

Fracture of the Centre and Presidential Popularity: The Chilean Christian Democratic Party, 1958-1970¹

*Fractura del Centro y Popularidad Presidencial:
el Partido Demócrata Cristiano chileno, 1958-1970*

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RESUMEN

Analizamos las elecciones presidenciales chilenas de 1970, y panorámicamente las de 1958 y 1964, utilizando las encuestas de opinión realizadas por Eduardo Hamuy en Santiago. Nos preguntamos por las características de las bases de apoyo de los candidatos. Concluimos, en primer lugar, que existe abundante evidencia sobre la volatilidad electoral de la época. Segundo, que la alta aprobación al Presidente Eduardo Frei Montalva por parte de los votantes del PDC, no se transfirió plenamente a Radomiro Tomic, candidato del partido en las elecciones de 1970. Tercero, que todo esto ilustra una importante fractura del centro político, que se dividió entre Tomic y el candidato de la derecha, Jorge Alessandri.

Palabras clave: PDC, encuestas, elecciones, aprobación presidencial, Chile

ABSTRACT

We analyse the Chilean presidential elections of 1970 and, more generally, those of 1958 and 1964, using opinion polls conducted by Eduardo Hamuy in Santiago. We ask about the characteristics of the candidates' support bases. We find, first, that there is ample evidence of electoral volatility during this period. Second, that the high approval rating of President Eduardo Frei Montalva among PDC voters was not fully transferred to Radomiro Tomic, the party's candidate in the 1970 elections. Third, that all this illustrates an important split in the political centre, which was divided between Tomic and the right-wing candidate, Jorge Alessandri.

Keywords: PDC, surveys, elections, presidential approval, Chile

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Introduction

In this article we analyse the Chilean presidential election of 1970, with reference to previous elections. Our aim is to identify the characteristics of the social bases of support for the competing candidates. We argue that this election not only illustrated the high volatility of the Chilean party system, but also highlighted the fracture of the political centre. On the one hand, voters who approved of the performance of President Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970) did not support his party's candidate - the Christian Democratic Party (DCP) - Radomiro Tomic with the same vigour. On the other hand, centrist voters were polarised, dividing their support between the right-wing candidate and the DCP candidate. We develop our argument using Eduardo Hamuy's pre-election surveys for the presidential elections of 1958, 1964 and 1970. We ask the following questions How much did the electoral preferences of centrist voters change between 1970 and 1958? To what extent did approval of President Frei influence voters' intentions to vote for Tomic?

A wealth of literature has been written on the characteristics of the political party system in Chile between 1932 and 1973 (Valenzuela 1995; Valenzuela and Scully 1997; Montes et al. 2000; Torcal and Mainwaring 2003) and on the electoral processes that culminated in the breakdown of Chilean democracy (Garcés 1971; Cruz-Coke 1984). However, most of these studies are based on the results of national and local elections, with less emphasis placed on analyzing public opinion polls throughout the period.

In 1957, Eduardo Hamuy, Director of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Chile, began to conduct electoral surveys in Santiago, Valparaíso and Viña del Mar. These surveys were periodically taken, generating a significant amount of data in some scholarly studies in the 1970s. For example, Prothro and Chaparro (1974) analyzed the shifts in Chilean's political identification. More recently, Navia and Osorio (2015) used the entirety of Hamuy's surveys to characterize the political and economic climate of the time. However, these studies are an exception since the focus is generally on Chilean democracy and political parties before 1973, using political and electoral data without analyzing public opinion in depth.

For example, Garretón's hypothesis (1983, 2000) on the characteristics of the party system is generally supported by Chilean literature. According to Garretón, political parties formed the 'backbone' of the Chilean political system up until the breakdown of democracy in 1973. The overlap between civil society organizations and the political system led to a 'relative efficiency of representation' that ensured a long period of stability (Garretón 1983: 17). This idea was disputed by Montes et al. (2000), who warned about the highly volatile nature of the Chilean party system between 1932 and 1973. These debates about the characteristics of the Chilean political party system are usually based on national and local electoral results without considering public opinion as an essential factor, nor Hamuy's survey results.

According to Valenzuela's classic study (1978), the democratic breakdown of 1973 in Chile is explained by the collapse of the party system and its division into 'thirds' and the erosion of the central consensus (Valenzuela 1978, 45) under Salvador Allende's government. Historically, the Chilean centre parties worked as pragmatic business agencies and political transactions. The irruption of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) -as a programmatic centre party- towards the end of the 50s changed that structure making it more difficult to reach an agreement or consensus in parliament. While the parties from the pragmatic centre promoted negotiation

and discussion, the other programmatic centre, the PDC, were stricter and less willing to reach an agreement with the left or right-wing parties. According to Valenzuela (1978), this stiffness led to the breakdown of democracy. While Valenzuela's argument has historical foundations and is supported by electoral evidence, here we suggest a different approach. Valenzuela (1978) analyses the role of PDC with a political-institutional perspective, pointing out its contribution to the programmatic polarisation of Chile. Based on Hamuy's surveys conducted in Santiago, we study the PDC's electoral base and the effect of approval for Frei Montalva's presidency on the electoral performance of the PDC's 1970 presidential candidate. Even though we recognize the contribution of the more institutionalist literature on the Chilean party system, in this article, we take a different path, evaluating the PDC's electoral base in a critical election.

Firstly, although the percentage of voters who identified with the right, centre or left of politics was stable between 1958 and 1973, this was only sometimes reflected in the electoral support received by the presidential candidates. This occurs with the centre voters who change their electoral preference from one election to another. Secondly, we determine that the rupture of the political centre began in the presidential elections of 1970, even though it had occurred to some extent in previous elections. During that election, a significant percentage of those who expressed support for President Frei Montalva (elected in 1964) did not vote for the PDC's presidential candidate.

We develop this argument, as we said, using Eduardo Hamuy's Santiago surveys to characterize Chilean electoral preferences between 1958 and 1970, with a particular focus on the presidential election of 1970. The 1970 election is considered a critical juncture which led to the military coup in 1973 (Valenzuela 1978). Despite the importance of the 1970 election, this has yet to be studied on its own. During this election, the three-way division was formed in Chilean politics with left, centre and right presidential candidates (Garcés 1971). Three candidates competed in the election: Jorge Alessandri (an independent candidate backed by parties on the right), Radomiro Tomic (candidate of the PDC), and Salvador Allende (candidate of the left-wing political alliance Popular Unity [Unidad Popular, UP]). The division of Chilean politics into 'thirds' likely contributed to the polarization and later the destabilization of the democracy because it weakened the political centre (Valenzuela 1978). The most credible expression of this theory is Tomic's political agenda which had more in joint with the proposals of a leftist candidate than those of a candidate belonging to a traditionally centrist party. This distinction distanced Tomic from President Frei, who represented the more moderate wing of the PDC. Therefore, it is likely that Tomic's radical and transformative programme caused alarm amongst centrist voters, some of whom opted to vote for Alessandri in the 1970 election (San Francisco 2005).

There is a consensus that Tomic's electoral programme was built around leftist as opposed to traditionally centrist ideas. However, there needs to be more quantitative analysis available to determine whether moderate voters effectively abandoned Tomic in favour of Alessandri and if this pattern differed from what was observed in the 1958 and 1964 elections. Although several studies have analyzed the Chilean PDC in terms of its electoral performance (Grayson 1969; Forgarty 1964), its role in the pre-1973 democracy (Yocelvezky 1985; Huneus 2016) and its social roots through the surveys (Morales and Poveda 2007; Navia and Osorio 2015a; Morales and Rubilar 2016; Herrera et al. 2019; Herrera et al. 2023), not much is known about its political trends in the presidential elections from 1958 to 1964. These studies usually explain the electoral rise of the PDC in terms of Eduardo Frei Montalva's leadership (elected in 1964) and his

transformative political programme, amongst other things. While Grayson (1969) attributes the PDC's success to political mobilization galvanized by the plans of a transformative government, Yoczelevsky (1985) focuses on the development of the PDC within the party system, pointing out the PDC's arrival as a new centrist political force to take the place of the Radical Party (Partido radical, PR). Meanwhile, Huneus (2016) discusses the institutionalization of the PDC and the relevance of Frei Montalva to this process, as he attracted the middle-class and the rural working-class sectors of society. This group traditionally aligned with the right-wing parties.

In this article, we propose something different. Our interest lies in analyzing the characteristics of the PDC's voters in a critical election (1970). To do this, we put two key hypotheses to the test. First is the polarization hypothesis. Theory suggests that an essential part of the centre electorate found themselves without a candidate to support in the 1970 election. Secondly, we test the presidential popularity hypothesis. This theory proposes that approval for President Frei was not transferred to Tomic's candidature, something that is explained, in part, by the differences between the programmes of the PDC's two leaders, a party that a year before the election had suffered a significant split. In contrast to the 1964 election, when Frei fulfilled the expectations of the ideological centre, in 1970, Tomic tried to appeal to left-wing voters and, by doing so, abandoned more moderate voters.

The article is divided into three sections. First, we explore the available literature on the characteristics of the Chilean political party system and what Nannestad and Paldman (1991) call the 'vote-popularity function'; that is to say, the impact of the President's popularity upon voter intentions. Second, we briefly describe the Chilean political process and the 1970 presidential elections. Third, we analyze the data provided by Hamuy's surveys, evaluating the behaviour of centre voters, the PDC's voters and those who approved Frei Montalva.

Theory

Generally, the electoral conduct of voters is studied according to socioeconomic and sociodemographic characteristics (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Crewe 1995), partisan identification (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996) and the impact of presidential approval and the government's management of the economy (MacKuen et al. 1992; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). As mentioned earlier, Nannestad and Paldman (1991) developed their 'Vote-Popularity model', later refined by Chang et al. (2009), Berlemann and Enkelmann (2014). They focus on the effect of countries' economic conditions on presidential approval ratings. Since presidential approval is a good predictor of the outcome of the next election, economic conditions are a good predictor of the outcome of the next election. This model predicts that the chances of electoral success for a presidential candidate belonging to the same party or coalition as the incumbent President increase to the perceived performance of the current government. The model's central assumption is that approval for the President in office translates into support for the candidate belonging to the same party or coalition as the President. Therefore, perceived government efficiency is a more relevant predictor than partisan identification or ideological affiliation. This means that voters cast their ballots by contingent or short-term variables such as material well-being and not according to longer-term political predispositions.

According to the traditional sociological approach (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944), the electoral conduct of voters is explained in terms of the different social, racial or religious groups and

the assumption that the more that is known about a voter's social environment, the easier it is to predict their electoral behavior. This model contradicts the assumptions of more classical schools of thought on voter behavior. According to a psychological approach, electoral behavior corresponds to the voters' environment of family socialization. An individual's socialization within a family environment prone to a political party leaves an essential mark on the individual's character. Therefore, partisan identification is the most critical factor and a "primary cause" of a voter's political predisposition (Miller and Shanks 1996).

To this individualistic approach, a more institutionalist focus is added. According to Scully (1992), the most relevant institutional factor is likely the organizing of the Chilean political parties into three large left-wing, right-wing and centrist sections, which occurred between 1932 and 1973. Scully (1992) notes that the Chilean party system owes its structure to three historical splits. In the nineteenth century, the parties were distributed along a clerical-anti-clerical spectrum. However, a class cleavage began in Chilean politics at the beginning of the twentieth century. Leftist parties such as the Socialist Party and the Communist Party were established to defend workers' rights. Finally, a new urban-rural cleavage began to appear in the structure of the party system because of migration from the land into the cities. This was accompanied by the consolidation of the PDC (Valenzuela 1995). The increasingly competitive nature of Chilean politics, characterized by political projects that were eminently different to one another, led to Sartori's classification of Chile (1976) as a polarized multi-party system with significant ideological differences between the parties and their respective support bases.

However, as Montes et al. (2000) argue, Chilean political parties have not always been strong or highly institutionalised in the sense of Mainwaring and Scully (1995). On the one hand, the level of volatility in presidential elections has been significant. This implies a large intertemporal shift in Chileans' electoral preferences. On the other hand, parties have not always been able to substitute for trade unions and social movements. As a result, parties have been an important part of Chile's political development, but not the only one, let alone the most perfect one. This is in addition to the five independent presidential candidates who ran between 1932 and 1970, who received an average of 32%. Finally, as Montes et al. (2000: 810) show, levels of volatility were not negligible. For example, in the 1957 general elections, the right-wing parties reached 50.9%, falling to 31.4% in 1961 and 13.8% in 1965. Centrist parties, on the other hand, went from 30 % to 58.3 % over the same period. Thus, while some of the literature has classified Chile as one of the most stable party systems in the region, the figures seem to challenge this approach. Indeed, our study shows some volatility, especially among centrist and PDC voters.

Methodology

We analyze public opinion at the time of the 1970 election and, especially, the voting intentions of Chilean citizens during this election. Consequently, the dependent variable for this study is the electoral preferences of Chilean citizens during the 1970 election and their intention to vote for either Alessandri, Tomic or Allende.

We highlight that Hamuy's opinion polls are not representative of the whole country but instead of the province of Santiago, which amassed 40.7 per cent of the votes cast in the 1970 elections (Urzúa 1992). There are significant geographical differences in the election results.

In some provinces, Allende was close to nearly 50 per cent of the vote; in others, he managed barely 24 per cent. Therefore, Santiago was a province with a result close to the national average and, due to its size, was where the presidential candidates concentrated their election campaigns (San Francisco 2005).

Regarding Hamuy's surveys, Navia and Osorio (2015) indicate they had an exceptional predictive capacity for the 1970 elections. They compare the results of the pre-election surveys (August 1970) with the election results in Santiago. They conclude that while the surveys slightly overestimated how well Alessandri would perform and slightly underestimated Allende, this falls within the margin of error calculated by Navia and Osorio (2015) to be 3 per cent considering a probabilistic sample. Thus, while the inferences of our article apply exclusively to Santiago and not to the entire country, it nonetheless serves as a premise for understanding these elections. Table 1 summarizes the methodological characteristics of Hamuy's surveys.

Table 1. Dates and Coverage of the Hamuy Surveys, 1958-1970

Date	Coverage	N
July-August 1958	Santiago	807
August 1964	Santiago	1095
January 1965	Santiago	557
May 1966	Santiago	614
November 1967	Santiago	495
February 1969	Santiago	853
July 1969	Santiago	537
March 1970	Santiago	625
May 1970	Santiago	679
July 1970	Santiago	886
August 1970	Santiago	721

Source: authors with data from Navia and Osorio (2015)

As our independent variables, we include the voter's sex, age, socioeconomic status (measured using the voters' subjective income), religion, level of education, position on the ideological left-to-right spectrum, approval for the incumbent President and level of identification with the PDC.

We provide descriptive and inferential analysis of the data. The descriptive data are shown in the complete historical series from 1958 to 1970, whereas for the inferential analysis, we only utilize the pre-election surveys conducted before the 1970 election. Even though Hamuy conducted surveys in Viña del Mar and Valparaíso, we used only the Santiago surveys for two reasons. First, Hamuy begins to conduct surveys in these cities only after 1967. This would imply losing the ability to compare an essential part of the historical series. A similar strategy is used by Navia and Osorio (2015). Second, of the 45 surveys, only five were conducted in Viña del Mar / Valparaíso

The 1970 Election

Three candidates competed in the 1964 election. Salvador Allende stood as the candidate for the Popular Action Front (Frente de Acción Popular, FRAP) in his third time running for the presidency. Eduardo Frei Montalva represented the PDC in his second attempt to win the presidency. Although he had obtained 20.7 per cent of the vote in the previous elections, the party had achieved good results in mid-term municipal elections, increasing its vote from 13.9 per cent in 1960 to 22 per cent in the 1963 elections. As a result, a favourable outcome was expected for the PDC in the 1964 elections. The third candidate was Julio Duran, initially supported by the Democratic Front (Frente Democrático, FD), a right-wing political alliance comprised of the Conservative, Liberal and Radical Parties. This candidate lost the support of the first two parties and achieved only 4.98 per cent of the vote. The FD decided to back Frei for fear that not doing so would increase Allende's chances of winning.

The PDC charted its course, which it named 'Revolución en Libertad' (Revolution in Freedom). Frei's candidacies in 1958 and 1964 offered a developmental program that incorporated elements of community society. His stance was more moderate and did not oppose Capitalism, an idea partially confirmed by Hamuy's surveys. 49.4 per cent of those surveyed who identified with the right believed that Frei did represent a revolution for Chile, but one that would maintain democracy and freedom. According to Labarca (2017), the Christian Democratic Party introduced new political practices during the 1964 presidential campaign. The DC's strategy emphasized a direct engagement with the Chilean populace through popular and national appeals, setting itself apart from Allende's campaign, which adopted a more doctrinal and abstract approach.

During his first years of government, Frei achieved good economic results. While in the 1950s and 60s, the Chilean economy was growing at 3.3 per cent, Frei earned growth rates of 6.5 and 10.1 per cent in the first two years. Moreover, his government slowed down price increases, with inflation falling from 43.7 per cent in 1964 to 19.9 per cent in 1966 (Rebolledo 2005). However, carrying out the program's proposals, such as the nationalization of copper and agrarian reform, required increased public spending and fiscal reform. These reforms resulted in an economic crisis in 1967. Economic growth fell from 10.1 per cent to 1.2 per cent, and inflation increased (Rebolledo 2005), forcing Frei to introduce measures to curtail public spending, primarily in housing and public works. From 1967, public expenditure was directed solely towards maintaining salary increases to avoid protests (Faúndez 1992).

The 1967 crisis and the change in the economic expectations of Frei's government are both reflected in opinion surveys of the time. The surveys conducted by Hamuy between 1965 and 1966 showed positive expectations about Frei's government. 50.8 per cent of Chileans believed that Frei would be able to halt rising prices, and only 29 per cent of people thought Chile's situation was terrible. However, this changed after 1967. Public approval for President Frei dropped from 76 per cent in 1966 to 54 per cent in 1967. Expectations about the government's performance in the fight against inflation also fell: 63.4 per cent of Chileans believed that prices would increase at a greater rate in 1967 in comparison with previous years.

The economic problems produced changes in the political and social climate of the time. The number of strikes increased from 693 in 1967 to 1127 and 1580 in 1967 and 1968, respectively (Rebolledo 2005). This indicated the poor relationship between Frei's government and the trade unions (Angell 1993).

In 1967 the PDC obtained nearly seven points less than in 1965. The radical leaders of the PDC interpreted this result as a product of the slow implementation of promised reforms (Faúndez 1992). This was in addition to the delayed implementation of the Land reform, which was supposedly one of the cardinal features of Frei Montalva's government. This interpretation by left-wing members of the PDC is reflected in the surveys. According to Hamuy's surveys, 82.5 per cent of those asked advocated land reform.

This determined the division with a sector of the PDC called 'Rebels' who 'demanded that the government take a determined stance for the left and to establish closer relations with Marxist parties' (Faúndez 1992, 159). The critic also pointed out that the right-wing sectors of the PDC were leading ministries such as Finance, Economy, and Labour which were fundamental for the development of reforms (Faúndez 1992).

Tomic aimed to represent the progressive sectors of the PDC to avoid losing members to left-wing parties. His program was similar to Allende's. Faúndez (1992) highlights two main elements in Tomic's program. Firstly, short-term politics to solve economic problems; unlike Frei, he believed that income redistribution would be necessary to kick-start the economy. Secondly, his program involved long-term measures based on copper and agriculture. He also proposed devolving power to the people to take decisions through a new constitution and an economic transformation to replace the Capitalist economy (San Francisco 2005). His campaign slogan was 'Not a single step backwards'. In his campaign closing speech, Tomic proposed an anti-capitalist alternative for the development of Chile through a 'social and political union of the working class'. Additionally, he emphasized 'the need to replace Capitalism and its power structures as early as possible' (El Mercurio, Agosto 1970: 55). Probably, the rise of the left and the ideological division within the PDC can explain Tomic's decision to emulate Allende's program. The PDC had suffered the desertion of a group of its members who had considered Frei's government reforms insufficient and demanded a radical transformation to his programme. In this context, Tomic had to take a strategic decision, proposing an utterly radical change to his program to prevent the loss of party members. Tomic asked Allende's Popular Unity to form a political alliance, which was rejected by the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista, PS) (Faúndez 1992).

On the other hand, the Right-wing decided to nominate Jorge Alessandri, its former President, for the presidential campaign. This was due to two reasons. First, Tomic's program resembled the Popular Unity's, far from the programmatic proposals advocated by the right. While supporting Frei was complex, supporting a candidate with a robust discourse against the main ideas of Capitalism and with a solid message to the 'working class' was impossible. Second, the polls showed Tomic had little chance of winning the election. The CEDOP, CESEC and the Public Opinion Centre polls predicted Alessandri to win with a lead of almost 10 points over Allende. Hamuy's was the only poll that showed a tie (Navia and Osorio 2015). Table 2 presents the data in detail, comparing the predictions drawn from the surveys with the election results in Santiago and the rest of the country.

Allende won the election by a margin of only 39 thousand votes. According to Gazmuri (2012), Allende's victory was related to something other than the Popular Unity's growth but to Tomic's weakness. In 1964, Allende obtained 38.93 per cent, while in 1970, this percentage went down to 36.63 per cent. On the contrary, legislative elections in 1969 foresaw a negative result for Tomic. The PDC obtained 31.05 per cent of the votes, whereas Tomic achieved only 28.08 per cent (See Table 3).

Table 2. Vote intention in pre-electoral surveys 1970

Candidate	Hamuy July 1970	Hamuy August 1970	CEDOP May 1970	CESEC August 1970	Santiago	National
Allende	35,1	32,7	28	33	34,8	36,6
Tomic	27,4	30,1	33	22	26,8	28,1
Alessandri	37,5	37,2	36,1	44	38,4	35,3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: authors with data from Navia and Osorio (2015)

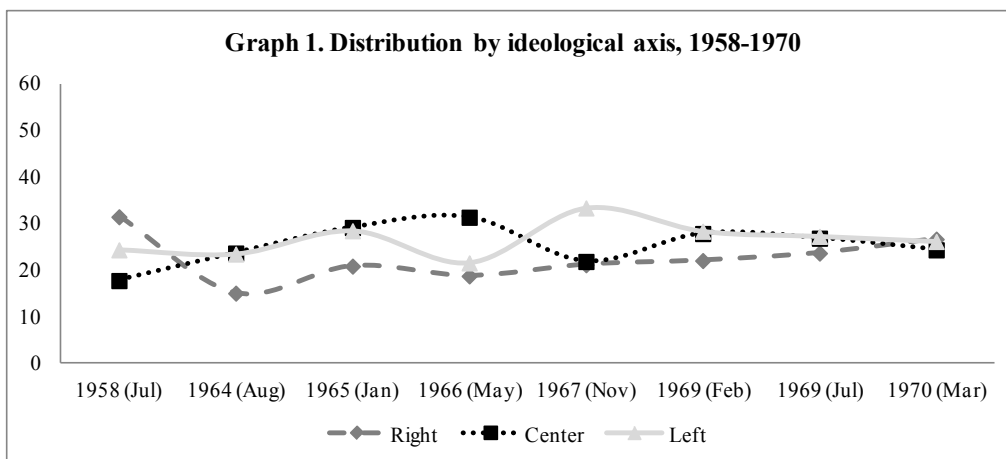
Table 3. Summary voting in presidential elections (1958-1970)

Year	Candidate/Party	Votes	
		N°	%
1958	Jorge Alessandri (Ind)	389.909	31,56
	Salvador Allende (PS)	356.493	28,85
	Eduardo Frei (PDC)	255.769	20,70
	Luis Bossay (PR)	192.077	15,55
	Antonio Zamorano (Ind)	41.304	3,34
1964	Eduardo Frei (PDC)	1.409.012	56,09
	Salvador Allende (PS)	977.902	38,93
	Julio Durán (PR)	125.233	4,98
1970	Salvador Allende (PS)	1.075.616	36,63
	Jorge Alessandri (Ind)	1.036.278	35,29
	Radomiro Tomic (PDC)	824.849	28,08

Source: authors with data from Cruz-Coke (1984).

Results and Discussion

The 1970 election was carried out on opposing programmatic platforms, which made an agreement between the centrist and left-wing parties unviable. The disagreement was reflected in public opinion. The August 1970 poll showed that 24 per cent of them identified with the right, 26 per cent with the centre, and 33 per cent with the left. Although it was not an exact distribution into thirds- because 17 per cent of the participants did not identify with any tendency- it demonstrated a political division reflected in the preferences towards the candidates. Graph 1 presents the distribution of the left, centre and right preferences from 1958 to 1970. Specific stability can be observed, albeit with natural variations by the incumbent government's political affiliation. For example, the right alternative obtained its best electoral performance when Alessandri won the presidential election in 1958; meanwhile, the centre achieved this during Frei's government.



Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys.

Table 4 shows the distribution of the electoral preferences according to ideological identification for the 1958, 1964, and 1970 elections. We used pre-election surveys from August carried out in Santiago for the three elections. The results indicate that in 1958 60 per cent of left and right voters supported their respective candidate. However, while most centre voters preferred centrist candidates such as Frei and Bossay, 28.4 per cent identified with the right-wing candidate, and only 4.2 per cent with the left-wing candidate. In 1964, Frei received identical support from both centre and right-wing voters, which can be explained by the decision of the right parties to support Frei to avoid an imminent Allende government. While left-wing voters mainly supported Allende, 25 per cent of them were in favour of Frei. The situation drastically changed in the 1970 election. Firstly, a more precise distribution can be observed regarding voter preferences. For instance, more than 80 per cent of right-wing voters chose Alessandri, while left-wing voters did the same with Allende. Secondly, a division started to appear in the centre. While in 1964, 62 per cent of centre voters supported Frei, in 1970, just over half cast their votes for Tomic. Nearly 38 per cent voted for Alessandri and around 7 per cent for Allende.

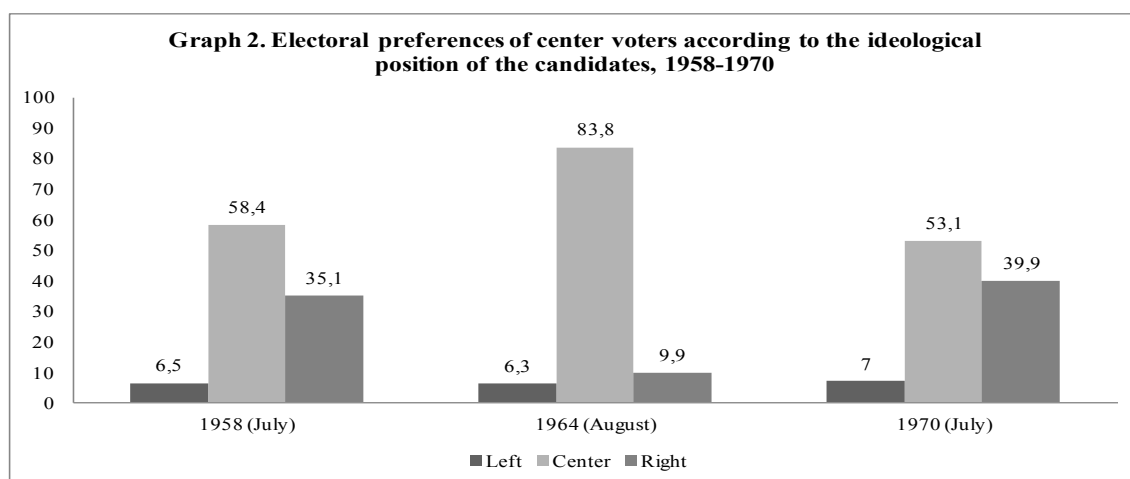
The main changes were displayed among centre voters. In graph two, we isolated this group and compared their presidential preferences in 1958, 1964, and 1970. To do this, we took the data on base 100, excluding the category 'no preference'. We are aware of the implied risk in assuming that electors with 'no preference' would distribute themselves randomly if they voted. However, it is the best way for us to be able to compare the three elections. The 1964 election results clearly show a fracture. In those elections, almost 84 per cent of centre voters supported the centrist candidate Eduardo Frei (PDC), which strongly contrasts with the 1958 election, in which 58.4 per cent of voters from the centre supported centre candidates (Frei and Bossay). In the 1970 election, other changes were visible. Firstly, 53.1 per cent of centrist voters supported the candidate from the centre- Tomic from PDC- which shows a lower percentage compared to the 1958 election, considering the number of voters from the centre who adhere to centrist candidates. In addition, in 1958, 35.1 per cent of centre voters preferred right-wing candidates. That percentage dropped to 9.9 per cent during the 1964 election and reached 40 per cent during the 1970's election, reflecting high volatility levels.

So, what happened to centre voters? How much did the internal PDC division influence voters who wanted to continue with Frei's legacy and the ones who were looking for radical change? Why did they lose fidelity to the candidate that better represented their interests?

Table 4. Distribution of electoral preferences according to ideological identification (1958 and 1970)

		Right	Centre	Left	Others	Total
1958 (July)	Allende	3,3	4,2	61,3	16	21,8
	Frei	12,5	34,7	4,5	16	16,6
	Alessandri	60	28,4	3,6	26	30,8
	Bossay	2,5	12,6	16,2	6	10,1
	Zamorano	0,8	1,1	0	0	0,5
	No Preference	20,9	19	14,4	36	20,2
		100	100	100	100	100
1964 (August)	Allende	2,4	4,7	44,9	11,6	17,8
	Durán	1,8	7,4	3,9	2,9	4,4
	Frei	62,8	62,4	25,4	35,5	45,9
	No Preference	33	25,5	25,8	50	31,9
		100	100	100	100	100
1970 (July)	Allende	2	6,6	80,6	15,5	33,2
	Tomic	15,7	50,2	10,7	28,9	26
	Alessandri	80,2	37,7	6	35,1	35,4
	No Preference	2,1	5,5	2,7	20,5	5,4
		100	100	100	100	100

Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys.



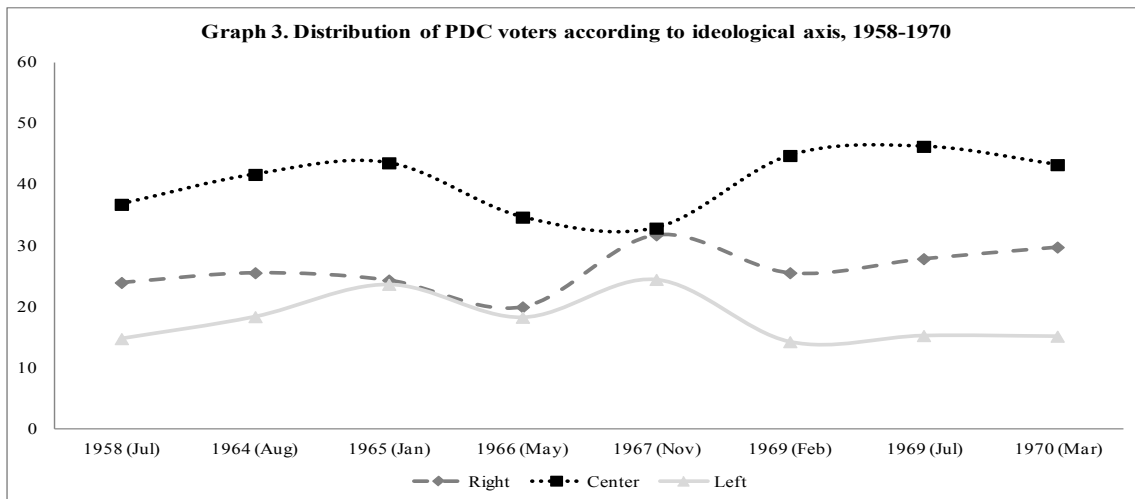
Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys.

A possible answer lies in the behaviour of the Christian Democrat electorate. While in the 1964 presidential election, 97 per cent supported Frei, towards 1970, this percentage had dropped to 75 per cent. This indicates that while the political centre was split between Tomic and Allende, DC voters were not entirely loyal to Tomic. As graph three shows, in the previous 1970 election, nearly 40 per cent of PDC voters identified themselves in the centre, whereas 30 per cent identified themselves with the right. PDC voters who identified with the left only constituted around 15 per cent. Due to these results, it was reasonable that part of the PDC support turned to Alessandri. Tomic tried to ally with the left-wing parties, which probably led him to present a program that did not generate enough consensus among the members of his party. Therefore, Tomic could only represent the interests of the left-wing voters from the PDC, while a considerable number of the centre PDC electorate preferred Alessandri.

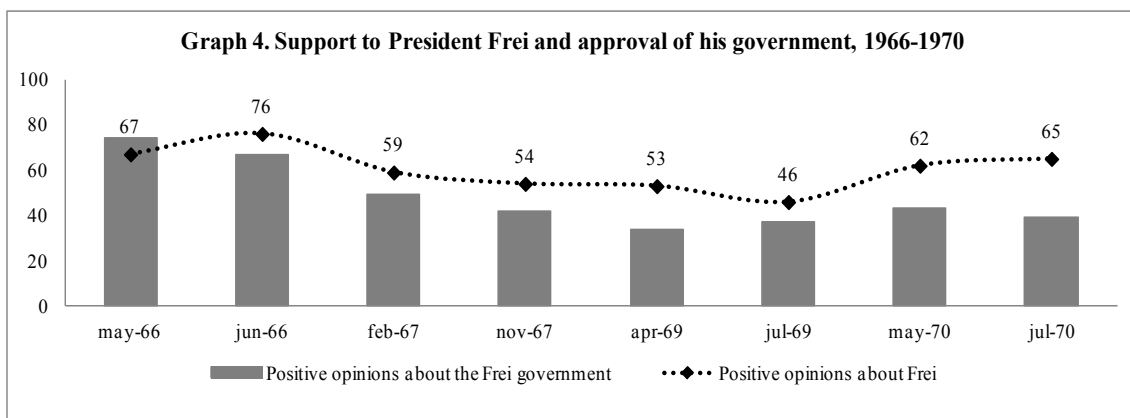
Did Tomic take advantage of Frei's popularity? As we pointed out, the 'vote-popularity function' suggests that the higher the approval rating of an outgoing President, the greater the possibility that a candidate belonging to the same party or coalition will win the next election. For that reason, that candidate must adhere to the President, and the President has to endorse the new candidate. The 1970 election is an example of this. Hamuy's polls asked two questions: a) We would like to know your opinion about President Frei (excellent/very good/good; okay; bad/ very bad); b) And what is your opinion about President Frei's government? (excellent/very good/good; okay; bad/ very bad). Whereas the former question measures personal support for Frei, the latter refers to the government's global performance. Frei's positive image a month before the elections was 65 per cent, while his government was valued positively by 40 per cent of the interviewees. Graph 4 shows the evolution of personal support for Frei and the support for his government from May 1966 until July 1970.

Frei's presidential approval did not mean complete support for Tomic. As noted above, the vote-popularity function hypothesis is central to our argument. In theory, popular presidents transfer their support to their party's presidential candidate. To move forward with this hypothesis, we took the polls from March to August 1970. We compared the results from presidential approval and voter's intention questions and showed the voting intentions of those who approved of Frei Montalva's government. As graph five shows, of all the participants who supported President Frei, almost 41 per cent- on average- favored Tomic, whereas 34 per cent favored Alessandri. If the centre's voters were already divided between Tomic and Alessandri, there was no unanimous support for its candidate. Frei's supporters were distributed among the candidates from the PDC, and the right party gave greater weight to the polarization hypothesis. In other words, according to this hypothesis, the centrist voters were divided between two alternatives and did not create unanimity around the PDC candidate. Tomic ignored the moderate voters. He distanced himself from Frei and exacerbated internal PDC conflicts, which had already happened in 1969 when they suffered the defection of those who joined the Popular Unitary Action Movement.

To demonstrate the hypothesis that Tomic ignored the moderate voters, we built a statistical model called *mlogit*. The dependent variable has three values: Alessandri, Tomic, and Allende. The polarization hypothesis supposes a rift among centrist voters who divided themselves between Tomic and Alessandri. The vote popularity function hypothesis assumes that part of the approval for Frei's government was transferred to Alessandri's electoral base; therefore, it was not transferred unanimously to Tomic.



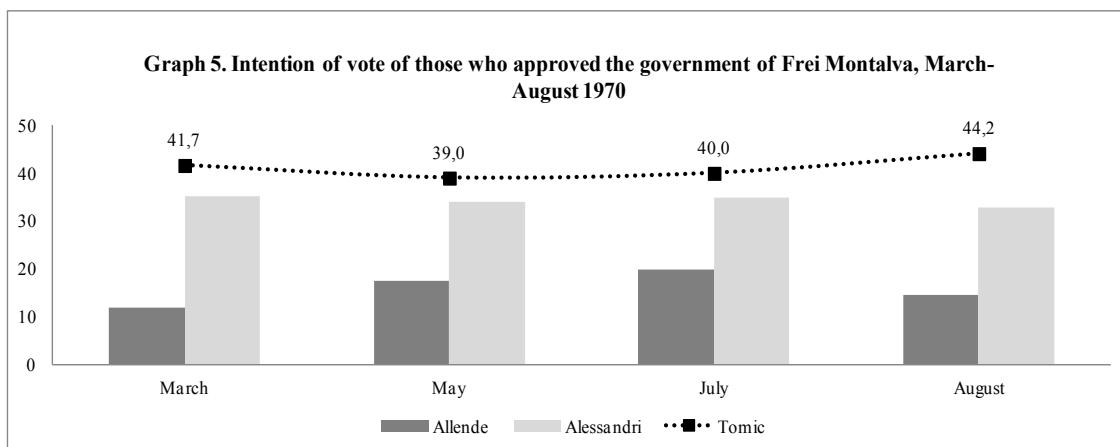
Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys.



Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys.

The main independent variables are the political 'centre' and the government's approval. These variables obtain a binary code. We coded with 1 to whom were identified with the centre and 0 with the rest of the options. We did the same with the government's approval. We code 1 to those who reported that Frei's government was excellent, very good, or good, and code 0 to those who chose the other options. We added stalwart identification with the PDC as another independent variable. Even though there is evidence about the decline of the partisan identification with the PDC between 1957 and 1973 (Navia and Osorio 2015a) and about the changes in the vote preferences for the PDC (Herrera et al. 2019), there is not a single study that analyses the characteristics of the social basis when supporting PDC presidential candidates.

Our models include some independent variables of control. We included the interviewees' sex (Male/Female), age, subjective income (you have enough money to make a living/you barely have money to make a living/ you do not have money to make a living/you suffer economic hardship) and education. In *mlogit* models, a referential category of the dependent variable is determined to have a frame for comparison. In this case, we have chosen Allende as our referential category. Therefore, the models will be interpreted in the following way: Tomic' against' Allende, and Alessandri' against' Allende. We built three models. In the first one, we included



Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys.

all variables previously mentioned, and in the second one, we excluded the ‘centre’ variable. It is plausible that the ‘centre’ variable measures the same characteristics as the PDC variable. To correct this potential problem, we specified a second model which excludes the ‘centre’ as a variable and a third model that excludes the ‘identification with the PDC’ as a variable. However, we established that the government approval variable does not present such issues as it is collinear with neither the centre nor the identification with the PDC variables.

Table 5 details the results. Firstly, approval for the President positively impacts intentions to vote for either Tomic or Alessandri compared with intentions to vote for Allende. Naturally, the regression coefficient is of greater significance to Tomic about Alessandri. However, it indicates that people who approved of Frei’s government were divided in their opinions about who should be the next President. Frei’s popularity was not transferred exclusively to Tomic’s campaign. Secondly, the same thing can be observed about centre voters. Here, the fracture is more evident, considering the magnitude of the coefficient mentioned in the model is similar for Tomic and Alessandri. As a result, the other factor that threatened Tomic’s candidacy was his programmatic polarization. Instead of inspiring loyalty in centre voters, he scared them away. Thirdly, it is surprising that the declaration of identifying with the PDC can be a strong indicator not only for Tomic’s candidature but also for Alessandri’s when comparing them to Allende. The magnitude of the coefficient in Tomic’s case is substantial. Nonetheless, in Alessandri’s case, the effect is positive and significant.

A sector of the political centre was loyal to Frei during his election campaign and throughout his term in office. However, during the 1970 election campaign, the same sector divided itself between Tomic and Alessandri. The following conclusions can be drawn from these results:

- (1) Something similar occurred with PDC voters, albeit to a lesser extent. While in 1964, they were unanimous in their support for Frei, by 1970, only three out of four interviewees who identified themselves with PDC supported Tomic.
- (2) President Frei’s popularity was only beneficial to Tomic but also Alessandri. The political distance between Frei and Tomic likely ensured that Frei’s popularity dissipated between the two presidential candidates. Even though the Presidents could intervene directly in the electoral campaigns, meetings between Frei and Tomic or their joint presence at supporter rallies were rarely reported in the press if they received any coverage.

Table 5. Government approval and voting intention by Radomiro Tomic

VARIABLES	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Tomic	Alessandri	Tomic	Alessandri	Tomic	Alessandri
Government Approval (0=Others; 1=Approve)	1.961*** (0.297)	0.663*** (0.242)	2.360*** (0.252)	0.689*** (0.238)	2.082*** (0.290)	0.775*** (0.234)
Sexe (0=Female; 1=Male)	-0.551** (0.278)	-0.945*** (0.193)	-0.562** (0.228)	-0.928*** (0.190)	-0.420 (0.269)	-0.844*** (0.183)
Age	0.108** (0.0497)	0.150*** (0.0340)	0.0315 (0.0415)	0.141*** (0.0335)	0.111** (0.0485)	0.152*** (0.0330)
Subjective Income (you have enough money to make a living = 1 / you suffer economic hardship=4)	-0.0802 (0.164)	-0.347*** (0.115)	-0.216 (0.137)	-0.373*** (0.114)	-0.137 (0.159)	-0.413*** (0.110)
Education (0=Other; 1=Secondary and University)	0.292 (0.353)	0.334 (0.245)	0.114 (0.289)	0.265 (0.241)	0.409 (0.338)	0.403* (0.230)
Political Position (0=Other; 1=Centre)	2.124*** (0.340)	1.894*** (0.284)	2.992*** (0.296)	2.007*** (0.279)		
Party Identification (0=Others; 1=DC)	4.059*** (0.423)	0.967** (0.434)			4.577*** (0.409)	1.416*** (0.416)
Constant	-2.606*** (0.556)	0.254 (0.365)	-1.194*** (0.445)	0.392 (0.361)	-2.187*** (0.536)	0.645* (0.346)
Observations	837		837		837	
Pseudo R squared	0.33		0.2		0.3	

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Source: authors with data from Hamuy Surveys, July 1970.

Conclusions

The 1970s election has been widely studied in history and political science. Generally, this is done using data gathered at a national level and, in a few cases, at the local level. The analysis of opinion polls, however, needs more coverage. We tried to open our understanding of the 1970 election through public opinion polls. Hamuy's surveys were conducted solely within Santiago, which prevented us from making inferences at a national level due to the lack of data from rural areas. However, this data evaluates two central hypotheses: the polarization assumption and the 'popular-vote' function.

Regarding the first hypothesis, our results are partially consistent with the historical literature, which identified Tomic's program as a 'leftward movement' closer to Allende's proposal than a genuine centre stance. Without specifically debating these proposals, we studied the support bases for each presidential candidate. We realized that the 'centre' was divided between Tomic and Alessandri when in similar circumstances in 1964, it had been totally behind Frei. The difference between both elections is that in 1964 the right-wing parties decided to support Frei for fear of an Allende victory. In 1970, Tomic's support was not unanimous among PDC voters, highlighting a significant difference compared with the results of the 1964 election. Therefore, the polarization hypothesis is supported not only by analyzing the content of the government programs of 1970, but it is also evident from public opinion.

The 'popularity-vote' function theory also has a place in our analysis. The centre was divided structurally between Tomic and Alessandri, but there was a marked division between the voters who approved Frei's government. For this reason, Tomic lost support from the voters who admired Frei and those who identified themselves as centrists.

The reasonable distance between the government and Tomic's candidature also contributed to his defeat.

If Tomic hoped to compete with Allende for the left-wing vote, he made a terrible mistake because he left the centre open to be exploited by Alessandri, who did not have to make too much of an effort to capture those votes. A month before the election, only 15 per cent of those who identified with the PDC were left-wing. Consequently, the 1970 election constitutes an excellent case to study campaign strategies regarding political agenda and public opinion.

This article contributes to the comparative discussion of the factors that determine electoral behavior. It does so by examining both long and short-term variables within the context of the solid programmatic polarization of parties and candidates. It concludes that high volatility in voters' preferences can exist within a stable political party system. Even though a party system has stable partisan competition, in this article, we confirmed that levels of volatility are highest within the centre party and that this volatility is linked to the characteristics of the candidates running for office and the popularity enjoyed by the outgoing President. The centre plays a crucial role in constructing coalitions in multi-party systems, acting as a buffer to stop the extremes' polarization. However, the Chilean example tells a different story. We propose a theoretical and methodological approach that analyses the programmatic platforms of the parties and candidates and explores the political predispositions of votes (mainly centrist voters) while simultaneously evaluating the effect of long- and short-term variables.

We suggest that even if the structural explanations help clarify the democratic breakdown, it is also essential to analyze the basis for the support towards the parties before that fracture to study the levels of political polarization. We have carried out this analysis in a context of high political polarization: the 1970 election was the last presidential election organized within a democratic system before the 1973 Coup d'état. A wide range of research proves the increased levels of polarization in the political elite in Chile before the 1973 military coup (Valenzuela, 1978; San Francisco, 2005, among others). However, public opinion and the social basis have been less analyzed during this period. As a result, we know that the elite was divided into thirds preceding the democratic breakdown. Likewise, polarization was a central characteristic of the historical process. Nonetheless, we have no evidence of the internal polarization of the most

critical and considerable centre-wing party, PDC, until now. Nor of how its 1970 presidential candidate preferred to radicalize his governmental programs instead of presenting a program oriented to centrist voters taking advantage of the popularity levels of the outgoing President, Eduardo Frei Montalva. As a result, this study complements some assumptions in the literature that are often assumed to be true without sufficient evidence. The fact that the main party of the time split in the run-up to an election as important as that of 1970 is no small result.

From a comparative perspective, this study analyses centre voters' voting behavior to identify political preferences for DC voters in Chile. Given that the DC was a prevailing party in some transitions to democracy in Latin America during the 1980s/ 1990s, this study could be replicated in countries like El Salvador or Guatemala and in countries where the DC was once a strong party but whose support base declined dramatically. An example is Venezuela's Independent Electoral Political Organization Committee (COPEI). COPEI was one of the most relevant parties in Venezuela from the late '60s to the late 90s until almost disappearing from the party system in the 2000s (See Morgan, 2007). Thus, the rise and fall of Christian Democratic Parties in Latin America help to understand the political development of countries. Although there is literature on the origins and evolution of DC in Latin America from a comparative perspective (Hawkins 2003), the same does not happen with analyzing the causes that explain the electoral decline of the PDC. This paper is moving in that direction, identifying changes in the social bases of the party, especially in the left-right axis. When the PDC loses its roots among centre voters and abandons political moderation, it becomes a more accessible party to defeat left and right parties.

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