tend to focus their propaganda efforts on a small percentage of undecided voters.

However, when partisan loyalties start to erode, campaigns become central periods of vote decision and, given that voters are guided mainly by conjunctural events, their decisions tend to vary as the campaign unfolds. When this happens electoral campaigns become "marketing crusades" designed to convince a growing number of sceptics, and parties, as acknowledged by Farrell and Webb, start functioning as "campaign machines operating in support of the principal candidates."[100]

Graph 6.10 shows that the TCE index followed a descending tendency until 1990. Since then the percentage of change registered during campaigns has notably increased, reaching its highest point during the 2002 electoral process. It is worth

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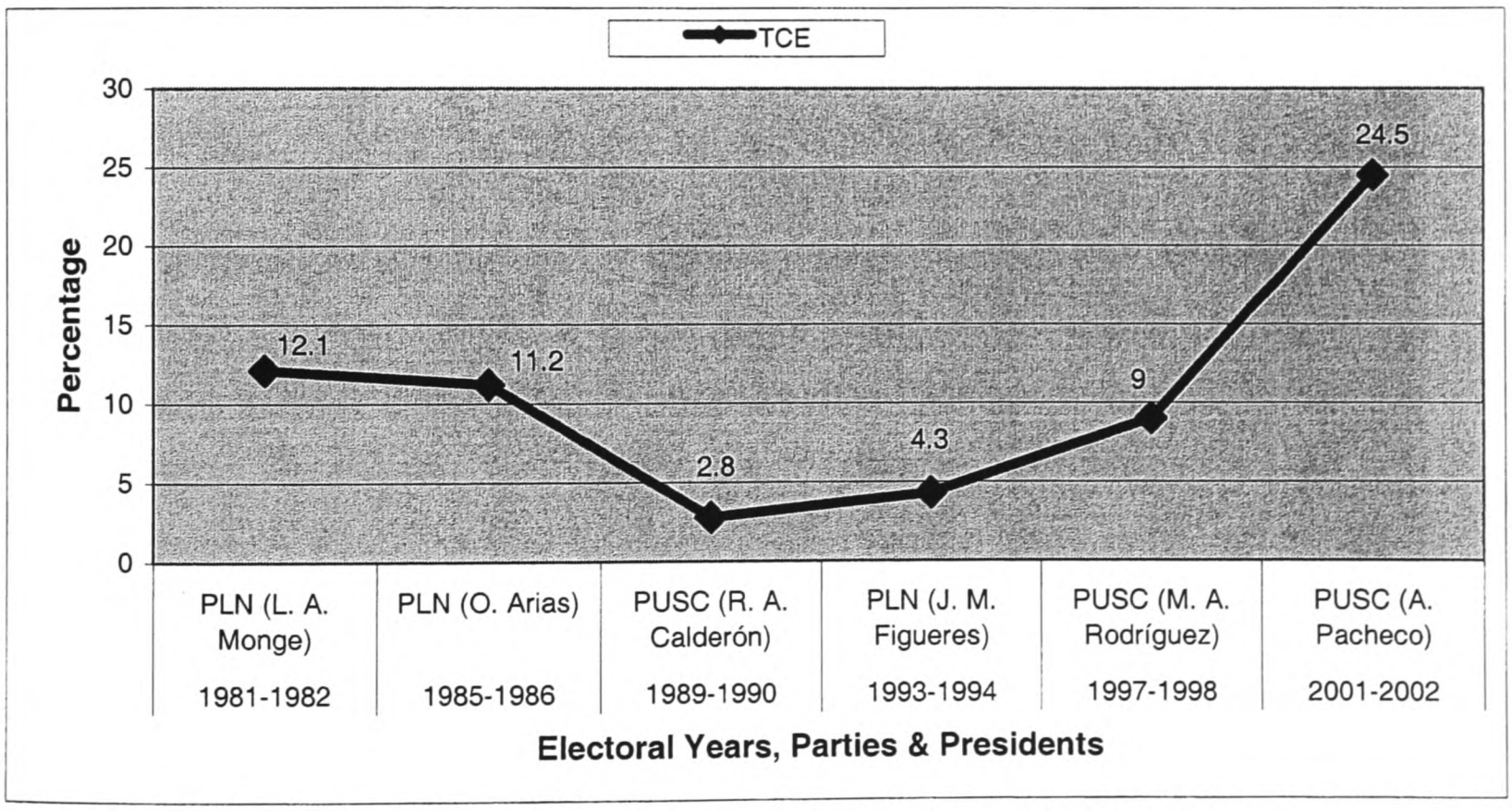
[99] This index was calculated using the first poll once the campaign had officially started and the two main parties (the PLN and the PUSC) have elected their presidential candidates, and the last one prior to the national elections. It was constructed using the same technique applied to calculate total electoral volatility (see Chapter 5), using instead of the percentage of votes obtained by a party, the percentage of citizens claiming that they will vote for a party at the moment of the poll, or the *preliminary vote decision* (PVD). Thus the formula used was:
TCE= ½ ( | PiPVD | + | PjPVD | + | PkPVD | + | PePVD |... + | PnPVD | ), where PiPVD represents the change—in absolute terms—in the aggregate *preliminary vote decision* for party i between the first poll after the campaign officially started and the last one prior to the general elections. Obviously only polls by the same firm can be used. In the case of this research the data came from CID-Gallup polls, and the time span between the first and the last poll used in each campaign was between 4 and 9 months (4 in 1982, 9 in 1986, 8 in 1990, 5 in 1994, 6 in 1998, and 6 in 2002). The disparity in the amount of months considered for each campaign is due to the differences in the moment when the PLN and the PUSC had both elected their presidential candidates, after which the first poll was conducted. Table 6.10 shows how, contrary to what could be expected, the campaigns where longer time spans were considered do not necessarily have higher TCE registers.

[100] Farrell and Webb 2000, pp. 121-122. This is exactly what happened in Costa Rica, especially during the campaign for the 2002 elections. See for example, *La Nación* 4 de abril 2002; *La República* 22 de marzo 2002; *La Nación* 11 de marzo 2002; *La República* 25 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 13 de febrero 2002; *La Nación* 28 de enero 2002; *La Nación* 23 de enero 2002; *La Nación* 15 de enero 2002.

comparing the pattern followed by the TCE index in Graph 6.10, with the trends of the independents and of the general party identification curves in Graph 6.3. Clearly, as independence grows and party identification descends, the TCE index increases. Again, data from UCR's survey studies corroborate this trend. They reported that in 1998, 66.9 per cent of the population claimed that they *always* knew which party they were going to vote for (campaigns do not make any difference for these citizens). This register came down to 40.4 per cent in 2002.[101] Thus, not only are more voters using campaigns as crucial vote decision moments (and changing their mind as they develop), but also the most evident increase in the amount of change has taken place during the last two campaigns, prior to the 1998 and the 2002 elections. In other words, the relevance of campaigns as vote decision periods has grown after the plunge of party identification in the mid-1990s.

Graph 6.10. Total Campaign Effect (TCE) in the Costa Rican Elections, 1982-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OP's # 8, 10, 19, 21, 31, 33, 45, 51, 52, 53, 68, 72, 73, 87, and 89.

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For a good analysis on the growing relevance of political campaigns in vote decision in Western democracies see, Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002.

[101] Fournier et al. diciembre 1999; IIS et al. 20 de febrero 2002.

Indeed, the increasing trend of the TCE index in the last electoral campaigns is indicative of the emergence of a less loyal voter in Costa Rican politics. As demonstrated by Ian McAllister, partisan dealignment is likely to move the average time when voting decisions are made closely to the elections day.[102] In his words:

> "How do you explain the rise of late deciding voters?...The most obvious explanation is partisan dealignment...Partisan dealignment implies that fewer voters begin the election cycle with such predispositions [standing partisan affinities], making them more susceptible to the short-term issues and themes of the campaign."[103]

This phenomenon has manifested in several Western democracies, and also in Costa Rica.

Table 6.4 depicts the vote decision timing of citizens during recent elections in Australia, Britain, the United States, and Costa Rica. All three Western countries are enduring partisan dealignment processes, as shown by Ian McAllister.[104] Costa Rica has the lowest percentage of the electorate making their vote decision before the campaign starts and, as a result, the highest percentage of voters deciding who to support during the campaign. Moreover, it is in this Central American country along with Australia, where the highest percentage of the electorate makes up its mind the same day of the elections. The high proportion of the electorate that can be classified as "late deciders" in Costa Rica leaves little doubt about the relevance of campaigns in this country as decision-making periods, a phenomenon characteristic of dealigning democracies.

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[102] McAllister 2002.
[103] McAllister 2002, pp. 30-31.
[104] McAllister 2002.

Table 6.4. Timing of Vote Decision in Elections in Australia, Britain, the United States and Costa Rica

| Vote Decision Timing | Australia (1998) | Britain (1997) | United States (2000) | Costa Rica (2002) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-Campaign** | 58% | 74% | 56% | 54% |
| **During Campaign** | 42% | 26% | 44% | 46% |
| ***Election Day*** | 11% | NA | 5% | 11% |
| **N** | 1,886 | 2,849 | 1,160 | 1,244 |

Sources: For Costa Rica, Unimer RI-La Nación, 3 de febrero 2002; for the other countries, McAllister 2002, p. 26.

4.3.3 Decreasing Levels of Vote Consistency

Finally, another result of electoral flux and a sign of dealignment in Costa Rica is a decline in the levels of vote consistency. Vote consistency means voting for the same party in subsequent elections.[105] Conversely to the case of the TCE index, polities where parties maintain strong party loyalties, normally have high percentages of vote consistency. When party identification erodes, the voter-party links relax, and vote consistency tends to decrease. Vote consistency figures can be attained by asking individual voters for the party(ies) they have voted for in a number of elections. Consistency evidence is obvious after studying the subjects' voting history. Normally this is done by following the voting history of specific individuals in panel studies. However, no panel studies evaluating political behaviour in Costa Rica are available.

The best proxy measure of vote consistency in the country has been done by a joint effort that involved the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, the Instituto de Investigaciones Psicológicas and the Escuela de Estadística, all of them part of the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR). These academic institutions designed a survey that asked citizens to name the presidential candidate that they voted for in the last

[105] A much common measurement normally used as partisan dealignment circumstantial evidence is vote switching, or the percentage of voters that change parties from one election to the next. One expects vote switching to rise during a partisan dealignment process. Subtracting the presented vote consistency percentages from 100 per cent provides a good proxy measure of vote switching in Costa Rica. However, this proxy measure does not differentiate between the percentage of citizens switching parties, and those that simply decided to abstain instead of voting for their "old" party. Thus, the more exact vote consistency measurement was the one used in this project.

four elections. Given that it also asked for the subject's party identification, it is possible to evaluate vote consistency figures for the whole population as well as for those claiming to identify with a specific party. The survey was conducted on election day 2002 (3rd of February), before the official results were announced.

Compared to the standard panel study, this survey has two problems. First, figures obtained depend on the subject's memory. This is somehow countered by the fact that they asked for the presidential candidate, a character who is hard to forget given the media coverage he gets. And second, the answers regarding citizens' vote in previous elections may be influenced by their immediate vote decision.[106] Despite these problems, this survey's results allow us to have a general idea of vote consistency in Costa Rica.

Graph 6.11 illustrates the percentage of citizens that voted for the same presidential candidate in the last four elections. The graph shows the figures for the PLN and the PUSC, and considers the trends both of the general voters, and of the percentage of voters that claimed to identify with one of these parties. Again, the PLN seems to be experiencing an evident decline in the percentage of citizens that support its candidate in subsequent elections. This is also the case among those that claimed to identify with the party. The trend is not as obvious in the case of the PUSC. Even if the percentage of its identifiers that have subsequently voted for its presidential candidate is decreasing, no clear trend is depicted when all the citizens are contemplated.

As much as this may appear contradictory, these trends make sense after considering the evidence presented in the previous sections of this chapter. In the case of the PLN, an older party that used to have deeply entrenched partisan loyalties, a decline in the amount of identifiers that used to vote for the party's candidate results almost automatically in the reduction of the percentage of all the voters that used to do so. For the PUSC, a newer party whose loyalties are still developing, and that—as demonstrated—depends to a greater extent on its candidate's image, a decline in the

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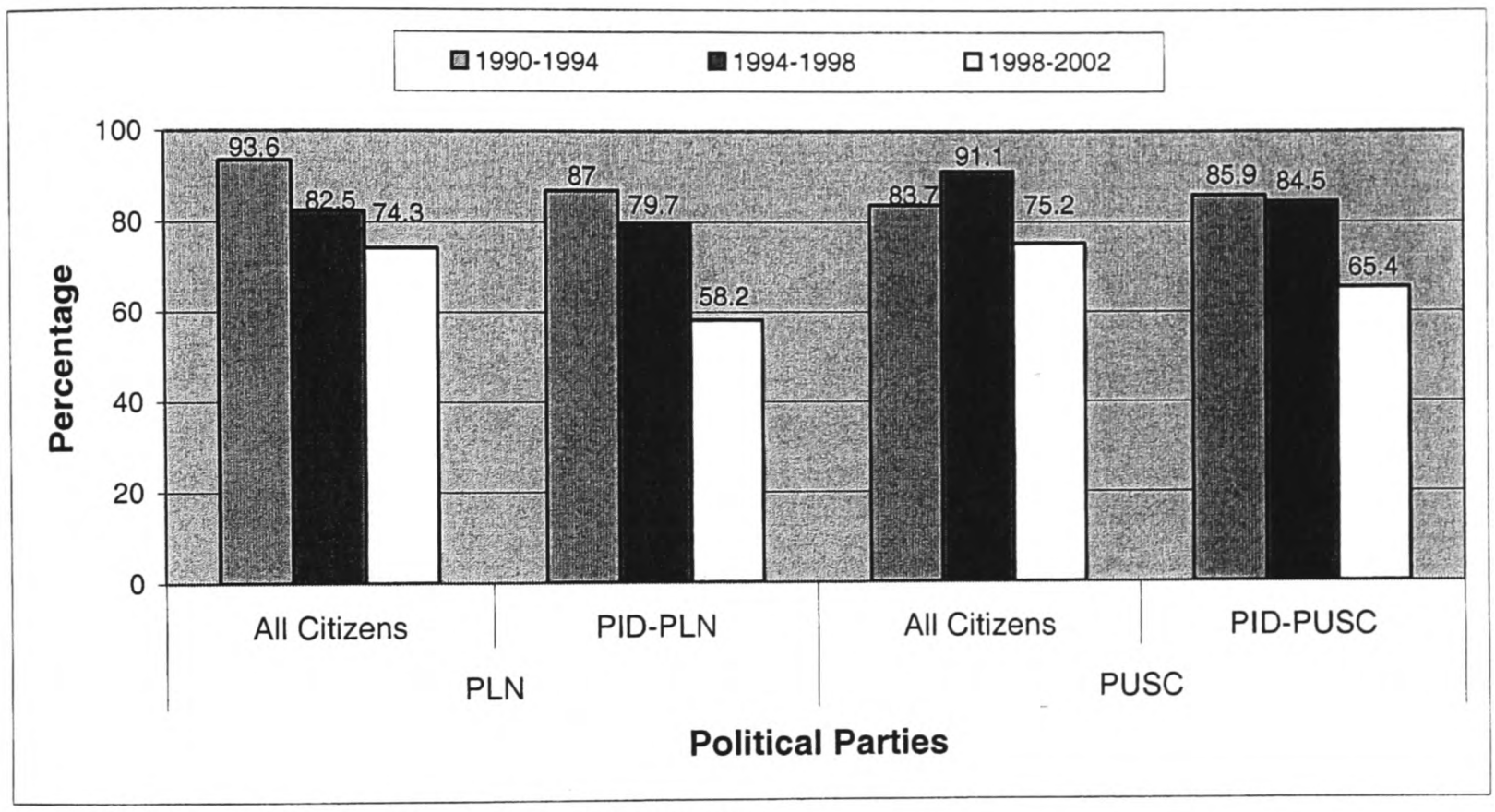
[106] Other institutions have made attempts to measure vote consistency in Costa Rica. However I did not find their results very useful as, on top of the problems the UCR survey has, these other surveys reported figures from different subjects in each election that was evaluated.

amount of identifiers that subsequently vote for their candidate does not necessarily imply a decline in the percentage of general voters that supports them. These figures are consistent with the data presented before, and back the conclusion regarding the existence of partisan dealignment in Costa Rica as a result of the weakening of the PLN supporters' loyalties.

Graph 6.11. Vote Consistency by Costa Rican Citizens and by PLN and PUSC Identifiers in Presidential Elections, 1990-2002




Source: Author's own estimations based on IIS 1982-2002.

## 5 Conclusions

It should be clear by now how the empirical data presented in Chapters 5 and 6, and the theoretical, historical, and institutional framework provided by Chapters 2, 3, and 4 combined to construct the central argument of this thesis. In general terms we have argued that the electoral change process observed in Costa Rica since the mid-1990s should be defined as dealignment. This general concept was subdivided into electoral and partisan dealignment, where the former is an expected outcome of the latter. The

most evident signal of dealignment in Costa Rican politics has been the progressive loss of electoral support by the main political parties, or electoral dealignment.[107] As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the main signs of electoral dealignment consisted of: an increase in absenteeism, the erosion of the electoral support for the country's two main parties—most evident in the case of the PLN—*vis à vis* "third parties" both in presidential and legislative elections, mounting figures of ticket splitting, and growing electoral volatility registers. All these changes were clear since the 1998 electoral process. Chapter 5 also provided preliminary evidence regarding partisan dealignment to be at the base of electoral dealignment in the country. This was done by demonstrating that electoral support for the main parties at the legislative level (again, especially in the case of the PLN), started to drop since 1994. And by showing that block volatility was the one responsible for the increase in total electoral volatility since 1998.

Having demonstrated the existence of electoral dealignment, the present chapter focused on elucidating what seemed to be its "hidden root:" partisan dealignment. This concept was defined as the "the weakening of affective, habitual and stable party loyalties among the electorate."[108] The veracity of the argument (partisan dealignment causing electoral dealignment) depended on satisfying two conditions. First, demonstrating the existence of partisan dealignment in Costa Rican politics. And second, showing that this process was evident before the 1998 elections. Both conditions were fulfilled. Six main conclusions can be drawn from Chapter 6.

First, as in the case of Western developed democracies, it seems that party identification—the concept—plays a central role in the study of electoral behaviour in Costa Rica. Second, the existing survey data is suitable to measure this concept in the local political scenario. Third, the proportion of Costa Rican citizens claiming to identify with a party (measured between 1978 and 2002) follows a descending trend since the mid-1980s. This trend has its most important drop between 1993 and 1996. As expected, the general party identification curve shows lower figures at the beginning and at the end of the time series. However, the average figures after 1995

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[107] Hagopian 1998, pp. 114-119.

are even lower than those before the formation of the two-party system, at the end of 1983. Indeed, the 1948 cleavage seems to be "unfreezing" and losing its bonding capacity. The behaviour of the party identification curve is indicative of a *secular* type of dealignment, defined as a long-term, incremental, and cumulative progressive weakening in party-voter bonds.[109] As demonstrated, the independents' curve follows an ascending trend in the period studied.

Fourth, at the party level, the PLN (dominant until 1994) is the only party whose partisan identification is showing evident signs of erosion. The PUSC basically maintains its support, and the independents are distinctly increasing in number. Thus, it is clear that the deterioration of the PLN's partisan loyalties is responsible for the decline in the country's general party identification curve. Moreover, it seems that ex-PLN identifiers are the ones "migrating" to the independents group. Fifth, since 1995, the local electoral market is divided into three political forces with similar strengths: the PLN identifiers, the PUSC identifiers, and the independents. And finally, sixth, the existence of circumstantial evidence of partisan dealignment (the growing relevance of specific campaign issues and events—primarily the candidate—when making electoral choices, rising levels of change in voting decisions during electoral campaigns, and decreasing levels of vote consistency), corroborate the previous statements. The main indicators of Costa Rica's dealignment process are depicted in Figure 6.1.

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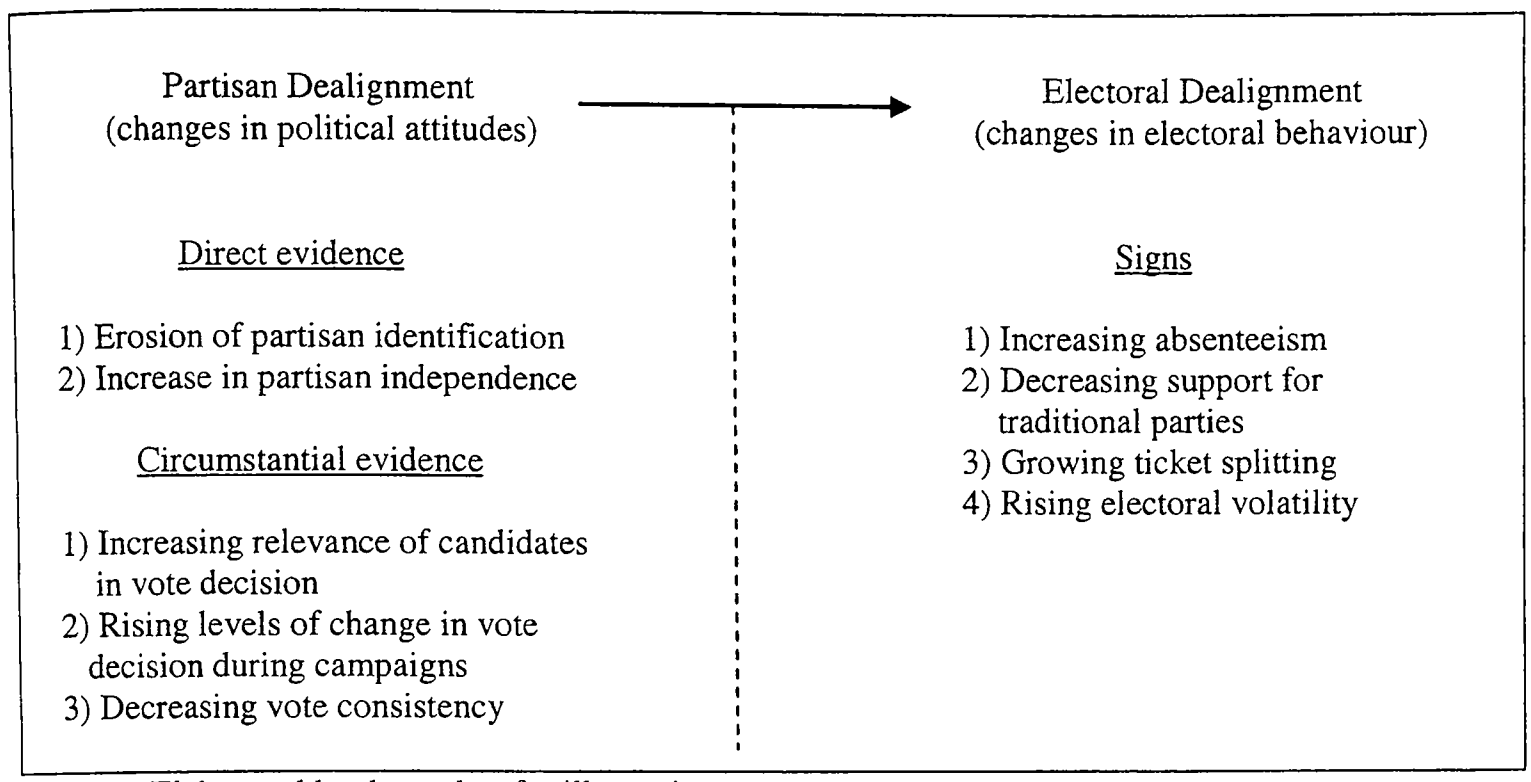
[108] Norris 1997, p. 86.

Figure 6.1. Indicators of Dealignment in Costa Rica




Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

The existence of decreasing partisan loyalties in the Costa Rican case also entails three interesting conclusions for the general theory of dealignment. Firstly, the present chapter has taught us that dealignment is not necessarily a Western phenomenon, it can and has happened in Latin America. Secondly, the fact that the erosion of partisan loyalties in Costa Rica is—until now—a party-specific experience also implies that dealignment processes are not necessarily broad, all-encompassing phenomena. The Costa Rican case confirms that they can be a result of the loss of support by one previously dominant party. This does not prevent us from classifying the electoral changes happening in Costa Rica as dealignment, as the losses of one party (the PLN) are not balanced by gains in the others. As a matter of fact, the other important party in the country—the PUSC—has managed (at least until the 2002 elections) only to sustain its historical support. Hence, as demonstrated, the general partisan identification trend in Costa Rica follows a downward pattern. In this regard, the presented case also finds parallels in Western nations. As acknowledged by Russell Dalton, dealignment cases basically resulting from the decline of one

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[109] Evans and Norris 1999c, pp. xxx-xxxi.

important party are not unusual in European countries, and should be regarded as part of the normal electoral give and take of democratic party systems.[110]

Thirdly, in direct relation to the previous point, the data presented in this chapter demonstrates that it is possible for a party to suffer the erosion of its historical loyalties without its opponents actually getting the defectors' backing. In other words, dealignment does not necessarily lead to realignment, even if one party declines whilst its most important opponent does not. This could very well be a result of the nature of Costa Rica's central cleavage.[111] It may be the case that cleavages of a political nature—predominant in Latin America[112]—characterised by armed confrontations (a civil war in the Costa Rican case), do not have the same resilience as social or religious cleavages, as loyalties are normally developed towards groups and leaders which eventually disband or die. However, it is precisely the dynamic of defining ones' partisan loyalty *in opposition to* another group and later party, which may stop disenchanted supporters of one party from actually "crossing the border" and joining those who more than political opponents were once "war enemies." Obviously this tends to erode as years go by and voters with direct or indirect connections to the war disappear.[113] Thus, the fact that realignment has not yet happened does not rule it out in the future. In any case, as we will see in the next chapter, it is clear—at least in Costa Rica—that party loyalties based on political cleavages do suffer when historical figures die and contending parties start to show important similarities in their policy commitments.

In conclusion, dealignment is an accurate way to describe the electoral change process taking place in Costa Rican politics. This process has clearly manifested since 1998 in the form of electoral dealignment. Following theory and the presented empirical evidence, partisan dealignment (specifically, the erosion of the PLN's partisan

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[110] The author specifically mentions the British case where, according to his data, partisan trends show Labour rising in the last decade and Conservatives in major decline. Nonetheless the general partisan identification trend is still down, as the gains of the former do not balance off the losses of the latter. I am grateful to Professor Dalton for his valuable insight on this point. Before the last decade though, dealignment in Britain was caused by a decline in both Conservative and the Labour identifiers. For details see, Crewe and Thomson 1999.

[111] For details see Chapter 3.

[112] Dix 1989

[113] This point is examined in Chapter 8.

loyalties), is at the base of the changes at the electoral level. Hence, not only is dealignment a coherent explanation for the Costa Rican case, but also, this Central American country can be included among the other—mostly Western—developed democracies undergoing similar electoral change processes.

# Part IV

## The Causes: Political and Sociological Explanations of Dealignment

# Chapter 7

## On the Supply Side: The Political Explanation of Dealignment

## 1 Introduction

The previous part of the thesis demonstrated that dealignment is an accurate way to describe the electoral change process happening in Costa Rica since the middle of the 1990s. Specifically, it was argued that partisan dealignment is at the base of electoral dealignment. Moreover, we presented evidence which showed that the erosion of long-standing party loyalties (partisan dealignment), is particularly affecting the country's oldest and, until the mid-1990s, strongest party: the PLN. This part (Chapters 7 and 8) will concentrate on explaining the causes of dealignment in Costa Rica, focusing on the case of this particular party.

As indicated in Chapter 2, explanations of partisan dealignment have tended to fall into two broad models: those emphasising sociological factors and those highlighting the political ones.[1] The first approach focuses on changes in the social composition and nature of the electorate—basically social mobility, rising levels of education, and growing availability of political information, especially amongst the younger generations. In other words, dealignment is regarded as a result of transformations in the "political demand:" the voter. The second one concentrates on the public's dissatisfaction with the performance of parties and, in general, with the democratic processes led by these institutions.[2] Hence, dealignment is considered a result of shortcomings in the "political supply:" political parties.[3] The former approach is normally used when undertaking cross-national comparative studies, while the latter is most common in nation specific analyses.[4]

In Chapter 2 we also explained that changes in partisan loyalties that occur as a result of socio-structural transformations tend to follow a gradual or glacial pattern, as social

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[1] In Chapter 2 we also talked about a third model named the "institutionalisation of partisan change." As discussed in that chapter, this approach is an explanation for cases in which stability prevails even though relevant factors for electoral change are present. After seeing the evidence of electoral transformations presented in the previous section, it is obvious that this model does not apply to Costa Rica's current situation.

[2] For two excellent analyses of the widespread decreasing satisfaction with democracy see, Pharr and Putnam 2000; Norris 1999a.

[3] I owe the economic metaphor used to describe both models to Rodrigo Cubero-Brealey.

[4] Dalton 2000, pp. 29-30.

changes usually do. On the other hand, changes in partisan identification caused by political factors normally present themselves in a rather swift and discontinuous manner, not necessarily showing a secular pattern. As illustrated in Graph 6.1 (Chapter 6), partisan identification in Costa Rica has followed a secular descending trend basically since the mid-1980s. However, this graph also demonstrates that the country's partisan loyalties present an abrupt decline between 1993 and 1996. Hence, the pattern followed by partisan identification in Costa Rica is not specific to a political or a sociological cause. Rather, as often happens in social science, it seems that the two of them may have some bearing on explaining the phenomenon.

Therefore, more than elucidating which of the two approaches provides a better explanation of dealignment (a task clearly out of reach for a case study),[5] this part of the thesis concentrates on evaluating whether these two broad models are suitable for explaining the erosion of partisan loyalties in Costa Rica. The present chapter focuses on the political explanation, while the next deals with the sociological one. Furthermore, and equally important, these two chapters will use the Costa Rican case to analyse the general trends as well as the country specific aspects of an electoral change process in a small Latin American country. This will allow for a thorough understanding of the recent transformations in Costa Rica's electoral panorama, while exploring this particular phenomenon in a Central American democracy whose peculiarities surely escape the broad approach of the Western-centred dealignment theory. As a result, and building on the existing explanations of dealignment, this part of the thesis aims to generate a coherent explanation for the electoral changes taking place in Costa Rica and, at the same time, test and complement the general propositions posited by dealignment's generalisations.

Specifically, the present chapter assesses what have been regarded as the PLN's major shortcomings and their effect on the decline of this party's support. First we concentrate on the Social Democrats' performance in government and look at factors such as: ideological convergence with the PUSC, poor economic results, corruption scandals, controversial decisions, unfulfilled promises, and the governing style of its

presidents. Then we analyse the PLN's main institutional weaknesses, which may also account for its decline. Among them one finds: the demise of leadership after the death of its central founding members, the pre-eminence of internal electoral disputes once the party decided to select its candidates in open primaries, and the growing distance between the party and the officials running its last two governments. These factors will be studied in the context of two global trends in party politics: parties' widespread functional weaknesses, and social democracy's general transformations.

Based on survey data and, especially, on elite interviews, the present chapter consists of four general parts. In the first place, an introduction poses the objectives of the section and the chapter. In the second place, a general discussion of the political explanation and its relation to other global trends in party politics is presented. Afterwards, a longer third section deals with the PLN's shortcomings and conflicts both in government and as an institution. Finally, the chapter ends with a set of final observations.

## 2 The Political Explanation

Before studying the PLN's problems in detail, it is important to take a closer look at the political explanation of dealignment. Defined by Evans, Heath and Payne (when analysing the British case) as a "top-down approach,"[6] the political explanation argues that the erosion of partisan loyalties is essentially caused by parties' failures in government, and by their internal contradictions and their inability to accomplish their central roles in society. The spirit of this explanation was well captured by Schmitt and Holmberg when they claimed that party identification lies in the hands of political parties, more than in socio-structural changes.[7] However, especially in the case of Costa Rica, this explanation needs to be understood in the context of two broader phenomena: the widespread discontent with political parties, and the general changes within social democracy.

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[5] For different studies (with contrasting conclusions) dealing with this debate see, Dalton 2000, pp. 29-36.; Dalton 1984a; Zelle 1995; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Norris forthcoming. Chap. 6.
[6] Evans et al. 1999, pp. 87-89.
[7] Schmitt and Holmberg 1995. p. 123.

## *2.1 Widespread Discontent with Political Parties*

### 2.1.1 The General Argument

Even though analysts have not agreed on a way to characterise party change ("in crisis," "declining," "adapting," etc.),[8] almost all accept that change is ocurring.[9] Moreover, it is quite clear that citizens are not satisfied with these changes, as bitter criticisms against parties are a widespread pattern throughout the democratic world.[10] In general terms, much discontent with parties appears to stem from their failure to perform their intended roles in the democratic process.[11] Indeed, political parties seem to be experiencing functional weaknesses or, in the harsher terms of Gomáriz-Moraga, a functional crisis.[12]

Anthony King pointed out the existence of this phenomenon in Western democracies long ago.[13] More recently, comprehensive analyses by Lawson and Merkl, and by Dalton and Wattenberg have warned of the implications of parties failing to fulfil their functions.[14] In the case of Latin America, this—quite popular—position is well summarised by Cuellar and Cordero who claim that there is an evident trend in democracies throughout the region towards the deterioration of political parties as vehicles of political representation, mediation, and interest integration.[15] In a similar

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[8] For different interpretations see, Webb et al. 2002; Gunther et al. 2002; Gomáriz-Moraga 2001; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Ware 1987b; Mair 1997; Katz and Mair 1995; von Beyme 23 June 2001; Perelli et al. 1995.

[9] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000c, p. 4.

[10] Daalder 2002; Linz 2002.

[11] Lawson and Merkl 1988. Following V.O. Key's framework, parties traditionally perform roles in three different settings. First in the electorate (simplifying choices for voters, educating citizens, generating symbols of identification and loyalty, and mobilising people to participate in political activities), second as organisations (recruiting political leadership and seeking governmental office, training political elites, and articulating and aggregating political interests), and third in government (creating majorities in government, organising the government, implementing policy objectives, organising dissent and opposition, ensuring responsibility for government actions, controlling government administration, and fostering stability in government). Dalton and Wattenberg 2000c, pp. 5-10, citing Key 1964.

[12] Gomáriz-Moraga 2001, p. 17.

[13] King 1969.

[14] Lawson and Merkl 1988; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000a.

[15] Cuellar and Cordero 1999, p. 7. Different versions of the same argument can be found in, Domínguez and Giraldo 1996; Rojas-Bolaños 1996; Rodríguez diciembre 1994; Núñez enero-junio 1998; Jackish enero-junio 1998; ASIES 1998; Cuellar and Peralta 2000; Borge 11 March 2002; Torres-Rivas 31 July 2002; *La Nación* 21 de febrero 1998; *La Nación* 17 de setiembre 2000; *La Nación* 25 de agosto 2000; *La Nación* 26 de junio 2000; *La Nación* 27 de mayo 2000.

vein, Pedro Nikken has argued that "political representation exercised by parties has lost its legitimacy."[16] Furthermore, apart from having "divorced" voters,[17] discontent with parties would also have been prompted by their abandonment of major ideological commitments[18] (a criticism especially salient in the case of social democratic parties), and by their inability to carry out most of their campaign promises and solve the countries' major problems while in office—parties are not delivering.[19] In terms of the electoral link, changes in electoral behaviour are regarded as a consequence of the public's disenchantment with political parties, and is due to the progressive deterioration of their ability to represent the public's interests and fulfil their aspirations when in government.[20]

However, political parties have not abandoned all their roles. In elections they are more active than ever, and this seems to be another problem. Analysts arguing for parties' functional decline indicate that, as a result of neglecting most of their other central roles in society, many parties end up operating just as self-referential entities whose primary goal is to win elections.[21] Following Angelo Panebianco, they are working as electoral-professional parties.[22] In the words of Scarrow, Webb and Farrell:

> "In place of its traditional role as an agent of social and political integration, the modern political party came to be regarded as a highly professional machine motivated primarily by the desire for electoral success."[23]

The preponderance of their electoral function has driven parties into what Farrell and Webb call "the permanent campaign;"[24] and to their description as merely "electoral machines."[25]

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[16] Nikken 1992, p. 16.
[17] Rojas-Bolaños 23 March 2001.
[18] de Paula-Gutiérrez 14 March 2001; Ordóñez 7 February 2002; Penón 15 March 2002; Cañas 13 March 2002; Solís 7 June 2002.
[19] Rodríguez 4 April 2001; Wilson 1998; Cerdas-Cruz 2 April 2001; *La Nación* 10 de diciembre 2001; *La Nación* 28 de noviembre 2000.
[20] Rodríguez and Castro-Méndez 1999.
[21] Cerdas-Cruz 1993.
[22] Panebianco 1988, pp. 264-267.
[23] Scarrow et al. 2000, p. 129.
[24] Farrell and Webb 2000, p 106.

Showing a classic "catch-all" conduct,[26] this intensified "electoralism" has led many parties to policy convergence, as they tend to pursue the median voter in order to enhance their victory chances.[27] In fact, equipped with numerous professional campaigners, it is now common for these institutions to shape their policies to the market place, based on polling data.[28] Substantive ideological differences between parties have blurred, making it harder for voters to differentiate parties on a policy basis. Hence, as illustrated in Chapter 6 for the case of Costa Rica, short-term reasons to vote—especially "the candidate"—are generally growing in relevance.[29] This phenomenon, in turn, elevates the importance of electoral campaigns, as it is during these political activities when candidates and their particular positions are widely publicised.

Furthermore, and reinforcing the illustrated pattern, the growing relevance of telecommunications and mass media in politics, has produced a general transformation in campaign management.[30] This change is especially noticeable in two central aspects. First, in the transformation of campaigns from party-activist organised, "labour intensive" activities focused on mass mobilisation, to "capital intensive," professionally managed enterprises concentrated on political marketing. And second, in the shifting emphasis from the party and its general manifesto, to the candidate's image and a more malleable, consumer oriented and targeted campaign message (what is known as "narrowcasting").[31] Hence, instead of groups interested in representing citizens, parties have transformed into—or at least are regarded as—permanent professional campaigners.

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[25] Rojas-Bolaños 1998, pp. 117-121.; Gomáriz-Moraga 2001, p. 11.; Sojo 14 March 2001; Solís 23 March 2001; Cerdas-Cruz 20 February 2002; *La Nación* 9 de diciembre 2001; *La Nación* 16 de diciembre 2001.

[26] Kirchheimer 1966.

[27] Downs 1957.

[28] Farrell and Webb 2000, pp. 122-123.

[29] For further details see, McAllister 1996.

[30] For different analyses of the effects of the media on politics see, Norris 2002; Norris 2000a; Norris 2000b; Davis 1994; Semetko 1996; Swanson and Mancini 1996; Smith 1981; Godoy-Etcheverry enero-junio 1998; Blumler and McQuail 2001; Zaller 2001.

[31] Farrell and Webb 2000. The professionalisation of electoral campaigns has received considerable scholarly attention. See for example, O'Shaughnessy 1990; Butler and Ranney 1992; Bowler and Farrell 1992; Field 1994; Kavanagh 1995; Scammell 1995; Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1996; Newman 1999; Pandiani-Martínez 2000; Plasser 2000; Priess 2000.

By prioritising their electoral function political parties seem to have neglected not only their social representativeness, but also other crucial roles such as recruiting and training their members, let alone having institutional encounters dedicated to debate and analysis.[32] These problems increase with the trend towards the democratisation of parties' internal selection processes,[33] and, in particular, the use of primaries in the choice of leaders. This is so, not only because they increase the time dedicated to electoral activities, but also because of the exacerbation of intra-party conflict, increased factionalism, loss of cohesion, and abandonment of central functions that follows from this type of process.[34]

With such weaknesses in the execution of many of their central social roles, citizens end up perceiving parties as entities composed of conflicting individuals whose central and, in many cases, only aim is the "selfish" struggle for power.[35] Obviously, such institutions and their members are unlikely to attain high public regard. Following the political explanation of dealignment, the combination of all these factors has prompted the loss of citizens' esteem for political parties in most of the democratic world, resulting in the decline of followers' loyalties and electoral support.[36]

It is worth noting that criticisms against parties are normally followed by a set of standard "antidotes." The most popular one is probably voiced by analysts that champion political participation.[37] They urge the restoration of the links between parties and the people mainly through reforms in the electoral system,[38] and consistently mention the growing importance of what Lawson and Merkl called

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[32] Carballo 1992; Carballo 22 March 2002; Cañas 13 March 2002; Zamora 10 April 2002.
[33] Hazan 2002, pp. 117-125.; Mair 1997, pp. 148-150.; Scarrow et al. 2000; Bille 2001; LeDuc 2001; Blake and Carty 1999; Alcántara and Freidenberg 2001; Alcántara and Espíndola March and April 2003.
[34] Hazan 2002, pp. 119-121.; Linz 2002, p. 298.; Patterson 1994.
[35] Linz 2002, p. 297.
[36] Zelle 1995; Lawson and Merkl 1988; IADB 2000, p. 181.
[37] Sojo 14 March 2001; Sojo 25 June 2002. Michael Rush broadly defines political participation as, "the involvement of individuals at various levels of activity in the political system, ranging from non-involvement to the holding of political office." Rush 1992, p. 110. For another good conceptual analysis of political participation see, Pasquino 1994.
[38] See for example, *La Nación* 5 de noviembre 2000; *La Nación* 19 de enero 2001; *La Nación* 6 de marzo 2001.

"alternative organisations"[39] (social or communal organisations, pressure groups, Non Governmental Organisations [NGOs], the media, etc.) which may be "taking over" some of political parties' traditional functions.[40] All in all, their central claim—and the problem they are trying to solve—is still the "electoral machine argument" or, in other words, that parties are failing to properly fulfil their central social roles, as they are concentrating primarily on their electoral activities.

### 2.1.2 The Data

As indicated above, discontent with political parties is a widespread phenomenon. Based on the 1995-1998 World Values Surveys, Dalton and Wattenberg have showed that when citizens of eight OECD countries were asked to rate their confidence in different institutions, political parties came last with 22 per cent.[41] A 2002 poll by Eurobarometer reported similar results. With an average 18 per cent, parties were the least trusted institutions among citizens of the fifteen European Union (EU) states.[42] Citizens in post-Communist countries were even more drastic in their evaluations of political parties. Working with 2001 New Europe Barometer and New Russia Barometer data, Richard Rose has reported that, on average, in ten Central and East European countries trust in political parties is only 12 per cent. The corresponding figure for Russia is even lower: 7 per cent.[43]

Africans also seem to have low levels of confidence in their political parties. Based on data from twelve countries provided by Afrobarometer, Logan and Machado

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[39] Lawson and Merkl 1988.
[40] Ulibarri 5 April 2001; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002; Araya-Monge 6 March 2002; Araya 19 March 2002. For similar arguments in industrialised countries see, Zelle 1995; Dalton and Kuechler 1990. For an alternative view see, Yanai 1999.
[41] The other institutions rated were: the police, the armed forces, the legal system, the ecological movement, the United Nations, companies, churches, the civil service, women's movement, unions, the national government, the parliament, the European Union, and the press. Dalton and Wattenberg 2000b, p. 265.
[42] The other institutions evaluated were: the civil service, the government, the parliament, the legal system, the police, the army, religious institutions, trade unions, big companies, the United Nations, NGOs, charitable or voluntary organisations, the press, radio, and TV. Eurobarometer Spring 2002. For the countries assessed see Graph 7.1.
[43] The other institutions evaluated were: the parliament, the courts, and the police. Rose 2002, p. 13, Table 3. For the countries studied see Graph 7.1.

revealed that, on average, 85 per cent of Africans claim that they never contact any government or party official when they have personal or communal demands.[44] Moreover, Putnam and colleagues have presented evidence of a decline in confidence in politicians in twelve out of thirteen industrialised countries.[45] Other recent comparative studies have also reported the public diminishing trust and eroding support for democracy's representative institutions, most notably political parties.[46]

Likewise, a parallel trend can be found throughout Latin America.[47] Matching the World Values Surveys and the Eurobarometer results, data presented by Latinobarómetro in 2002 showed that when confidence in political parties was compared with trust in other institutions, it registered the lowest figure: 20 per cent.[48] Moreover, when compared with the 1997 results, by 2002 confidence in political parties had dropped in all seventeen countries studied, registering, on average, a decline of 14 points in the region.[49] Even if the time span (six years) is not enough as to escape the influence of conjunctural events in each nation, the pattern is still striking.

As expected, data at the country level corroborates the pattern. Graph 7.1 presents the level of trust in political parties in the seventeen countries assessed by Latinobarómetro, the fifteen EU members studied by Eurobarometer, and the eleven post-Communist nations evaluated by New Europe and New Russia Barometers. Two central conclusions can be drawn from this graph. First, in thirty-nine of the forty-three countries studied, a quarter or less of the population trusts political parties. Moreover, in fourteen countries (a third of the total) trust in political parties was below 10 per cent. This widespread low level of trust is quite detrimental for institutions that are supposed to be the main link between society and the state.

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[44] The countries assessed were: Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Logan and Machado March 2002, p 53, Table 5-4.
[45] The countries where confidence in politicians is declining are: Austria, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. Only the Netherlands registered an opposite trend. Putnam et al. 2000, pp. 14-15.
[46] See for example, Norris 1999a; Nye et al. 1997; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Torcal et al. 2002. For a discussion on the concept of political confidence see, Hardin 2000.
[47] Rial and Zovatto 1998; Colburn and Sánchez 2001, Chap. 6.
[48] The other institutions evaluated were: the church, the armed forces, the presidency, the police, the judiciary, and the congress. Latinobarómetro 2002. For the countries studied see Graph 7.1.

Second, the average trust in political parties in the forty-three countries analysed is 16 per cent. Of the seventeen countries that have levels above the average, eleven are EU members; and out of the twenty-two that register levels below the average, nineteen are either Latin American or post-Communist nations.[50] It seems that democratic stability, which is stronger in the EU members assessed, has an influence on the way citizens feel about their parties. Endowed with one of the most stable democracies and one of the better-institutionalised party systems in the region,[51] Costa Rica—along with Uruguay—show levels of trust in parties that are closer to the EU countries than to most of its Latin American counterparts. In fact, the level of trust in political parties in Costa Rica (24 per cent) is the same as in Spain or Ireland. This further validates our analysis of the Costa Rican case using general theoretical approaches, in many cases conceived after assessing advanced democracies, rather than narrow Latin American-oriented frameworks.

All in all, these studies support Gutemberg Martínez's assertion regarding low levels of public confidence as the central symptom of the actual "crisis" of political parties.[52] Indeed, the presented data shows that even if generally used to elucidate nation-specific cases, the political explanation of dealignment may also be applicable to explain general processes.

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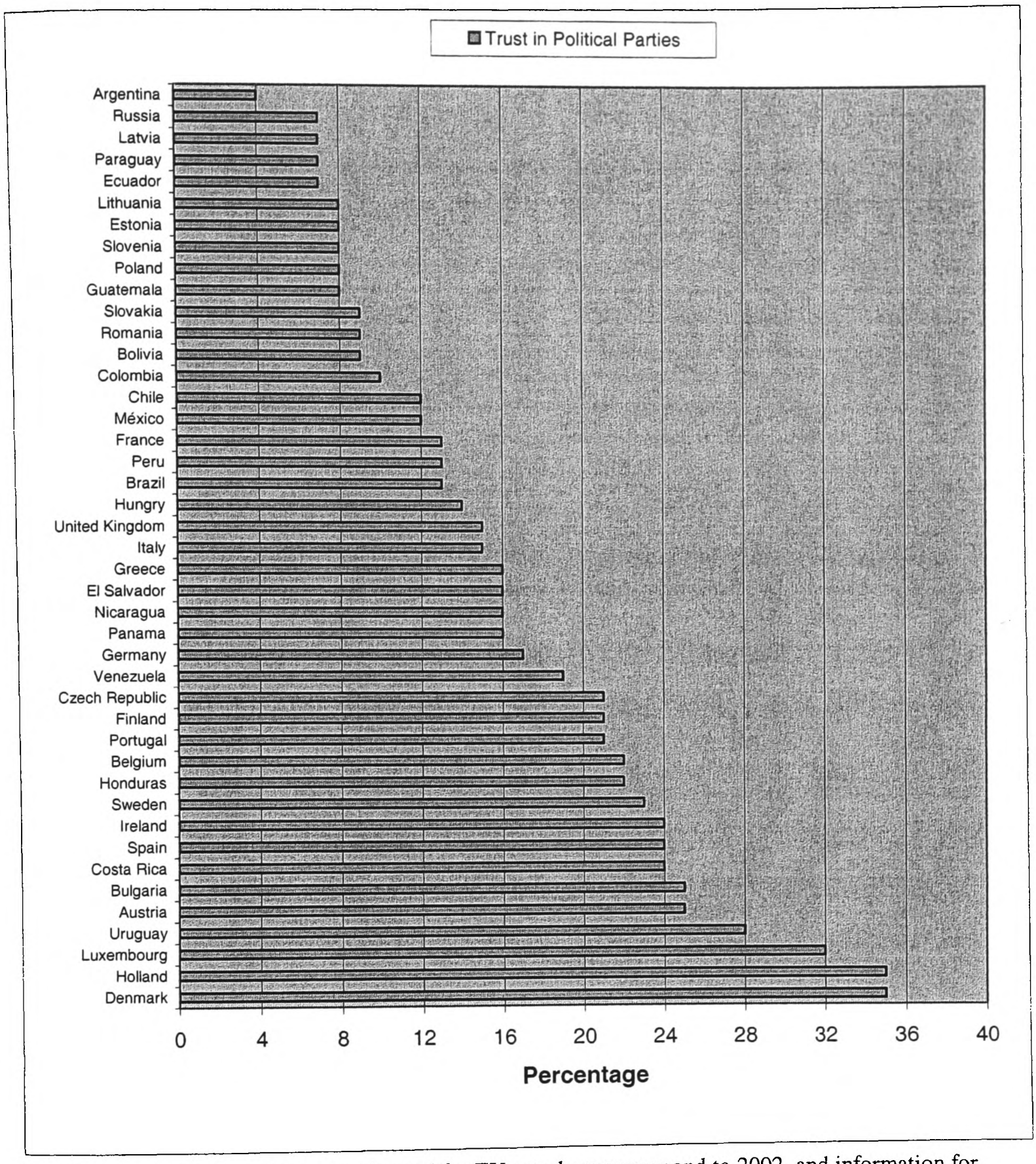
[49] Latinobarómetro 1996-1997; Latinobarómetro 2002.
[50] In the remaining four countries (Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Greece) trust in political parties is the same as the general average: 16 per cent.
[51] Mainwaring and Scully 1995b.
[52] Martínez enero-marzo 2000, p. 8.

Graph 7.1. Trust in Political Parties in EU, Latin American, and Post-Communist Countries, 2001/2




Note: Data for Latin American countries and for EU members correspond to 2002, and information for post-Communist nations to 2001.
Sources: Latinobarómetro 2002; Eurobarometer Spring 2002; Rose 2002, p. 13, Table 3.

Concentrating on the Costa Rican case, data from different sources have demonstrated that citizens are not satisfied with their parties. For example in 1997, 84 per cent of the "*ticos*" believed that politicians cared very little about their problems, 72 per cent

considered that parties were not able to solve the problems of their communities, and 32 per cent did not feel properly represented by any of the existing political parties.[53] Public opinion studies keep on illustrating this tendency. A 2000 poll by Unimer RI-La Nación revealed that almost 50 per cent of the population believed that politicians and their political parties are the main cause of the country's problems.[54] Moreover, a survey study conducted prior to the 2002 elections showed that 44.3 per cent of Costa Ricans think that parties do not defend their interests and aspirations. As a result, more than half of them express a negative opinion of politicians.[55] In a related vein but taking a broader approach, Mitchell Seligson has identified a secular decline in Costa Ricans' support for the political system as a whole.[56] The widespread dissatisfaction with political parties has even been described by some commentators as the "weakest link in Costa Rica's democracy."[57]

Following these figures, it is not surprising that the general debate regarding parties' paradoxes and their apparent decline has also been replicated in Costa Rica.[58] Indeed, a heated debate had taken place among analysts diagnosing or predicting a crisis of local political parties—and even of the party system—and those rejecting or qualifying this proposition.[59] After the evidence presented in the previous section, and the one that will be discussed in the rest of the chapter, it seems that, at least in the case of the PLN, those voicing the former were right.

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[53] Barómetro Centroamericano 1997; Rodríguez et al. 1998.
[54] Unimer RI-La Nación, mayo 2000; *La Nación* 26 de junio 2000.
[55] Rodríguez et al. abril 2002, Cuadros 7 and 9.
[56] Seligson 2001b; Seligson 2002.
[57] Zovatto 2 April 2001; Paniagua 20 March 2001. Forrest Colburn argues that this is a generalised phenomenon in Latin American democracies. Colburn 1998.
[58] For two excellent accounts of this general debate see, Daalder 2002; Linz 2002.
[59] For examples of the crisis argument see, Cerdas-Cruz 1993; Cerdas-Cruz 1992b; Cerdas-Cruz 1995; Cerdas-Cruz 2 April 2001; Vega-Carballo 1978; Gutierrez-Dermissien 1985. For examples of authors opposing this thesis see, Bendel 1994; Rovira-Mas 1993; Rovira-Mas 1994a; Rovira-Mas 1994b. For further details regarding the prospects of a party system change in Costa Rica see, Chapter 4. A cogent account assessing the scholarly debate about the general crisis in representative democracies has been presented by, Fuchs and Klingemann 1995, pp. 5-10.

*2.2 General Changes of Social Democracy*

The political explanation needs to be understood in the context of two general patterns. The first one is the widespread discontent with parties and, as a central part of it, the second one is the dilemmas and general transformations of social democratic political movements. The latter phenomenon is especially relevant for the present study, as it is the PLN (a social democratic party by Latin American standards[60]) the one suffering the decline of its partisan loyalties and electoral support in Costa Rica.

The previous section discussed how, in their pursuit of the median—more numerous—electorate, many parties have switched from presenting voters with distinct, clear programmes, to marketing a set of vague, standard policies. These policies normally respond more to the advice of professional pollsters and campaign strategists, than to the parties' alleged ideological credo. As a result, voters are having a hard time distinguishing between parties on a policy basis, causing, among other things, the intensification of candidate-centred campaigns, and the attenuation—according to Schmitt and Holmberg—of partisan identification.[61]

Probably the most common criticism to parties' policy convergence is the conclusion that, notwithstanding their ideological label, "all parties are the same."[62] In Dalton and Wattenberg words:

> "[T]he left and right profiles of the major parties have tended to converge over time in most nations...This is consistent with the notion that the ideological and political groundings of political parties have weakened as many parties...have adopted vote maximizing strategies that have led towards centrist politics."[63]

This process moved *The Economist* to describe parties as "empty vessels,"[64] and guided several analysts to talk about the "deideologisation" of these political

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[60] The main differences between the PLN's ideological position and the "classic" notion of social democracy are discussed in the coming section.
[61] Schmitt and Holmberg 1995, pp. 122-123.
[62] Linz 2002, p. 299.; Núñez enero-junio 1998, p. 160.; Gomáriz-Moraga 2001, p. 23.
[63] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000b, p. 271. For studies qualifying or countering this argument see, Farrell and Webb 2000, p. 124.; Budge 1996.
[64] *The Economist* 24 July 1999.

institutions.[65] This general criticism is especially bitter in the case of social democratic parties.

Few political parties have received as much scholarly attention as the social democratic ones. This is due not only to their dominance after the Second World War, but also because of the dilemmas and transformations they have endured from the 1970s onwards.[66] For the purposes of this thesis, social democracy's transformations are relevant in so far as they allow for a better understanding of the widespread discontent with political parties and, especially, of the PLN's declining support. Hence, more than attempting an in-depth assessment of this ideology's historical development or of the transformation of specific parties,[67] I will concentrate on the general changes which may help to elucidate the transformation processes.

According to Stuart Thomson, talking about a "classic social democracy" may be misleading, given the heterogeneity of social democratic movements. However, this same author has pointed out that using this general concept provides a useful framework when analysing transformations in parties of the same "type."[68] Following Thomson, the traditional or classic social democratic model can be defined in terms of its values: mainly its commitment to equality, social justice, and social welfare. To achieve these goals, social democrats used to rely primarily on active state policies, redistributing funds via a welfare system, and taxation. Moreover, state intervention also played a central role on the economic side to prevent uneven development.[69]

Social democracy allows for the reform of Capitalism. It stands, according to Andrew Heywood, "for a balance between the market and the state."[70] Therefore, Keynesian methods were used to ensure full employment, sustained economic growth, and high wages. Finally, as a response to economic difficulties, many social democratic parties

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[65] Cerdas-Cruz 1992b, p. 85.; Cerdas-Cruz 1995, p. 22.; Steichen 1992, p. 273.; Rojas-Bolaños 1998, p. 120.; Ordóñez 7 February 2002.
[66] See for example, Przeworski 1985; Kitschelt 1994; Glyn 2001; Martell and Van der Anker 2001.
[67] For general analyses see, Thomson 2000; Callaghan 2000; Kitschelt 1999. For an interesting assessment of different social democratic parties see, Bell and Shaw 1994b. For accounts on social democracy's historical development see, Shaw 1999, pp. 1-4.; Berman 1998.
[68] Thomson 2000, pp. 7, 19.
[69] Thomson 1996, p. 1.
[70] Heywood 2000, p. 74.

followed corporatist arrangements, especially those with strong trade unions links.[71] All these were important ideological commitments, in a post-war political scenario where marked differences existed between parties on matters of policy.[72]

However, as posited by Luke Martell, "from the 1970s onwards these ideological and policy features have taken a battering."[73] From then on, new forms of competition based on international competitiveness underpinned by economic globalisation and neoliberal ideas, have ended the former "social democratic friendly," economic system. This system, following Thomson, was based on a country-based, "full time, male employment in industrial communities, with national governments employing the economic levers at their disposal."[74] Moreover, during this same decade, Keynesianism was associated with macro-economic failures. This provided social democratic parties with the electorally damaging image of economic incompetence.[75] Therefore, since the 1970s, and especially once in the 1980s, the new global economic environment has been based on a neoliberal view of the world, with free markets at the forefront of development, and expanded, interventionist states regarded as a liability for progress.[76]

Driven mainly by the changing economic panorama,[77] and after the failure of Keynesian policies (which combined effective governance of the economy with the expansion of the welfare state), social democratic parties needed a new way of compounding economic prosperity and social justice. This was central to the success of their vote-seeking efforts.[78] The answer was not to be awaited. What Luke Martell defines as "neoliberal acquiescence," has been the most popular road taken by modernising social democracy in its pursue of a renovated project, more appealing to

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[71] Thomson 1996, p. 1. For different definitions and aims of classic social democracy see, Paterson and Thomas 1986, p. 3.; Gray 1996, p. 25.; Thomson 2000, pp. 8-10.
[72] Martell 2001, p. 2.
[73] Martell 2001, p. 2.
[74] Thomson 1996, pp. 22-23.
[75] Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen 2002, p. 508.
[76] Thomson 1996, p. 3.; Thomson 2000, p. 23.
[77] After providing different economic, political, sociological, and institutional explanations for the decline of social democracy, Thomson has concluded that changes in the economy are the "driving force" behind the phenomenon. Thomson 2000, Chap. 2.
[78] Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen 2002, p. 508.

the median voter.[79] This approach, equated to Giddens' "Third Way,"[80] and having British New Labour as the best example,[81] basically consists of a macro-economic policy designed to reduce obstacles to the competitiveness of domestic capital, and to attract investment and deter capital from leaving the country. Specifically it may include low business taxes, labour market flexibility, macro-economic stability, an emphasis on fiscal prudency, and restrictions on public spending and business regulations.[82] All this must be achieved without losing social democracy's traditional concern with social and economic equity.

In fact, according to Martell, many social democratic parties are currently discussing and implementing privatisations, welfare reforms, cuts in business regulations and taxes, more flexible labour markets, low inflation and macro-economic stability, and supply-side policies, alongside their normal concerns for social inclusion and minimum social standards.[83] In the words of Stuart Thomson, "social democrats who have achieved or stayed in power, have done so by becoming progressively less social democratic."[84] As we will see later, this applies to the PLN's governments since the mid-1980s.

In any case, and without getting into the debate regarding the benefits or the unavoidability of these policy changes, social democrats' neoliberal acquiescence has had two central implications. First, as indicated, it had led to policy convergence between social democratic parties and parties of the centre-right, replacing—particularly since the 1980s—the social democratic model of the post-war period with a neoliberal consensus.[85] And second, it had undermined some of social democracy's fundamental pillars such as: the role of redistribution, equality, taxation, and trade unions. Most importantly, it had called into question and even advocated the

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[79] Other social democratic responses mentioned by Martell include: continued nation-state interventionism, and what he regards as "globalist social democracy." Martell 2001, pp. 7-15.
[80] Giddens 1998.
[81] For the ideas behind New Labour's changes see, Blair and Schröeder 1999.
[82] Martell 2001, p. 7.
[83] Martell 2001, p. 5.
[84] Thomson 1996, p. 8.
[85] Martell 2001, p. 7.

retrenchment of the welfare state.[86] Regardless of the electoral gains that some parties have obtained from these changes,[87] once in government they entailed expenditures and personnel cuts. Such policies are certainly costly for a social democratic movement.[88] As a result, social democratic parties are finding it quite hard to keep their supporters satisfied.[89] And, at same time, they encounter serious complications differentiating themselves from other parties, even risking an "identity crisis."

Both the widespread discontent with political parties and the transformations and "identity dilemmas" of social democracy, are general processes that should be considered in order to contextualise and understand the PLN's actual crisis. However, and not withstanding these global patterns, the diversity of parties and the specifics of each country's political dynamics require a detailed individual analysis to uncover the causes of dealignment. Therefore, it is essential to take a closer look at the PLN's particular contradictions and problems in Costa Rica.

## 3 The Crisis of the PLN

In January 2003, a survey by Unimer RI-La Nación, provided a general assessment of Costa Rica's main political parties after the 2002 elections: the PLN, the PUSC, and the PAC.[90] When the public were asked to evaluate how well they perform their central functions,[91] on average, the PUSC scored 24 per cent, the PAC 13.2 per cent, and the PLN only 11.9 per cent. Similarly, when questioned about the party having more problems or failures,[92] citizens again criticised the PLN. On average, this party

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[86] Bell and Shaw 1994a, p. 174. For general analyses of the changes experienced by the welfare state see, Pierson 1991; Pierson and Castles 2000; Isuani et al. 1991.

[87] Conspicuously, Blair's New Labour in Britain, and Schröeder's Social Democratic Party in Germany.

[88] Thomson 1996, p. 24.

[89] See for example, Bloomberg 18 December 2002; *The Economist* 6 February 2003.

[90] It should be said that PAC's evaluation is positively affected by it being a new party, with no experience running the executive and no major chances to disappoint the electorate.

[91] The functions assessed were: ability to negotiate with other parties, having clear plans and objectives, ability to negotiate with other social sectors, integrates and fulfils society's main demands, nominates the most competent candidates, has teams analysing the country's problems, incorporates its followers in party activities, promotes ethics in the public sector, and knows the country's reality and its main problems.

[92] The problems or failures evaluated were: the party is managed by people interested just in sustaining their power, leaders impose candidates, the party is just an electoral machine, it is antiquated, it is not

was the worst evaluated with 21.6 per cent, followed by the PUSC with 10.8 per cent, and by the newly-formed PAC with 3.3 per cent.[93] Certainly, Costa Rica's oldest party seems to have lost the public's esteem.

PLN followers are well aware of their party's problems. A 2002 survey conducted amongst PLN members and supporters revealed that a striking 97.3 per cent think that their party is in crisis. Moreover, 55.8 per cent of *liberacionistas* believe that "the PLN's life is in danger," and almost all of them (98.1 per cent) are worried about the current situation of the party.[94] The evidence of this study confirms that PLN members have reason to be concerned. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, this party has been suffering the erosion of its partisan loyalties since the mid-1990s. This process has translated into the decline of its electoral support since the 1998 elections onwards. The present section analyses the main political transformations and internal conflicts, which may have prompted PLN's party identification decline. In the first part, it studies the performance and general changes of the Social Democrats as a party in government. In the second part, it looks at the central conflicts of this party as a political institution.

### *3.1 The PLN in Government*

Following Chapter 6 (especially Graph 6.4), the PLN's party identification had its most significant decline between 1993 and 1996—basically during the Social Democrats last period in office. Even if they recovered some of the lost support afterwards, the PLN's partisan loyalty never again reached its previous levels. Before studying what happened during these years, it is important to take at least a brief look at the Social Democrats' influence on Costa Rica's development, and how this has changed recently. Such an analysis is central in order to fully comprehend the reasons of PLN supporters' discontent with their party.

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capable to fulfil the needs of the poorer sectors, has been unable to solve its internal problems, has permitted corruption and the mismanagement of public funds, it is unable to led the transformations needed in the country, and important differences exist between the party and its legislative faction.

[93] Unimer RI-La Nación, enero 2003.

[94] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.

### 3.1.1 The Eclipse of the Social Democratic Model

The PLN defines itself as a social democratic party.[95] This party's ideological position and its leaders original ideas did have a traditional social democratic influence. In fact, the PLN is one of the most important and stable representatives of this ideology in Latin America.[96] However it is important to keep in mind that it is not possible to equate Latin America's social democratic parties—the PLN included—with their European counterparts.[97] Amongst the most salient differences of the PLN with "classic" social democratic European political groups are its strong anti-communist stance,[98] and the absence of an organised labour sector in its base of support.[99] Certainly, the PLN should be positioned to the right of the International Socialist Movement.

The political nature of the 1948 cleavage, compounded with the absence of a strong working-class constituency and the weakening of the unions after the civil war,[100] has driven the PLN to find in middle class sectors (liberal professionals, owners of small businesses, farm owners—*finqueros*—small landowning peasants—*campesinos*—urban employees, civil servants, etc.) the base of its political support.[101] Even if the 1948 Civil War witnessed members of different social sectors fighting on both sides,[102] middle sectors have been able to grow largely as a result of the PLN's polices (especially between the 1950s and the 1970s). Hence their natural tendency is to support this party. As a result, and according to former President of the Republic and party founder Luis Alberto Monge, eclectic, pragmatic, and moderate, is the best way to describe PLN's government programmes and policies.[103]

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[95] Partido Liberación Nacional 1995; Partido Liberación Nacional 1991; Partido Liberación Nacional 1987; Partido Liberación Nacional 1968;Villalobos-Solé and Núñez-Vargas undated.
[96] Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, pp. 62-75.; Nilsson March and April 2003.
[97] For a study of social democracy in Latin America see, Vellinga 1993.
[98] Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, pp. 9, 53-56. PLN's anti-communism was one of the legacies of the 1948 Civil War. See Chapter 3 for details.
[99] Yashar 1995, pp. 85-86.
[100] Salazar-Mora and Salazar-Mora 1993, p. 95.; Yashar 1995, p. 85. See also Chapter 3.
[101] Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, pp. 33-44.; Booth 1998, p. 66.; Yashar 1995, pp. 85-87.; Denton 1971; Cañas 13 March 2002.
[102] See Chapter 3.
[103] Monge-Álvarez 1970, pp. 8-13. See also, Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, p. 60.

Overall, the PLN has embraced general social democratic principles, namely: solidifying democracy in Costa Rica, making income distribution more egalitarian, expanding social services (primarily education, health, and housing), and increasing the size and influence of the middle class.[104] In terms of economic orientation, it supported a "mixed economy model" (a harmonisation of the private and the public sectors).[105] Following the PLN's main leader, José Figueres-Ferrer, this model had Keynesianism at its base, and was centred on the development of a welfare state.[106] Indeed, the active participation of the state in the economy was the central characteristic of the PLN's development model.[107]

As indicated in Chapter 3, the Second Republic in Costa Rica's modern history (from 1948 onwards) is also known as the Social Democratic Republic. Having ruled the country for eighteen years and a half between 1948 and 1978,[108] this period definitely has the PLN's imprint. According to Manuel Carballo, the Social Democrats' development strategy had four pillars during these years: the democratisation of credit, for which the banking system was nationalised; a growing salary policy; price stability and consumer protection; and the development of infrastructure, especially in terms of electricity and telecommunications achieved with the creation of the Instituto Nacional de Electricidad (ICE). This model was complemented with policies typical of the Import Substitution Industrialisation Model, mainly supported by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). These included, basically, the creation of an industrial sector, and the modernisation of agricultural production. All this was accomplished with a direct participation in the economy of a strong and expanding state apparatus.[109]

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[104] Booth 1998, p. 66.
[105] Jonas-Bodenheimer 1984, pp. 14-15.
[106] Figueres-Ferrer 1956, pp. 126, 133.
[107] Carballo 1992, p. 314.
[108] The PLN governments in this period were: José Figueres-Ferrer (1948-1949 [eighteen months *de facto* Governing Junta], 1953-1958, and 1970-1974), Francisco Orlich (1962-1966), and Daniel Oduber (1974-1978).
[109] For analyses of the development of the state in Costa Rica and its role in the economy see, Villasuso 1992b; Romero mayo-agosto 1984; Vega-Carballo 2000; Barahona-Montero 1997; Vega 1996, pp. 129-132.

In terms of results, and according to Jorge Rovira-Mas, from 1948 to 1980 Costa Rica was characterised, among other, by: high and constant economic growth (an annual average of 6 per cent in real terms), a decline in income inequality, a notable expansion of middle class sectors, an increase in industrial workers, and an ascendant social mobility resulting from strong investment in education, heath, and housing programmes.[110] In his words, and given its inclusiveness, this period was marked by a "socially-oriented economic development."[111] Furthermore, and central to this study, this "socially-oriented" development model and the policies which prompted it were based on programmatic positions that clearly differentiated the PLN from the Conservative Alliance coalitions (not keen on state intervention), which organised in each election to confront the Social Democrats.[112]

All this changed, however, during the late 1970s and the early 1980s. According to Juan Manuel Villasuso, in those years an expansive fiscal policy financed basically via a growing internal and foreign debt, compounded with the oil shock, a rise in international interest rates, and a recession in the Western economies.[113] As a result Costa Rica suffered the worst economic crisis in its history. A 0.1 per cent government budget surplus turned into an 8 per cent deficit between 1970 and 1980. Following a regional pattern, in 1981 the Carazo administration (a conservative government) had to default on the payment of the foreign debt, which—expressed as a percentage of the GDP—rose from 11.5 per cent in 1970 to 147.0 per cent in 1982 (its service consumed one-third of the export earnings by the early 1980s).[114] Moreover, between 1981 and 1982 the *colón* (Costa Rica's currency) devalued almost 600 per cent, and the GDP decreased nearly 10 per cent. Likewise, inflation registered a record high 90 per cent in 1982 (see Graph 7.2), unemployment, previously hovering around 5 or 6 per cent, nearly reached 10 per cent in the same year (see Graph 7.3), and the average salaries (in real terms) dropped by 45 per cent between 1979 and 1982. As a result, the percentage of poor households in the country more than

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[110] Rovira-Mas octubre 1995, pp. 6-12. See also, Rovira-Mas 1987, pp. 15-42.; Booth 1998, pp. 156-158.
[111] Rovira-Mas octubre 1995, p. 8.
[112] Rovira-Mas octubre 1995, p. 7. For further details see, Chapter 3 especially Table 3.5.
[113] Villasuso 1992a, p. 428.
[114] Booth 1998, pp. 161-162.

doubled between 1980 and 1982 (see Graph 7.3).[115] In sum, Costa Rica's economy was in a critical condition.

The PLN had no major problems returning to power in the 1982 elections. However, given the prevalent economic situation, the expansive fiscal policies and the economically active state characteristic of this party's previous governments were out of the question. Instead, President Monge (1982-1986) initiated a phase of economic transformations based on negotiations and conditional loans with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and "Structural Adjustment Programmes" (Planes de Ajuste Estructural [PAEs]), via agreements with the World Bank (WB). From here on, Costa Rica's development model significantly changed. According to John Booth:

> "[The PAEs] initiated a concerted neoliberal attack upon the social democratic development model, engineered mainly by powerful external economic actors with the help of the influential national economic interest. The neoliberals wanted to reduce the size of the state and its economic role as entrepreneur, regulator and service provider; to stimulate new exports; and to open Costa Rica to foreign capital, both to reduce imports and to attract investment by lowering labour costs through currency devaluations."[116]

A new phase in Costa Rica's development started from the 1980s onwards,[117] and PLN's traditional programmatic preferences found little space in it.

Costa Rica's desperate economic situation and the international banking community massive leverage, "persuaded" subsequent PLN governments to accept and implement more Structural Adjustment Programmes. Following former deputy and youth leader, Alex Sibaja, "since 1982 we have been governing Costa Rica with PAEs."[118] As mentioned, the first one was negotiated during the Monge administration (1982-1986), the second during the Arias administration (1986-1990), and the third (which ultimately was not completed) during the Figueres-Olsen

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[115] Villasuso 1992a, pp. 428-429.; Lizano 1999, pp. 134-135, Cuadros 4.8 and 4.9. For two cogent analyses of the process that led to this crisis and its outcomes see, Villasuso 1992a, Booth 1998, pp. 156-166.
[116] Booth 1998, pp. 162-163.
[117] Rovira-Mas 1987; Carballo 1992.

administration (1994-1998). The fact that all the PAEs were negotiated during the last three PLN governments is quite meaningful, as their implementation meant the weakening of the social democratic model. This model has been progressively substituted by one of neoliberal orientation.[119] Certainly, the neoliberal reform that has taken place in Costa Rica since the beginning of the 1980s has been rather "mild," if one compares it with other much more radical processes in Latin America such as the Chilean or the Argentine one.[120] But still, the implementation of the PAEs marked a change in the orientation of Costa Rica's development model.

For the purpose of this study, it is not necessary to provide all the details for each PAE.[121] Suffice it to say that as a result of the reforms introduced, the economy stabilised. As demonstrated in Graphs 7.2, 7.3, and Table 7.1, inflation was controlled, unemployment and poverty returned to their pre-crisis levels, and economic growth—not without inconsistencies—resumed. Apart from the macroeconomic prudency implemented by governments after the crisis, economic recovery was certainly eased by a significant rise in the levels of American economic assistance. Costa Rica enjoyed this aid mostly during the eleven-year rule (1979-1990) of the socialist Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) in neighbouring Nicaragua. As illustrated in Graph 7.4, U.S. economic assistance faded once the FSLN lost the 1990 elections, and American fears of the expansion of communist influence in Central America abated.[122]

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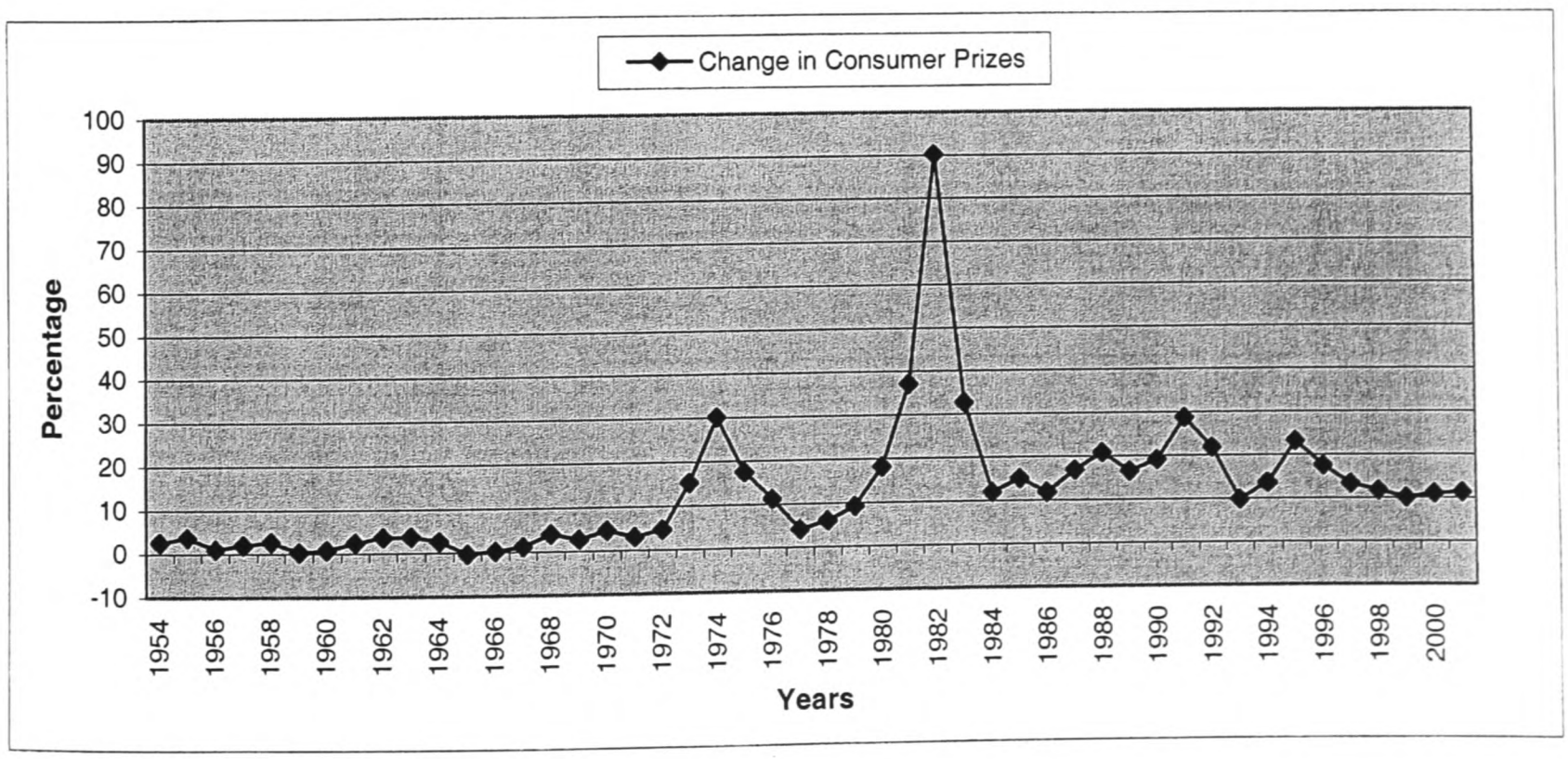
[118] Sibaja 11 March 2002.
[119] Booth 1998, p. 164. The same argument has been posited by, Carballo 1992, pp. 318-319.; Rovira-Mas 1992, pp. 242-245.; Chinchilla 4 June 2002; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002.
[120] Carmelo Mesa-Lago has defined the Costa Rican model as a "mixed economy," locating it at a mid-point between the Cuban and the Chilean models. Mesa-Lago 2000. For details on neoliberal reforms in different Latin American countries see, Manzetti 1999; Teichman 2001; Levine 1992; Sojo 1998; Lizano 1999; Franco and Sojo 1992; Larraín and Vergara 2000; Büchi 1993; Llanos 2002; Amann 2000.
[121] For more information on this topic see, Raventós-Vorst 1995; Raventós-Vorst 2001; Franco and Sojo 1992; Villasuso 1992a, pp. 430-433.; Booth 1998, pp. 163-172.
[122] For further details see, CBO December 1997; Booth 1998, pp. 22-26, 164.

Table 7.1. GDP in Costa Rica, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990-2001
(average annual growth)

| Years | GDP percentage change | GDP per capita percentage change |
|---|---|---|
| **1966** | 7.9 | 4.7 |
| **1970** | 7.5 | 4.3 |
| **1975** | 2.1 | -0.3 |
| **1980** | 0.8 | -1.6 |
| **1985** | 0.7 | -4.5 |
| **1990** | 3.6 | 1.1 |
| **1991** | 2.3 | -0.1 |
| **1992** | 7.7 | 5.3 |
| **1993** | 6.3 | 4.0 |
| **1994** | 4.5 | 2.2 |
| **1995** | 2.4 | 0.3 |
| **1996** | -0.6 | -2.6 |
| **1997** | 3.7 | 1.6 |
| **1998** | 6.7 | 4.5 |
| **1999** | 8.3 | 6.1 |
| **2000** | 2.2 | 0.1 |
| **2001** | 0.9 | -1.0 |

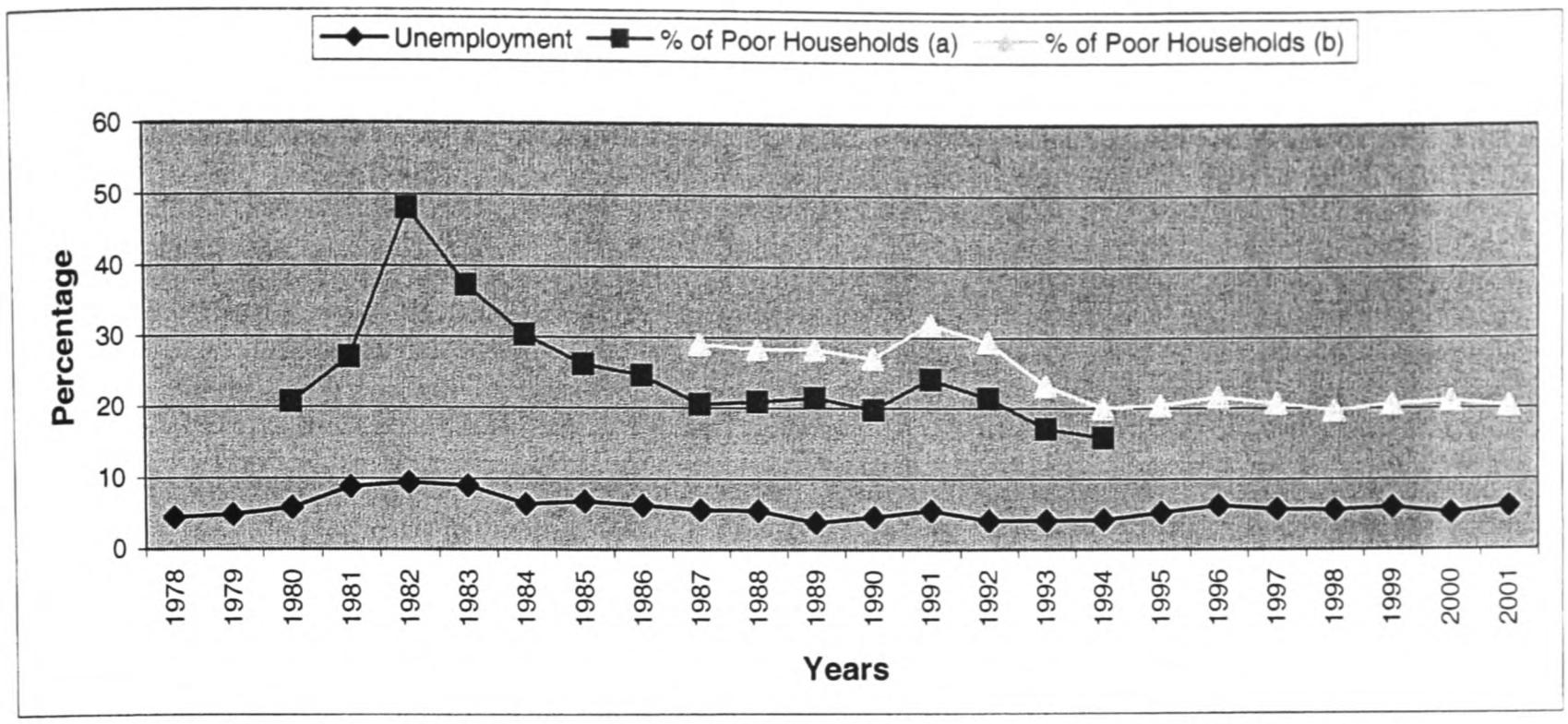
Sources: For 2000 and 2001, World Bank 2002; for all the rest, MIDEPLAN 2002.

Graph 7.2. Inflation in Costa Rica, 1954-2001



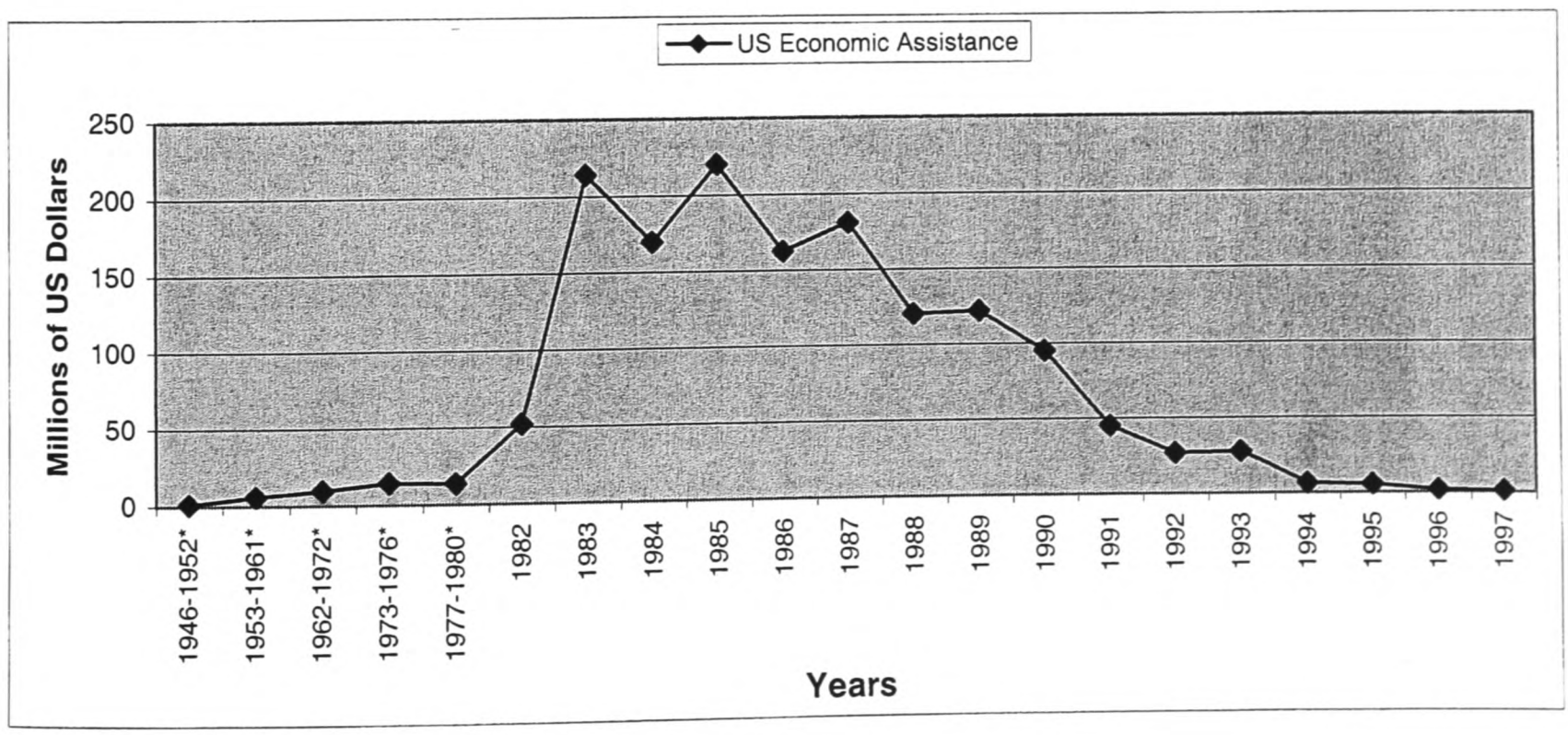

Source: MIDEPLAN 2002.

Graph 7.3. Unemployment and Poverty in Costa Rica, 1978-2001




Note: Poverty data in Costa Rica has been calculated using different methodologies, and there is not a single series using only one of them which covers the whole period studied. Hence, I graphed two series for percentage of poor households calculated under different methodologies. Even if their absolute values cannot be compared, their trends can. The years in which series "a" and "b" overlap demonstrate how they follow a similar trend.
Sources: For unemployment and percentage of poor households (b), MIDEPLAN 2002; for percentage of poor households (a), Lizano 1999, p. 135, Cuadro 4.9.

Graph 7.4. U.S. Economic Assistance to the Costa Rican Government, 1946-1997




* Annual averages.
Sources: From 1946 to 1980, Booth 1998, p. 216, Table A.5.; from 1982 to 1994, Lizano 1999, p. 254, Cuadro A-5.1.; from 1995 to 1997, Center for International Policy 2003.

However, according to Table 7.2, the first decade of neoliberal transformations also meant a reduction in the state's overall social spending. Additionally, it witnessed a shift in the government's social investment strategy, substituting the previous emphasis on sectors with a universal impact on social mobility (basically education and health), with a more targeted and *asistencialista* approach.[123] Likewise, as demonstrated in Table 7.3, in accordance with the new model's preference for a smaller, less intrusive public sector, the state's size and its relevance in the economy strongly diminished. In fact, between 1980 and 1989, twenty-seven firms and subsidiary enterprises were privatised, and the government divested its partial ownership of nine more firms.[124]

These reforms were especially troublesome for middle class citizens as, according to Mylena Vega, 54.1 per cent of them were employed by the public sector in 1987. Even if still quite high, this register came down to 45.9 per cent in 1995.[125] As illustrated by Table 7.4, the change in Costa Rica's development model slowed down the country's social mobility process. Indeed, after growing 10.2 per cent between 1963 and 1984, the middle sector only increased 1.6 per cent between 1984 and 2000. Likewise, after decreasing 11 per cent between 1963 and 1984, the lowest sector only diminished 0.9 per cent between 1984 and 2000.

The reduction of the state's relevance and of its budget, has been accompanied by growing complaints regarding the quality of public services. In a recent poll, Demoscopía S.A. reported that 70 per cent of Costa Ricans believe that public institutions provide ineffective solutions for their problems, 76 per cent think that they are too slow to respond to their demands, and 40 per cent claim that they are just not able to fulfil their needs.[126] By supporting the reduction of the state, the PLN has not only helped to undermine its own social democratic model, but it has also

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[123] This change has also been highlighted by Mylena Vega. Vega 1996, p. 132.
[124] Booth 1998, p. 175, citing, Vargas 1990, pp. 273-276. Most of this privatisation process was a result of the closure of the Corporación Costarricense de Desarrollo (CODESA), a state holding company conceived to function as an enterprise and revenue generator. For details on this company and on the entrepreneurial roles played by the Costa Rican State especially during the 1970s see, Vega 1982.
[125] Vega 1996, p. 136.
[126] Demoscopía S.A., febrero 2002.

penalised members of its traditional support base. This drove PLN founder and ideologue, Benjamín Núñez, to claim that the party's major challenge was to reassess its "ideological authenticity."[127]

Table 7.2. Distribution of Social Expenditures as a Percentage of the GDP in Costa Rica, 1980-1989

| Years | Education | Health | Social Assistance | Housing | Social Sector Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1980** | 6.9 | 11.3 | 3.6 | 1.5 | 23.3 |
| **1984** | 5.2 | 7.1 | 3.2 | 1.0 | 16.5 |
| **1987** | 4.7 | 5.5 | 7.4 | 2.5 | 20.1 |
| **1989** | 4.5 | 5.7 | 6.9 | 2.3 | 19.4 |

Source: Booth 1998, p. 167, Table 8.5.

Table 7.3. Growth of Costa Rica's Public Sector, 1920-2000

| Years | Percentage of the GDP added by the Government (a) | Percentage of National Workforce in the Public Sector (b) |
|---|---|---|
| **1920** | 2.9 | NA |
| **1930** | 4.8 | NA |
| **1940** | 5.1 | NA |
| **1950** | 5.9 | 6.0 |
| **1960** | 10.7 | NA |
| **1970** | 12.0 | 16.6 (1976) |
| **1980** | 11.2 | 19.6 |
| **1990** | 8.7 | 17.0 |
| **2000** | 6.6 (1999) | 14.1 |

Sources: For data from 1920 to 1980 in column (a), Booth 1998, p. 216, Table A.6.; for data for 1950 in column (b), Villasuso 1992a, p. 427.; for the rest of the data, MIDEPLAN 2002.

Table 7.4. Changes in Costa Rica's Social Structure, 1963-2000

| Social Classes | 1963 | 1973 | 1984 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **High** | 3.4% | 6.9% | 4.2% | 3.5% |
| **Middle** | 18.2% | 21.8% | 28.4% | 30.0% |
| **Low** | 78.4% | 71.6% | 67.4% | 66.5% |

Note: Data for 1963, 1973, and 1984 is based on censuses. Information for 2000, the same year the last census took place, was obtained from a study by the IIS.
Sources: For 2000, IIS 2001, p. 12.; for the rest, Vega et al. 1995, p. 62.

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[127] Núñez 1986, p. 19.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, Costa Rica's other major party, the social christian PUSC, was formed in 1983 by the parties which previously (since 1978) integrated the Coalición Unidad (CU). Since then, the country's party system is characterised by bipartism. Due to the background of the parties which formed the PUSC,[128] their original ideological position, and the economic model prevalent at its "birth," this party assumed without major controversies or contradictions several neoliberal dictums—especially those arguing for macroeconomic prudency, fiscal cuts, and state reduction.[129] This, compounded with the PLN's "neoliberal acquiescence," resulted in a two-party system whose general ideological moderation turned almost into "in-differentiation," as the two major parties share very similar programmatic positions and present voters almost indistinguishable manifestos during elections.[130] Numerous commentators agree with Rovira-Mas when he claims that since the 1980s the PLN and the PUSC have offered Costa Ricans a shared project whose organising element has shifted from the state to the market.[131]

Therefore, it was hardly unexpected that, according to a 1999 survey by Unimer-La Nación, more than half of Costa Rica's population thinks that there are no real differences between the PLN and the PUSC. This is not positive for parties functioning in a nation where 76.3 per cent of the public (according to the same poll) considers that being able to distinguish between them is "good for the country."[132] Likewise, at the party level, Alcántara and Guzmán have reported that in 1995, 71 per cent of PLN's deputies and 86 per cent of PUSC's congressional representatives, believed that their parties did not have important ideological differences.[133]

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[128] See Chapter 3.

[129] Thompson 16 January 2002; Laclé 12 March 2002; Vásquez 26 June 2002; Sánchez 26 June 2002; Madrigal 12 January 2002.

[130] Several authors have reported the salient similarities between the PLN and the PUSC manifestos since 1986, when the PUSC participated for the first time as a single party in local elections. See for example, Rovira-Mas 1987, Chap. 4.; Rovira-Mas 1990; Sánchez 1994; Fonseca 2002; *La Nación* 29 de noviembre 1993; *Al Día* 17 de agosto 1997; *La Nación* 20 de marzo 2002. Alejandro San Francisco has identified a similar trend in the Chilean party system. San Francisco 2002, pp. 38-41.

[131] Rovira-Mas octubre 1995, p. 19. The same argument has been posited by Madrigal 12 January 2002; Araya 11 January 2002; Hernández-Rodríguez 15 February 2002; Penón 15 March 2002; Bravo 27 February 2002; Borge 11 March 2002; Coto-Molina 1998, p. 4.; Paniagua 17 January 2002; Carvajal 27 February 2002; Urcuyo-Fournier 26 February 2002; Araya-Monge 6 March 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002.

[132] Unimer RI-La Nación, mayo 1999.

The same authors requested that PLN and PUSC deputies place themselves and their parties on an ideological continuum. As shown in Table 7.5, the difference or the "ideological distance" of the medians between the PLN and the PUSC (1.2) and between their deputies (1.8), is quite small. It is also worth noting that while the ideological distance that PUSC deputies reckon exists between themselves and their party is almost non-existent (0.1), in the case of the PLN it is considerably higher (0.7). This is not surprising at all as, contrary to the PUSC which has not had major ideological changes since its creation, the PLN has undergone a "programmatic movement" towards the centre of the ideological spectrum. This phenomenon is depicted in Table 7.6, which demonstrates that both in their self-placement and in the placement of their party on the ideological continuum, PLN deputies recognise a movement towards the centre of the ideological spectrum between 1994 and 1998.

As a result, and following what Costa Ricans generally believe, a PLN internal study revealed that 52.5 per cent of its members think that their party is no longer a social democratic movement.[134] PLN high officials are conscious of their party's ideological contradictions. In the words of its Secretary General, Luis Guillermo Solís:

> "It is quite hard to be a consistent social democratic party when the global trend is to reduce the size of the state and to cut public services budgets. Obviously, the electorate is harsher on a party which now executes such policies after having advocated and previously implemented the opposite."[135]

Ideologically speaking, the PLN seems to be experiencing symptoms distinctive of an "identity crisis."

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[133] Alcántara-Sáez and Guzmán-León abril 1998, p. 111.
[134] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.
[135] Solís 7 June 2002.

Table 7.5. Median Ideological Placement of the PLN and the PUSC and of their Congressional Representatives according to their Deputies, 1994-1998 Constitutional Period

| Parties | Deputies own placement | Party's placement according to deputies | Difference between deputies and their parties |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PLN** | 4.3 (N: 24) | 5.0 (N: 23) | 0.7 |
| **PUSC** | 6.1 (N: 23) | 6.2 (N: 23) | 0.1 |
| **Differences between parties** | 1.8 | 1.2 | — |

Note: Deputies of both the PLN and the PUSC in the 1994-1998 constitutional period were asked to place themselves and their respective parties in an ideological continuum, where 1 was the most leftist point and 10 the most rightist one.
Source: Alcántara-Sáez and Guzmán-León abril 1998, pp. 47-48.

Table 7.6. Change in the Median Ideological Placement of the PLN and of their Congressional Representatives according to their Deputies, 1994-1998 and 1998-2002 Constitutional Periods

| Years | 1994-1998 | 1998-2002 | Movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PLN deputies own placement** | 4.3 (N: 24) | 4.8 (N: 20) | + 0.5 |
| **PLN's placement according their deputies** | 5.0 (N: 23) | 5.4 (N:20) | + 0.4 |

Note: PLN deputies in the 1994-1998 and the 1998-2002 constitutional periods were asked to place themselves and their party in an ideological continuum, where 1 was the most leftist point and 10 the most rightist one.
Sources: For 1994, Alcántara-Sáez and Guzmán-León abril 1998, pp. 47-48.; for 1998, Alfaro-Salas 2001, p. 44.

### 3.1.2 The Public's Reaction

Following the political explanation of dealignment, a party's failures in government can be a reason for the decline of its supporters' loyalty. Costa Rica's development model started to change in the 1980s and the PLN, with three administrations since then (1982-1986, 1986-1990, and 1994-1998), has had an important role in this transformation process. During this period the PLN has shared governmental responsibilities with the CU-PUSC, which has headed the executive power four times, including its last electoral victory in the 2002 elections (1978-1982 [CU government], 1990-1994, 1998-2002, 2002-2006 [PUSC governments]). Thus, the

question we need to answer now is how has the public reacted and evaluated these two parties' administrations since the end of the 1970s.

In order to do this I will use survey data reported by CID-Gallup, in which different presidents' performances are evaluated. This firm has systematically assessed the executive's performance since the end of the 1970s. In fact, there is available data of the last six presidential periods (from 1978 to 2002).[136] Following the results presented in Chapter 6 and the contradictions of Costa Rica's Social Democratic Party, we would expect the PLN to have obtained lower marks than its social christian counterpart.

In order to evaluate the different presidential performances, citizens were asked to answer the following question: "What is your opinion regarding the way (president's name) is performing his task as president?"[137] They were given a five-point scale (very good, good, average, bad, very bad) to respond. Building on this question I constructed an index adding the positive answers (very good and good) and the negative ones (very bad and bad), and then calculating the difference between the two. The results are depicted in Graph 7.5. As it can be seen, even if quite volatile, the public's assessment of Costa Rican presidents follows a general descending trend in the period studied. It is also clear from this graph that the Carazo administration (1978-1982) and the Figueres-Olsen administration (1994-1998) were the worst evaluated of the last six complete presidential periods.

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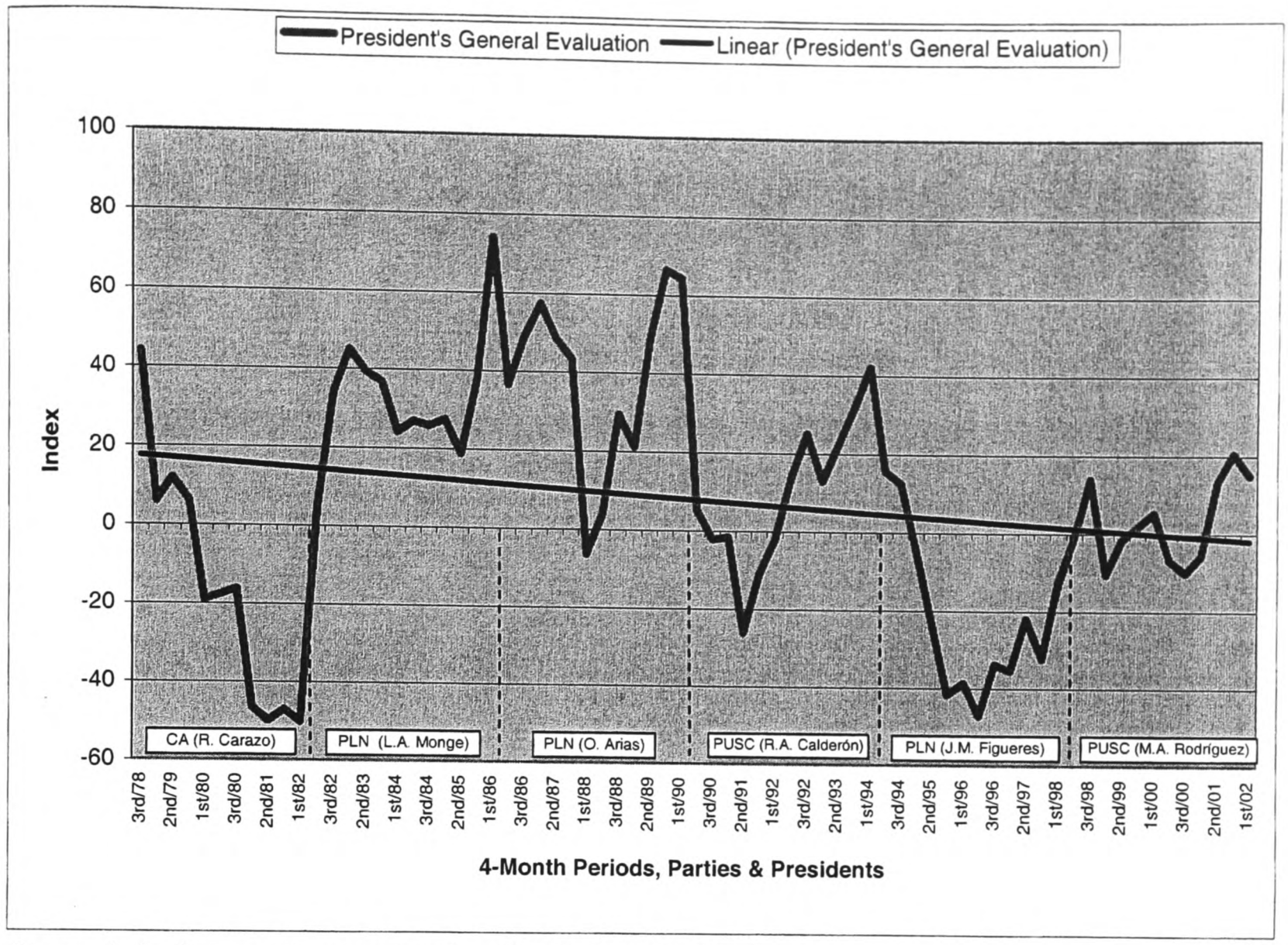
[136] There is also data for the first year of the current 2002-2006 government. However I concentrated on the six complete administrations that have taken place between 1978 and 2002. This as I wanted to compare the evaluations of each complete governmental period, and not only the first—normally better evaluated—year of each.

Graph 7.5. President Evaluation General Index, 1978-2002
(4-month periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

After enduring the most important economic crisis in the country's history during the beginning of the 1980s, it is not a surprise that the 1978-1982 presidential period was negatively assessed. As illustrated in Graph 7.6, Carazo's evaluation index plunged, while the GDP per capita declined, and inflation, unemployment, and poverty rose. However, nothing similar happened during the more recent Figueres-Olsen government—the last time the PLN was in office. According to the same graph, Figueres' evaluation index followed a descending trend from 1994 to 1996, despite basically stable poverty and unemployment registers. Inflation increased in 1995, but dropped the year after. It is worth noting, however, that the presidential evaluation index did follow a declining pattern while the GDP per capita decreased, and

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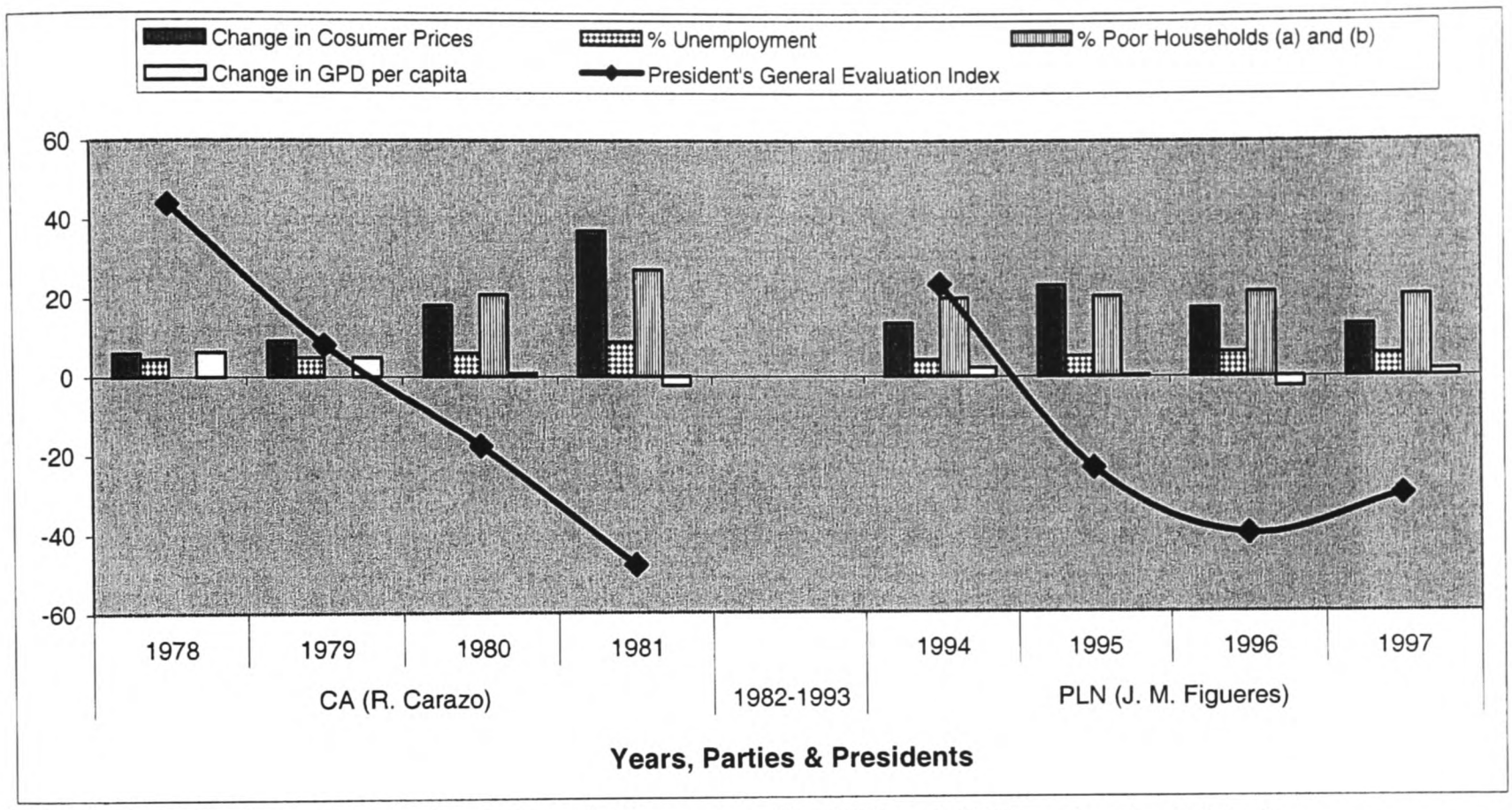
[137] In Spanish: "¿Cúal es su opinión sobre la forma en que desempeña sus labores como presidente

recuperated slightly when this economic indicator rose in 1997. But still, contrasting with the Carazo administration, it would not be possible to explain the unpopularity of the Figueres' administration solely in economic terms.

Graph 7.6. President Evaluation Index, and Economic and Social Indicators during the Carazo and the Figueres Administrations, 1978-1982 and 1994-1998




Note: Series "a" of percentage of poor households was used in 1980 and 1981, and series "b" in the 1994-1997 period. For details on these two series see the note under Graph 7.2. Presidential periods in Costa Rica end at the beginning of May. Thus, economic and social data for 1982 and 1998 was not included as it mainly corresponded to the next presidential period.
Sources: For the president evaluation index, CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-10, 55-73.; for change in consumer prices, unemployment, change in GDP per capita, and percentage of poor households (b), MIDEPLAN 2002; for percentage of poor households (a), Lizano 1999, p. 135, Cuadro 4.9.

Graphs 7.5 and 7.6 presented a general picture of Costa Ricans' evaluation of their last six presidents, and examined the central difference between the two most unpopular ones. However, in order to study and contrast the reactions of supporters of different parties to their elected leaders, I constructed similar indexes of PLN and

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(nombre del presidente)?"

PUSC identifiers, as well as of those who claim to be independent.[138] The results are presented in Graph 7.7. Out of this graph we can draw three basic conclusions.

In the first place, the dissimilar way in which citizens that identify with different parties evaluate the presidents confirms that party identification does have an influence, and does function as a perceptual screen by which Costa Rican voters appraise and understand political activities. Notice how PLN and PUSC supporters tend to evaluate better the presidents of their respective parties, and are evidently harsher with those elected by their opponent. Moreover, it is also interesting to discover that citizens claiming to be independent, and presumably more objective, tend—as expected—to give presidents marks that fall between those allocated by PLN and PUSC identifiers—closer to those provided by the identifiers of the party in opposition at the time.

In the second place, it is clear that PLN supporters were quite happy with their party's first two administrations in this period (1982-1986 and 1986-1990). However, and consistent with the picture presented in Graph 7.5, that was not the case with the last time they were in office (1994-1998). In fact, it was during this administration that for the first time PLN supporters gave negative marks to a president elected by their own party. Illustrating the connection between presidential evaluations and party loyalties, notice how *liberacionistas'* evaluation of the Figueres-Olsen administration followed a descending trend from 1994 to the middle of 1996, basically the same time span in which this party suffered the most important decline in its party identification (see Graph 6.4 in Chapter 6).

In the third place, and certainly differing from PLN's situation, PUSC supporters seem to be quite satisfied with the work of their leaders the last times they were in office in the period studied (1990-1994 and 1998-2002). Moreover and even if they were not very happy with Carazo's government (1978-1982), one needs to bear in mind that this administration was a CU one, as the PUSC had not yet been formed.

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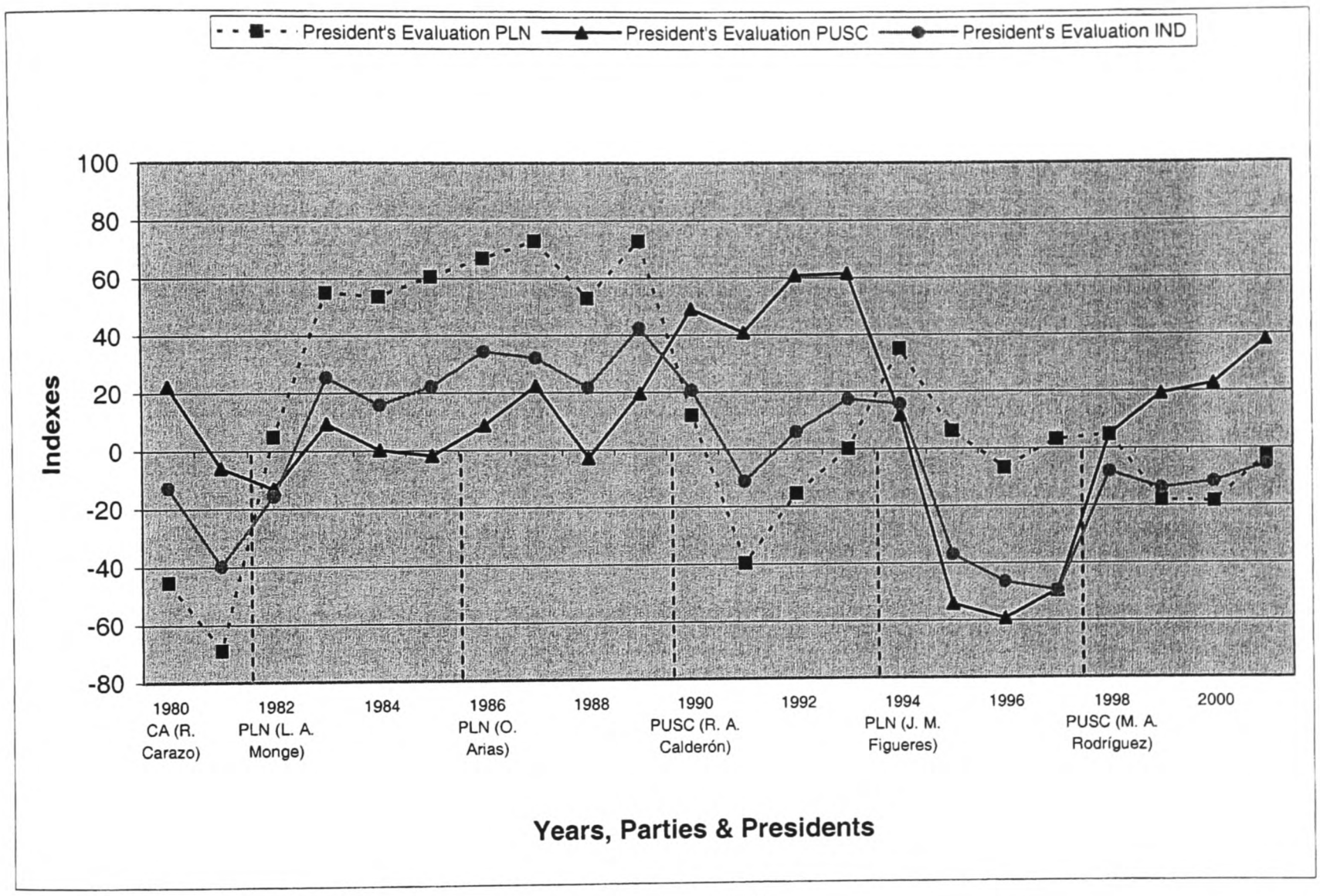
[138] Cid-Gallup's data of presidential evaluations distributed by party identification was available since 1980. Thus, the information corresponding to the first two years of the Carazo administration is missing.

Hence, it is not hard for PUSC leaders to "disown" it whenever it is convenient. Furthermore, and contrasting with the PLN case, this government took place more than 20 years ago, enough time to cloud many voters' memories, especially the youngest.

Graph 7.7. President Evaluation Indexes by Party Identification, 1980-2002
(4-year periods)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 6-89.

Therefore, and consistent with our prediction, PLN supporters are the ones disillusioned with their party's performance in office—at least with the last time they ran the country. Moreover, given the match in terms of dates, one can conclude that *liberacionistas'* disappointed with the Figueres-Olsen administration did have an impact on the decline of the Social Democrats' partisan identification. Thus, the political explanation of dealignment does work in the Costa Rican case.

Nonetheless, the reasons for PLN supporters' dissatisfaction with the Figueres-Olsen government are still not clear. As showed in Graph 7.6, their disappointment seems to stem from much more than poor economic results. Moreover, contradicting policies do not seem to solely explain *liberacionistas'* discontent either. In fact, even if PLN's policies started to vary since 1982 (during the 1982-1986 and the 1986-1990 administrations), it was not until this party's third government in the period studied (1994-1998) that their supporters clearly expressed their dissatisfaction. Hence, apart from economic mismanagement and programmatic changes, it appears to be something else catalysing PLN supporters discontent with their party's last time in office.

### 3.1.3 The Figueres-Olsen Administration (1994-1998)

Why was the Figueres-Olsen presidency so unpopular? It is important to take a closer look at this administration in order to uncover the main reasons for its low evaluation, especially amongst PLN supporters. In general terms, five different factors seemed to have negatively affected the 1994-1998 government: an unsatisfactory economic performance (especially during its first three years), a set of unpopular and contradicting decisions, corruption scandals, President Figueres "governing style," and the disproportionate expectations that the electorate had with the arrival of another "Figueres" to the presidency. These factors added to make of the Figueres-Olsen administration, "the most detrimental government in the PLN's history," according to Ex-President and party founder, Luis Alberto Monge.[139]

#### 3.1.3.1 Unsatisfactory Economic Results

Firstly, economic growth was less than impressive during this administration—especially during its first three years. As illustrated in Table 7.1, after registering a GDP annual growth of 7.7 and 6.3 per cent in the last two years of the Calderón administration (1990-1994), this register significantly dropped in the first three years

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[139] Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002.

of the Figueres-Olsen government. It was 4.5 per cent in 1994, 2.4 per cent in 1995, and -0.6 per cent in 1996. As expected, a similar trend was followed by the GDP per capita. It went from 5.3 and 4.0 per cent in the last years of the previous administration, to 2.2 per cent, 0.3 per cent, and -2.6 per cent, in the first three years of the 1994-1998 government. These results were a big disappointment for those who supported Figueres-Olsen in the 1994 elections.

Indeed, bad economic performances have important political consequences. According to Helmut Norpoth:

> "Voters key on retrospective assessments of the overall economy, hold the incumbent government responsible, and administer vengeance *and* reward at the polls."[140]

As imagined, citizens, and especially PLN supporters, were quite dissatisfied with their party's economic management; and that showed later in PLN's party identification and electoral support decline.[141] However, as indicated above, Figueres' unpopularity and its negative influence on PLN's partisan loyalties cannot be explained solely in terms of poor economic results.

### 3.1.3.2 Controversial Decisions and Unfulfilled Promises

Secondly, the Figueres-Olsen administration took a number of erratic and controversial decisions which did little to uphold the president's popularity. According to William Furlong, Figueres-Olsen won the 1994 elections after bitterly attacking the general neoliberal model, and having made more than 170 promises, most of them related to the reinvigoration of the welfare state and the reestablishment of PLN's traditional social democratic policies. After one year in office it was clear that most of his pledges could not be honoured.[142] Two central decisions illustrate Figueres' contradictions.

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[140] Norpoth 1996, p. 317. Italics in the original.
[141] *La Nación* 13 de enero 1995.
[142] Furlong 2001, p. 108.

In the first place, as PLN presidential candidate and party leader, Figueres denounced the PAE III, originally presented during the Calderón administration, as a "neoliberal PAE."[143] He denied his party's support for the passage of this project in congress,[144] and promised to elaborate and present a new socially oriented version during his government, which he named "PAE a la tica."[145] Once in office, obtaining the loan that was conditioned on the implementation of the PAE III was central to the new social democratic government in order to maintain economic stability without drastic cuts in social investment. As showed in Graph 7.4, contrasting with the two previous PLN administrations (1982-1986 and 1986-1990), the 1994-1998 Figueres' government could no longer rely on the massive American economic assistance that was granted to Costa Rica, especially during the rule of the leftist FSLN in Nicaragua (1979-1990).

Nevertheless, lacking a legislative majority in congress, and facing an inflexible PUSC opposition,[146] Figueres-Olsen was eventually "forced" to present and support some components of the original PUSC project.[147] Not surprisingly, many *liberacionistas*—both supporters and party members—were not happy with this inconsistency. A survey conducted at the end of Figueres' term by Unimer RI-La Nación, reported that 42.1 per cent of Costa Ricans thought that he did not fulfil his campaign promises. This was also true for more than a quarter of those who claimed to be PLN supporters.[148] Moreover, according to the PAC's leader and former PLN member, Ottón Solís, it was after this contradiction that he seriously started to consider leaving the PLN and forming a new party.[149]

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[143] Among the rather unpopular conditions required by the IMF and the WB to grant the funding were: a strong reduction in the fiscal deficit (from 6.9 per cent of the GDP in 1994 to 0.5 per cent by 1996), immediately pay US$79 million to Paris Club creditors, cut 8,000 public-sector jobs, enact large tax hikes, and carry on with privatisation schemes. Booth 1998, p. 165.

[144] PAEs need congressional authorisation in order to be implemented. Given that they involve granting a loan after the country commits to undertake certain structural reforms (many of them entailing changes in the law), PAEs need to be ratified by the Legislative Assembly, even if already signed by the executive.

[145] The translation would be: "PAE in a Costa Rican way."

[146] *La Nación* 27 de marzo 1995.

[147] Raventós-Vorst 2001, p. 373.

[148] Unimer RI-La Nación, abril 1998. Interviews with former PLN local leaders disappointed by the party's inability to deliver corroborated this claim. Arias 23 February 2002; Rodríguez 9 March 2002; Paniagua 9 March 2002.

In the second place, as a way to break a legislative deadlock prevalent after the first year of the 1994-1998 administration, the leaders of the PLN and the PUSC at the time, President José María Figueres-Olsen and Ex-President Rafael Ángel Calderón-Fournier,[150] signed a pact on the 28th of April 1995.[151] It is worth noting that the signatories are both sons of Costa Rica's main historical leaders and opponents in the 1948 Civil War: José Figueres-Ferrer and Rafael Ángel Calderón-Guardia. The agreement was named "Pacto Figueres-Calderón." Voicing its benefits for the country's governance, the two leaders agreed to speedily pass in congress a number of rather unpopular bills. At the beginning, the pact was well regarded by the public. According to data provided by Unimer RI-La Nación, in May 1995, 68.9 per cent of Costa Ricans believed that the Pacto Figueres-Calderón was "beneficial" for the country, while 17.6 per cent thought otherwise.[152] However, by September of that same year opinions changed. Four months later only 33.5 per cent of the population characterised the accord as beneficial for the nation, and 56.6 per cent considered it detrimental. Moreover, more than half of the citizens indicated that signing this pact had "damaged" the government.[153]

The public's opinion was modified once the Pacto outcomes became apparent. Especially unpopular was a new tax bill (known as a *paquete fiscal*), and a general reform of the pensions scheme for educators working in the public sector—a group that, according to PLN members, historically used to back their party.[154] The latter measure produced a general teachers' strike which paralysed the public education system for 32 days (from the 17th of July to the 17th of August 1995). Apart from the participation of all the sector's unions, the street protests were attended by thousands

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[149] Solís 22 February 2002.
[150] Unlike José María Figueres-Olsen, Rafael Ángel Calderón-Fournier is still the central figure of his party.
[151] For the complete document and the main agreements see, *La Nación* 29 de abril 1995; *La Nación* 5 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 12 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 13 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 14 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 30 de mayo 1995.
[152] Unimer RI-La Nación, mayo 1995.
[153] Unimer RI-La Nación, setiembre 1995.
[154] Pacheco 11 March 2002; Álvarez-Desanti 5 March and 16 April 2002; González 15 January and 18 June 2002.

of students, and—according to opinion polls—supported by almost half of the population.[155]

Moreover, the Pacto also infuriated the more traditional social democratic members of the PLN. This was because Figueres and Calderón agreed to pursue a general reform of the state apparatus, which included proposals for reforming, privatising, or closing several public institutions.[156] Additionally, they also introduced a financial reform that finally ended the public banks' monopoly on current accounts and on their access to the Central Bank's discount—one of PLN's milestone reforms implemented by José Figueres-Ferrer.[157] Apart from disappointing many PLN supporters and causing internal conflicts in the party, the Pacto Figueres-Calderón reinforced the popular perception regarding growing similarities between the PLN and the PUSC.[158] It is revealing that after the Pacto was signed, many *ticos* started to argue in informal conversations that the country was governed by a single party called "the PLUSC."[159] This notion was more prejudicial for the PLN, which, as the incumbent party at the time, was ultimately held responsible by the public for the Pacto's outcomes; and whose leader (Figueres) had promised to govern following traditional social democratic ways.

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[155] *La Nación* 17 de agosto 1995. For more details see, *La Nación* 18 de agosto 1995; *La Nación* 15 de julio 1995.

[156] Due to the public's rejection of the state reform scheme, many of the agreements regarding privatisations and closures of public institutions were never implemented. *Al Día* 9 de noviembre 1997.

[157] *La Nación* 19 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 8 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 9 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 13 de junio; *La Nación* 14 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 15 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 18 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 20 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 24 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 9 de abril 1995; *La Nación* 4 de abril 1995; *La Nación* 17 de noviembre 1995; *La Nación* 18 de noviembre 1995.

[158] Cañas 13 March 2002; Álvarez-Desanti 5 March and 16 April 2002; Laclé 12 March 2002; Corrales 2 April 2002.

[159] This idea was certainly boosted years later (in 2000) when PLN deputies, then in opposition, backed a project presented by the PUSC to reform and modernise the ICE (one of PLN's institutional icons). For details on the considerable popular unrest caused by this event (strikes, road closures, and street protests supported by 67 per cent of the population) see, Rojas-Bolaños forthcoming; Unimer RI-La Nación, mayo 2000.

### 3.1.3.3 Corruption Scandals

Thirdly, the Figueres-Olsen administration had to endure several subsequent corruption scandals. In fact, according to a report presented by *El Financiero*, out of the ten worst and more "expensive" political corruption scandals that have occurred in Costa Rica since 1985, four were uncovered during the Figueres-Olsen administration. These scandals included: the closure of Costa Rica's until then oldest public bank, the Banco Anglo Costarricense (BAC) (founded in 1863), which went into administration for excessively risky and fraudulent practices (September 1994),[160] the mismanagement and abuse of the Fondo Nacional de Contingencias Agrícolas (September 1995), a number of economic misuses in the Dirección Nacional de Aviación Civil (July 1996), and mounting irregularities in the management of the Programa Nacional de Compensación Social (February 1998).[161]

Additionally, Figueres' Minister of Public Works and his Deputy Interior Minister were sacked, after the Republic's General Comptroller filed charges against them for abuses of their positions and illicit enrichment (October-November 1996).[162] One cannot say that all these scandals were a direct responsibility of the Figueres-Olsen administration.[163] Nonetheless this is little consolation, because, as normally happens, the incumbent president and his party are generally the ones that have to bear the brunt of public anger generated by such events.[164] In fact, according to an internal poll, 93.5 per cent of PLN members believe that corruption scandals have been one of the main causes of their party's weakening in the last ten years. Interestingly, more than 40 per cent of them indicate that these scandals normally have to do with "irregular handling of public funds" by party members when they are

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[160] Following the same report, this scandal implied the highest financial loss of all the cases assessed. *El Financiero* 24-30 de junio 2003. Moreover, it was revealed that the risky operations carried out by the BAC and its main debtors included loans and donations to both the PLN and the PUSC. *La Nación* 26 de octubre 1994; *La Nación* 25 de setiembre 1994; *La Nación* 17 de agosto 1995; *La Nación* 16 de agosto 1995; *La Nación* 13 de agosto 1995.

[161] *El Financiero* 24-30 de junio 2003.

[162] *La Nación* 26 de mayo 1997; *La Nación* 5 de marzo 1997; *La Nación* 16 de octubre 1997; *La Nación* 15 de noviembre 1995; *Al Día* 21 de mayo 1997.

[163] This was certainly the case with the BAC affair, whose board of directors was integrated mostly by PUSC supporters appointed during the Calderón administration, and with the Fondo de Contingencias Agrícolas, which suffered irregularities since its creation in 1983.

in office.[165] As acknowledged by PLN's former Secretary General, Rolando González, "We have suffered the consequences of our misconduct, as well as of others' misbehaviour."[166]

### 3.1.3.4 Confrontational Governing Style

Fourthly, trained at West Point Military Academy (USA), José María Figueres-Olsen, was known for having a rather direct, authoritative, and vertical governing style.[167] These attitudes were at odds with the deeply entrenched democratic political culture prevailing amongst Costa Rican citizens and, especially, among its political elite.[168] Furthermore, he appointed as his closest advisors a group of highly qualified technocrats with no party background or relevant political experience. This group, known as the Grupo de Asesoría para la Toma de Desiciones (Decision Making Advice Group [Grupo ATD]), built a reputation for its political brashness and arrogance,[169] when dealing with different pressure groups, with the opposition, and even with the official party.

In the words of Josette Altmann, the First Lady at the time:

> "In José María's [Figueres] government the main decisions were taken by the Grupo ATD. This was a well-intended group of highly qualified professionals, which had their own government plan, but a very narrow political sense. Indeed, they were politically irresponsible when presenting their ideas to the public, even if they were good; and lacked the communication skills to safeguard the government's popularity. This, plus the fact that many of them were not even PLN members infuriated party officials, who witnessed how the government's and their party's

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[164] The impact of these and the previously discussed events on PLN's partisan identification and on the Figueres-Olsen administration evaluation, are clearly depicted in Graphs 6.4 and 7.5, respectively.
[165] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.
[166] González 15 January and 18 June 2002.
[167] Solís 7 June 2002.
[168] Booth 1998, Chap. 7.
[169] John Booth regards arrogance as "the cardinal sin of Costa Rican politics." Booth 1998, p. 75.

> popularity was undermined by 'inexperienced and arrogant new-comers'."[170]

It is quite hard to govern smoothly and successfully when the political consequences of central decisions are not considered by the president's main advisors.

Indeed, one of the central characteristics of the Figueres-Olsen government, particularly during its first two years, was the constant confrontation with the opposition, with different labour and private sector pressure groups, and, most strikingly, with his own party.[171] As expected, the continuous disagreements with different politically relevant groups made it hard for the government to construct stable alliances—a task especially relevant when it lacked a legislative majority in congress. Certainly it was not by chance that after the first year of the 1994-1998 administration, analysts started to diagnose Costa Rica with governance problems.[172]

Once out of office it was clear to José María Figueres that the way he conducted the government at the beginning of his period was highly detrimental to his broad political objectives. In his own words:

> "We had a lot of plans and goals that needed to be fulfilled as quickly as possible. Many of them entailed taking difficult decisions. Hence, it was clear to me that I could not take the typical president attitude and govern constantly worried for my popularity. I was proven wrong. Without political capital, constant negotiations, and a good deal of public relations it is almost impossible to accomplish anything in this country [Costa Rica]. I learned the hard way that in politics form is often as important as content."[173]

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[170] Altmann 6 August 2002.
[171] *Al Día* 12 de enero 1995; *La Nación* 13 de enero 1995; *La Nación* 16 de enero 1995; *La Nación* 19 de enero 1995; *La Nación* 14 de enero 1995; *La Nación* 11 de febrero 1995; *La Nación* 10 de marzo 1995; *La Nación* 14 de marzo 1995; *La Nación* 15 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 8 de noviembre 1995; *La Nación* 25 de marzo 1995; *La Nación* 28 de mayo 1995; *La Nación* 30 de marzo 1995; *La Nación* 9 de mayo 1995.
[172] *La Nación* 31 de julio 1995; *La Nación* 13 de junio 1995; *La Nación* 2 de junio 1995; Villasuso 4 July 2002; Cañas 13 March 2002.
[173] Figueres-Olsen 1 August 2000.

Figueres-Olsen's political mistakes were certainly a result of his lack of experience,[174] and of the alienation from his government of many of the "older" PLN members.

### 3.1.3.5 Disproportionate Expectations

Finally, the Figueres-Olsen administration was certainly affected by the huge weight of his last name, and the disproportionate expectations citizens (particularly *liberacionistas*) had with the return of a "Figueres" to the presidency.[175] Not withstanding the shortcomings, contradictions, controversies, and mistakes of his government, there is little doubt that José María Figueres' administration was more harshly evaluated simply because many citizens felt let down by the son of one of the country's "heroes." This is especially true given that his predecessor, and son of the other central historical leader, Rafael Ángel Calderón-Fournier, did a job which was generally well regarded by the population, and quite successful according to PUSC followers (see Graphs 7.5 and 7.7).

As rightly alleged by Ex-President Rodrigo Carazo:

> "There was nothing more reinvigorating for *liberacionistas* that being able to follow and vote again for a 'Figueres.' However, there was nothing more frustrating for this party's supporters than to see him fail. Costa Ricans' partisan loyalties were developed towards figures, not ideas. Hence, once don Pepe died and his son fell short, it was hardly unexpected that PLN's party identification dropped."[176]

Even if it was a major advantage in winning the election, José María Figueres' last name proved to be an important handicap once in office.

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[174] Basically, his only salient political position before reaching the presidency was the Ministry of Agriculture during Oscar Arias' government.
[175] The affective significance of Figueres-Olsen's electoral victory in 1994 was enhanced by the death of his father four years before, during the presidency of Rafael Ángel Calderón-Fournier—son of Figueres senior archenemy.
[176] Carazo-Odio 7 August 2002.

It can hardly be denied that the Figueres-Olsen administration negatively affected PLN's popular support. As demonstrated in Chapter 6 (Graphs 6.1, 6.3, and 6.4), it was during this administration that the Social Democrats suffered the most important erosion of their partisan identification. However, had it been only "a one man problem," PLN's support would have eventually recovered once Figueres-Olsen was out of office. As illustrated in the aforementioned graphs, this group's party identification did recover some of the lost terrain afterwards, but it is still far away from its historical levels. Moreover, it does not seem logical for a fifty-year old, reasonably well-institutionalised party to be so badly worn out by one disappointing administration. Hence, there appears to be more to the Social Democrats' loyalty decline than an unpopular government. What has happened with the PLN as an institution during this period? This is the central question that the next section will answer.

### *3.2 The PLN as an Institution*

The other party realm that needs to be assessed in order to evaluate the pertinence of the political explanation of dealignment for the Costa Rican case is the dynamics of political parties as institutions. Hence, this section focuses on the main internal transformations and conflicts the PLN experienced prior to and during the decline of its party identification in the 1990s. This exercise will also allow for a deeper understanding of the reasons of PLN's actual crisis.

Contrary to the assessment of political parties' performances in government, a direct causal link between parties' internal conflicts and contradictions and their loss of voter support cannot be assured. Maybe that is why analysts tend to concentrate on the former and generally neglect the latter, when assessing dealignment cases from the viewpoint of a political explanation. However, it can hardly be denied that internal conflicts do debilitate parties. This, in turn, diminishes their capacity to respond to their supporters' demands and expectations, and eventually eases the way for their defection. Hence, parties' internal contradictions should be considered as possible—indirect—causes of partisan dealignment.

In the Costa Rican case, three factors seem to have weakened the PLN's internal cohesion: the succession dynamics after the death of its earlier leaders, the pre-eminence of its internal electoral processes, and the growing distance between the party and its elected or appointed representatives. All these factors are deeply intertwined. Nonetheless, for purpose of clarity, they will be assessed individually.

### 3.2.1 The Death of the Historical Leaders and the Feudalisation of the Party

As explained in previous chapters, given the nature of Costa Rica's cleavage—a civil war[177]—one would expect that the disappearance of the battle's central figures would have important negative consequences on parties' historical loyalties. This is especially true in the case of the PLN, as the central war figures were also the party's "founding fathers."[178] Indeed, apart from eroding PLN supporters' adherence, their passing was also highly detrimental for the party's internal cohesion.

According to Manuel Carballo, the PLN was created as a cadre party with a rather closed structure.[179] This structure was basically dominated by the PLN's four main founding fathers: José Figueres-Ferrer (don Pepe), Francisco Orlich (don Chico), Daniel Oduber, and Luis Alberto Monge. These figures held uncontested power until the mid-1980s. They all reached the Presidency of the Republic. Don Pepe, the PLN's main leader, led a *de facto* Governing Junta for eighteen months after the 1948 Civil War, and was elected President twice: 1953-1958 and 1970-1974. Don Chico reached the Presidency in 1962, Oduber in 1974, and Monge governed between 1982-1986. Moreover, Figueres was the PLN's President when he was not Costa Rica's Head of State. He led the party from August 1958 to August 1969, and from June 1974 until his death in June 1990. Orlich occupied the same position between April 1952 and April 1956. Oduber was the PLN's President from April 1970 to June 1974, and Secretary General between April 1956 and August 1958. Finally, Monge

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[177] See Chapter 3 for details.

[178] In the case of the PUSC it was Rafael Ángel Calderón-Guardia, the father of the party's founder, the one who participated in the war. His son, Rafael Ángel Calderón-Fournier, is very active leading his party.

[179] Carballo 1992, p. 316. For a detailed assessment of PLN's internal structure see, Alfaro-Salas 2001, pp. 33-72.

held the latter post from July 1967 to July 1979.[180] Obviously they also had a decisive influence in selecting nominees for positions when none of the four were holding them.[181]

The "founding fathers" also played a central role in maintaining PLN's internal unity. It was between them that the party's main disputes were resolved and that central decisions were taken. Most importantly, it was through agreements among the members of this group (particularly between Figueres, Oduber, and Orlich[182]) that the order of the party's presidential candidates and, in many cases, of its deputies' lists was determined.[183] Later the leaders' decisions were rubber-stamped by the PLN's General Assembly, either by supporting the party's only candidate or by granting landslide victories to the founders' preferred nominee in closed internal elections.[184] The PLN's internal cohesion and party discipline were assured by the hierarchical nature of its internal dynamics. As indicated by Alberto Cañas, another founding member:

> "For more than three decades Liberación [the PLN] was smoothly run by an elite political group whose decisions were seldom questioned by the rest of the party. This group's leadership and its political competence allowed the party to keep its internal cohesion, and implement a coherent project whenever we won an election."[185]

Indeed, at least for its first thirty-five years, the PLN was vertically directed by its main founders.[186]

Of the four founding fathers, Luis Alberto Monge was probably the only one who was not comfortable with his party's elitist internal dynamics—which he often criticised.[187] However, and even though Figueres' and Oduber's power had clearly

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[180] Alfaro-Salas 2001, Cuadro XV, p. 58.
[181] Cañas 17 May 1992.
[182] Luis Alberto Monge used to call them "*la troika.*" Monge-Álvarez 1978, p. 2.
[183] Cañas 17 May 1992.
[184] Elizondo-Vargas mayo 1993.
[185] Cañas 17 May 1992.
[186] Carazo-Odio 7 August 2002.
[187] Monge-Álvarez 1970, p. 14.; Monge-Álvarez 1976, pp. 15, 42-44.; Monge-Álvarez 1978, pp. 2-3.; Monge-Álvarez 1988, p. 20.

eroded by the mid-1980s,[188] their influence lasted until their deaths—at the beginning of the 1990s.[189] With their passing, and Monge's (the only remaining founding father) predilection for a more democratic party, the PLN started a new phase. As Alex Sibaja, a former deputy, noted, the history of the PLN can be divided into two parts: before and after the death of its main founding members.[190]

The disappearance of its central historical figures left the PLN acephalous, and prompted an internal struggle amongst younger leaders—most of them with presidential aspirations—for control. Nevertheless, none of them had the authority and influence that their predecessors had. Hence, the disputes to control the party and the newer leaders' unwillingness to abdicate in favour of "similarly ranked" members, ended up dividing the PLN into factions or groups, normally headed by present or prospective presidential candidates ("pre-candidates"). As the party's Secretary General, Luis Guillermo Solís, acknowledged:

> "The death of PLN 'kings' left the party in the hands of several 'feudal lords.' Lacking the individual strength to assume the party's leadership, they started a heated struggle for the 'kingdom.' The expected result was the enhancement of internal divisions and the 'feudalisation' of the party."[191]

The PLN's internal cohesion was affected badly by the disappearance of its central founding fathers; which, it must be said, did little to secure PLN's vigour once they were absent.[192] Even one of their main critics, fellow party founder Luis Alberto Monge, considers that their deaths led to the demise of leadership in the party.[193]

Political parties' internal democratisation processes are generally regarded as positive transformations.[194] However, in the case of the PLN, the democratisation process that started since the mid-1980s had significant harmful consequences. Especially

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[188] Orlich died in 1969.
[189] Figueres died in 1990, and Oduber in 1991.
[190] Sibaja 11 March 2002.
[191] Solís 7 June 2002.
[192] Campos 31 July 2002; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002.
[193] *OJO* 23 mayo 2001; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002.
[194] See for example, Sartorius 1996, Chap. 7.; Thesing abril-junio 1996, p. 36. Patterson has challenged this position. Patterson 1994.

prejudicial for the party's unity was that the old way of solving internal problems "behind closed doors," was replaced by public arguments between the leaders of each faction. In the words of a PLN official, "the best way of learning about the latest argument in the party is by watching the evening news."[195] Press conferences, TV commercials, and newspaper articles have become central ways in which "pre-candidates" voice their positions, communicate with followers, and confront adversaries.

The PLN's internal cohesion also suffered when the presidential candidate succession system, essentially an "arranged queue" agreed by the founding fathers, was no longer respected. The queue was first "broken" in 1985, when it was clear that the historical leaders' power had started to erode. On that occasion Oscar Arias opposed and defeated the founding members' candidate, Carlos Manuel Castillo, in the first open internal election organised to choose the party's presidential candidate. It was broken again in 1993, when José María Figueres-Olsen, a new-comer,[196] defeated other long-awaiting "pre-candidates" in the PLN primaries.

After these two precedents, it was obvious to party members with presidential or congressional aspirations that no leader was able to assure them a post in a future PLN government. The previous low profile succession system characterised by negotiations and compromises was replaced by open and public electoral struggles.[197] These struggles have had a negative impact on the PLN's internal unity and on its popular support. As posited by Bell and Shaw:

> "[I]t does appear that voters dislike parties in which disagreements are openly and freely conducted—that is, more democratic parties. Hence the paradox: the more oligarchical a party, the more it is likely to be seen as possessing the qualities which fit it for the task of government in political systems which value pluralism and political liberty."[198]

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[195] Villasuso 4 July 2002.
[196] Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002.
[197] Pacheco 11 March 2002; Weisleder 8 March 2002.
[198] Bell and Shaw 1994a, p. 181.

The end of the "old way of doing politics" in the PLN has left many disgruntled supporters, and created the incentive for party members to spend most of their time in internal electoral activities.

The PLN's reaction to the disappearance of its founding father's has demonstrated that, even if endowed with one of Latin America's oldest and better-institutionalised party systems, personalism is still quite relevant in Costa Rican politics. Certainly, the Social Democrats' internal cohesion has been jeopardised seriously since their historical leaders departed, putting into question the solidity of the party's alleged institutional strength.[199]

### 3.2.2 Pre-eminence of Internal Electoral Processes

The PLN's founding fathers' deaths, plus the constitutional prohibition on presidential reelection which lasted until April 2003,[200] started a struggle for power among the party's new leaders. Once the "presidential candidate queue" was no longer in place, the PLN had to find another way to select its leadership. This was a central decision as, according to Reuven Hazan:

> "[A] party's candidates help to define its characteristics—demographically, geographically, ideologically, etc.—more than its organization, and perhaps even more than its manifesto."[201]

As a result, and joining what seems to be a general trend, the PLN started to democratise its candidate selection methods.

As indicated above, the Social Democrats organised their first open primary election in 1985. Table 7.7 presents the contestants and results of the five internal elections that have taken place since then. The main characteristic of the PLN's new leadership selection method is that it is completely open. In other words, anyone,

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[199] Huntington argues that successful generational change is a central indicator of political institutionalisation in parties. Huntington 1968, pp. 14-15, 409-410.
[200] The implications of this reform for the present study are assessed in the concluding chapter.
[201] Hazan 2002, p. 110.

regardless of their party identification or membership, can vote in these elections.[202] Hence, the PLN went from a closed and elitist leadership selection scheme, to a completely open one. Table 7.7 also shows that the highest turnout in PLN's primaries was registered in June 1993, when Figueres won the party's candidacy, and the lowest one occurred in the following election, June1997, during his last year in office. This is a suggestive sign of the initial enthusiasm and the overwhelming disappointment caused by Figueres-Olsen amongst *liberacionistas.*

Table 7.7. Open Primary Elections in the PLN, 1985-2001

| Elections | Pre-candidates | Results | Turnout (in absolute terms and as a percentage of the electoral roll) (a) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **January 1985** | Oscar Arias | 59.6% | 267,281<br>18.0% |
| | Carlos Manuel Castillo | 40.4% | |
| | Invalid/blank | NA | |
| **February 1989** | Carlos Manuel Castillo | 59.8% | 287,576<br>17.0% |
| | Rolando Araya | 33.9% | |
| | Invalid/blank | 6.2% | |
| **June 1993** | José María Figueres | 55.1% | 533,070<br>28.3% |
| | José Miguel Corrales | 22.9% | |
| | Margarita Penón | 15.6% | |
| | Rolando Araya | 1.5% | |
| | Francisco Morales | 0.3% | |
| | Juan Antillón | 0.2% | |
| | Invalid/blank | 4.4% | |
| **June 1997** | José Miguel Corrales | 59.3% | 163,483<br>8.0% |
| | Walter Coto | 22.3% | |
| | Invalid/blank | 18.4% | |
| **June 2001** | Rolando Araya | 51.2% | 362,300<br>15.9% |
| | José Miguel Corrales | 33.2% | |
| | Antonio Álvarez-Desanti | 15.6% | |
| | Invalid/blank | 0.0% | |

Note: Due to rounding, totals for each election may not add to 100 per cent.
(a) Percentages were calculated using the electoral roll reported by the TSE for the national election organised immediately after the PLN primaries (i.e. February 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2002).
Sources: For the 1985 election, *La Nación* 18 de febrero 1985; for 1989, Sistemas Analíticos S.A. 1989; for 1993, *La Nación* 23 de junio 1993; for 1997 and 2001, Lizano 2002.

[202] Prieto J. 1992, p. 282. Voters are asked to sign an adhesion form which only has symbolic implications. The PUSC started to organise similar open primaries in 1989.

Once the party's presidential candidate was elected via an open internal election, members with presidential aspirations had the incentive to prioritise electioneering and to initiate it as early as possible. The PLN's "pre-candidates" normally begin to surface one month after a national election takes place,[203] and start to campaign in the media three years before the next contest.[204] Thus, since the mid-1980s the PLN has been involved in a non-stop electoral process whose main figures change every four or eight years.[205] Moreover, given that since 1993 the party's candidate is elected nine months before a general election (in June of the pre-electoral year), out of the four years of each period, three and one quarter of them (81 per cent of each four-year period) are consumed by internal electoral confrontations. As diagnosed by former presidential candidate, Rolando Araya, "The PLN presents an acute case of 'electoralitis'."[206]

Specifically, the pre-eminence of electoral activities prompted by the "opening" of PLN's candidate selection method has four central consequences for the party's internal dynamics: it enhances factionalism, turns the party into an "intermittent" institution, strongly radicalises its internal conflicts, and induces the abandonment of central party functions.

### 3.2.2.1 Enhancement of Factionalism

Firstly, the pre-eminence of internal electoral activities enhances the previously discussed "feudalisation process" by dividing the party into factions immediately after national elections. As noted, new "pre-candidates" normally emerge a month afterwards, encouraging other party members to support one of them.[207] As a result, the PLN has turned into what Oscar Fernández defines as a "federation of

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[203] *La Nación* 6 de marzo 1990; *La Nación* 8 de marzo 1994; *La Nación* 27 de marzo 1998. A pact amongst PLN possible candidates for the 2006 national election prevented this happening after the 2002 contest. However, just by taking place, the pact has already signaled which could be the PLN's "pre-candidates" in the coming elections.

[204] Servicios Públicos Computarizados 1990-2002. The law that is suppose to oblige candidates to campaign only six moths prior to the national election has not been enforced.

[205] As shown in Table 7.8, some "pre-candidates" have participated in several elections.

[206] Araya-Monge 6 March 2002.

[207] See for example, *La Nación* 14 de enero 1991.

factions."[208] Moreover, led by a "pre-candidate," each faction organises parallel structures to the party. Indeed, many of them have their own campaign managers, fully integrated policy and fund raising committees, and self-sufficient bureaucratic apparatuses. According to Laura Chinchilla, PLN's campaign manager in the 2002 elections:

> "Most of these personnel are professionals hired by a party's faction to run or collaborate in a long campaign. Maybe they sympathise with the candidate they are working for, but the main reason they go to work is because they are being paid. This is true for renowned international 'spin doctors' as well as for secretaries. Voluntary work is now an oddity in our party."[209]

This dynamic, replicated in most of the factions with some chances of victory, results in the "multiplication" of professional politicians in the party.

The faction that wins the internal elections takes control of the party's structure, and imposes its finance and image committees, most of its personnel, and even its own manifesto.[210] Equally detrimental for PLN's strength is that, in light of this practice, most of the financial donations are given to the factions and not to the party.[211] As admitted by PLN's accountant, Eduardo Morera:

> "Our party suffers unbelievable contradictions. While some 'pre-candidates' have resources to finance 'marathon-like' campaigns, we in the party sometimes do not have enough money to pay electricity and telephone bills."[212]

No wonder the PLN is having trouble maintaining its institutional vigour.

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[208] Fernández 14 February 2002.
[209] Chinchilla 4 June 2002.
[210] Weisleder 8 March 2002; Carballo 22 March 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002; Zamora 10 April 2002.
[211] Morera 18 April 2002. Costa Rican parties' main sources of funding are public and private donations. The state provides funding to all political parties that obtain at least 4 per cent of the electoral support. The percentage of the money reimbursed to each party corresponds to the percentage of votes attained. Parties are also financed with private donations, especially salient during electoral periods. Membership dues, often erratic, account for a negligible part of parties' funding. For further details on the dynamics of party finance in Costa Rica see, Casas-Zamora 2002, especially pages 172-173; Morera 18 April 2002; Guardia 3 April 2002; Sánchez 2001, pp. 148-149.
[212] Morera 18 April 2002.

### 3.2.2.2 Institutional Intermittence

Secondly, the party's dynamics described above have resulted in the PLN behaving as an "intermittent institution."[213] Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the party is basically a dormant organisation between electoral processes, as most of its activities take place in the factions. The PLN "wakes up" when it organises its primary elections and officially begins the campaign for the national contest—led by members of the winning faction. Once the national elections are over, the cycle starts again.

The PLN's intermittence is clearly demonstrated by following its expenditures in the last three four-year periods (1990-1994, 1994-1998, and 1998-2002). If we assume that most parties' activities have a cost, then their expenditures can be used as a proxy measure of party activity. Since 1993 the PLN's presidential candidates have been chosen nine months prior to the national elections (i.e. in June 1993, 1997, and 2001—see Table 7.7), and so it is not until then—during the eight "electoral months"—that the party registers significant electoral costs. This is from July of the year prior to the national elections until the February following, when the elections take place. Before then, during the forty "pre-electoral months" (from March after each national election until June of the year prior to the next national contest) most of the electoral costs are managed and registered by each faction, and seldom reported to the party's financial officials.[214] Therefore, PLN's expenditures during this period mainly correspond to non-electoral activities.

The distribution of the PLN's expenditures (calculated as a percentage of the total) in the last three four-year periods is shown in Table 7.8. This table demonstrates two key phenomena. First, it shows that the party behaves as an intermittent institution, "hibernating" for forty months and functioning for eight, in each four-year period. Second, it is clear that most of PLN's expenditures, and presumably its activities, are of an electoral nature. This is evident as more than 90 per cent of its total expenses in the last three four-year periods took place in the eight months prior to each national election, during the electoral campaigns.

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[213] Fernández 14 February 2002.

Table 7.8. Distribution of PLN's Expenditures, 1990-1994, 1994-1998, and 1998-2002

| Four-Year Periods | Forty Pre-Electoral Months | Eight Electoral Months | Periods' Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1990-1994** | 4.6% | 95.4% | 100% |
| **1994-1998** | 8.8% | 91.2% | 100% |
| **1998-2002** | 9.0% | 91.0% | 100% |

Source: Authors' own estimations based on data provided by Morera 18 April 2002.

The PLN's intermittent functioning is strongly resented by its members. The previously mentioned internal poll revealed that 42.1 per cent of *liberacionistas* believe that the main organisational problem of their party at the local level is the disappearance of its structure after electoral campaigns. Almost 40 per cent claim that they are most concerned that the party is present in their communities only during electoral periods. Moreover, 82.8 per cent indicated that the PLN clearly has a leadership only during electoral times, and 94.2 per cent demanded more permanent participation in their party's activities.[215] There is little doubt that the PLN's "electoral machine" behaviour is not well regarded by its members, and most certainly disappoints its supporters.

3.2.2.3 Radicalisation of Internal Conflicts

Thirdly, another consequence of the PLN's candidate selection reform has been the radicalisation of its internal conflicts. It is widely known that the selection of the party's candidate is normally one of the most distressing activities of these political institutions. In the words of Austin Ranney:

> "[T]he most vital and hotly contested factional disputes in any party are the struggles that take place over the choice of its candidates; for what is at stake in such struggle...is nothing less than control of the core of what the party stands for and does."[216]

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[214] Morera 18 April 2002.
[215] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.
[216] Ranney 1981, p. 103.

This is especially true when candidate selection processes are democratised,[217] as in the case of the PLN.

Nevertheless, hardly anyone could have foreseen the levels of internal conflict that PLN primaries have triggered. This happened because, being members of the same party (generally standing for similar principles and policies), participating in "marathon-like" internal campaigns, and lacking a strong party leadership that could mediate and control the levels of confrontation, the main controversies during internal elections have to do with prolonged and direct personal attacks between "pre-candidates." This was the case in the Arias/Castillo election in 1985, and in the Castillo/Araya one in 1989. However, neither these elections, nor the later ones (Corrales/Coto in 1997, and Araya/Corrales/Álvarez in 2001) matched the internal battle fought in 1993.

As shown in Table 7.7, this election witnessed the highest number of "pre-candidates" competing in a PLN primary: seven. Additionally, creating even more internal unrest, it had a new-comer as the most important postulant: José María Figueres. The controversy of the election was heightened when the legality of several companies of the Figueres family were put into question,[218] and after a book was published linking Figueres-Olsen to the death of a drug dealer in 1973. Even though the case was never brought to trial,[219] this last issue "haunted" Figueres-Olsen, first during the internal election and later in the national one.[220] Moreover, it drove the other three main "pre-candidates" (Corrales, Penón, and Araya) to publicly ask Figueres to abandon the electoral race, and to deny him their support after he won it.[221] As expected, this caused internal commotion and heated open confrontations;[222]

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[217] Hazan and Rahat 2000.
[218] *La República* 25 de abril 1993; *La República* 6 de mayo 1993.
[219] Figueres even ended up suing the Romero brothers (José and David), authors of this book entitled *El caso Chemise.*
[220] Furlong 1994, p. 129.
[221] *La Nación* 18 de febrero 1993; *La Nación* 25 de mayo 1993; *Al Día* 26 de mayo 1993; *La Nación* 29 de mayo 1993; Pérez and Ramírez 8 de junio 1993.
[222] *La Nación* 19 de febrero 1993; *Al Día* 19 de febrero 1993; *La República* 18 de febrero 1993; *La Nación* 23 de febrero 1993; *La Nación* 2 de marzo 1993; *La Nación* 7 de marzo 1993; *La República* 15 de marzo 1993; *La Nación* 25 de marzo de 1993; *La República* 1 de abril 1993; *La República* 4 de abril 1993; *La República* 26 de mayo 1993; *Al Día* 26 de mayo 1993; *La Nación* 28 de mayo 1993; *La*

and even induced Corrales to consider leaving the PLN.[223] Both Corrales and Penón have admitted that this election was the most bitter political experience of their lives.[224]

According to Josette Altmann, the President's wife in the 1994-1998 period:

> "The 1993 internal election taught me that PLN primaries are basically civil wars. The weapons used by each faction are not policies or plans, just personal attacks. Afterwards, the winning candidate has to undertake the titanic mission of reuniting the party and getting his previous opponents' support before facing the national elections a month later."[225]

Indeed, one month is all the winning candidate gets to work on his party's unity before having to face the campaign for the national election. As contended by former PLN minister, Rodrigo Arias, "It is very difficult to rapidly unite a party when its members have been fighting each other for almost three and a half years."[226]

In the case of the 1993 primaries, Figueres did win, but was unable to reunite his party and obtain his adversaries' support. Therefore, the PLN was bitterly divided during the campaign for the 1994 elections and during its subsequent government (as discussed above). As demonstrated in Chapter 6, it was after these internal disputes, in the middle of the 1994-1998 PLN administration, that the Social Democrats suffered the most pronounced decline in their partisan loyalties.

The general conflicts between PLN's main leaders were replicated at all party levels when, prior to the 2002 contest, they decided to implement open elections to choose their candidates for the Legislative Assembly and for local Councils.[227] Beforehand, even if postulants had to prevail in a set of internal elections in order to reach the party's National Assembly,[228] final party lists presented for congressional and local

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*República* 27 de mayo 1993; *La Nación* 27 de mayo 1993; *La República* 30 de mayo 1993; *La Nación* 31 de mayo 1993.

[223] *La Nación* 19 de junio 1993; Corrales 2 April 2002; Güell 23 January 2002.

[224] Corrales 2 April 2002; Penón 15 March 2002.

[225] Altmann 6 August 2002.

[226] Arias-Sánchez 27 February 2002.

[227] See, Estatutos Partido Liberación Nacional updated until May 2002, Arts. 83-88.

[228] For details on the process see, TSE 2002a, Arts. 60-61.

elections were decided by this body under the scrutiny and direct influence of the party's presidential candidate. Thus, elected deputies and municipal authorities owed their job and their loyalty, to a great extent, to the party's candidate—who, if successful, was later the nation's president.

The reform changed things drastically, resulting in the multiplication of candidates at all levels. This made the PLN's internal electoral processes more expensive,[229] reduced the ability of party's high officials to monitor the competence and integrity of candidates, removed the most important incentive for party discipline,[230] and, by multiplying the number of losers in each election, increased the amount of internal disputes and resentments.[231] In fact, almost a quarter of *liberacionistas* indicated that "internal struggles" are one of the central manifestations of the PLN's problems, and 88.5 per cent of them believe that internal disputes between local leaders have increased party divisions.[232] It is no wonder that former Secretary General, Rolando González, characterised this reform as an "institutional suicide."[233]

All in all, PLN's internal electoral dynamics—particularly since 1993—work against any possible efforts to preserve its cohesion. This was confirmed by Anna Gabriela Ross' statement after holding the party's presidency. In her words, "Since we started organising open internal elections, PLN members' worst political enemies are all found within the party."[234]

#### 3.2.2.4 Abandonment of Central Party Roles

The fourth consequence of the PLN's new way of choosing its leadership was the abandonment of two central party functions: the recruitment of new political leaders,

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[229] For example, Víctor Hugo Víquez, a PLN member who competed for a space in the party's deputies list for Heredia prior to and after the reform, accepts that he expended six times more money on his candidacy once he had to race against other four contenders in open elections. Víquez 1 March 2002.
[230] The loss of party discipline is regarded by Lucio Mendienta as a central cause for a party's decadence. Mendieta y Núñez 1985.
[231] Vílchez 17 January 2002; Ulate 21 January 2002; Pacheco 11 March 2002; Carvajal 27 February 2002; Ugalde 21 January 2002; Víquez 1 March 2002; Sancho 12 August 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002.
[232] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.
[233] González 15 January and 18 June 2002.

and the training of its members. These two party roles are not relevant for factions that prefer to use their time and resources mainly on electoral activities.[235]

In terms of political recruitment, since the PLN divided into "electoral factions" it has neglected most of the programmes, which were generally launched by its Youth Movement.[236] According to former PLN's Youth President, Alex Sibaja, this Movement was "colonised" by the different factions and ended up reproducing the same electoral disputes in its internal leadership selection processes. As he admitted, there are few incentives and no real opportunities for young leaders in the party unless they have the "blessing" of one the "pre-candidates."[237] Thus, it was hardly a surprise that PLN members considered that the most important action that needs to be undertaken in order to restructure their institution (mentioned by 37.3 per cent of *liberacionistas*) is to "open spaces for the arrival of new figures to the party."[238]

Something similar happened to the PLN's training programmes.[239] According to Manuel Carballo, Director of the Centro de Estudios Democráticos de América Latina (CEDAL), the most important institution providing training for the party, between 1968 and 1978 around 60 per cent of the events organised by his Centre were PLN activities. This figure declined to 40 per cent between 1978 and 1990, and fell again to 25 per cent between 1990 and 2002. Moreover, Carballo indicated that while about 10,000 to 12,000 party members registered annually for non-electoral training sessions during the 1970s,[240] enrolment for these courses dropped to about 3,000 people between 2000 and 2001.[241] In the words of Víctor Ramírez, "The PLN has stopped teaching its members how to think."[242] Certainly, PLN members share this concern, as almost 90 per cent of them believe that the best way to collaborate with

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[234] Ross 11 July 2002.
[235] Zamora 10 April 2002; Ross 11 July 2002; Solís 7 June 2002; Carballo 22 March 2002.
[236] Chinchilla 4 June 2002; Churnside 2 April 2001; Villasuso 4 July 2002.
[237] Sibaja 11 March 2002.
[238] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.
[239] Garita 13 August 2002; Coto-Molina 5 August 2002; González 15 January and 18 June 2002; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002.
[240] The main topics discussed were: PLN's history and ideology, political organisation, party finance, and methodology of political training. Carballo reckons that about 30 per cent of PLN members participating in these training sessions enrolled in more than one course. Carballo 22 March 2002.
[241] Carballo 22 March 2002.
[242] Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002.

the party is by organising political training activities in their communities. In fact, establishing permanent "analysis groups" and training programmes were mentioned by *liberacionistas* as two central tasks necessary to restructure the party and overcome its current crisis.[243]

Recruiting new leadership and training its members are crucial party roles. They are essential in a party's constant need to innovate and adapt to its country's new realities and its followers' changing demands. It is by integrating new members with fresh ideas that a party avoids turning into a "closed" and antiquated political institution. Equally important, it is by training existing members that a political party can raise the quality of its leaders, assure at least a basic level of ideological awareness and coherence, and, as a result, can expect better outcomes when they are elected or appointed to public posts.

However, apart from the inherent importance of these roles, they also serve another central purpose in a party's internal life: they tend to generate unity. Especially in the case of political training, these roles are carried out with activities that party members perform together, as part of a single group with common objectives. As acknowledged by the PLN's President, Marielos Sancho:

> "People attend a training session or an analysis group as members of the party, not as representatives of one of the factions. It was amazing how fast electoral disputes were left aside the last time we were able to get together and discuss what should be our new policy priorities. The most important outcome of this type of activities is the general realisation that, in the things that really matter, we all have similar positions."[244]

Indeed, constant electoral struggles can easily cause party members to forget the reasons that led them to join a party in first place.

The PLN's case shows that internal democratisation processes have to be managed with caution, in order not to expose a party to internal ruptures and institutional waning. Indeed the pre-eminence of internal electoral processes, boosted by the

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[243] Instancia Social Demócrata and CEDAL 2002.

"opening" of the candidate selection method, has weakened PLN's internal cohesion. By deepening its factionalism, turning the party into an intermittent institution, strongly radicalising its internal conflicts, and inducing its abandonment of leadership recruitment and party members training, this reform has proved to be quite detrimental for the PLN's institutional strength.[245] This, in turn, has surely lowered its followers' morale, and definitely undermined the party's chances in national elections.

### 3.2.3 Distance between the PLN and its Representatives in Office

Regarded by Linz as an important reason for anti-party sentiments typical of presidential systems,[246] a third factor that has weakened the PLN's internal cohesion is the distance that has grown between the party and the officials it elects or appoints to office. As discussed above, since 1982 the PLN has espoused a number of policies of a neoliberal nature which are at odds with its original social democratic beliefs.[247] This certainly caused internal unease and various heated disputes that ended up dividing the party into two main groups: a more traditional social democratic sector composed mainly of older party members, and another group integrated by younger leaders voicing the "ideological renewal" of the party. The latter group seems to have prevailed both programmatically and in the struggle for central positions in the party's structure and in its governments.[248] This group's dominance was particularly evident during the last two times the PLN was in office (1986-1990 and 1994-1998), when not only less traditional party members were appointed to key positions, but also quite a few central posts were offered to highly qualified professionals with no party militancy.[249]

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[244] Sancho 12 August 2002.
[245] Hélène Combes has reported similar outcomes after studying the internal open elections in the Partido Revolucionario Democrático in Mexico. Combes March and April 2003.
[246] Linz 2002, pp. 292-293.
[247] For further details see for example, Booth 1998, Chap. 8.; Rovira-Mas 1987; Rovira-Mas octubre 1995; Wilson 1994; Wilson 1999.
[248] Cañas 17 May 1992; Corrales 2 April 2002; Álvarez-Desanti 5 March and 16 April 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002; Coto-Molina 5 August 2002. For more details on the division and disputes between the traditional and the reformist groups in the PLN see, Sánchez 1992.

Oscar Arias (1986-1990) was the first PLN president to implement this practice. After defeating Castillo, the "pre-candidate" supported by the more traditional sector of the party (particularly by Figueres-Ferrer and Oduber), he felt legitimised to start what local analysts regard as a generational change.[250] The most important modification implemented by Arias was to appoint several campaign advisors and, later, government high officials, who were not party members. He justified his decisions by arguing that talent, education, and competence are what should guide the selection of government officials, and not solely party affiliation. This practice was named "*meritocracia*."[251] As a result, almost 30 per cent of the most relevant positions in Arias' government (ministries, vice-ministries, and presidencies of central public institutions) were occupied by persons with no history of involvement in the PLN.[252] Moreover, his closest group of advisors (known as "Colina 2000") was composed of successful professionals, not necessarily related to the party.[253] Naturally, Arias' *meritocracia* was not easily criticised in public, but it certainly irritated many party members who were "not found worthy" to be appointed to his government.

According to Saúl Wesleder, former PLN treasurer and deputy, Arias' *meritocracia* was later revived during José María Figueres-Olsen's government (1994-1998).[254] As discussed above, apart from designating several officials with no party affiliation, one of this administration's main conflicts with the PLN was the appointment and the high concentration of power on the Grupo ATD. Indeed, the disputes between this "technically oriented" group and the more "political" group of Figueres-Olsen's cabinet led to the resignation of several traditional PLN members from the government,[255] and—as explained before—to constant disagreements between this administration and the party.

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[249] Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002; Sibaja 11 March 2002.
[250] Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002; Ramírez 22 January 2002; Ordóñez 6 April 2001; Borge 19 March 2001.
[251] *La República* 1 de abril 2002; Arias-Sánchez 22 March 2001.
[252] Rojas-Bolaños 1995, pp. 28-35.
[253] For example, one of the central figures of this group was John Bihel, a reputable Chilean political consultant.
[254] Weisleder 8 March 2002.
[255] Most notably, Carlos Manuel Castillo and Elías Soley. For further details see, *La República* 1 de abril 2002.

The internal bitterness caused by the selection practices implemented by Arias and Figueres-Olsen led Alberto Cañas to argue that:

> "The PLN did not really govern during its last two times in office. Both in 1986 and in 1994, all we did was win the election. Later, the government was handed over and run by a supra-party technocracy, with no practical or ideological relation to the party."[256]

This helps to explain why it was during these two administrations that most ideological disputes arose in the PLN.[257]

Despite the evident benefits of "meritocratic practices," few things cause as much internal distress amongst a party's membership as the disappointment of not seeing electoral victories materialise into office designations. This ends up eroding party members' loyalty, and certainly their willingness to participate in future election campaigns. It is more "productive" and reliable to work for a "pre-candidate" in one of the factions, and avoid "wasting time" in general party activities. The "coldness," and reluctance of supporters of the losing factions to participate in the last two general electoral campaigns (1997-1998 and 2001-2002) support this claim.[258] It is hard to maintain a party's unity when office holding, even after winning an election, is uncertain and depends not on party membership, but on the candidate's predilection.

## 4 Final Observations

As we saw in Chapter 6, the loss of partisan loyalties present in the Costa Rican case is not a generalised phenomenon. Indeed, it is the decline of the PLN's party identification, and its subsequent loss of electoral support, what accounts for the registered erosion of partisan adherence in the nation. The "single-party" nature of partisan dealignment in the country is a central consideration when analysing the

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[256] Cañas 13 March 2002.
[257] Cañas 13 March 2002; Álvarez-Desanti 5 March and 16 April 2002; Villasuso 4 July 2002; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002.
[258] Coto-Molina 5 August 2002; Corrales 2 April 2002; Álvarez-Desanti 5 March and 16 April 2002; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002.

possible explanations of this phenomenon. Hence, assessing the causes of dealignment in Costa Rica implies an in-depth analysis of the PLN's dynamics as an institution, in government, and in its relation with its supporters.

Building on the two most widely accepted models developed to explain partisan dealignment—the political and the sociological one—Part IV of the thesis undertakes this task. Specifically, Chapter 7 has concentrated on the political explanation. This is, explaining the loss of partisan loyalties as a result of the public's dissatisfaction with political parties (shortcomings "on the supply side"). For reasons already explained, the analysis focused on the case of the PLN.

Before getting into the specifics of this party, and to demonstrate that events in Costa Rica are part of global processes, the political explanation of dealignment was presented in the context of two universal phenomena: the widespread discontent with parties, and—especially relevant for the PLN case—the general transformations and dilemmas of social democracy. From this analysis it was clear that the political explanation, generally used to elucidate nation-specific cases, could also be applied to explicate general processes. This is certainly relevant for the broad theoretical discussion of dealignment and its causes.

However, notwithstanding these global patterns, it was also clear to us that given the diversity of parties and the distinctive features of each country's political dynamics, uncovering the causes of dealignment required a detailed individual analysis. Hence we studied PLN's actual crisis in Costa Rica, specifically assessing what have been regarded as its major shortcomings and their effect on the decline of this party's support. For the purpose of clarity, first we studied the performance and the general changes of the Social Democrats as a party in government. Afterwards we assessed their main conflicts as a political institution.

In terms of the effect of PLN's performance in government on its partisan loyalties, two central points ought to be mentioned. First, the successful and "socially oriented" social democratic development model implemented and led by the PLN since the 1950s, started to decline at the end of the 1970s. Moreover, by negotiating and

carrying out neoliberal guided PAEs since the beginning of the 1980s, this party played a central role weakening its own social democratic model. With its movement towards the centre of the ideological spectrum, the PLN now shares substantive policy objectives with its historical opponent, the centre-right PUSC. As we saw, these changes have not been well-regarded by PLN supporters.

Second, it was evident that Costa Ricans in general and *liberacionistas* in particular were quite disappointed with PLN's performance the last time it was in office in the period studied. Indeed, alongside the Carazo administration (1978-1982), when the country endured the most difficult economic crisis in its history, the Figueres-Olsen administration (1994-1998) has been the worst evaluated government in the last twenty-four years. As we saw, this government's unpopularity was prompted by several factors: a poor economic performance (basically during its first three years), a set of unpopular and contradicting decisions, several corruption scandals, Figueres' confrontational "governing style," and the great disappointment given the disproportionate expectations generated by the arrival of another "Figueres" to the presidency. As demonstrated, it was during his government that the PLN suffered the most important drop in its partisan identification figures.

Nonetheless, it was hard to believe that the loyalty to what was Costa Rica's most important party for almost fifty years eroded just because of one disappointing government (even if it was by a "Figueres"). Hence we studied PLN's major contradictions as an institution, and certainly found other important reasons for the party's decline, and for its inability to recuperate the lost support. As noted, contrary to the assessment of parties' performances in government, it is not possible to assure a direct causal link between parties' internal conflicts, and their loss of voters' loyalty. However, we know that internal conflicts do debilitate a party and diminish its capacity to respond to its supporters' demands and expectations, eventually easing the way for their defection.

In the case of the PLN three general, mutually related factors appear to have weakened its internal cohesion since the mid-1980s. First, the loss of leadership and the feudalisation process incited by the death of its main founding fathers. Second,

the pre-eminence of internal electoral processes prompted by the democratisation of its leadership selection practices. Specifically, this reform had four main consequences for the party's internal dynamics: it enhanced its factionalism, turned the party into an intermittent institution, strongly radicalised its internal conflicts, and induced its abandonment of party roles essential for institutional renewal and union (elite recruitment and membership training). Finally, the growing distance of the party from its elected or appointed representatives in office during its last two administrations (1986-1990 and 1994-1998), has also been quite detrimental to the PLN's internal cohesion.

The aforementioned performance and institutional problems in the PLN started to emerge in the 1980s, and their impact was particularly noticeable between 1993 and 1996. As indicated above, partisan identification in Costa Rica has being declining since the mid-1980s, and suffered its most pronounced fall precisely in the 1993-1996 period. This certainly corroborates the applicability of the political explanation to the Costa Rican case.

The findings of this chapter also provide two important conclusions relevant for dealignment's broad, primarily Western-centred perspectives. Firstly, analysts using the political explanation to clarify dealignment processes normally tend to concentrate on parties' performances in government. Some even called it "the performance explanation."[259] In this type of evaluations, poor economic indicators as well as specific controversial governmental decisions or scandals are probably the most popular factors used to explain the erosion of party loyalties. By assessing the internal institutional dynamics of a party enduring a dealigning process, we have unveiled other factors that, together with economic mismanagement and conjunctural events during an administration, can also debilitate a party and eventually cause the erosion of its partisan identification. Even if indirectly, institutional waning can certainly be a cause of dealignment.

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[259] Dalton 2000, pp. 34-35.

Secondly, the Costa Rican case provides the general dealignment discussion with an alternative, not often considered, variable for analysing similar phenomena in other Latin American countries: personalism. Indeed, the PLN's case has centre-staged the relevance of personality for party loyalties. Parties functioning in countries whose central cleavages are of a political nature (as in most Latin American countries), are generally "born" after a distinctive event—usually armed conflicts—where particular figures played central roles. Such parties may depend to a greater extent on leaders or *caudillos* and/or on their images to uphold their followers' loyalty. This may explain the recurrent election as party leaders and even as Chiefs of State of ex-presidents' sons, wives, or close relatives in Latin America.[260]

Moreover, as suggested in Chapter 6, this also implies that, contrary to parties functioning in party systems whose central cleavages are of a religious or a social nature, parties having a political event as a "dividing line" and different personalities as their sources of loyalty, would have weaker, or at least less resilient party identifications. These parties' loyalties depend, to bigger extent, on figures that eventually grow old and died, and on events that are more easily "forgotten" by younger generations of voters. It is worth noting that the relevance of personalism for Latin American parties' loyalties is reinforced by the magnification of the candidate's image typical of presidentialism. All in all, personality is a variable that ought to be taken into consideration whenever studying dealignment in a Latin American country, and certainly in Costa Rica.

In conclusion, the evidence presented in this chapter allowed for a deeper understanding of PLN's actual crisis, and confirmed the bearing of the political explanation of dealignment to elucidate Costa Rica's electoral change process. Indeed, there are clear and identifiable political factors that seem to have prompted PLN's loss of partisan loyalties. As often happens when analysing social phenomena, the Social Democrats' political crisis has been triggered by various, in many cases intertwined, elements. Hence, measuring their individual weight is not possible.

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[260] Illustrative cases can be found in Argentina (Perón family), Chile (Frei family), Mexico (Cárdenas family), Uruguay (Batlle family), Nicaragua (Chamorro family), Panama (Moscoso family), and Costa Rica (Figueres and Calderón familes).

Nevertheless, after a detailed assessment of the case and numerous conversations with different PLN members, it seems that losing the party's founders, the disappointment with the Figueres-Olsen administration (1994-1998), and the internal conflicts and divisions caused by the open primary elections, have had a stronger impact on the Social Democrats' declining support. In any case, this chapter has demonstrated that different political factors compounded to produce the erosion of PLN's partisan identification. The next chapter will discuss whether the sociological explanation of dealignment also applies to the Costa Rican case, and whether this case is useful to enrich this explanation's general position.

# Chapter 8

## On the Demand Side: The Sociological Explanation of Dealignment

## 1 Introduction

Chapters 7 and 8 concentrate on explaining the causes of dealignment in Costa Rica. As we saw in Part III, the PLN is the party whose loyalties are eroding and whose electoral support is declining. Thus, assessing the causes of dealignment in Costa Rica implies an analysis of this party's dynamics as an institution, in government, and in its relation with its supporters. Both Chapters 7 and 8 perform this task, from the perspective of the two most popular theoretical approaches developed to assess dealignment cases: the political and the sociological explanations.

The previous chapter studied the PLN's dynamics as a party in government and as an institution, and showed that there are distinctive political factors that account for this party's loyalty decline. Therefore, it was concluded that the political explanation of dealignment does work in the Costa Rican case. Now the focus shifts to analysing whether changes at the sociological level are also responsible for the loss of support suffered by Costa Rica's Social Democrats. Moreover, this analysis should shed some light on the reasons why the majority of former *liberacionistas* have chosen to become politically independent, rather than to support another party. The sociological explanation of dealignment consists, basically, of explaining partisan dealignment as a result of changes in the social composition and nature of the electorate. Hence, dealignment is understood as a result of transformations in the "political demand."

In general terms, this explanation poses that changes in social variables, most prominently, social class, place of residence, age, and level of education, have an impact on partisan identification. In the specific case of Costa Rica, it appears that general social transformations have been particularly detrimental for the PLN. Indeed, a preliminary observation indicates that the stagnation of the middle class, the decline of the agricultural sector, urbanisation, rising levels of education, and the growing availability of political information, especially amongst the younger generations have, in one way or another, negatively affected this party's loyalties.

To substantiate this assumption, the present chapter will study Costa Rica's main social transformations in the last decades, and their effect on the PLN's declining

support. This will allow us to find whether changes in the social composition and in the nature of the electorate also account for Costa Rica's current dealignment process. The assessment of a small Latin American democracy should also provide interesting conclusions to test and complement dealignment's general propositions.

Censuses, survey studies, and interviews are the main sources of information of the present chapter. It is divided into five general parts. Firstly, the introduction posits its main objective. Secondly, the general sociological explanation of dealignment is presented. Afterwards, a longer third section assesses Costa Rica's main social changes in the last decades, and a fourth section evaluates their impact on the PLN's partisan identification decline. Finally, the chapter concludes recapitulating the central findings.

## 2 The Sociological Explanation

Defined by Evans and colleagues as the "bottom-up explanation,"[1] the sociological explanation argues that dealignment and the general changes in a country's electoral dynamics ensuing from it, are caused by secular transformations in the social composition and nature of voters. In other words, partisan loyalties erode as a result of changes in the "numbers" or relative weight of different social groups, as well as because of the varying political attitudes associated with these changes.

Transformations studied from the viewpoint of the sociological explanation are generally understood as part of a broader socio-structural phenomenon: the emergence of post-industrialism.[2] Russell Dalton has developed one of most coherent frameworks to explain how changes in post-industrial societies affect citizens' political attitudes and behaviour.[3] The author refers to advanced Western countries when he signals these changes, thus not all of them are present in the Latin American scenario. Nevertheless, some of the social transformations studied by Dalton are

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[1] Evans et al. 1999, pp. 87-89.
[2] Bell 1973; Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1990; Inglehart 1997; Clark and Rempel 1997.
[3] Dalton 1996b; Dalton et al. 1984a. Other sound analyses on this topic have been presented by, Rempel and Clark 1997; Lechner 1998; Zaffirio 1998.

occurring in other regions.[4] Hence, it is worthwhile studying whether some of these changes are present in Costa Rica and, if so, how they have influenced citizens' partisan loyalties.

According to Dalton's general approach, citizens have changed their political attitudes and electoral behaviour basically due to five intertwined social processes.[5] In the first place, citizens have benefited—even if with inconsistencies—from an unprecedented improvement in economic well-being since World War II. This has improved the living standards and life expectations of many low and middle class sectors. In the second place, a concomitant result of the previous point has been the restructuring of the labour force. In general terms the size of the industrial and, especially, of the agricultural labour force has declined, as more and more citizens have found new job opportunities in the service sector. Indeed, a growing number of nations have already passed Bell's threshold of post-industrialism: half the labour force employed in the tertiary sector of the economy.[6]

In the third place, societies are not only experiencing changes in the relative size of the three main employment sectors, but also in the context of the workplace and the residential neighbourhood. Urbanisation processes and the expanding size of metropolitan centres stimulate changes in life expectations, as they introduce citizens to new habits, interest, and institutions. Growing affluence, new tertiary-sector jobs, and increasing geographical mobility have positively affected social mobility and changed lifestyles, blurring class distinctions and the partisan behaviour associated with it.

These socio-economic changes were joined by the expansion of educational opportunities, the fourth process mentioned by Dalton. Certainly, modernising societies are characterised not only by rising levels of compulsory education but, most notably, by increasing levels of university training. Finally, ascending levels of education and, hence, of information-handling skills, have been accompanied by

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[4] Manuel Rojas-Bolaños has highlighted the political changes caused by social transformations in Costa Rica in the last two decades. Rojas-Bolaños 2002, p. 29.
[5] Dalton 1996b, pp. 7-10.; Dalton et al. 1984a.

parallel rises in information resources. The most noteworthy developments have taken place within the media, particularly television. Other significant developments include the growth of electronic information, especially with computers and the Internet, and the increasing number, variety, and availability of more traditional sources of information such as: newspapers, magazines, and books. In Dalton's words, "Information is no longer a scarce commodity."[7]

Expanding education and increasing information resources, have resulted in what Ronald Inglehart describes as a process of "cognitive mobilization," or the qualitative increase of the electorate's political sophistication.[8] Rising educational levels and the growing availability of political information have improved the political skills and resources of contemporary voters. With the decrease in the cost of acquiring information and the increase in the public's ability to process it, more individuals are able to evaluate parties and their performance while in office without depending solely on the cues provided by partisan identification.[9] More knowledgeable, politically self-sufficient citizens have a stronger tendency to be politically independent.

Another important change not related to post-industrialism (but surely enhanced by it) is what Dalton and, most prominently, Beck, and Clubb and colleagues, refer to as the "aging of the party system." This argument basically proposes that partisan adherence declines as time passes and the conflicts and issues that prompted the cleavage from which the party system emerged lose relevance.[10] As explained in previous chapters, the probability of this phenomenon happening in cleavages of a political nature (as the Costa Rican one), seems to be higher.

In general terms the aging of the party system is more likely to be manifested amongst younger generations of citizens, who, in any case, tend to be rather less interested in politics, are less likely to vote, less committed to any political party, and somewhat

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[6] Bell 1973.
[7] Dalton 1996b, pp. 8-9.
[8] Inglehart 1977, Chaps. 10-12.; Inglehart 1990; Dalton et al. 1984a, pp. 18-19.; Dalton 1984a.
[9] Dalton 1984a; Dalton 1996b; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000c, pp. 10-11.
[10] Dalton et al. 1984a, p. 19.; Beck 1984a; Clubb et al. 1980.

more volatile.[11] Therefore, as posited by Miller and Shanks, "Changes in social conditions and political context are more likely to produce changes in party identification among the young..."[12] However, following Converse, when historical effects can be disengaged from life-cycle effects,[13] they often permit to foresee secular changes in electoral trends.[14] This position is supported by Constantino Urcuyo. In his words:

> "There is a good chance of witnessing more fluid partisan loyalties and the emergence of more independent voters, when a generation of citizens learns about parties' foundational cleavage in history books."[15]

When this happens, the eventual strengthening of party loyalties and "normalisation" of the vote predicted by the life-cycle effect may not be enough to maintain previous levels of partisan identification. Hence, age is also an important sociological variable to assess when studying partisan dealignment.

Concentrating on the Costa Rican case, several analysts have mentioned the relevance of social transformations for explaining the country's current electoral changes.[16] In terms of the aging of the party system argument, it is evident that the central cleavage—the 1948 Civil War—which defined the nation's political landscape and the main partisan loyalties, is losing its "bonding capacity."[17] According to Fernando Leal, "Our new generations ignore their grandparents' political motivations."[18] Likewise, Fernando Zeledón explains the reasons for the country's recent electoral changes by indicating that "new voters do not have the partisan loyalties that their parents used to have."[19] Certainly, commentators agree that the 1948 episode is no longer relevant for many young citizens,[20] whom one would expect to have higher levels of political independence.

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[11] Heath et al. 1991, p. 212.
[12] Miller and Shanks 1996, p. 184.
[13] This concept is studied in Chapter 2.
[14] Converse 1974, pp. 740-741.
[15] Urcuyo-Fournier 26 February 2002.
[16] Calderón-Fournier 13 March 2002; Ulibarri 17 January 2002; Varela 25 January 2002; Urcuyo-Fournier 21 March 2001; Carvajal 27 February 2002; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002.
[17] For details see Chapter 6.
[18] *La Nación* 13 de febrero 2001.
[19] *La Nación* 12 de diciembre 2001.
[20] Urcuyo-Fournier 2000; Urcuyo-Fournier 21 March 2001; Fournier 23 January 2002; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002; Ramírez 22 January 2002; Ordóñez 7 February 2002; Paniagua 17 January 2002; Haug

Moreover, it has also been contended that political parties now appeal to a more knowledgeable and demanding electorate.[21] Indeed, changes in contemporary voters have been associated with the modernisation process lived by the Costa Rican society in the last decades.[22] As indicated by Florisabel Rodríguez, "Political parties are struggling to respond to an evermore demanding Costa Rican citizen."[23] Commentators generally recognise that the development of these demanding and politically sceptical citizens has been enhanced by the growing availability of information, especially due to the development of a more diverse, active, and critical press.[24] Bluntly, the number of Popkin's "reasoning voters" has increased.[25] Consequently, local analysts have echoed van der Eijk and colleagues,[26] highlighting the tendency of citizens to behave in a more individualistic way, not as followers, let alone members of political parties.[27]

The likely result of all these processes is for partisan loyalties to decline, and political apathy, scepticism, and partisan independence to increase, all true in Costa Rica as demonstrated in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. For younger, better educated, less loyal, bettered informed, and more individualistic and independent voters, candidates, programs and the evaluation of incumbents' executions—Fiorina's retrospective voting[28]—provide central decisional elements. Hence, as illustrated in Chapter 5, voting behaviour in Costa Rica is now more volatile. As in the case of many Western developed societies,[29] we would expect to find this kind of political behaviour mostly amongst middle or high class, urban, better educated, and younger Costa Ricans.

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11 January 2002; Ulibarri 17 January 2002. For two studies regarding the issues that seem to be more appealing to young Costa Ricans see, Villalobos-Cárdenas and Jiménez-Porras 2000; Varela 2000.

[21] Ordóñez 6 April 2001; *La Nación* 29 de junio 2001; *La Nación* 12 de marzo 2001.

[22] Varela 25 January 2002; Urcuyo-Fournier 25 June 2002. For a discussion regarding the main social changes in Costa Rica in the last two decades see, Vega 1996.

[23] Rodríguez 21 March 2001.

[24] González 15 January and 18 June 2002; Thompson 16 January 2002; Vílchez 17 January 2002; Ulibarri 17 January 2002; Zumbado 22 January 2002; Gutiérrez-Saxe 8 February 2002; Ramírez 1 and 12 March 2002; Calderón-Fournier 13 March 2002; Monge-Álvarez 25 April 2002. For an analysis of Costa Rica's media main transformations in the last decades see, Ulibarri 1992.

[25] Popkin 1991, p. 7. For a cogent analysis about reasoning voting see, Pappi 1996.

[26] Eijk et al. 1992.

[27] Sobrado 4 April 2001; Solano 4 April 2001; *La Nación* 12 de diciembre 2001.

[28] Fiorina 1981. For a revealing analysis about the influence of party identification in retrospective economic voting see, Johnston and Pattie 1999.

[29] Rempel and Clark 1997, p. 14.; Dalton et al. 1984a, p. 21.

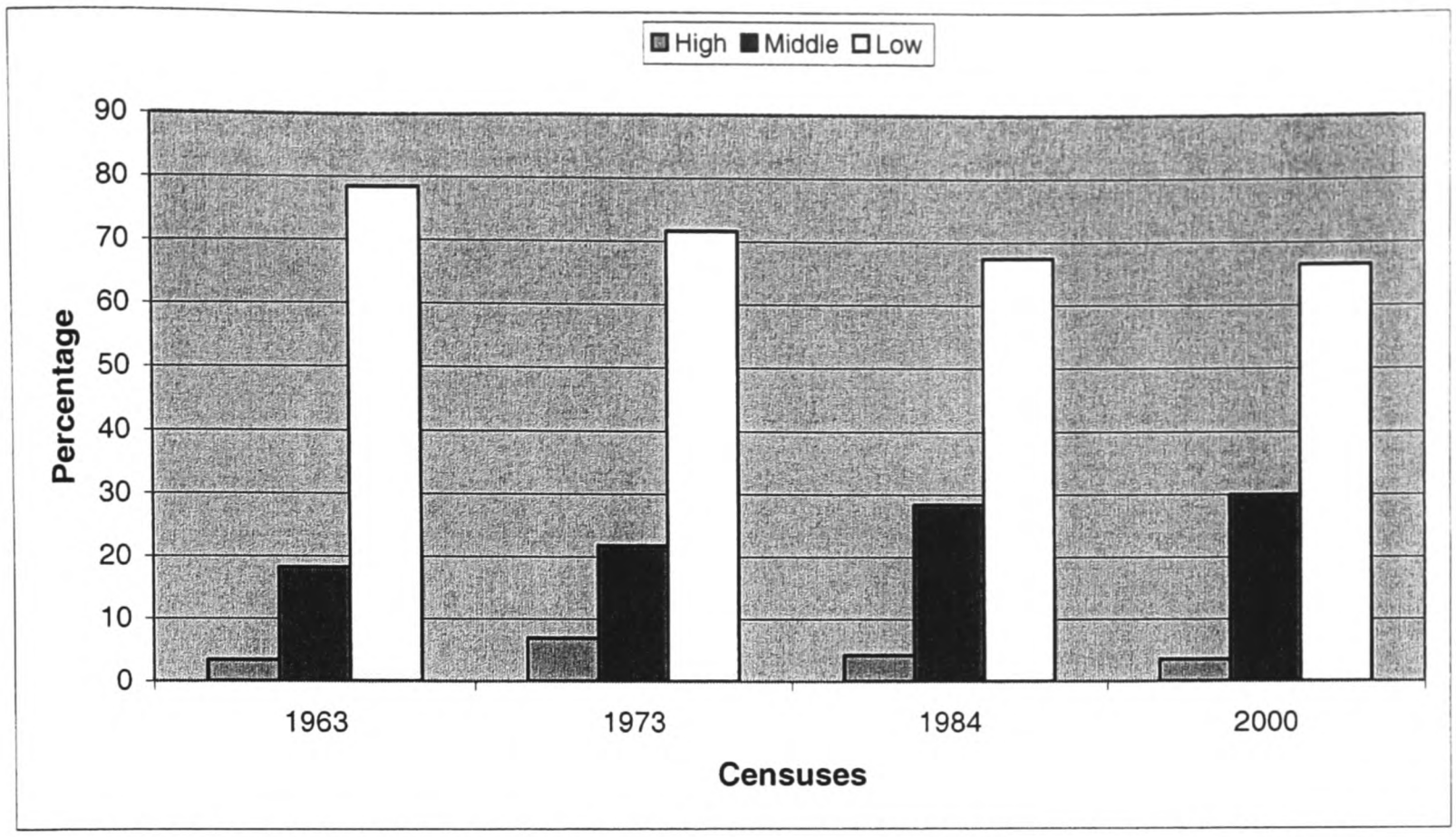
## 3 Central Social Transformations in Costa Rica

Prior to analysing how social changes have affected the PLN's support, it is necessary to study what have been the central transformations in Costa Rica's social composition in the last decades. Hence, building essentially on information from the last five censuses (1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000), this section assesses the country's main social changes. We concentrate on examining transformations in variables which are indicative of the six aforementioned processes. Specifically changes in social classes, in the country's main employment sectors, in Costa Rica's population and in citizens' place of residence, in their educational level, in the general expansion of media and information resources, and the implications of age in what was defined above as the aging of the party system, are studied.

### *3.1 Changes in Social Structure*

In the first place, in terms of changes in Costa Rica's social classes, Graph 8.1 shows that the country has witnessed a progressive decrease of the lower sectors and an increase of the middle ones in the last forty years. Apart from the rise in 1973, the upper class has stayed generally stable, registering between 3.5 and 4.2 per cent of the population. Thus, Costa Rica has lived a process of social mobility as the growth of the middle sector has mainly resulted from lower classes improving their socio-economic conditions. This is especially true between the beginning of the 1960s and the mid-1980s. As stressed in Chapter 7, this process significantly slowed down between 1984 and 2000. As we will see later, this was not beneficial at all for the PLN, a party whose base of support basically comes from middle sectors. In any case, in terms of longer-term changes in Costa Rica's society, Graph 8.1 shows that the country has lived an important process of social mobility, whose central result has been the growth the middle sector, now representing a third of the population.

Graph 8.1. Costa Rica's Population by Social Sector, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000

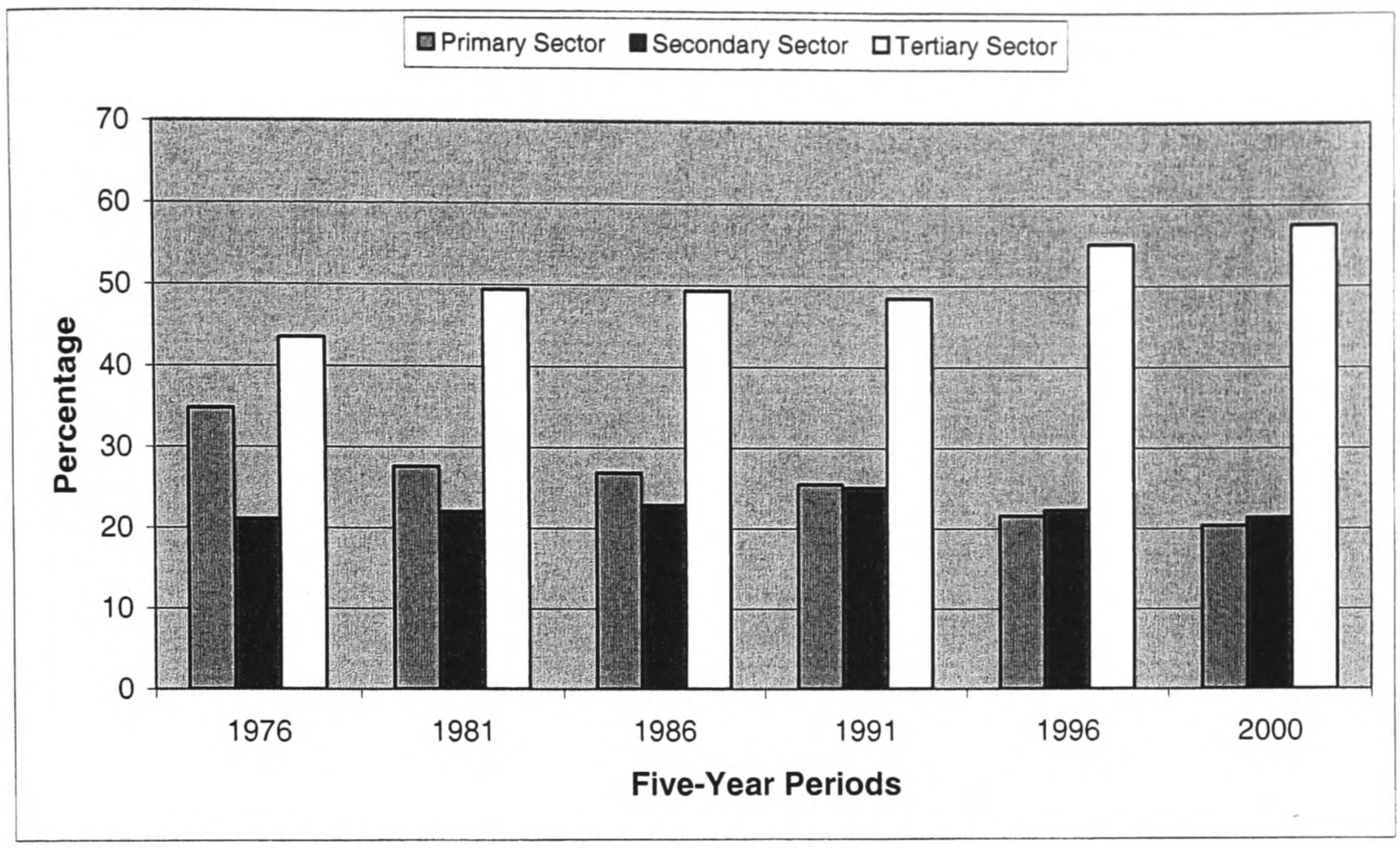



Note: Data for 1963, 1973, and 1984 is based on censuses. Information for 2000, the same year the last census took place, was obtained from a study by the IIS.
Sources: For 2000, IIS 2001, p. 12.; for the rest, Vega et al. 1995, p. 62.

*3.2 Changes in Employment Sectors*

In the second place, Graph 8.2 demonstrates that changes in the country's social structure have been accompanied by transformations in the relative importance of the main employment sectors of the economy. Indeed, during the last three decades the percentage of Costa Ricans working in the secondary and, most significantly, in the primary sector of the economy has diminished, while those making a living in tertiary activities have risen. In fact, by the beginning of the 1980s, virtually half of Costa Rica's labour force was employed in the tertiary sector of the economy. By the mid-1990s the country had well over passed Bell's threshold of post-industrialism, as more than half the labour force was employed in this sector.[30]

Graph 8.2. Percentage of Costa Rica's Labour Force Employed in the Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Sectors of the Economy, 1976-2000




Note: The official data series started in 1976, and no information is yet available for years after 2000. By primary sector we understand agricultural and related activities, by secondary sector industrial and related activities, and by tertiary sector service activities.

Source: Author's own estimations based on MIDEPLAN 2002.

Furthermore, using the last three censuses, Table 8.1 illustrates a significant decline in the percentage of Costa Rica's working force employed in agricultural activities (primary sector of the economy). Indeed, between 1973 and 2000, the percentage of the country's labour force which made a living in this sort of activities fell by 17.1 points. As shown in Graph 8.2, most of the citizens that are no longer engaged in agricultural enterprises have found new employment opportunities in the tertiary sector of the economy. Again, this change is prejudicial for the PLN, because citizens who work in agricultural activities are also considered to be part of the party's traditional base of support. This aspect will be assessed in further detail in the next section.

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[30] Bell 1973.

Table 8.1. Percentage of Costa Rica's Labour Force Employed in Agricultural and in Non-Agricultural Activities According to Censuses, 1973, 1984, and 2000

| Censuses | Non-Agricultural Activities | Agricultural Activities | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1973** | 61.2% | 38.8% | 100% |
| **1984** | 66.7% | 33.3% | 100% |
| **2000** | 78.3% | 21.7% | 100% |
| **Change between 1973-2000** | 17.1 | - 17.1 | — |

Source: Rodríguez agosto 2002, p. 13, Cuadro 1.

*3.3 Changes in Population and Place of Residence*

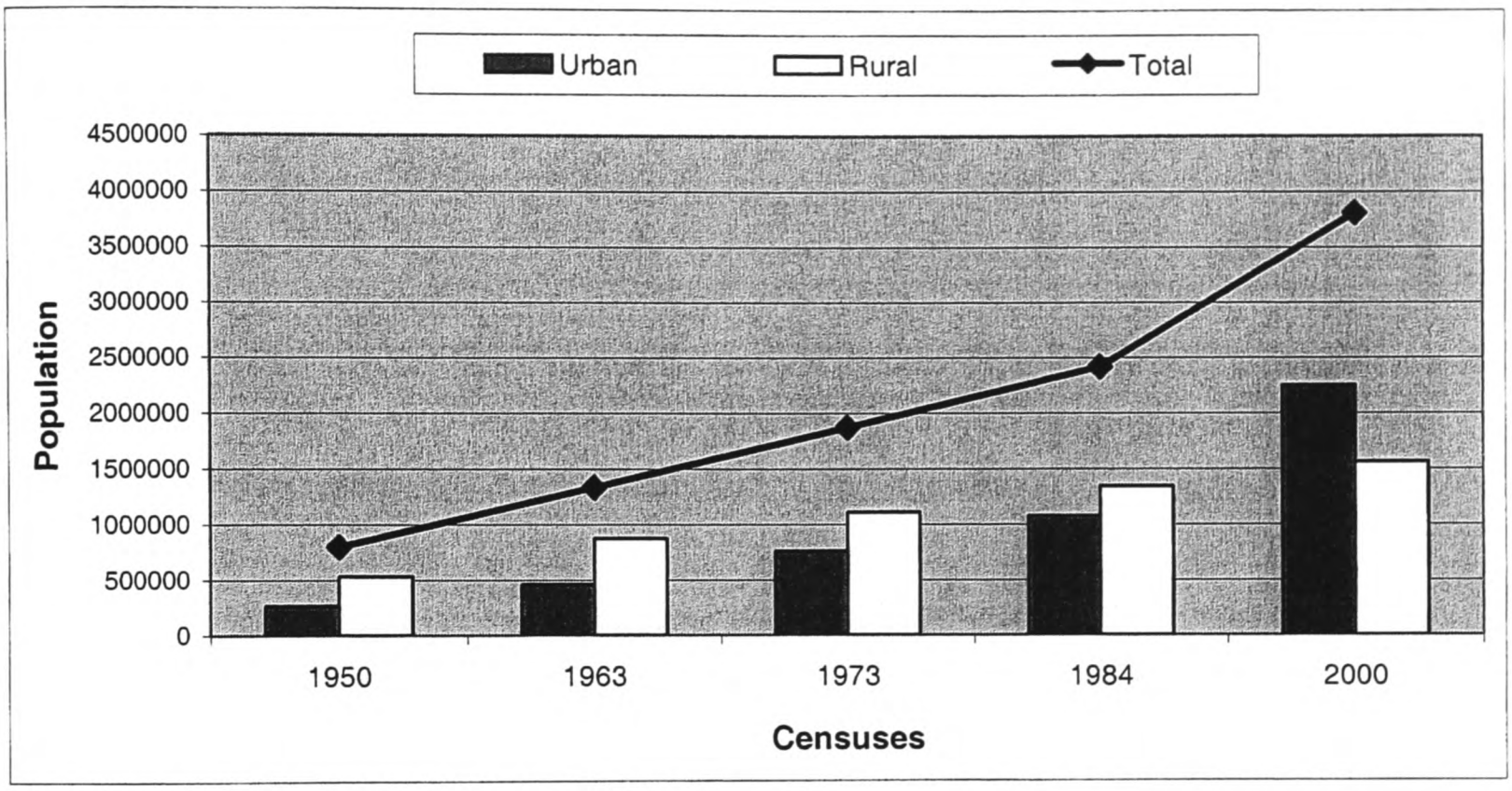
In the third place, not only have social classes and employment sectors changed in the last decades in Costa Rica. The country's general population and citizens' places of residence have also undergone important transformations. Graph 8.3 depicts the ascending trend of Costa Rica's population, which has grown from less than a million in 1950, to almost 4 million in 2000. The growth of the country's populace has been continuous and was especially strong between 1984 and 2000. According to the data presented in Tables 8.2 and 8.3, this phenomenon is due to two general processes.

Firstly, population growth is a result of the improvement of social indicators such as life expectancy and infant mortality, and not to rises in birth rates, which have actually decreased in the last fifty years. Secondly, the rise in international migration figures has also had a significant impact on population increases. Indeed, between 1984 and 2002, the percentage of Costa Rican residents born outside the country went from 3.68 per cent to 7.78 per cent. As depicted in Table 8.3, most of the foreigners living in Costa Rica migrated from neighbouring Nicaragua. In fact, nearly 6 per cent of Costa Rica's population are immigrants from Nicaragua.[31] To the best of my knowledge, a systematic study assessing the political attitudes and behaviour of Nicaraguan migrants has not been done yet. However one could presume that, given

[31] The figure is probably higher because censuses data do not include the significant amount of Nicaraguans that travel every year to work in the coffee and sugar cane harvests in Costa Rica, and/or those who stay in the country illegally.

their natural detachment from Costa Rica's political history and parties and the absence of a strong democratic culture in their country,[32] citizens with Nicaraguan origin now living in Costa Rica would have a greater predisposition for political independence.

Graph 8.3. Growth in Population and Urban and Rural Residence in Costa Rica According to Censuses, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000




Source: INEC, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000.

Table 8.2. Selected Demographic Indicators in Costa Rica, 1950-2000

| Indicator | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Life Expectancy (years)** | 57.3 | 63.0 | 68.1 | 73.5 | 75.2 | 75.6 |
| **Infant Mortality (for every 1000 born alive)** | 90.1 | 67.8 | 61.5 | 19.1 | 14.8 | 10.2 |
| **General Birth Rate (births per 1000 citizens)** | 44.8 | 50.2 | 33.2 | 31.2 | 27.4 | 22.2 |

Source: MIDEPLAN 2002.

[32] For a study on Nicaragua's political culture see, Córdoba-Macías and Günther 1995.

Table 8.3. International Migration to Costa Rica According to Censuses, 1950, 1963, 1973, and 2000
(percentage of Costa Rica's population)

| Country of origin of residents born outside Costa Rica (a) | 1950 | 1963 | 1973 | 1984 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | 4.15 | 2.66 | 1.19 | 3.68 | 7.78 |
| **Nicaragua** | 2.36 | 1.40 | 0.63 | 1.90 | 5.94 |
| **Panama** | 0.26 | 0.24 | 0.09 | 0.20 | 0.27 |
| **USA** | 0.12 | 0.15 | 0.11 | 0.22 | 0.30 |
| **El Salvador** | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.04 | 0.36 | 0.23 |
| **Colombia** | 0.08 | 0.05 | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.16 |
| **Other** | 1.27 | 0.76 | 0.29 | 0.93 | 0.94 |

(a) Census data only includes "habitual residents." Hence, it excludes individuals staying in Costa Rica for less than 6 months who express no intention of living in the country. This contemplates tourists and people staying for short periods for labour purposes.
Source: INEC 2001, p. 4, Cuadro 2.

Additionally, Graph 8.3 demonstrates how, until 1984, citizens living in rural places dominated in Costa Rica. However this changed between 1984 and 2000, when the urban population surpassed its rural counterpart. This is consistent with the decline in individuals employed in agricultural activities—generally rural—whose most important drop happened between the same two years (see Table 8.1). Indeed, the percentage of Costa Rica's population living in San José—the country's capital—where the main metropolitan area is located, rose from 22 per cent in 1950, to 34.2 per cent in 2000.[33] Therefore, between the mid-1980s and 2000, Costa Rica not only experienced an evident rise in its population growth, but also in the amount of citizens living in urban centres. Social mobility, new third-sector jobs, and urbanisation and international migration processes—all of which are present in Costa Rica—change citizens' lifestyles and demands, and influence their political attitudes and behaviour, making partisan independence even more likely.

[33] CELADE 1997, p. 38, Table 7.

*3.4 Changes in Education*

In the fourth place educational levels have also risen in Costa Rica. Table 8.4 shows how in the last fifty years the country's literacy level has increased from 78.8 per cent, to 95.2 per cent. In other words, by 2000 more than 95 per cent of Costa Ricans over ten years old were able read and write. Furthermore, the average number of years of education amongst the country's citizens more than doubled between 1950 and 2000, and attendance to educational centres increased 5.3 per cent in the last sixteen years. This has caused an "upgrade" in Costa Rica's labour force educational level mode, which went from incomplete primary education in the beginning of the 1970s, to complete primary education by the mid-1980s.

Table 8.4. Selected Education Indicators in Costa Rica According to Censuses, 1950, 1963, 1973, and 2000

| Indicator | 1950 | 1963 | 1973 | 1984 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Literacy (a)** | 78.8 | 85.7 | 89.8 | 93.1 | 95.2 |
| **Average number of years of education (b)** | 3.1 | 3.6 | 5.3 | 5.9 | 7.4 |
| **Percentage Attending Educational Centres (c)** | NA | NA | NA | 28.3 | 33.6 |
| **Educational level mode (d)** | NA | NA | Incomplete Primary | Complete Primary | Complete Primary |

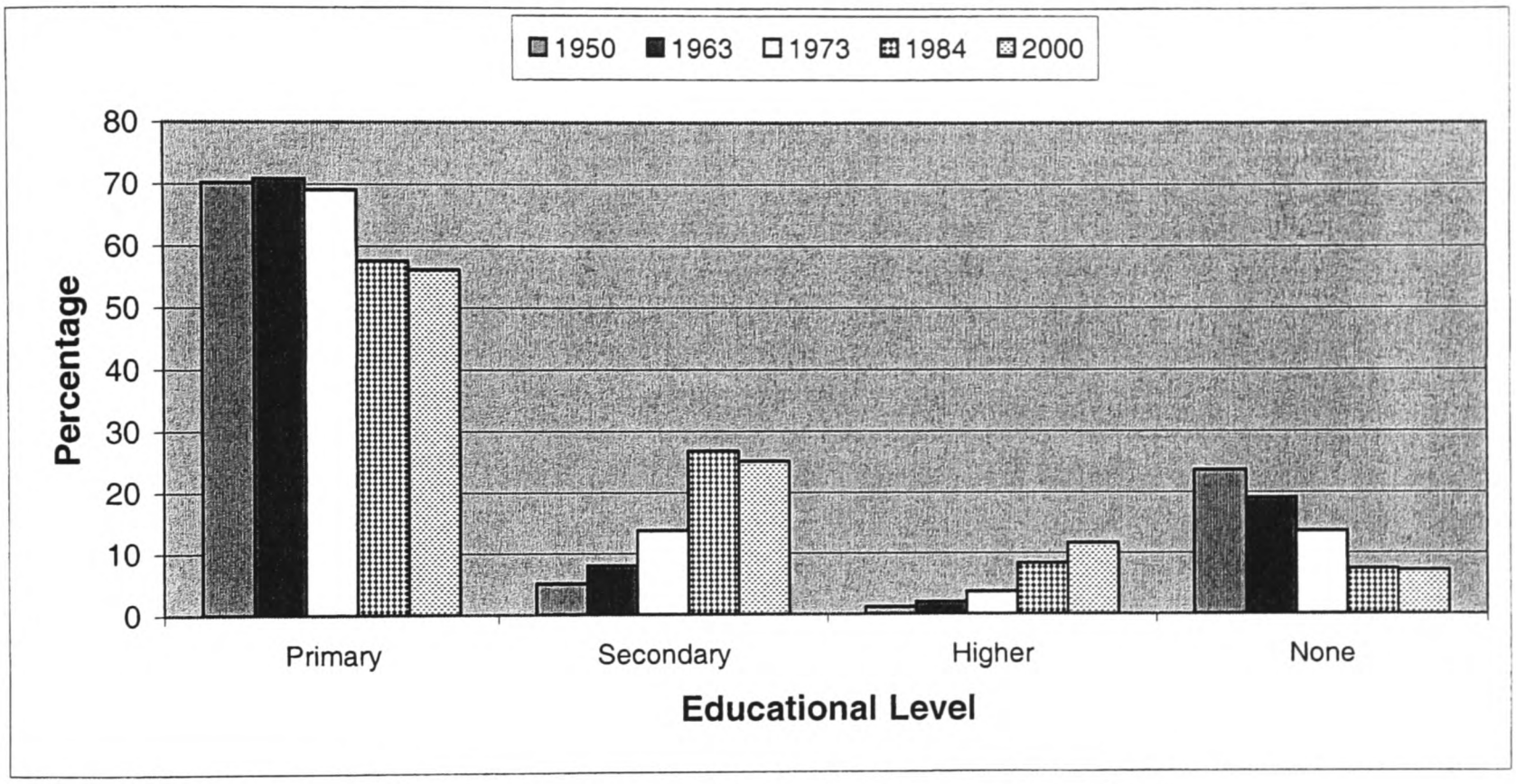
(a) Percentage of the population with 10 years or more that knows how to read and write.
(b) For citizens 25 years old or older
(c) For citizens 5 years old or older.
(d) For the country's labour force.

Sources: For educational level mode, Rodríguez agosto 2002, p. 20, Cuadro 7.; for all the rest, INEC, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000.

Additionally, not only have Costa Rica's basic education indicators improved in the last fifty years, but also the educational level attained by its population has increased. According to Graph 8.4, primary school training has been Costa Ricans most common level of education since the 1950s. However, the same graph shows that, while the amount of citizens with some level of primary education or no education at all has been declining, the percentage of the populace with higher and secondary education (even with a small 1.6 per cent drop between 1984 and 2000) has risen. In fact, as

depicted in Table 8.5, between 1950 and 2000 the percentage of citizens with secondary education has increased 20 points and the percentage of those with higher education has risen 10.5. This table also shows how individuals with primary education or no education at all have dropped 14.1 points and 16.5 points, respectively, in the same period.

Graph 8.4. Educational Levels in Costa Rica According to Censuses, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000




Note: Each category includes citizens with complete and incomplete education at each level.
Source: INEC, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000.

Table 8.5. Change in the Percentage of Costa Ricans in Different Educational Levels According to Censuses, 1950-2000

| Educational Level | 1950 | 2000 | Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **None** | 23.6 | 7.1 | -16.5 |
| **Primary** | 70.2 | 56.1 | -14.1 |
| **Secondary** | 5.1 | 25.1 | 20.0 |
| **Higher** | 1.2 | 11.7 | 10.5 |

Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add 100 per cent.
Source: INEC, 1950 and 2000.

A closer look at Graph 8.4 also demonstrates that the most important change in Costa Rica's educational level between 1984 and 2000 was the sustained rise in the proportion of citizens with higher education. Indeed, according to Table 8.6, between 1950 and 1984, the declining trend in citizens with no education and with primary education was basically due to the rise of those with secondary education. Nevertheless, between 1984 and 2002, the period in which the electoral changes assessed in the present study have occurred, "None," "Primary," and even "Secondary" education decreased due to an increase in higher education.

Table 8.6. Changes in Costa Rican's Educational Levels According to Censuses, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000

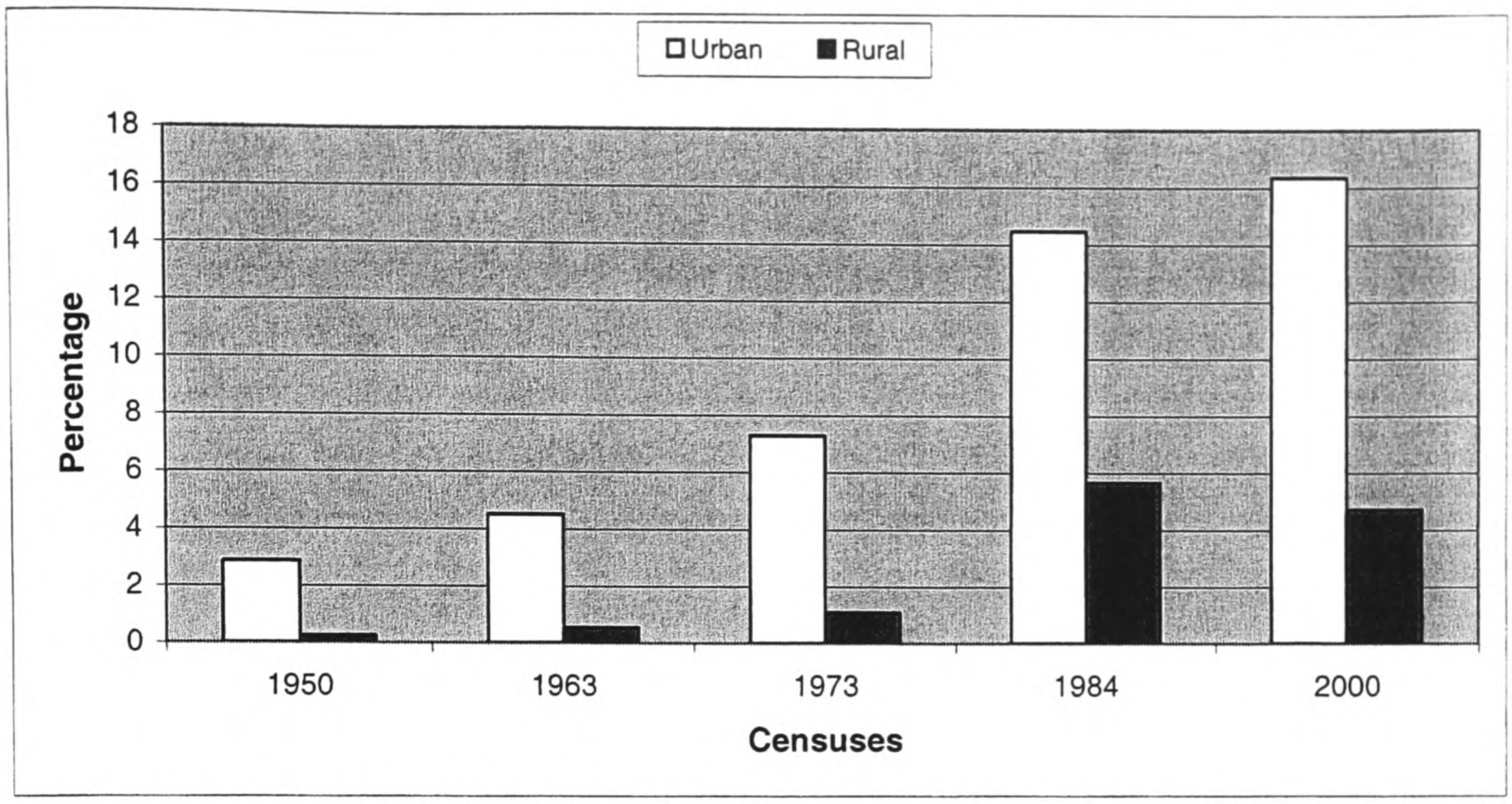
| Educational Level | 1950-1963 | 1963-1973 | 1973-1984 | 1984-2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **None** | -4.5 | -5.4 | -6.2 | -0.3 |
| **Primary** | 0.7 | -1.8 | -11.5 | -1.4 |
| **Secondary** | 3.0 | 5.7 | 13.0 | -1.6 |
| **Higher** | 0.8 | 1.7 | 4.7 | 3.3 |

Note: Due to rounding, the net result of the changes may not be 0.
Source: INEC, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000.

Graph 8.5 shows, as one would expect, that the increase in the percentage of citizens with higher education is especially salient in urban areas. Indeed, the percentage of citizens with higher education living in urban areas has gone from less than 3 per cent in 1950, to more than 16 per cent in 2000. The rise in tertiary sector employment in Costa Rica (more common in urban locations) has surely influenced this trend, as jobs in this sector of the economy tend to demand higher levels of training. In fact, Florisabel Rodríguez reported that in 2000, 26.8 per cent of the country's working force living in urban areas had higher education training.[34] Hence, not only has Costa Rica's general educational levels increased, but also higher education has significantly risen in the last two decades, particularly amongst citizens living in urban settlements.

[34] Rodríguez agosto 2002, pp. 20-21, Cuadro 8.

Graph 8.5. Percentage of Citizens with Higher Education by Place of Residence According to Censuses, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000




Source: INEC, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, and 2000.

*3.5 Increase in Information Resources*

In the fifth place, following with Dalton's framework, the increase in citizens' educational levels and, hence, in their ability to handle information, has been accompanied by rises in the availability of information resources. As illustrated by Table 8.7, since 1973 the percentage of Costa Rican households with TVs has increased 50.3 points, and the percentage having radios 13.7. As a result, by 2000 more than 90 per cent of the country's households had a TV and nearly all of them a radio. Additionally, the percentage of households with telephones rose 47.3 points in the last thirty years, enhancing the communication possibilities of almost 60 per cent of them by 2000. Furthermore, in terms of how Costa Ricans use information resources, a 2002 survey by Demoscopía S.A. reported that 90 per cent normally watch TV news. Likewise, in regards of reading habits, it revealed that 69.1 per cent

periodically read newspapers, 31.4 magazines, 24.5 general books, and 19.3 scientific literature.[35]

Table 8.7 demonstrates that Costa Rican citizens are also using less traditional sources of information. Even if data for the previous years is not available, it is noteworthy that by 2000, 15.2 per cent of the country's households had a computer, and could benefit from the information resources this entails. Graph 8.6 reveals that the availability of computers is significantly higher in households of provinces located in the Central Valley, than in those situated in the coastal provinces. This is an expected result as Central Valley provinces in Costa Rica (i.e. San José, Alajuela, Cartago, and Heredia), are the ones holding the country's major urban settlements. Moreover, it is in San José and in Heredia where the main private and public universities are located, most notably the UCR in the former and the UNA in the latter. Not surprisingly these two provinces registered the highest percentages of computer owning households in the country.

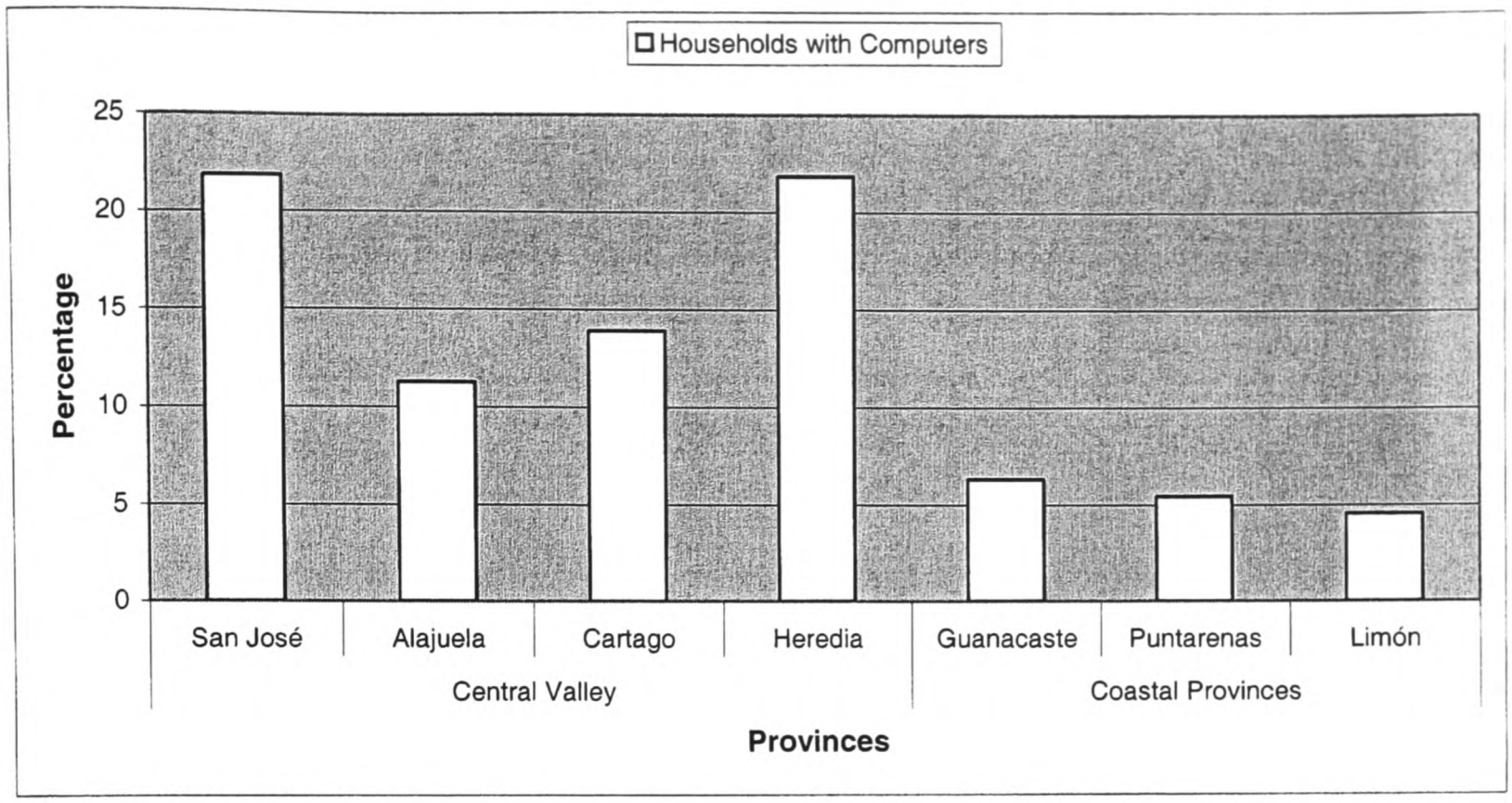
Table 8.7. Information Resources in Costa Rica According to Censuses, 1973, 1984, and 2000

| Indicators | 1973 | 1984 | 2000 | Change between 1973-2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of Households with TV** | 41.3 | 86.4 | 91.6 | 50.3 |
| **Percentage of Households with Radio** | 86.3 | 87.2 | 100 (a) | 13.7 |
| **Percentage of Households with Telephone** | 11.3 | 28.2 | 58.6 | 47.3 |
| **Percentage of Households with Computer** | NA | NA | 15.2 | — |

(a) In 2000 no question assessing the percentage of radios in each household was asked as, according to INEC officials, previous data indicated that by that year there was at least one radio in every Costa Rican household.
Source: INEC, 1973, 1984, and 2000.

[35] It is interesting that also 60 per cent of Costa Ricans claimed to read the Bible. Demoscopía S.A., febrero 2002.

Graph 8.6. Percentage of Households with Computers by Province, According to 2000 Census




Source: INEC, 2000.

Furthermore, the Grupo Nación has presented a market study assessing the media consumption habits of what are considered to be country's main consumers: middle and high class citizens, 18 years old or older, who live in the urban settlements of the four Central Valley provinces (also referred to as the Grand Metropolitan Area [GMA]). Even if this survey was done for commercial purposes, it is very useful for the present study as it assesses the media consumption habits of a group of the country's population which—as illustrated above—is significantly changing: middle and high class citizens living in urban settlements.

Given that the study divides citizens into different educational levels, it is possible to contrast their behaviour according to education. As we saw, education, especially at secondary and higher levels, has notably improved during the last fifty years in Costa Rica. Hence, the Grupo Nación study will allow us to evaluate the media consumption habits of a group of citizens that is changing, and whose transformations—following Dalton's framework—have a direct repercussion on a country's political scenario, especially affecting partisan identification.

Tables 8.8 and 8.9 are built with information from the Grupo Nación study. In the first place—according to Table 8.8—and not surprising given the social composition of the citizens evaluated, 90.1 per cent of them normally read at least one newspaper a week. Furthermore, the same table demonstrates that, as one would have expected, newspaper reading is positively associated with the level of education. Indeed, citizens with higher educational levels have stronger newspaper reading habits. Both the certainty of reading at least one newspaper a week, and the number of different newspaper consulted is higher amongst the better educated.

Table 8.8. Newspapers Readers in Costa Rica According to Educational Level, 2000

| Educational Level | | None | Primary | Secondary | Higher | General |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reads at least one newspaper between Mondays and Sundays** | **Yes** | 55.3% | 83.2% | 90.5% | 96.0% | 90.1% |
| | **No** | 44.7% | 16.8% | 9.5% | 4.0% | 9.9% |
| **Number of different newspapers read between Mondays and Saturdays (a)** | **1** | 79.2% | 50.3% | 46.0% | 43.0% | 46.1% |
| | **2** | 20.8% | 32.9% | 34.9% | 32.8% | 33.7% |
| | **3** | — | 12.4% | 13.3% | 15.4% | 13.7% |
| | **4** | — | 2.9% | 3.8% | 5.9% | 4.2% |
| | **5** | — | 1.2% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 1.2% |
| | **6** | — | 0.4% | 0.8% | 1.9% | 1.0% |

Note: data for 18 years old or more, middle or high class citizens living in the GMA.
(a) Published by different companies.
Source: Grupo Nación 2000.

Table 8.9 depicts a similar picture. As we saw above, TV and radio coverage are a generalised phenomenon in Costa Rica. Hence when dealing with TV and radio, more than just looking at the percentage of citizens that watches or listens to them (99 and 91.9 per cent, respectively[36]), it is better to focus on the nature of the programs they are consuming. Thus I concentrated on citizens listening or watching debate programs, a much more "sophisticated" form of information resource available in TV and radio broadcasts. This is not necessary when assessing Internet users as, regardless of the reasons it is used for, this type of information source can surely be

[36] Grupo Nación 2000.

considered as "sophisticated." Nonetheless, given that it points towards an even more advanced Internet consumer, the percentage of citizens which employs the web to search for news was also included.

Among the data presented in Table 8.9 it is notable that, in general terms, 19.2 per cent of the population assessed are frequent Internet users. Data is not as impressive for the total percentage of citizens that watches or listens to debate programs, or for those using the Internet to search for news. Nevertheless, what is certainly revealing and coherent with our previous results is that in all the cases the consumption of what was defined as "sophisticated information resources" (radio and TV debate programs, and the Internet [general users and news searchers]) increases as the educational level rises.

Table 8.9. Costa Rican Citizens Using Sophisticated Information Resources According to Educational Level, 2000

| Educational Level | | None | Primary | Secondary | Higher | General |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Debate programs audience** | **Radio** | 0.9% | 21.1% | 42.7% | 35.4% | 9.2% |
| | **TV** | — | 15.8% | 34.5% | 49.6% | 6.2% |
| **Internet users** | **General purposes** | — | 1.4% | 36.4% | 62.1% | 19.2% |
| | **Search for news** | — | — | 23.4% | 76.6% | 4.0% |

Note: data for 18 years old or more, middle or high class citizens living in the GMA.
Source: Grupo Nación 2000.

All in all, the data presented shows that education has improved in Costa Rica. This is especially true in the case of higher education among individuals living in urban areas. This trend has compounded with the growing availability of information resources, which has mainly benefited those with more skills to process it: urban, better educated citizens. As explained in the previous section, expanding education and increasing information resources result in the enhancement of voters' political sophistication (Inglehart's "cognitive mobilization"), which raises their predisposition for political independence.

*3.6 The Aging of Costa Rica's Party System*

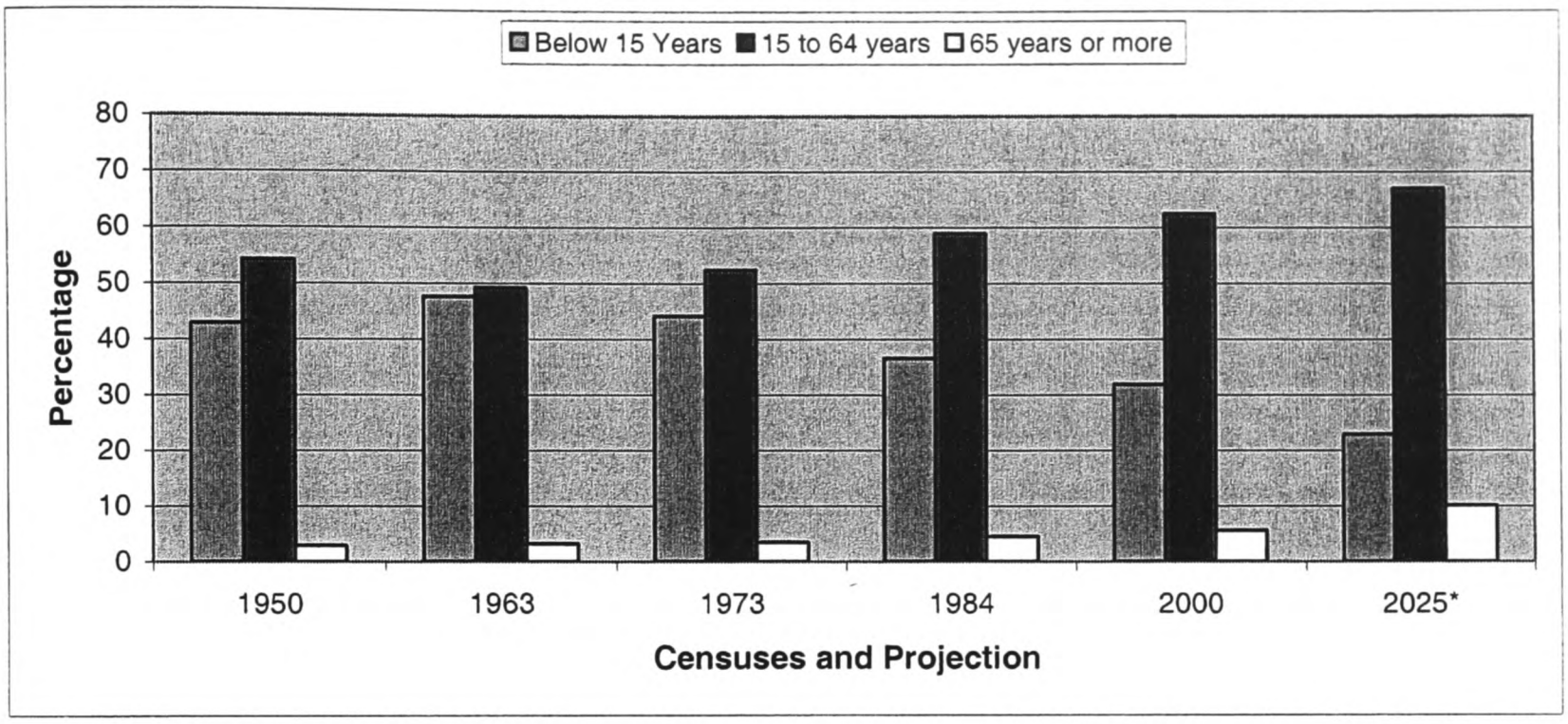
Finally, Costa Rica also seems to be enduring what we defined in the previous section as the aging of the party system. As mentioned above, the loss of relevance of the party system's central cleavage tends to manifest itself most prominently among younger citizens. Chapter 6 demonstrated that Costa Rica's central cleavage—the 1948 Civil War—is losing its bonding capacity. Now we need to unveil whether this phenomenon is especially salient amongst younger voters.

Graph 8.7 shows that over the last five decades Costa Rica (not unlike developed countries) is faced with an increasingly aging population. Indeed, the percentage of the population below 15 years has notably reduced, while those between 15 and 64, and 65 and above, have increased. The same graph illustrates that this trend is expected to deepen in the next twenty-five years. It is worth noting, however, that citizens in the age group that is losing relative weight in the country's population—those below 15 years of age—are the least politically involved. Many of them are still too young to be "politically aware" and none of them have yet reached Costa Rica's legal voting age: 18 years.

Table 8.10 divides citizens eligible to vote into different age groups. Following the pattern presented in Graph 8.7, the two "younger groups" (18 to 24 years and 25 to 39), have reduced their relative weight in the electorate *vis à vis* the "older groups" (40 to 59 years and 60 and more), between 1950 and 2000. This is particularly notable in the case of the lowest age group (18-24 years), which has lost almost 6 points in the last 50 years. Nonetheless, even with this reduction, youngsters still account for a significant percentage of the country's voting population. In fact, citizens between 18 and 24 years amounted to almost 21 per cent of the country's electorate in 2000. The oldest members of this age group (those 24 years old in 2000) were born twenty-eight years after the civil war. Certainly, voters in this age group have only, if any, an indirect relation with the armed conflict (parents or, most likely, grand parents may have been involved with one of the warring factions). Using Urcuyo's expression, they have basically learned about the 1948 conflict in the

history books.[37] As explained, their detachment from the party system's central cleavage increases the possibilities of political independence.

Graph 8.7. Costa Rica's Population by Age Groups According to Censuses and Projection, 1950, 1963, 1973, 1984, 2000, and 2025*




* Projection.
Source: INEC 2001, p. 7, Cuadro 3.

Table 8.10. Costa Rica's Population Legally able to Vote by Age Groups According to Censuses, 1950 and 2000

| Age Groups | 1950 (a) | 2000 | Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **18-24** | 26.7 | 21.0 | -5.8 |
| **25-39** | 38.9 | 37.5 | -1.5 |
| **40-59** | 25.2 | 28.7 | 3.6 |
| **60 and more** | 9.2 | 12.8 | 3.7 |

Note: I divided the country's eligible voters in these four age groups following CID-Gallup's convention. Party identification data, including information by age group, used in this thesis comes from this firm's surveys.
(a) In 1950 Costa Rica's legal voting age was 20 years. It was lowered to 18 in 1971. Nonetheless, I have used the same age groups both in 1950 and 2000 for comparative reasons.
Source: INEC, 1950, 2000.

[37] Urcuyo-Fournier 26 February 2002.

Partisan independence is even more likely when voters are disappointed with their parties. This is especially true in the case of Costa Rica's younger citizens. Building on different 2001 and 2002 IIS surveys, Carlos Eduardo Cruz reported that 42.5 per cent of citizens between 17 and 25 years believed that no party represents the interests of the country's younger generations. In fact, 53.4 per cent of them argued that the future president (the survey was conducted prior to the 2002 elections) would not solve their main problems. Their lack of confidence in politicians was confirmed when almost 60 per cent of them claimed that party members want to become deputies just for the personal benefits that the post offers.[38] Corroborating young citizens' political scepticism, another study on Costa Rican's political culture reported even more troubling results. According to Rodríguez and Castro-Méndez, 78 per cent of secondary students in their last year (17 years old on average) believe that none of the existing parties represent their interests, and 68 per cent of them have a negative opinion of politicians.[39]

These results are certainly not a surprise because, as we saw in Chapter 7, low esteem for political parties and politicians is a generalised phenomenon in most of the democratic world. Nonetheless, younger Costa Ricans seem to be even more sceptical and critical towards parties and politics than their adult counterparts. In the mentioned study, Cruz contrasted different political attitudes of what he defined as "young citizens" (17 to 25 years), with those of what he named "adult citizens" (27 years or more).[40] Some of the most revealing results are presented in Table 8.11.[41] This table demonstrates that interest in politics and in elections is evidently lower among young citizens. Moreover, it shows that younger voters have less confidence in traditional parties, and are less willing to collaborate with them than adult voters. Finally, there is a clear difference in the way young and adult citizens evaluate Costa

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[38] Cruz 2002, pp. 17, 20, and 22, Cuadros 21, 25, and 28.
[39] Rodríguez and Castro-Méndez 2001, pp. 163-164, Gráficos 6 and 7.
[40] There has been some controversy on how to create age limits which actually divide citizens into groups that can be regarded as "young" and "adult." Cruz's division suits the present study as it almost matches the convention used by CID-Gallup (18 to 24 years). Party identification data, including information by age group, used in this thesis comes from this firm's surveys. Moreover, the older citizens in Cruz's "young citizens group," those with 25 years in 2001 or 2002, were born 28 or 29 years after the civil war, enough time not to have a direct relation with the conflict.

Rica's two-party system. While almost 37 per cent of the adults think that it is "positive" for the country, less than 8 per cent of the young share that belief. This is reflected in the higher percentage of youngsters that consider that the consolidation of a third strong political party (other than the PLN and the PUSC) is "positive" for the nation.

Table 8.11. Political Attitudes of Young and Adult Costa Rican Citizens, 2001-2002

| Age Groups | Young Citizens (17-25 years) | Adult Citizens (27 years or more) |
|---|---|---|
| **Interested in politics (a)** | 32.0% | 42.0% |
| **Interested in elections (a)** | 63.3% | 67.6% |
| **Confidence in traditional political parties (PLN and PUSC) (b)** | 3.81 | 4.02 |
| **Willingness to collaborate with a political party** | 17.1% | 24.1% |
| **Bipartism is positive for the country** | 7.8% | 36.9% |
| **A third strong political party is positive for the country** | 78.5% | 63.1% |

(a) Percentage resulting from adding those who answered "very interested" and "more or less interested."
(b) Average of a scale having "1" as the lowest mark, and "10" as the highest.
Source: Cruz 2002, pp. 26-34.

There are also differences amongst younger citizens according to their place of residence, educational level, and social class. Working with a broader age group referred to as "young adults" (citizens between 18 and 39 years of age), Manuel Rojas-Bolaños has demonstrated that young adults living in the GMA are more dissatisfied with Costa Rican politicians, than those residing in rural areas. This is important as 60 per cent of the country's citizens with ages between 18 and 39 live in urban settlements.[42] Citizens in this age group accounted for almost 60 per cent of the country's electorate in 2000 (see Table 8.10).

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[41] The surveys from which this data was drawn were conducted months before the 2002 elections. Hence some of the results, especially data regarding interest in politics and elections, could be higher than in periods of less political activity.
[42] Rojas-Bolaños 2002, p. 25.

Moreover, Table 8.12 shows that the evaluation of politicians' representativeness is also affected by educational level and by social class. Indeed, the dissatisfaction with politicians' representativeness amongst young adults rises as education and class increases. This has important implications for the national political scenario as it has been estimated that in 2000, 26 per cent of Costa Ricans between 18 and 24 years were undertaking university studies.[43] Citizens with higher education are more likely to be or to become members of middle or high social sectors.[44] Urban, better educated, and more affluent young citizens are also the ones who have more access to the increasing supply of information resources in the country. Hence, apart from their natural detachment from parties posited by the aging of the party system argument, younger Costa Ricans attitudes towards politics are also influenced by the social transformations that the country has experienced in the last decades.

Table 8.12. Representativeness of Politicians According to Young Adults by Educational Level and Social Class, 2001
(18-39 years)

| | Educational Level | | | | Social Class | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None | Primary | Secondary | Higher | Low | Middle | High |
| **Feels well represented** | 52.3% | 52.4% | 38.8% | 26.5% | 50.7% | 34.6% | 34.9% |
| **Does not feel well represented** | 23.1% | 40.8% | 56.4% | 71.6% | 41.9% | 61.3% | 63.0% |
| **NA** | 24.6% | 6.8% | 4.8% | 2.0% | 7.4% | 4.1% | 2.1% |
| **Total** | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Source: Rojas-Bolaños 2002, p. 26, Cuadro 5.

Following what is expected of younger citizens' political attitudes, Rojas-Bolaños has acknowledged that in Costa Rica, "Partisan loyalties seem to be lower amongst young adults."[45] Nonetheless, it appears that youngsters' partisan identification will take much more than time and familial political socialisation (the life-cycle effect) to strengthen. Contrasting with the rest of the country's population, an IIS study reported that 55.5 per cent of citizens between 18 and 24 years indicate that their

[43] Estado de la Nación 2002, pp. 90-91.
[44] Interesting discussions about the relation between education and social class have been presented by, Gambetta 1987; Lucas 1999; Breen and Goldthorpe 1997.

families' partisan loyalties have no or very little influence on their vote decision.[46] The fact that almost 41 per cent of them claim never to talk about political issues with their parents or with older persons, certainly hinders the possible impact families' traditional partisan attachments may have on them.[47] Moreover, probably as a result of this phenomenon, almost 70 per cent of the youngsters affirm that the 1948 cleavage does not exert any influence at all on their voting choices (the corresponding register for the rest of the population is 57 per cent).[48] As we will see later, the eroding influence of familial and historical partisan traditions on young citizens has been especially detrimental for the PLN.

The weaker partisan identification of younger voters also reflects on their electoral behaviour. Manuel Rojas-Bolaños has shown that absenteeism tends to be higher amongst younger citizens. For example, in the 1998 elections, while the national register was 30 per cent, absenteeism amongst citizens between 20 and 29 years was 33 per cent.[49] Furthermore, the mentioned IIS study has demonstrated that in the 2002 elections, voters between 18 and 24 years registered the highest ticket-splitting records of all age groups in the country: 43 per cent.[50] Certainly, Costa Rica's party system seems to be "aging."

Overall, it is clear that many of the social transformations posited by Dalton's framework to explain political changes in post-industrial societies are also present in Costa Rica. As shown, during the last fifty years this Central American nation has witnessed, first, a social mobility process which has resulted in the enlargement of its middle class, principally between the 1960s and the 1980s. Second, Costa Rica has registered a notable growth of tertiary sector employment, and a secular decline of citizens working in agricultural activities (primary sector). Third, the country has witnessed an increase in its general population, basically caused by the improvement of social indicators (life expectancy and infant mortality) and international migration

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[45] Rojas-Bolaños 2002, p. 19.
[46] IIS et al. 20 de febrero 2002, p. 6.
[47] Cruz 2002, p. 13, Cuadro 14. The influence of parents on youngsters' party identification is discussed in Chapter 6.
[48] Fournier et al. diciembre 1999, pp. 28-29.
[49] Rojas-Bolaños 2002, p. 19.
[50] IIS et al. 20 de febrero 2002, p. 7.

(predominantly from Nicaragua). This has compounded with an urbanisation process especially salient since the mid-1980s.

Fourth, Costa Rica has enjoyed an improvement in basic education indicators. Quite notable has been the increase in the percentage of citizens with secondary and, particularly, higher education (mainly since the mid-1980s). The rise of Costa Ricans with higher education is much more significant among those living in urban settlements. Fifth, Costa Rican citizens are also enjoying a growing supply of traditional and new information resources. Urban, middle and high class, better educated citizens, are the ones with the skills and the economic resources to obtain most of the benefits from this process. Finally, there is evidence that Costa Rica's population is getting older and, most importantly, that the country's party system is aging. Younger generations' political attitudes and voting behaviour are less influenced by the 1948 cleavage. Indeed, young citizens seem to be more distant and critical of political parties—and of the party system—than their adult counterparts, and it seems that it would take much more than the normal development of the life-cycle effect to strengthened their party loyalties. As shown, this process has been enhanced by the mentioned social transformations, as political scepticism is even higher amongst the urban, more affluent, and better educated youngsters.

Following Russell Dalton,[51] social mobility, new third-sector jobs, and urbanisation processes, change citizens' lifestyles and demands. Moreover, these transformations are enhanced by the introduction of a divergent political culture, when combined—as in Costa Rica—with a significant influx of international migration. This, in conjunction with expanding education and increasing information resources, certainly alters individuals' political attitudes and behaviour. In general terms, voters' political sophistication increases. That is, citizens tend to be more demanding of their politicians and less dependent on their parties' cues when making political decisions. As a result, political independence tends to increase and partisan loyalties start to erode.

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[51] Dalton 1996b; Dalton et al. 1984a.

## 4 The Impact of the Social Changes on the PLN

It is clear that many of the social transformations, and their political consequences, evident in post-industrial societies are also occurring in Costa Rica. These changes seem to account for the progressive increase of political independence in the country since the mid-1980s (see Chapter 6, Graphs 6.1 and 6.3). Nevertheless, in order to elucidate Costa Rica's dealignment process using the sociological explanation it is still necessary to explain why these transformations have mainly affected the PLN—the party whose partisan loyalties are clearly declining. This is important, as all parties have had to deal with the nation's changing social reality.

In general terms, the PLN has been directly or indirectly affected by six of the aforementioned, mutually related, processes: the stagnation and increasing political independence of the middle class, the declining number and party identification among individuals dedicated to agricultural activities, the growing political independence among urban and among well-educated citizens, and two trends observable among the young. These trends are: the loss of their relative weight in the country's electorate and the aging of the party system—characterised by higher political independence amongst younger voters. The mounting availability of information in the country has had an indirect effect on the PLN's declining support given that more affluent, better educated, urban, and younger individuals are normally the ones that mostly benefit from it.

Changes in the middle class, the agricultural sector, and the young have to do both with transformations in the social composition (changes in "numbers") and in the political attitudes (changes in "the nature") of individuals. Transformations amongst the better educated and the urban Costa Ricans basically reflect the latter. In any case, these factors, which have been especially salient since the mid-1980s, explain why the PLN has been the one losing identifiers. Furthermore, the social composition and nature of the defectors also clarify why disaffected *liberacionistas* have largely become independent voters.

*4.1 Stagnation and Rising Political Independence of the Middle Class*

In the first place, as explained in Chapter 7, the PLN found in middle sectors a major part of its support. As depicted in Graph 8.1, this sector grew in numbers largely as a result of the social mobility process prompted by the PLN's social democratic model,[52] a process which, in turn, also benefited the party. This was especially true between 1963 and 1984—as illustrated in Table 8.13—and showed in the PLN's electoral dominance during those years.[53]

However, according to the same table, this process clearly slowed down almost to a point of stagnation between 1984 and 2000. Indeed, as stressed in Chapter 7, after increasing 10.2 points between 1963 and 1984, the middle sector only grew 1.6 points between 1984 and 2000. The progressive substitution—with the active participation of the PLN—of the social democratic model by a neo-liberal oriented one since the beginning of the 1980s,[54] has certainly hindered Costa Rica's middle sector development. This effectively decelerated the expansion of PLN's natural support base.

Table 8.13. Changes in Costa Rica's Middle Class, 1963-2000

| Indicators | 1963 | 1973 | 1984 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of population** | 18.2 | 21.8 | 28.4 | 30.0 |
| **Growth between censuses** | — | 3.6 | 6.6 | 1.6 |

Note: Data for 1963, 1973, and 1984 is based on censuses. Information for 2000, the same year the last census took place, was obtained from a study by the IIS.
Sources: For 2000, IIS 2001, p. 12.; for the rest, Vega et al. 1995, p. 62.

Moreover, the PLN's conflicts and policy changes have surely disappointed this politically more aware and demanding class, which—as discussed above—has a predisposition for political independence. Indeed, according to data provided by the

[52] See Chapter 7.
[53] See Chapter 5.

IIS, 48.2 per cent of citizens that have a middle "socio-economic condition"[55] claimed to be politically independent in 2002. When asked about their party identification in "the past,"[56] 35.2 per cent indicated that they did not identify with any party before. Out of the 13 points that the independents have grown between now and "the past" (48.2-35.2), 7.7 came from former PLN identifiers while 4.9 used to be PUSC supporters.[57] However, contrary to the case of the PLN, losing followers from the middle sectors is not as relevant for the PUSC, whose base of support paradoxically comes mainly from low and high social sectors.[58] Therefore, the Social Democrats have suffered both the stagnation or deceleration in numbers of the middle class—a key part of its natural support base—and their progressive conversion to political independence (change in nature).

### *4.2 Decline and Increasing Political Independence in Citizens Employed in the Agricultural Sector*

In the second place, the PLN's base of support included the better off citizens working in agricultural activities (farm owners—*finqueros*—small landowning peasants—*campesinos*—etc.). This was another sector that generally benefited from the PLN's administrations between the 1950s and the 1970s. During these years the Social Democrats endorsed policies that granted agricultural producers access to new technology, research, and several price leverage schemes.[59] Not surprisingly, Florisabel Rodríguez reports that in 1970 the PLN had a significant support amongst

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[54] See Chapter 7.

[55] This category can be used as a proxy measure of class. According to IIS researchers, individuals were divided into high, middle, and low "socio-economic condition" according to: 1) the educational level and work position of the family's main income earner, and 2) the existence of different appliances in the household.

[56] The question did not ask for a specific number of years.

[57] The remaining 0.4 came from citizens who mentioned other parties. Author's own calculations based on IIS 1982-2002. Answers regarding party identification, or its absence, "in the past" are certainly influenced by individuals' current party adherence. Hence, the difference between their current and past party identification is probably underestimated. This means that the growth of party independence could have been bigger.

[58] This unusual combination is a result of the Social Christians' laxer ideological credo, their progressive policies during in the 1940s, and its history of coalitions: with the Communist Party during the Eight-Year Regime and the civil war, and later with members of the oligarchical PUN. For more details see Chapter 3.

[59] For a discussion about the main changes in the agricultural sector in Costa Rica in the last decades see, Chinchilla 1992.

citizens working in the agricultural sector, especially those living in the Central Valley.[60]

However, traditional agricultural producers (basically those depending on the internal market) are another group that suffered with the retrenchment of the social democratic model, the opening of the economy, and the modernisation of the Costa Rican society during the last two decades.[61] As depicted in Table 8.14, the percentage of citizens engaged in agricultural activities has evidently decreased over the last three decades. In 1973, 38.8 per cent of the population was employed in the agricultural sector, while only 21.7 per cent were engaged in this sort of activities by 2000. Hence, a group that tended to be PLN supporters decreased by more than 17 points in the last thirty years.

Table 8.14. Changes in Costa Rica's Labour Force Working in Agricultural Activities, 1973-2000

| Indicators | 1973 | 1984 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentage of population** | 38.8 | 33.3 | 21.7 |
| **Growth between censuses** | — | -5.5 | -11.6 |

Source: Rodríguez agosto 2002, p. 13, Cuadro 1.

Probably disenchanted by the parties' approval of less "helpful," interventionist policies, 45 per cent of citizens working in the agricultural sector claimed to be politically independent in 2002. This marks a significant increase, as only 19.6 per cent accepted not to identify with any party in "the past." Once more, the PLN was the main source of the 25.4 point increase (45-19.6) of political independence in this group. The Social Democrats contributed with 13.6 points while the PUSC supplied 11.3.[62] Nonetheless, in contrast to the situation faced by the PLN, PUSC officials

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[60] Rodríguez agosto 2002, pp. 28-30.

[61] The more "capital intensive," non-traditional agricultural producers did not suffer the fate of its traditional, more "labour intensive" counterparts. In fact, non-traditional producers were generously helped by state-sponsored programs and, in many cases, have successfully penetrated international markets. For further details see, Colburn and Sánchez 2000, Chap. 4.; Booth 1998, Chap. 8.

[62] The remaining 0.5 came from citizens who mentioned other parties. Author's own calculations based on IIS 1982-2002. The same qualification posited in footnote 57, Chapter 8 applies.

affirm that enduring the defection of members of the agricultural sector is not as worrisome as they are taking advantage of the rising number of citizens working in the tertiary sector of the economy (see Graph 8.2), which—according to them—are keener on the "less intrusive" state traditionally supported by the Social Christians.[63] Thus, similar to what happened with the middle class, the PLN has been negatively affected by the decline in numbers and the growing partisan independence—or change in nature—in citizens working in the agricultural sector, a social group considered to be a central part of its support base.

*4.3 Growing Political Independence amongst Urban Citizens*

In addition to the decline in numbers and the rising political independence in the PLN's traditional support base, this party has suffered from the changing political attitudes—or nature—of previously supportive groups. Thus, in the third place, the PLN has been negatively affected by the political consequences of the urbanisation process which has occurred in Costa Rica since the mid-1980s (see Graph 8.3). As previously explained, the growing amount of citizens now living in urban areas, which tend to have higher levels of education and better access to information, also present a stronger predisposition for political independence.

Indeed, Graph 8.8 shows how the PLN used to dominate partisan allegiances amongst urban citizens until the beginning of the 1990s. Since the 1990-1994 period, however, the PLN's partisan identification has declined while the number of citizens claiming to be politically independent has increased. In fact, the PLN's partisan loyalties and political independence almost follow a mirror image. Hence, the Social Democrats have not benefited from the growing number of citizens now living in urban areas, a group where they used to prevail. On the contrary, the party has suffered from the growth of political independence among them.

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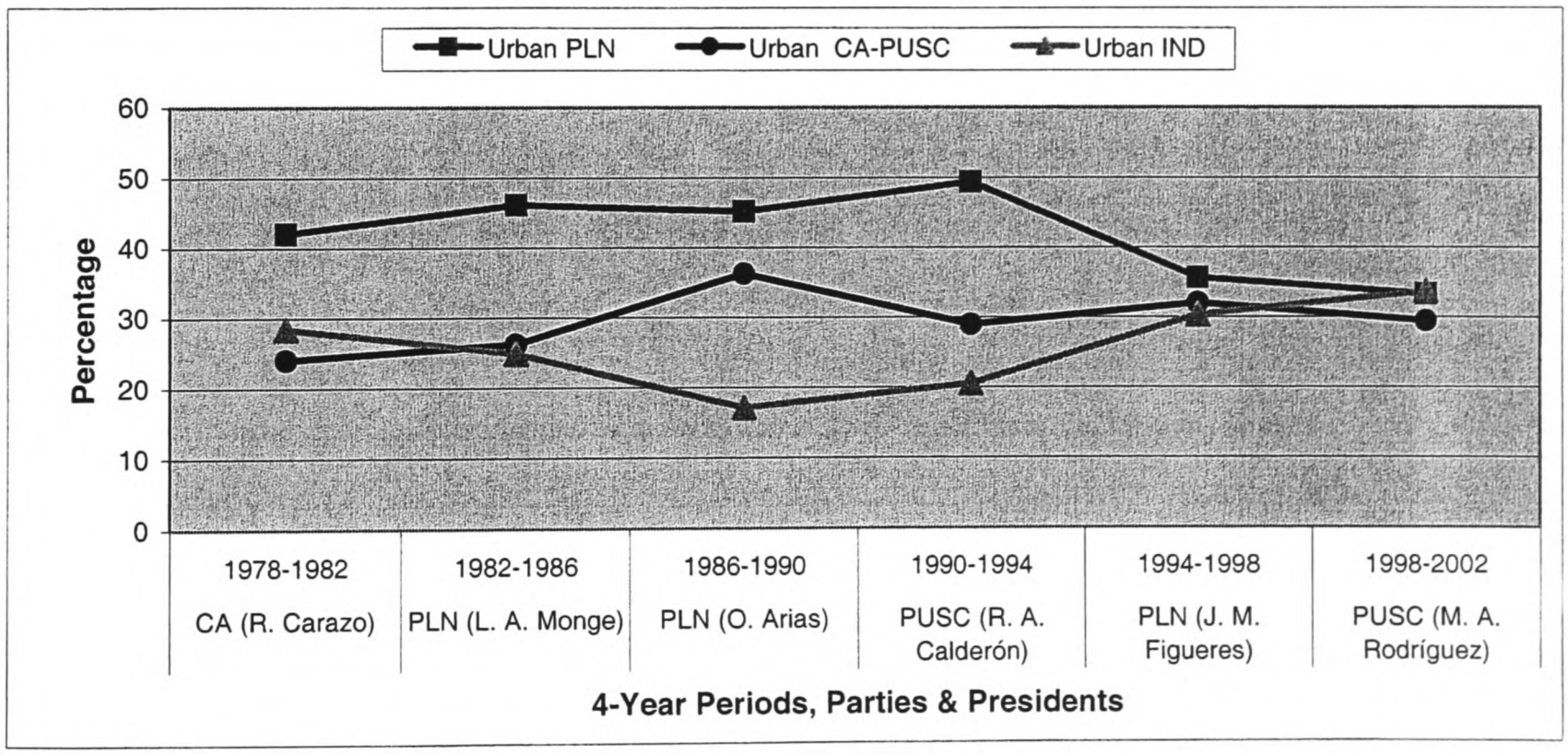
[63] Laclé 12 March 2002; Sánchez 26 June 2002; Vásquez 26 June 2002.

Indeed, with 33 per cent claiming not to identify with any party at all in the 1998-2002 period, political independence has levelled PLN's partisan loyalties amongst urban citizens. Nonetheless, while the former has followed an ascending trend since the 1986-1990 interval, the latter is clearly descending since the 1990-1994 period. It is worth noting that PLN's partisan identification amongst urban citizens follows a similar tendency as the party's general trend (see Chapter 6, Graph 6.4), showing the most pronounced decline after the mid-1990s, once the Figueres-Olsen administration started. Graph 8.8 also demonstrates that, not having been dominant amongst urban citizens, the PUSC has not suffered from their "conversion" to political independence. In contrast, they seem to have achieved some gains and now place themselves just below the PLN, enjoying the endorsement of a third of urban Costa Ricans.

Graph 8.8. Party Identification of Citizens Living in Urban Areas, 1978-2002
(4-year averages)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 3-89.

*4.4 Increasing Political Independence among Citizens with Higher Education*

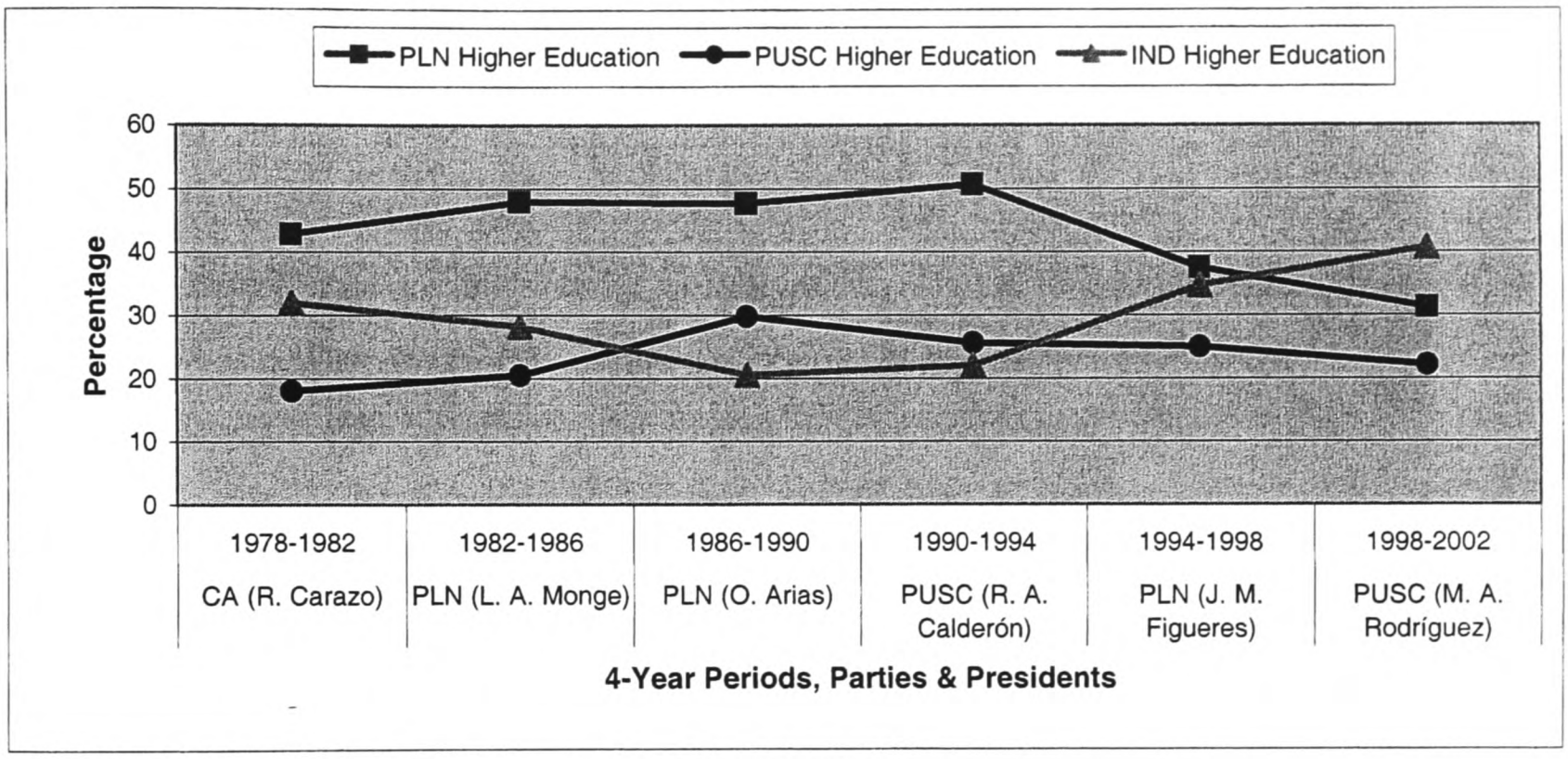
In the fourth place, also referring to changes in the nature of voters and directly related to the previous point, the PLN has been negatively affected by the political outcomes of the increase in citizens with higher education registered in Costa Rica after the mid-1980s (see Graph 8.4, and Tables 8.5 and 8.6). This phenomenon is especially salient amongst individuals living in urban settlements (see Graph 8.5). Again, one would expect better educated, urban citizens, with more skills to process the growing availability of information, to have a stronger inclination towards political independence.

As in the case of urban citizens, Graph 8.9 demonstrates that up until the mid-1990s, the PLN used to prevail amongst Costa Ricans with higher education. This changed after the 1990-1994 period, when the Social Democrats' partisan loyalties amongst the better educated plunged. Once more, the biggest drop occurred when the Figueres-Olsen government was in office. At the same time—as expected—political independence among this group started to grow, again mirroring PLN's party identification trend. As a result, the Social Democrats have not benefited from the increase in numbers of citizens with higher education, a group where they were dominant. On the contrary, they have witnessed how between 1990-1994 and 1998-2002, political independence in this group has risen by almost 20 points, becoming the preferred political position amongst Costa Ricans with higher education since the mid-1990s. Finally, and even if they have been losing support since the 1986-1990 period, the PUSC has not suffered nearly as much as the PLN by these citizens' progressive movement towards political independence, as the Social Christians have always been a minority among the better educated.

Apart from losing its predominance amongst the country's better educated, the PLN no longer enjoys the influence these citizens have on public opinion. Evidently, this is something else that benefits the PUSC. Better educated—generally urban—citizens certainly have a stronger influence on other voters. This is either because they have direct access to public opinion (newspaper articles, TV or radio shows, or interviews,

etc.), or simply because they hold leadership positions in their workplace and/or in their different social groups. With their rapid conversion to political independence, it is now this political stance they might be encouraging others to follow. Indeed, by no longer having the support of a significant portion of the better educated, more influential citizens, the PLN is losing much more than a possible vote.

Graph 8.9. Party Identification of Citizens with Higher Education, 1978-2002
(4-year averages)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 2-89.

*4.5 Loss of Relative Weight and Higher Political Independence among Young Citizens*

Finally, not only are younger voters losing relative weight in the electorate (see Table 8.10), but also Costa Rica's party system is aging. This is reflected in the higher levels of political scepticism and partisan independence amongst younger citizens. Other than their natural detachment from the country's central cleavage for age reasons, young Costa Ricans political attitudes have also been strongly influenced by the country's general social transformations, which—as we saw—tend to push citizens towards political independence.

Graph 8.10 reveals how, once again, this process has been especially prejudicial for the PLN. The Social Democrats used to enjoy the majority of partisan allegiances amongst younger citizens (18 to 24 years). Hence, their relative loss of weight in the electorate negatively affects this party. Nonetheless, this reduction in numbers is not as relevant once we discovered that, following the same pattern as the urban and better educated individuals, PLN support amongst youngsters has evidently declined since the mid-1990s—they have also undergone a change in nature. The most important drop occurred once more between 1990-1994 and 1994-1998, after the Figueres administration started. Moreover, since the 1986-1990 period, as predicted by the aging of the party system postulate, partisan independence among youngsters has been consistently growing. It is worth stressing that this phenomenon is not a Costa Rican peculiarity. After studying dealignment in 11 advanced industrial nations, Dalton concluded that the decrease of partisan identification has been disproportionately concentrated among the young.[64] Indeed, declining levels of partisan loyalties amongst young citizens seem to be a generalised phenomenon in established democracies.

Graph 8.10 also shows that the PUSC, not without inconsistencies, is now favoured by more young voters. Hence, after having been the dominant party among younger citizens, the PLN now has to share these voters' support with the PUSC and with those which claim not to identify with any party at all. In fact, the same graph demonstrates how youngsters' partisan loyalties are now evenly divided between the Social Democrats, the independents, and the Social Christians, each obtaining approximately one-third of the electorate's support.

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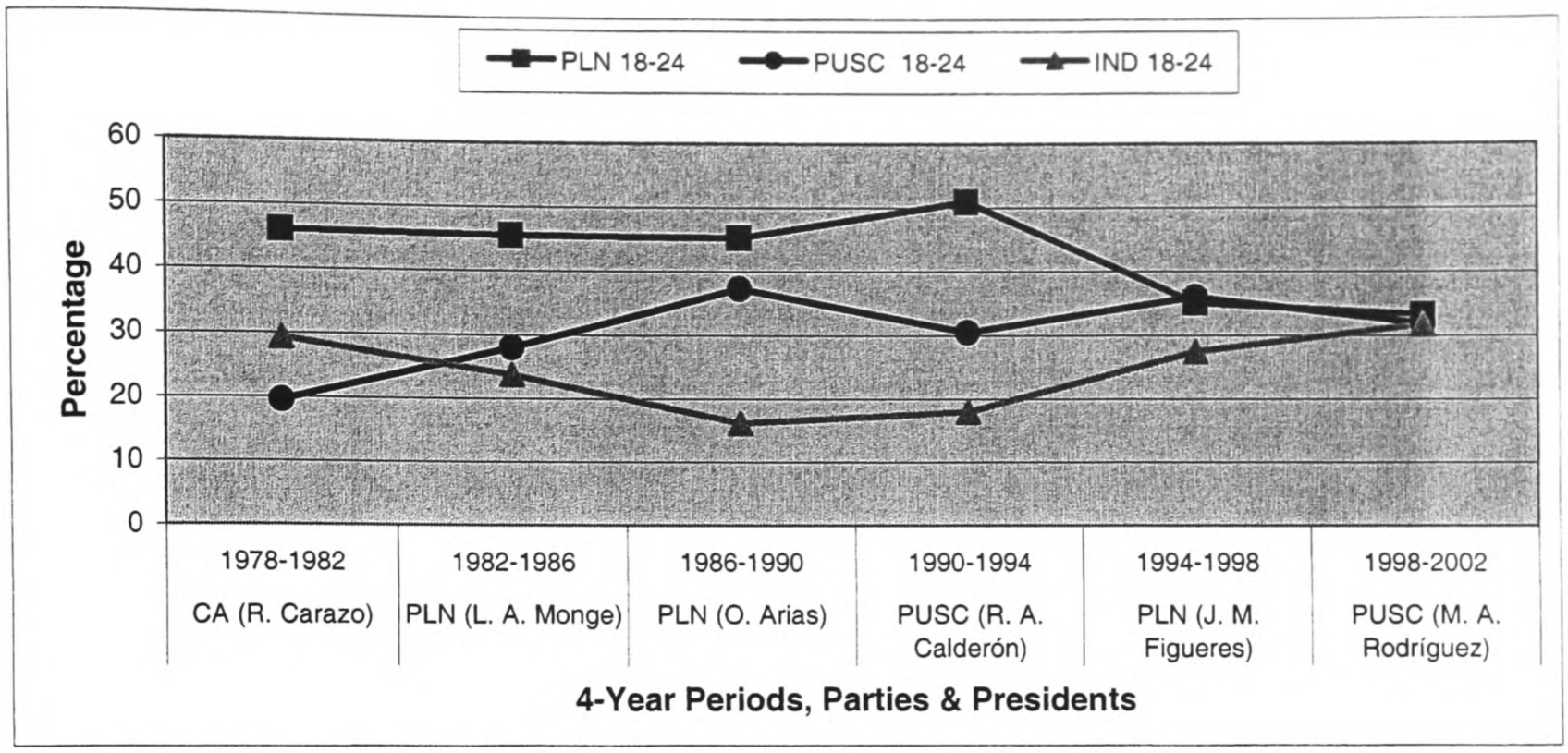
[64] Dalton 2000, pp. 30-31. The nations studied were: Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States.

Graph 8.10. Party Identification of Citizens Between 18 and 24 Years, 1978-2002
(4-year averages)




Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 2-89.

Table 8.15 confirms that the erosion of partisan loyalties amongst younger people is especially affecting the PLN. Even if 54. 3 per cent of the youngsters claim to come from a family which traditionally used to support the Social Democrats, only 25.5 per cent and 22.3 per cent of them voted for the PLN in the 2002 presidential and legislative elections, respectively. This means that 28.8 per cent in the case of the presidential election and 32 per cent in the case of the legislative one, defected or simply did not assume their traditional PLN partisan adherence in the last electoral process. This is especially relevant in the case of the congressional contest, given that—as we discussed in Chapters 4 and 5—Costa Rica's electoral rules at the legislative level (closed list voting) make of this election's results a good proxy measure of party identification.

The same table demonstrates that the majority of the young citizens who claim to come from a traditional PUSC supporting family (35.6 per cent), seem to have voted for the Social Christians. Especially in the case of the legislative elections—for the reasons already explained—the rather low 3.2 per cent difference between family's partisan tradition and vote, could very well be explained as the expected temporary

defections from the normal vote occurring in each election due to conjunctural circumstances.[65] All in all, it is also clear that the aging of the party system has been especially detrimental for the Social Democrats, as it is among its previous young supporters where partisan independence has manifested most prominently.

Table 8.15. Family Partisan Tradition and Actual Vote of Young Costa Ricans (18-25 years)

| | Family Partisan Tradition | February 2002 Presidential Election | | February 2002 Legislative Election | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Vote | Difference (vote-tradition) | Vote | Difference (vote-tradition) |
| **PLN** | 54.3% | 25.5% | -28.8% | 22.3% | -32.0% |
| **PUSC** | 35.6% | 29.3% | -6.3% | 26.1% | -3.2% |

Source: Cruz 2002, pp. 23, 35-36, Cuadros 31, 50, and 52.

Therefore, it is evident that the party whose interests were particularly damaged by the main social transformations lived in Costa Rica in last decades has been the PLN. This party's natural base of support has weakened with the stagnation of the middle class and the decline of citizens engaged in agricultural activities. Additionally, it suffered with these two groups progressive conversion to political independence. Moreover, the rising levels of partisan independence amongst urban, better educated, and younger Costa Ricans (which also lost relative weight in the country's electorate), three groups where the PLN used to prevail, have further reduced the Social Democrats' partisan loyalties. Indeed, the PLN has faced an important erosion of partisan adherence among citizens in these three previously supportive groups. Between the 1978-1982 and the 1998-2002 intervals PLN's general partisan identification has fallen 21 per cent. This party's loyalties amongst urban citizens in the same period registered a similar decline. However, the drop among citizens with higher education and younger voters was -27 per cent and -28 per cent, respectively. Both cases depict a decline much more pronounced than the party's general drop when considering the whole population.[66]

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[65] For further details on the influence of partisan loyalties on voting behaviour see Chapters 2 and 6.
[66] Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 1-89.

Certainly, the presented data shows not only that the PLN has been the main loser of the modernisation process and the concomitant growth of political independence in the country; but also that the sociological explanation of dealignment is useful to elucidate the Costa Rican case.

## 5 Final Observations

Part III of the thesis demonstrated that Costa Rica is undergoing a process of dealignment. Part IV has assessed the causes of this process. In order to do this, we built on the two main general explanations of dealignment: the political (Chapter 7) and the sociological (Chapter 8) approaches. Given that the PLN is the party whose loyalties are declining, in both cases we concentrated on explaining why political and sociological phenomena triggering the decline of partisan loyalties and the increase of political independence, are basically affecting Costa Rica's Social Democrats.

In the previous chapter we concluded that there certainly are political factors contributing to the PLN's declining partisan identification. The present chapter focused on the sociological explanation of dealignment. In other words, it explained the increase of partisan independence and the loss of partisan loyalties as a result of transformations in the social composition and nature of citizens (changes in the "political demand"). Following Russell Dalton's framework to explain the political consequences of central changes in post-industrial societies, we concluded that many of the transformations mentioned by this author are also taking place in Costa Rica.

Specifically it was demonstrated that during the last fifty years this Central American country has undergone six distinctive processes that seem to have altered the local political scenario. Firstly, a social mobility process which resulted in the enlargement of its middle class between the 1960s and the mid-1980s. Secondly, Costa Rica witnessed a notable rise in tertiary sector employment, and a secular decline in citizens working in agricultural activities. Thirdly, it registered an increase in the general population, mainly caused by the improvement of social indicators and international migration. Demographic changes have also been characterised by an urbanisation process especially salient since the mid-1980s.

Fourthly, Costa Ricans have also enjoyed the improvement of basic education indicators. Moreover the country has witnessed an important increase in the percentage of citizens with secondary and, particularly, higher education (essentially since the mid-1980s). The rise in higher education is much more significant among individuals living in urban areas. Fifthly, Costa Rican citizens are enjoying a growing supply of traditional and new information resources. Urban, middle and upper class, educated citizens, are the ones with the skills and the economic resources to obtain most of the benefits from this process. Finally, there is evidence regarding the aging of the country's population and, most importantly, of its party system. In contrast to their adult counterparts, younger citizens' political attitudes and voting behaviour are less influenced by the 1948 cleavage. Indeed, political independence is higher amongst members of the younger generations. This phenomenon, which seems unlikely to be significantly altered by the normal development of the life-cycle effect, has been enhanced by the aforementioned social transformations. In fact, political scepticism is more evident among the urban, more affluent, and better educated young citizens.

These transformations certainly change individuals' lifestyles and alter voters' political attitudes by increasing their political sophistication (changes in nature). As a result, citizens tend to be more demanding of their politicians and less dependent on their parties' cues when making political decisions. This has surely been reflected in the increase of political independence in Costa Rica. In fact, most of the abovementioned processes began to surface in the 1980s, around the same time that partisan identification started its secular decline.

Even if these transformations account for the increase of partisan independence in Costa Rica, they do not explain why they have particularly affected the PLN. However, this can be unveiled by studying their specific effect on the country's two main parties: the PLN and the PUSC. As explained, the Social Democrats' partisan loyalties have eroded due to the direct or indirect impact of six mutually related processes. The PLN's natural base of support base was debilitated with the stagnation of the middle class after the mid-1980s and the decline of citizens engaged in agricultural activities (transformations in social composition). Likewise, it was

weakened by the rise of partisan independence amongst these two social groups (changes in nature).

Additionally, the rising levels of partisan independence (changes in nature) amongst urban, better educated, and young citizens (which also lost relative weight in the electorate), three groups where the PLN used to be dominant, have further reduced the Social Democrats' partisan identification. In general terms, members of these groups are also the ones with the skills and resources to take advantage of the growing supply of information available in the country. Hence their conversion to partisan independence is not an unexpected outcome, as they tend to be more critical, demanding, and politically knowledgeable individuals. As explained, neither of these processes have been particularly prejudicial for the PUSC which, on the contrary, has generally benefited from them.

Therefore, the present chapter showed that much of the social transformations that affect political attitudes in post-industrial societies are also taking place in Costa Rica. This is an important finding both for this research and for the general theory of dealignment. It has been demonstrated that the sociological explanation, an approach generally applied to elucidate the erosion of partisan loyalties in developed post-industrial countries, is also useful to explicate the increase of political independence and the decline of partisan identification in a small Latin American nation. Moreover, and also relevant for the general theory, we have determined that in the case of Costa Rica both the political and the sociological explanations of dealignment are applicable. This conclusion shows that in certain cases, more than contesting explanations, the political and the sociological approaches may well be mutually reinforcing.

Indeed, Chapter 7 illustrated how the progressive substitution of the social democratic model by a neoliberal oriented one, disappointing governmental results during the 1994-1998 Figueres-Olsen administration, the loss of the party's historical figures leadership, and institutional waning resulting from recurrent, electorally motivated, internal conflicts, caused the defection of many *liberacionistas.* Chapter 8 highlighted the general social processes that have resulted in the increase of political

independence and the decline of partisan identification in Costa Rica. This chapter also explained that PLN's base of support has been negatively affected by its changing policies, which have contributed towards the stagnation of the middle class and the decline of agricultural producers. The disappointment with the PLN's policies surely bears some responsibility for the growth of partisan independence amongst these two sectors of the Social Democrats' traditional support base.

Furthermore, Chapter 8 showed how political independence has also manifested quite prominently amongst groups that historically tended to support the PLN: urban, better educated, and young Costa Ricans. Given these citizens' social characteristics, they are normally better informed, less influenced by foundational historical events (i.e. the "critical juncture" of 1948), more aware of their party's recent economic and political failures (more recent historical events), and surely more critical of its internal problems. Certainly, their defection from the PLN and their predilection not to identify with any other party cannot be regarded as a surprise. Consequently, there were former *liberacionistas* with a higher "natural" predisposition towards political independence the ones that have most strongly reacted to the PLN's political troubles and contradictions, resulting in the observed decline of this party's loyalties. Or, in other words, the more knowledgeable, demanding electorate—which previously identified with the PLN—has most vigorously "punished" their party's failures, and its inability to respond to their expectations and adapt to the country's changing social landscape. Indeed, the social composition of PLN's defectors allows us to understand how the political and the sociological explanations of dealignment complement each other to elucidate this case.

Overall, in terms of the present chapter, it has been demonstrated that the sociological explanation of dealignment does help to explain the Costa Rican case. This Central American nation is experiencing transformations which affect the country's social composition and alter citizens' political attitudes, by eroding their party loyalties. These processes have been especially detrimental for the PLN, as its base of support has been weakened by the stagnation or decline of sectors which were natural followers, and by the conversion of previously supportive groups to political independence. The social composition of PLN's defectors explains, to a great extent,

their predilection for partisan independence. In conclusion, there are political and sociological causes that seem to explain Costa Rica's dealignment process since the mid-1980s, and also account for the fact that the PLN is particularly affected by this phenomenon. Figure 8.1 syntheses the main political and social elements causing the erosion of PLN's partisan loyalties (and of the country's general party identification levels), and the growth of political independence in Costa Rica.

Figure 8.1. Main Political and Sociological Determinants of Dealignment in Costa Rica

**Explanations**

**Political**

PLN's Performance in Office

| Programmatic convergence with PUSC | Disappointing 1994-1998 administration |
|---|---|
| 1) Unsatisfactory economic results<br>2) Unfulfilled promises<br>3) Corruption scandals<br>4) Confrontational governing style<br>5) Failure respond high expectations | |

PLN's Institutional Waning

| Death founding leaders | Distance govts. from party | Internal electoral processes |
|---|---|---|
| 1) Enhanced factionalism<br>2) Institutional intermittence<br>3) Radicalisation of internal conflicts<br>4) Abandonment of central party roles (recruitment and training) | | |

**Sociological**

Main Social Transformations

1) Growth of middle class (until mid-1980s)
2) Increase in tertiary and decline in primary sector employment
3) Urbanisation (especially since mid-1980s)
4) Improvement in education (particularly at the higher level)
5) Rising supply of information
6) Aging of party system

Type of Changes Affecting PLN's Support

| Changes in social composition | Changes in nature |
|---|---|
| 1) Stagnation of middle class<br>2) Decline in citizens working in agricultural activities<br>3) Loss of relative weight of the young in the electorate | Growth of partisan independence among citizens:<br>1) With higher education<br>2) Living in urban settlements<br>3) Between 18 and 24 years of age |

Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

# Part V

# Dealignment in Costa Rica

# Chapter 9

# Conclusion

## 1 Electoral Change in Costa Rica

Political parties are essential anchors in the democratic process. They are located at the centre of democracy, connecting governments and citizens in political systems. By leading the process of political representation and competing in elections, parties allow democratic regimes to develop and function. Following Schattschneider, it is hard to imagine democracy without them.[1]

Given their centrality in the democratic process, parties are always under stress and in constant need to adapt. Successful parties are able to respond to changing social expectations, while maintaining their internal cohesion. Indeed, long-lasting, electorally successful parties, are normally those whose leadership and institutional strength allows them to respond efficiently to voters' changing demands, without contradicting their general programmatic goals and jeopardising their unity. This is not an easy task, and it becomes even harder when political parties have to function in polities marked by accelerated changes.

Certainly, in order to survive, contemporary parties are bound to adapt, operate, and deliver in societies characterised by rapid transformations. As a result, party change is a generalised phenomenon in most liberal democracies. Particularly in developed nations, social modernisation processes and the emergence of more knowledgeable, demanding voters, along with technological developments, an increasingly influential mass media, and the appearance of specialised interest groups, among others, have drastically altered countries' political arenas.[2] This has affected parties' functions as institutions and in government. However, the most evident transformations are those occurring in their roles and connection with the electorate.[3]

As we have seen throughout this research, analysts have reported growing levels of electoral flux, and decreasing support for traditional political parties around the world. Especially in the case of Western countries, the stability and long history of their

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[1] Schattschneider 1942, p. 1.
[2] Rempel and Clark 1997.

democratic regimes and party systems has allowed academics to undertake detailed studies in order to determine the causes of these transformations. In many of these polities electoral changes seemed to be motivated by the erosion of citizens' partisan identification, which, in turn, is generally caused by political and/or social factors. Indeed, the emergence of less loyal, more independent voters, or dealignment, is one of the central challenges political parties are facing at the turn of the century.

Most of dealignment's theoretical propositions are drawn from the analysis of electoral change processes in Western democracies. However, this does not mean that similar processes are not happening elsewhere. As suggested by the present research, comparable situations can be found in different Latin American countries. Specifically, we have presented evidence of an electoral change process taking place in Costa Rica, the region's most stable democracy.

The stability of this country's democratic regime and the level of institutionalisation of its political parties has allowed us to study Costa Rica's electoral change process from the viewpoint of dealignment—as noted, a theoretical approach inspired by Western nations. By doing this we were aiming not only to characterise and explain Costa Rica's current political transformations, but also to probe and complement this theory's general propositions, applying them in a Latin American scenario. The peculiarities of this Central American country (which we defined in the introduction as the "most similar case in one of the most different settings"), and the absence of similar works on which to build, led us to choose a case study to undertake the analysis. This was the most appropriate methodological approach for this research, as it allowed the characterisation of Costa Rica's main electoral changes and the study of its causes to be preceded by thorough historical and institutional assessments of the country's political parties, electoral rules, and party system. Likewise, when applicable, comparisons were drawn with other countries undergoing similar processes.

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[3] Dalton and Wattenberg 2000a.

This chapter (the last part of the thesis) is divided into four sections. The thesis topic and its main objectives are summarised in the first one. The second one recapitulates the study's central findings. The third one assesses the project's main results in light of the more recent events in Costa Rican politics. Finally the fourth section proposes future lines of research.

## 2 Central Lessons from the Costa Rican Case

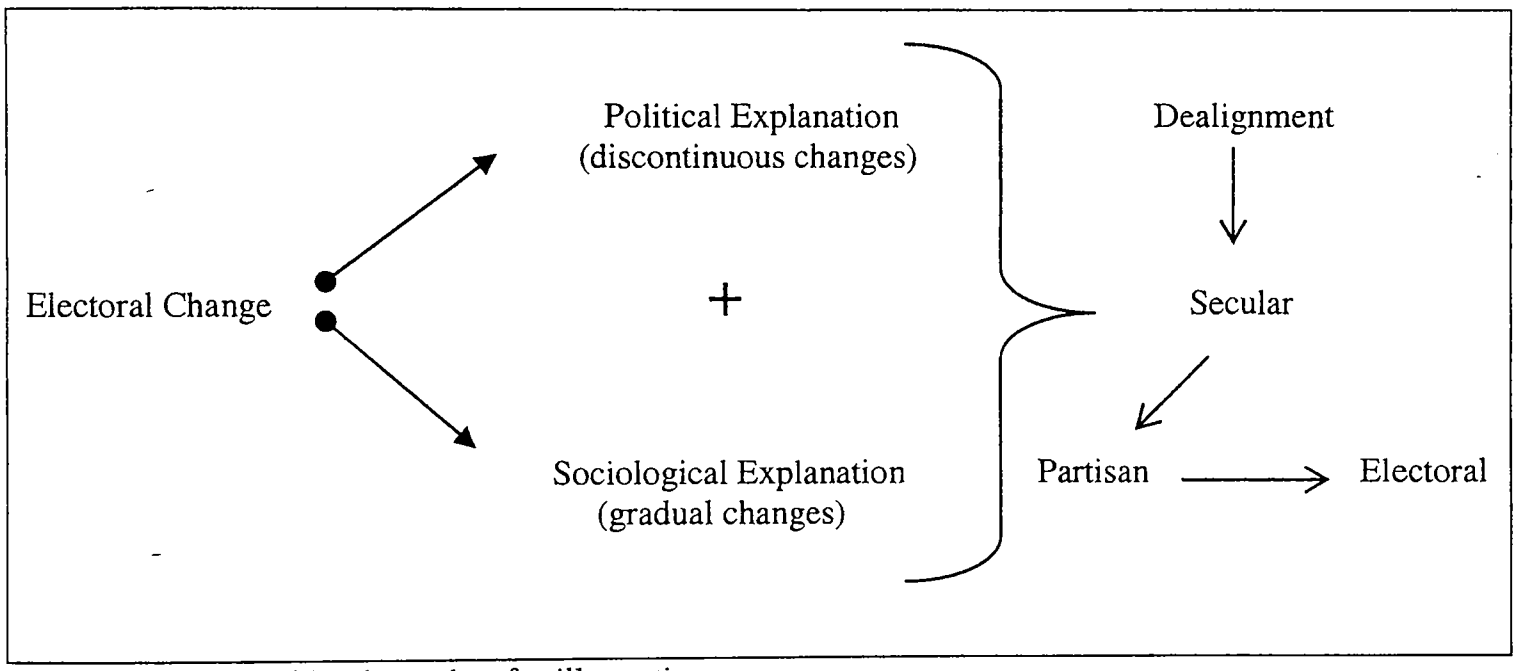
Hitherto unexplained electoral transformations have been evident in Costa Rica since the 1998 elections. This thesis has studied whether this country was undergoing a long-term electoral change, and, if so, how the process could be classified and explained. Moreover, it evaluated how well the theories developed to explicate electoral change in Western democracies illuminate the Costa Rican case. This was done via an extensive longitudinal assessment, or a "developmental-case-study,"[4] enriched with an eclectic theoretical approach.

After an analysis of electoral trends in Costa Rica, and the historical, institutional, political and social factors that may have influenced them, we concluded, firstly that this country is undergoing a long-term electoral change process. This process can certainly be defined as secular dealignment. Secondly, in the case studied, the erosion of citizens' partisan identification (partisan dealignment) since the mid-1980s—particularly salient between 1993 and 1996—has resulted in a growing electoral flux and the decline in traditional parties' electoral support (electoral dealignment) since 1998. Thirdly, dealignment in Costa Rica is essentially caused by the decline of the PLN's (the country's oldest, most important party) historical loyalties. And finally, the PLN's partisan identification is eroding due to the combination and mutual influence of political factors and social transformations. In other words, not only do the two most important general theoretical explanations of dealignment (the political and the sociological one) work in the Costa Rica case, but they also help to elucidate the case by complementing each other. While many of the social determinants of dealignment in Costa Rica find parallels in developed democracies, some political

factors seem to be specific to this country—and most probably to Latin American nations.

Chapter 2 ended by presenting a graphic synthesis of the study's general theoretical framework (see Figure 2.1). This framework considered different "avenues" of analysis that might have been followed depending on the evidence found. Now, having finished the study, Figure 9.1 presents the specific theoretical framework that was used to elucidate the Costa Rican case.

Figure 9.1. Conceptual Framework Applied to Elucidate Costa Rica's Electoral Change Process




Source: Elaborated by the author for illustrative purposes.

This thesis has also provided interesting conclusions for the more general, basically Western-centred, discussion on elections and parties. It is worth reviewing the most relevant ones. In the first place the study demonstrated not only that party identification can be measured in Costa Rica,[5] but also that there are grounds to believe that—as in most Western democracies—this concept plays a central role in explaining electoral behaviour in the country. Furthermore, it was shown that

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[4] Bartolini 1994, pp. 116-117.

[5] The unavailability of systematic and trustworthy data on party identification is one of the central reasons why these type of studies are scarce in developing countries.

dealignment is not necessarily a Western phenomenon, it can and has happened in Latin America.

In the second place it was demonstrated that analyses of the political determinants of dealignment should not concentrate solely on the effects of parties' performances in government (basically poor economic results, particular unpopular decisions, or scandals) to explain their loss of support. They should also assess the consequences of changes in parties' internal institutional dynamics. Even if the causal link might not be as evident as in the case of performance shortcomings, institutional waning can certainly contribute to the erosion of party loyalties. Likewise, it was shown that many of the political attitude changing processes that Dalton considers as characteristic of post-industrial societies,[6] are also taking place in Costa Rica. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that the sociological explanation, an approach generally applied to elucidate the erosion of partisan loyalties in developed societies, is also useful to explicate the increase of political independence and the decline of partisan identification in a small, developing Latin American nation. Additionally, in terms of the general explanations of dealignment, the present thesis has demonstrated that the political and the sociological explanations are not necessarily contesting positions. In certain cases they may well be mutually reinforcing.

Finally, it was shown that the political nature of Costa Rica's central cleavage, and the relevance of particular figures both in the development of the conflict and in the formation of the parties, created partisan loyalties that have a strong personalistic component. Even if the admiration and loyalty to the leaders have certainly been "inherited" by the parties—the institutions—party identification in Costa Rica still remains heavily determined by the character of parties' leadership. This has important implications for the study of electoral change processes in countries with similar "politically based" cleavages.

It might be the case that cleavages of a political nature—in many cases evolving from armed confrontations—do not have the same resilience as social or religious

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[6] Dalton 1996b; Dalton et al. 1984a.

cleavages. In political cleavages (at least in those predominant in Latin America) loyalties are normally developed towards groups and leaders which eventually disband or die. If it is not reinvigorated by the involvement of family members in politics—understandably a common event in Latin America—partisan identification originating from the loyalty to a specific figure or group of leaders faces higher probabilities of rapid erosion once these characters disappear. This should not be the case with partisan loyalties based on a sense of membership to a common, more enduring social or religious group. The nature of a cleavage surely affects the development of partisan identification and the outcomes of its decline. It should be stressed that the significance of personalism for Latin American parties' loyalties is reinforced by the magnification of the candidate's image typical of presidentialism. In any case, these findings strongly suggest that personality is a variable that ought to be seriously considered whenever studying dealignment in a Latin American context.

Therefore, apart from demonstrating that Costa Rica is undergoing a process of secular dealignment which can be explained using the general, mainly Western, theory on the topic, this thesis has also illustrated the relevance of in-depth, context-sensitive case studies for comparative electoral research. It showed that comprehensive electoral change studies can be undertaken in Latin America, and highlighted the theoretical and empirical benefits of such works outside the Western world.

## 3 Party Loyalties after 2002: The Effect of Presidential Reelection

A question that still needs to be addressed is whether the dealignment process in Costa Rica might be reversed. To assess the possibilities of changes in the party identification declining trend we need to go back to its causes.

As noted above, political and social factors have underpinned the erosion of partisan loyalties in Costa Rica. Electoral changes caused by social factors follow a gradual pattern, as do social transformations themselves. Hence, we would not expect the declining tendency followed by partisan identification to be altered by changes in

these factors in the near future. Nonetheless, this is not the case with the political determinants of dealignment. With the obvious exception of the deaths of the "founding fathers," the loyalty erosion suffered by the PLN might be altered if this party is able to regain its institutional cohesion, select more appealing, strong leaders, and—eventually—win an election and do well in office. However, due to the more enduring social causes of dealignment, this would have to be accomplished in a less "party friendly" political scenario, characterised by a significant percentage of the electorate (about one third at the moment) claiming to be politically independent.

Still, a recent electoral reform with evident political implications might change the PLN's fate. On the 4th of April 2003, the prohibition for presidential reelection (in place since 1969) was lifted by the Constitutional Court. Thus, Costa Rica went back to the pre-1969 rule which allowed former presidents to serve again after an eight-year intervening period.[7] This reform has introduced change in the country's hitherto stable institutional framework. Specifically, it has direct implications for parties' leadership, which—as we saw—is one of the central political elements influencing partisan identification in Costa Rica.

Indeed, the reestablishment of presidential reelection could result in former presidents who still enjoy high public regard returning to their parties in order to participate in electoral politics once again.[8] In the case of the PLN this means that Ex-President Oscar Arias, the party's most popular living leader, could run again for office.[9] The immediate effect of the reform on the country's party loyalties is depicted in Table 9.1. This table shows how, after matching its lowest party identification register since 1978 in the second fourth-month period of 2002 (26.8 per cent[10]), the PLN has recovered some of the lost terrain.

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[7] See, *La Nación* 26 de junio 1969; *La Nación* 5 de abril 2003.
[8] Due to the existing prohibition on reelection, most ex-presidents normally "retired" from politics after their period was over.
[9] Even though he has not officially launched his campaign yet, it is *vox populi* that Arias will be the PLN's candidate in the 2006 elections.
[10] The PLN registered the same party identification percentage during the 1st four-month period in 1996.

The imminent reestablishment of presidential reelection was widely known since the end of 2002, and may have been reflected in the Social Democrats' growing loyalties since then. Nevertheless, it is more likely for the PLN's party identification growth to be a consequence of the contradictions and poor results of the PUSC's current administration.[11] As demonstrated in Table 9.1, the Social Christians have been rapidly losing party adherence since the end of 2002. This party initially benefited from the popularity of the elected President. However, in a matter of months, it has directly suffered from the decline in Pacheco's public esteem.

It is still too early to measure the long-term effect of the reestablishment of presidential reelection on party identification in Costa Rica. However, at least until the middle of 2003, this reform and the unimpressive first year of the PUSC 2002-2006 administration, have not been enough to restore the PLN's historical party adherence levels. Moreover, its recovery—until now—has not been sufficient to reverse the general dealignment process. In fact, as illustrated in Table 9.1, after registering a sudden increased due to the high support obtained by the PUSC at the beginning of the 2002-2006 government, party identification started to decline again—and party independence to increase—just four months later. This fall has apparently been stopped by the PLN's possibly temporary recovery. Nonetheless, the general party identification average in 2002-2003 (63.4 per cent) is almost three points below the average in 1998-2002, until then the lowest in the last six administrations.

Thus, up until the middle of 2003, it seems that the reestablishment of presidential reelection could have prevented a further decline of party identification, but it does not appear to be sufficient to stop its long-term negative trend. Moreover, the sudden changes in parties' loyalties (particularly PUSC's fall) and the impact of the image of the candidate or the president on partisan identification erase any remaining doubts regarding the possibility of a realigning process in Costa Rica, and further

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[11] Three quarters of the population thinks that after one year in office President Pacheco has not started to govern yet, and only 3 per cent believes that the current administration is solving the country's problems. The generalised perception of "political stagnation" has caused the President's credibility to fall 16.5 points between October 2002 and May 2003. Unimer RI-La Nación, octubre 2002, mayo 2003. See also, *La Nación* 9 de febrero 2003; *La Nación* 6 de julio 2003.

demonstrate the state of flux prevailing in the country's electorate, characteristic of dealignment.

Table 9.1. Party Identification and Political Independence in Costa Rica, 2002-2003 (4-month periods)

| PID/4-Month Periods | 1st/02 | General Elections (03/02/02) | 2nd/02 | 3rd/02 | 1st/03 | Presidential Reelection Restablished (04/04/03) | 2nd/03 | 3rd/03 | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PLN | 30.6 | | 26.8 | 28.9 | 31.0 | | 35.0 | 32.0 | 30.7 |
| PUSC | 31.5 | | 39.8 | 34.9 | 30.0 | | 27.0 | 29.0 | 32.0 |
| IND | 21.1 | | 24.1 | 27.8 | 31.5 | | 31.0 | 29.0 | 27.4 |
| Left | 0.4 | | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.7 | | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| Total PID | 62.5 | | 67.3 | 64.5 | 61.7 | | 62.7 | 61.7 | 63.4 |

Source: Author's own estimations based on CID-Gallup, OPs # 89-96.

## 4 Topics for Future Research

In the course of this thesis we have highlighted several findings relevant not only for the Costa Rican case, but also for the more general debate about electoral change. Given the nature (case study) and limitations (basically in terms of the availability of specialised survey data) of the thesis, some of these propositions need to be further developed and substantiated with additional research. This study ends by signalling five particular aspects inspired by the present work whose assessment would be particularly beneficial for our general understanding of electoral change processes.

The first two are part of a "follow up agenda," and consist of ways in which this case study could be complemented. In the first place, apart from carrying on updating party identification registers in Costa Rica, it would be interesting to study the influence that the reestablishment of presidential reelection will have on parties' internal dynamics. With this reform, ex-presidents (current and future) interested in being re-elected would have to return to their parties' active life. With the salient exception of Ex-President Calderón-Fournier, all the other former presidents were until now "retired" from politics. Moreover, several ex-presidents (both of the PLN and the PUSC) have publicly expressed their intention to reform the way in which

legislative candidates are selected. The detrimental effect of open internal elections on parties' cohesion has driven party leaders to look for alternative methods to select their congressional candidates.[12] Thus, two factors which negatively affect party loyalty (the "leadership deficit" and some of the divisions caused by internal elections [both particularly salient in the case of the PLN]), could be fixed or at least improved in a near future.

In the second place, the present case and the framework of analysis developed would be enriched if we were able not only to find the causes of dealignment, but also measure their relative weight.[13] Indeed, a future study could concentrate on determining the relevance of the political and the social factors in Costa Rica's electoral change process. Furthermore, in the case of the latter, the specific effect of changes in composition and changes in nature could also be individually measured. The assistance of "tailor made" surveys will be necessary to undertake this task.

The other research avenues inspired by this thesis entail assessing some of its more general conclusions in a broader context, by including more cases in the analysis. Firstly, it would be interesting to further explore the impact of parties' internal dynamics (repercussions of internal election methods, generational changes, general policy or personal conflicts, etc.) on their party identification. As indicated, a direct causal link between the two cannot be assured. However, by including some questions on the topic in public opinion surveys, and studying this aspect in several democracies, we should be able to define more precisely the relevance of parties' institutional waning on the decline of their historical loyalties.

Secondly, a cross-country analysis could also be undertaken to compare and contrast partisan loyalties developed for parties originating from different types of cleavages. It would be particularly revealing to study the differences which exist between party identification (its development, endurance, central determinants, etc.) emerging from political cleavages *vis à vis* social or religious ones. The variations in the relevance of

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[12] *La Nación* 18 de mayo 2003; *La Nación* 22 de julio 2003.
[13] Heath and colleagues provide a good example of a methodology that could be used to undertake this type of analysis. See, Heath et al. 1991, Chap. 9.

personality and the effect of intervening institutional variables (presidentialism, parliamentarism, the electoral system, etc.) should be closely monitored in such a study.

Finally, our general understanding of electoral change processes would undoubtedly benefit if the framework developed to assess electoral change in Costa Rica could be applied in other Latin American countries. Taking into account their historical and institutional differences, similar analyses could be undertaken in other democracies in the region. Given their democratic stability, the strength of their political parties (or coalitions) and the availability of information, Uruguay and Chile seem to be the more appropriate cases to include in the first steps of a cross-national study of electoral change in Latin America.

The present thesis has demonstrated that, even if not with the same array of previous research, survey studies and statistical data as in developed countries, electoral change can and needs to be systematically studied in Latin America. Such a task will entail—at least in the primary stages—a deep understanding of the political, historical and institutional variables which may influence electoral behaviour in each country. Nonetheless, by doing this we would have provided comparative electoral studies with a wealth of new information, and may also find answers to questions that have puzzled political scientists for years.

# Appendixes

Appendix 1. Voter Participation in the Costa Rican Elections, 1897-2002

| Electoral Year | Population (1) | Votes (2) | Percentage (2/1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1897** | 275,000 | 24,065 | 8.8 |
| **1901** | 310,000 | 35,722 | 11.5 |
| **1905** | 341,000 | 51,789 | 15.2 |
| **1909** | 378,780 | 51,623 | 13.6 |
| **1913** | 410,000 | 64,147 | 15.7 |
| **1919*** | 421,000 | 47,497 | 11.3 |
| **1923** | 460,000 | 71,545 | 15.6 |
| **1928** | 471,524 | 70,281 | 14.9 |
| **1932** | 539,654 | 70,447 | 13.1 |
| **1936** | 591,862 | 88,324 | 14.9 |
| **1940** | 660,000 | 108,145 | 15.7 |
| **1944** | 700,000 | 126,606 | 18.1 |
| **1948** | 756,000 | 99,369 | 13.1 |
| **1953** | 868,741 | 197,489 | 22.7 |
| **1958** | 1,052,474 | 229,543 | 21.8 |
| **1962** | 1,251,397 | 391,406 | 31.3 |
| **1966** | 1,515,292 | 451,490 | 29.8 |
| **1970** | 1,710,083 | 562,766 | 32.9 |
| **1974** | 1,905,338 | 699,340 | 36.7 |
| **1978** | 2,098,531 | 860,206 | 41.0 |
| **1982** | 2,339,828 | 991,679 | 42.4 |
| **1986** | 2,674,174 | 1,216,300 | 45.5 |
| **1990** | 2,959,177 | 1,384,326 | 46.8 |
| **1994** | 3,234,133 | 1,525,979 | 47.2 |
| **1998** | 3,681,157 | 1,431,913 | 38.9 |
| **2002** | 4,029,955 | 1,569,418 | 38.9 |

* Between 1914 and 1917 the country was ruled by the Tinoco brothers' dictatorship.
Sources: Based on TSE 2002b; INEC 2002; Stone 1975, p. 236.; Thibaut 1993a, pp. 183-209.; Núñez and Rosales 1999, p. 13.

Appendix 2. Citizens Registered to Vote in the Costa Rican Elections, 1953-2002

| Electoral Year | Population (1) | Citizens Registered to Vote (2) | Percentage (2/1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | 868,741 | 294,016 | 33.8 |
| **1958** | 1,052,474 | 354,779 | 33.7 |
| **1962** | 1,251,397 | 483,980 | 38.7 |
| **1966** | 1,515,292 | 554,627 | 36.6 |
| **1970** | 1,710,083 | 675,285 | 39.5 |
| **1974** | 1,905,338 | 875,041 | 45.9 |
| **1978** | 2,098,531 | 1,058,455 | 50.4 |
| **1982** | 2,339,828 | 1,261,127 | 53.9 |
| **1986** | 2,674,174 | 1,486,474 | 55.6 |
| **1990** | 2,959,177 | 1,692,050 | 57.2 |
| **1994** | 3,234,133 | 1,881,348 | 58.2 |
| **1998** | 3,681,157 | 2,045,980 | 55.6 |
| **2002** | 4,029,955 | 2,279,851 | 56.5 |

Sources: Based on TSE 2002b; Núñez and Rosales 1999, p. 13.

Appendix 3. Absenteeism in the Costa Rican Elections, 1953-2002

| Electoral Year | Citizens Registered to Vote (1) | Actual Votes (2) | Percentage [1-(2/1)] |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | 294,016 | 197,489 | 32.8 |
| **1958** | 354,779 | 229,543 | 35.3 |
| **1962** | 483,980 | 391,406 | 19.1 |
| **1966** | 554,627 | 451,490 | 18.6 |
| **1970** | 675,285 | 562,766 | 16.7 |
| **1974** | 875,041 | 699,340 | 20.1 |
| **1978** | 1,058,455 | 860,206 | 18.7 |
| **1982** | 1,261,127 | 991,679 | 21.4 |
| **1986** | 1,486,474 | 1,216,300 | 18.2 |
| **1990** | 1,692,050 | 1,384,326 | 18.2 |
| **1994** | 1,881,348 | 1,525,979 | 18.9 |
| **1998** | 2,045,980 | 1,431,981 | 30.0 |
| **2002** | 2,279,851 | 1,569,418 | 31.2 |

Sources: Based on TSE 2002b; Núñez and Rosales 1999, pp. 11-13.

Appendix 4. Legislative Results and Split-Ticket Voting between the Two Major and Other Minor Parties in Costa Rican Elections, 1953-1998

| Electoral Years | Parties | % Legs. Elect. (1) | % Pres. Elect. (2) | (1) – (2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | Two major | 85.9 | 100 | (14.1) |
| | Other minor | 14.1 | 0.0 | 14.1 |
| **1958** | Two major | 64.0 | 89.2 | (25.2) |
| | Other minor | 35.9 | 10.8 | 25.1 |
| **1962** | Two major | 82.3 | 85.6 | (3.3) |
| | Other minor | 17.7 | 14.4 | 3.3 |
| **1966** | Two major | 92.1 | 100 | (7.9) |
| | Other minor | 7.9 | 0.0 | 7.9 |
| **1970** | Two major | 86.6 | 96.0 | (9.4) |
| | Other minor | 13.4 | 4.0 | 9.4 |
| **1974** | Two major | 65.6 | 73.8 | (8.2) |
| | Other minor | 34.4 | 26.2 | 8.2 |
| **1978** | Two major | 82.3 | 94.3 | (12. 0) |
| | Other minor | 17.7 | 5.7 | 12.0 |
| **1982** | Two major | 84.1 | 92.4 | (8.3) |
| | Other minor | 15.9 | 7.6 | 8.3 |
| **1986** | Two major | 89.1 | 98.1 | (9.0) |
| | Other minor | 10.9 | 1.9 | 9.0 |
| **1990** | Two major | 88.1 | 98.7 | (10.6) |
| | Other minor | 11.9 | 1.3 | 10.6 |
| **1994** | Two major | 85.0 | 97.3 | (12.3) |
| | Other minor | 15.0 | 2.7 | 12.3 |
| **1998** | Two major | 76.0 | 91.5 | (15.5) |
| | Other minor | 24.0 | 8.5 | 15.5 |
| **2002** | Two major | 56.9 | 70.0 | (13.1) |
| | Other minor | 43.1 | 30.0 | 13.1 |

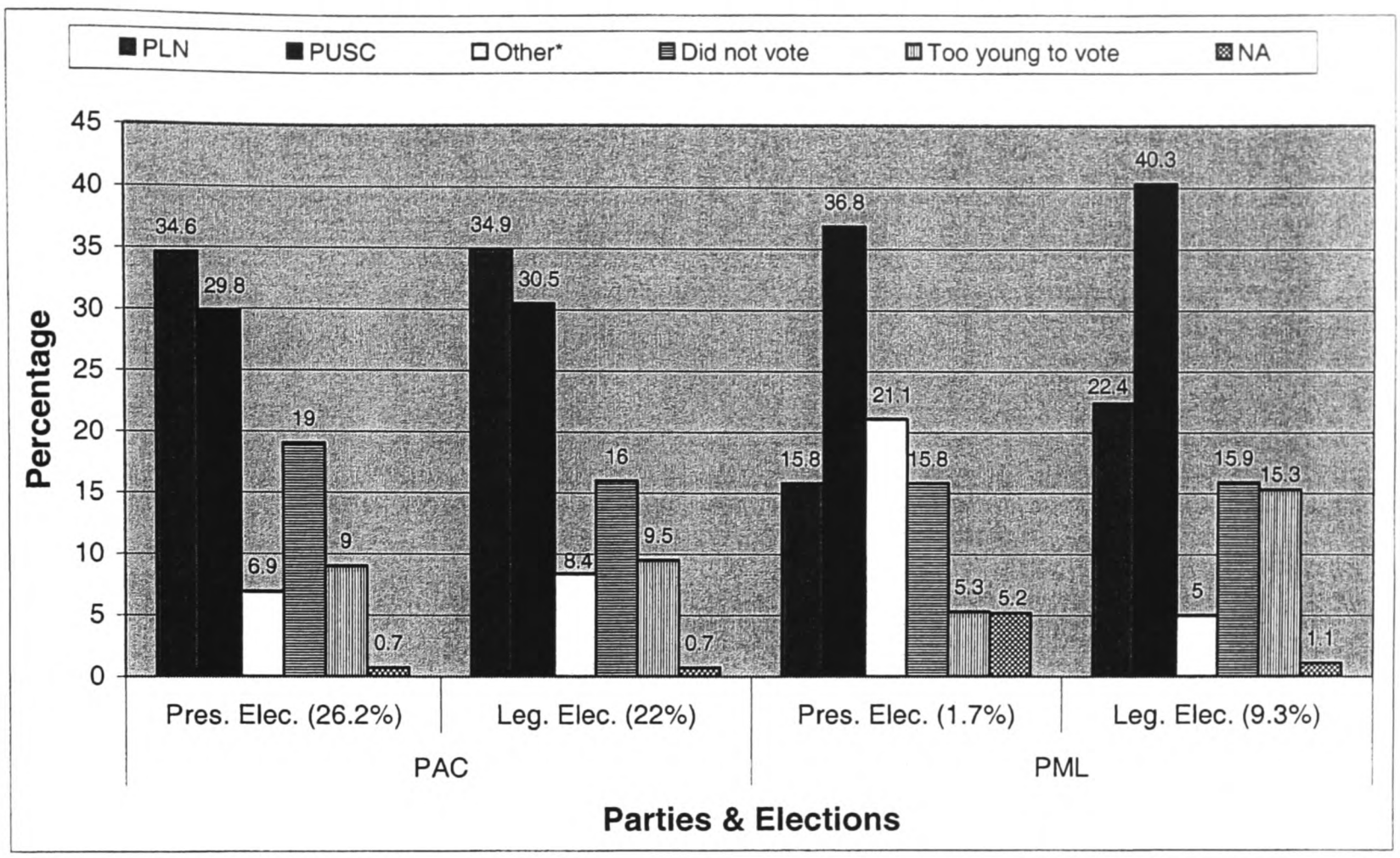
Sources: Based on Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 257, 262-265.; TSE 2002b.

Appendix 5. Votes, Seats, and Disproportionality by the Two Major and Other Minor Parties in the Costa Rican Legislative Elections, 1953-1998

| Electoral Years | Parties | % of Seats (1) | % of Votes (2) | Disproportionality (1) – (2) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1953** | Two major | 91.1 | 85.9 | 5.2 |
| | Other minor | 8.9 | 14.1 | -5.2 |
| **1958** | Two major | 68.9 | 64.0 | 4.9 |
| | Other minor | 31.1 | 35.9 | -4.9 |
| **1962** | Two major | 82.5 | 82.3 | 0.2 |
| | Other minor | 17.5 | 17.7 | -0.2 |
| **1966** | Two major | 96.5 | 92.1 | 4.4 |
| | Other minor | 3.5 | 7.9 | -4.4 |
| **1970** | Two major | 94.7 | 86.6 | 8.1 |
| | Other minor | 5.3 | 13.4 | -8.1 |
| **1974** | Two major | 75.4 | 65.6 | 9.8 |
| | Other minor | 24.6 | 34.4 | -9.8 |
| **1978** | Two major | 91.6 | 82.3 | 9.3 |
| | Other minor | 8.4 | 17.7 | -9.3 |
| **1982** | Two major | 89.5 | 84.1 | 5.4 |
| | Other minor | 10.5 | 15.9 | -5.4 |
| **1986** | Two major | 94.7 | 89.1 | 5.6 |
| | Other minor | 5.3 | 10.9 | -5.6 |
| **1990** | Two major | 94.7 | 88.1 | 6.6 |
| | Other minor | 5.3 | 11.9 | -6.6 |
| **1994** | Two major | 93.0 | 85.0 | 8.0 |
| | Other minor | 7.0 | 15.0 | -8.0 |
| **1998** | Two major | 87.7 | 76.0 | 11.7 |
| | Other minor | 12.3 | 24.0 | -11.7 |
| **2002** | Two major | 63.2 | 56.9 | 6.3 |
| | Other minor | 36.8 | 43.1 | -6.3 |

Sources: Based on Hernández-Naranjo 2001, pp. 262-265.; TSE 2002b.

Appendix 6. Party Supported in the 1998 Elections by Voters that Supported the PAC and the PML in the 2002 Presidential and Legislative Elections




* Includes votes obtained by the Left.
Note: Numbers in parenthesis indicate the percentage of the vote obtained by each of the parties in the 2002 presidential and legislative elections.
Source: Author's own estimations based on Unimer RI-La Nación, 3 de febrero 2002.

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