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March 2021



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March 21, 2021

## Abstract

This paper combines electoral surveys to analyze the transformation of the structure of political cleavages in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico and Peru over the last decades. We document that Latin American countries are characterized by personalist leaderships (e.g., Fujimori in Peru, Uribe in Colombia) and important historical cleavages (e.g., anti vs. pro-PLN in Costa Rica) that blur class-based voting patterns and have led in some cases to the emergence of competing pro-poor and ethnic-based competing coalitions (e.g., PRN-PLN in Costa Rica, Fujimori-Humala in Peru) over the last decades. The party systems of Costa Rica, Colombia and Peru have thus generated volatile political socio-economic cleavages, while in the more institutionalized party systems of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico they have been less volatile.

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# 1 Introduction

This paper exploits existing electoral surveys to analyze the political representation of social inequalities since mid-twentieth century in six Latin American countries: Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. With the end of Spanish rule, nearly all Latin American countries were divided by the same liberal-conservative cleavage (Mainwaring, 2018). The Liberals' ideological principles were anticlericalism, federalism and free trade, while Conservatives defended the Church and favored centralization and protectionism. Despite this common point of departure in the nineteenth century, contemporary Latin American party systems are very diverse and no longer reflect this traditional cleavage.

Among the six countries we have analyzed, Colombia is the only one in which the traditional cleavage survived into the twentieth century. Prolonged and intense inter-party fighting forged strong identification with the two traditional parties, so that the two-party system only collapsed after the adoption of electoral reforms in the early 2000s. The absence of political opportunities for outsiders contributed to the formation of left-leaning guerrilla movements in the early 1960s, among which the most powerful was the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC).

With the beginning of the 21st century, Colombia's political landscape experienced a profound transformation. The two traditional parties lost part of its hegemony in benefit of left-leaning political groups and the independent Álvaro Uribe consolidated a new right-wing political ideology. The position towards the FARC conflict represented class cleavages since the beginning of Uribism, which have persisted until today. The main problem of the country has remained corruption, especially among high-income and high-educated anti-Uribist voters, while for low-income and low-educated Uribist voters the armed conflict has been considered of greater importance, as they live in rural areas and have been more exposed to the violence.

Class cleavages are also prominent in Argentina and Chile. The hegemony of Peronism in Argentina, which has governed the country for almost four decades since the

1940s, has created a sharp division of the electorate between Peronists and anti-Peronists. Although Peronism is well-represented across all classes and sectors of Argentinian society, the low-income and low-educated are persistently more prone to vote for Peronist candidates.

The pre-dictatorship political structure in Chile was characterized by the existence of three historical cleavages: Catholic-secular, class and urban-rural. Since the end of Pinochet's dictatorship in 1990, a fourth cleavage emerged splitting voters by their support or opposition to the dictatorship and dominating the previous historical conflicts. The last decade has been a period of social unrest, due mainly to rising income concentration, market-oriented education, and dissatisfaction with the governing coalitions' responses to social demands. Political polarization has consequently increased, exacerbating class cleavages.

Costa Rica and Mexico have transitioned from two-party and one-party dominant systems to more fractionalized multi-party systems, respectively. The 1948 Revolution was the last violent political episode in the history of Costa Rica. The winning side established the National Liberation Party (*Partido Liberación Nacional*, PLN), of center-left social democratic orientation, which would become the hegemonic political party. The losing side reconstituted into a number of political parties and coalitions of center-right Christian democratic orientation that won the elections three times before its political heirs established the Social Christian Unity Party (*Partido Unidad Social Cristiana*, PUSC) in 1983. The main political cleavage during the period was thus between PLN's supporters and its adversaries. Dissatisfaction with corruption scandals, the deterioration of the welfare state during the economic recession of the 1980s and the neoliberal turn of the PLN from socio-democratic to neoliberal policies, led to an increase in political dissatisfaction with traditional parties, the rise of abstention, a large shift of voters towards new parties and the emergence of competing pro-poor (i.e., PLN and PRN) and pro-rich parties (i.e., PUSC and PAC) since the 2000s.

Mexico's democratic transition during the 20th century has been a series of iterations of electoral fraud, opposition protest, and electoral reform, which have leveled the political playing field and opened new opportunities for electoral competition. The In-

stitutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI), the hegemonic party inspired by the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, has decayed in benefit of new left-leaning parties and the conservative National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*, PAN). Nonetheless, as low-income low-educated PRI voters have moved both towards PAN and towards the left, the country has maintained during this process a reasonably stable “multi-elite party system”, according to which higher education attainment is associated with higher vote for the left whereas, higher income is associated with higher vote for the PAN.

Peru had until mid-twentieth century multiclass electoral constituencies mobilized by oligarchic leaders that used clientelist networks. Strong class divisions in voting patterns did not emerge until the 1980s, after the rise of labor unions and urban social organizations in the 1970s. The strength of popular organizations however eroded by the end of the 1980s, in a context of deep economic crisis and political violence. This process gave room to a new type of personalist leadership, initiated by Alberto Fujimori, which has continued until the present. Peru thus presents volatile income and education cleavages since the mid-1990s. Indigenous issues have been gradually incorporated into the political process. They were initiated by Fujimori in the 1990s, who is of Japanese origin, and have continued during the presidential campaigns of Alejandro Toledo and Ollanta Humala in the 2000s, who are of indigenous origins. Ethnic cleavages have thus blurred class cleavages in the last three decades.

## 2 Argentina

### 2.1 Peronism and the Making of Argentina’s Party System

With the declaration of independence in 1816 and the military defeat of the Spanish Empire in 1824, a prolonged period of civil wars led to the formation of the federal republic of Argentina. Between 1869 and 1914, the population grew about 338 percent<sup>1</sup>, due in part to a great migratory wave coming mainly from Italy and Spain. During the European

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<sup>1</sup>INDEC, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos de la República de Argentina.

wars of the first half of the twentieth century, Argentina also became an important supplier of meat and grains to the belligerent countries, thus reaching high levels of wealth and education, and a relatively egalitarian social structure. However, tensions rose due to workers' poor social conditions.

Before 1930, the leader Hipólito Yrigoyen from the Radical Civic Union (*Unión Cívica Radical*, UCR) governed the country. Using an anti-oligarchy speech, he gained support from the middle class in urban and rural areas, and a share of the urban working class. In the 1930s, a conservative elite governed the country under controverted cases of fraud and corruption. In 1943, the Colonel Juan Domingo Perón participated in the military coup that overthrew the conservative government of Ramón Castillo, and took the head of the Ministry of Labor. Perón embraced the pro-social and anti-oligarchy principles from Yrigoyen, while arguing that the UCR lacked legitimacy to defend the interest of workers (James, 1993). In 1946, Perón won the elections with the newly created Labor Party, a political organization formed with the support of labor unions, the military, and the Catholic Church. In response, an anti-Peronist block was formed with the support of the United States, the electoral alliance *La Unión Democrática (UD)*, composed of the UCR, the Socialist Party, the Progressive Democratic Party, the Communist Party, the Rural Society, and the Industrial Union. The UD accused Perón of being anti-democratic, which was the base of the anti-Peronist speech during his regime and after his fall.

While from the Ministry, Perón implemented generous social policies which strongly benefitted workers, from the presidency, he created a broad public health and education system, institutionalized the rights of workers and peasants, and encouraged the emergence of a class consciousness pushing workers to fight for their rights (Coppedge, 1998). In 1947, to run for the 1952 presidential election, he founded the Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*, PJ), which replaced the Labor Party. However, his separation from the Church in 1954 led to political tensions that ended up in a new violent military coup. Perón was forced to exile for about 20 years while the coup banned Peronism. This allowed the UCR and its political faction Integration and Development Movement (*Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo*, MID) to govern the country during the democratic periods (1958-1962 and 1963-1966). From the exile, Perón organized the resistance, which jointly with the

prohibition of politics and the constitution of guerrillas groups led to a violent era that reached its peak (*el Cordobazo*) in 1969. Under this political crisis, in 1971 General Alejandro Lanusse, restored democracy and allowed the reestablishment of political parties, including Peronism. Perón returned to office in 1973, in the middle of a dramatic right-left ideological rift within the party, which triggered the Ezeiza massacre<sup>2</sup>.

In 1976, two years after Peron's death, the country experienced a new military coup, during which numerous left wing activists from different parties (including Peronism) were tortured, killed or expelled from the country (Conadep., 2011). The new military government adopted liberalization policies that caused a flood of imports and opened access to foreign loans, triggering a financial crisis.

The Falklands war accelerated the fall of the dictatorship and the country returned to a democratic regime in 1983. The anti-Peronist party UCR, directed by Raúl Alfonsín, won the elections. The new president refused to implement the austerity and liberalization policies advocated by multilateral institutions, but his at first heterodox policy attempts failed and resulted in hyperinflation (Huber and Stephens, 2012). In 1989, Carlos Menem became the first Peronist president after the dictatorship. During the 1990s, elections and civil liberties were institutionalized and macroeconomic stability was achieved for the first time in decades (Calvo and Murillo, 2012).

In 1995, Menem was elected for a second term. As fears of hyperinflation faded, new issues, such as corruption and public accountability, became increasingly salient. A group of Peronists, who were against Menem, founded the center-left political coalition the Front for a Country in Solidarity (*Frente País Solidario*, FREPASO), which captured 30 percent of votes in the 1995 presidential election. FREPASO and the UCR undertook two strategic changes after 1995. First, they incorporated core elements of the neoliberal economic model, including fiscal balance, privatization, trade openness, and convertibility. Second, in 1997, both movements formed the Alliance for Work, Justice and Education, which won the presidential elections in 1999 with Fernando de la Rúa.

Two years after the victory of Fernando de la Rúa, the Argentinian economy fell into

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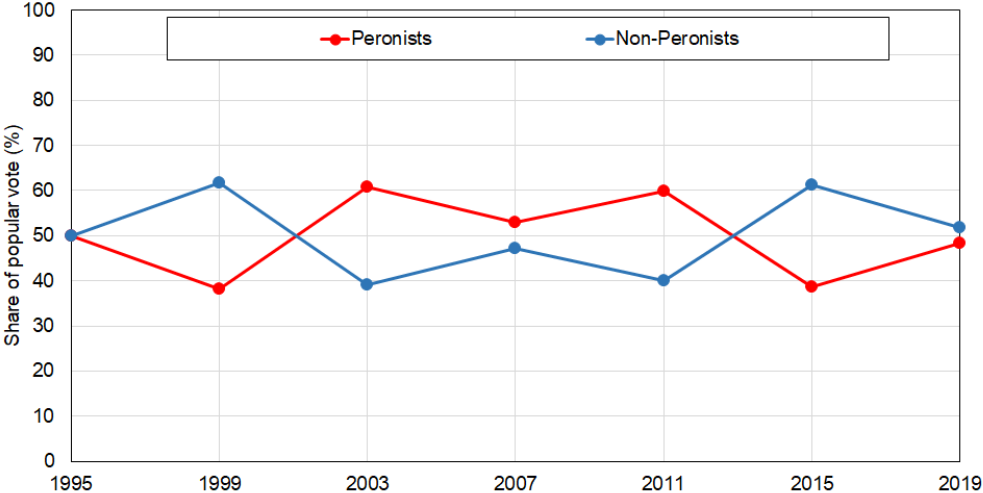
<sup>2</sup>In 1973, at Peron's reception at the airport the right-wing Peronists open fired against the left-wing Peronists.

a deep debt crisis. The unprecedented economic collapse, the successive resignation of two presidents, and a massive rebellion against the entire political elite led to the return of political instability. In 2003, the Peronist Néstor Kirchner was elected president. The *Kirchners* led the country for three consecutive terms: Néstor in 2003-2007, and his wife Cristina Fernández in 2007-2011 and 2011-2015. Political turmoil nonetheless gave rise to a center-right force headed by Mauricio Macri, Let’s Change (*Cambiamos*), who became the president of Argentina in 2015 with the support of few unions (Carrera et al., 2020). He was defeated by the Justicialist Party’s candidate, Alberto Fernández, in 2019.

## 2.2 The Persistence of Class Cleavages in Argentina

Most Argentinians are loyal to one of two main political tendencies, either anti-Peronism or Peronism. In what follows, we study the relationship between several socio-economic factors and the Peronist vote for all presidential elections held between 1995 and 2019 (Figure 1)<sup>3</sup>.

FIGURE 1: General elections in Argentina, 1995-2019



Source: authors' computations using official election results.  
 Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by selected groups of Argentinian political parties in general elections between 1995 and 2019. Non-peronist parties include: Radical Civic Union (UCR), Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO), Action for the Republic, Civic Coalition ARI, Cambiamos, Frente de izquierda and Recrear.

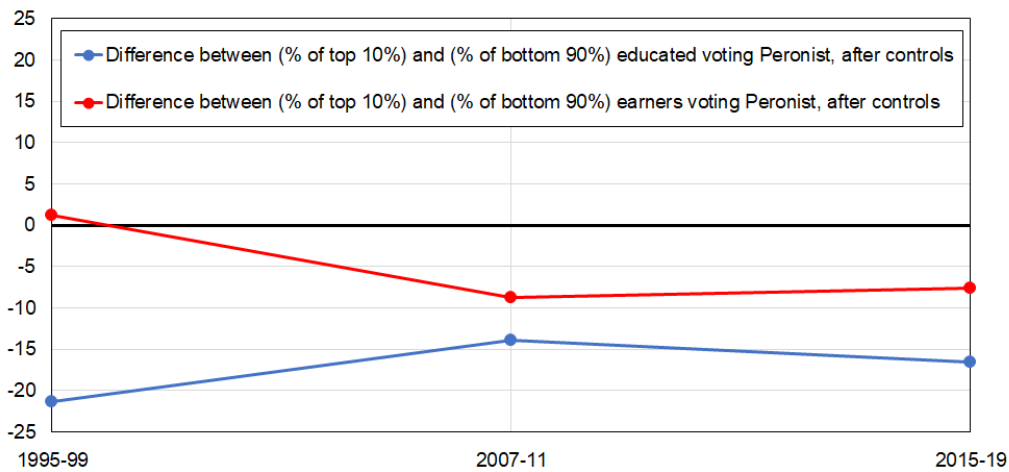
<sup>3</sup>See Table AB1 for data sources



Scholars often characterize Peronism as a movement representing the working class, which was previously excluded from Argentina’s electoral politics Lipset and Man (1960). Others view Peronism merely as a more electorally important successor to an existing working-class party, the Socialist Party (Canton and Jorrat, 1996), the UCR, or even as a multiclass movement Germani and Graciarena (1955).

We also find that the Peronist vote is more concentrated among lowest-educated and lowest-income voters, but with interesting variations over time (Figure 2). During the 1990s, in particular, Peronism received lower support from low-income and lower-educated voters, partly driven by the anti-popular policies adopted during Menemism (1995-1999) and by the well-structured anti-Peronist alliance between UCR and FREPASO.

FIGURE 2: The Peronist vote, income, and education in Argentina, 1995-2019



Source: authors' computations using Argentinian post-electoral and political attitudes surveys.  
 Note: the figure shows the relative support for highest-educated and top-income voters for Peronists, after controlling for age, gender, religious affiliation, religiosity, employment and marital status, occupation, rural-urban location, region, ethnicity, and perceived social class.

Radicals reached the Argentinian presidency in 1999 but resigned two years later after a dramatic economic crisis. The Peronists’ challenge was thus to recover popular support. In this context, the interim Peronist president, Eduardo Duhalde, created an emergency conditional cash transfer and food program targeted to the poorest 20 percent citizens (Huber and Stephens, 2012).

The Kirchnerism terms of the 2000s came with a reduction in income inequalities. The

Argentinian economy was performing well and the Peronist government extended social transfers, increased pension benefits, pushed up social benefits linked to the minimum wage, and increased the progressiveness of other social benefits. The government also strengthened unions and their bargaining power (Vuolo, 2009). As a result, Peronism gained back popularity. The peak was reached in the 2000s, when nearly 70 percent of the poorest half of voters and of primary-educated voters voted for the Kirchners<sup>4</sup>.

Political stability ended in 2015, with the onset of an economic crisis triggered by the fall in commodity prices and the breaking of relations with the Peronist central union federation (Lazar, 2016). As a result, popular support to the Peronists faded out, especially among lowest-educated voters, and Mauricio Macri, backed by an important share of unions, became president in 2015. In 2019, Peronists managed to gain back the support of low-income earners, due in part to a new economic crisis that disproportionately affected the most vulnerable groups in society. Despite these fluctuations, Peronism has clearly received enduring support from lowest-educated and low-income voters since the 1990s, which has contributed to the persistence of strong class cleavages in Argentina.

### **2.3 Peronism and Other Socioeconomic Cleavages**

Although, as we have shown, education, income, and class are important socioeconomic variables determining party choice in Argentina, the Peronist vote is also divided along other lines. Public-sector workers, self-employed individuals and non-paid workers have been more prone to vote Peronists than private-sector workers and entrepreneurs, in line with what we observe in Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico, where civil servants tend to vote more for progressive parties. The Peronist vote is also stronger in urban areas, which reflects the large historical working class electoral base since the pro-worker policies of Perón (Table 1). Nonetheless, the increase in Peronist votes in rural areas, northern regions, and La Pampa explained the massive support for Peronists during the 2000s, while Peronist vote shares remained relatively constant in the Capital, in Cuyo, and in Patagonia<sup>5</sup>. After 2018, following the abortion debate, Peronism lost an important share of

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<sup>4</sup>See online appendix Figures AA2 and AA3

<sup>5</sup>See online appendix Figures AA12 and AA13.

votes in the North, where the population is largely conservative and Catholic (Mallimaci, Giénez-Bélibeau, Esquivel, and Irrazábal, Mallimaci et al.).

TABLE 1: The structure of political cleavages in Argentina, 2015-2019

	Share of votes received (%)	
	Peronists	Non-Peronists
<b>Education</b>		
Primary	55%	45%
Secondary	51%	49%
Tertiary	38%	62%
<b>Income</b>		
Bottom 50%	55%	45%
Middle 40%	44%	56%
Top 10%	34%	66%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Public worker	39%	61%
Private worker	34%	66%
Entrepreneur	27%	73%
Self-employed	38%	62%
<b>Subjective social class</b>		
Working class	57%	43%
Upper/Middle class	32%	68%
<b>Location</b>		
Urban area	47%	53%
Rural area	40%	60%

**Source:** authors' computations using Argentinian political attitudes surveys.

**Note:** the table shows the average share of votes received by Peronists and non-Peronists by selected individual characteristics in 2015-2019. 55% of primary-educated voters voted for Peronists in this period, compared to only 38% of university graduates.

Our analysis, however, does not show significant variations in the Peronist vote in terms of age or gender<sup>6</sup>. Religion does not seem to be an important dividing variable either, even at times in which Peronist candidates such as Cristina Kirchner advertised their faith as a distinctive feature of reliability and good values<sup>7</sup>. Hence, education, income and class are the most important socio-economic variables explaining the structure of the Peronist vote in Argentina.

<sup>6</sup>See online Appendix Table BA3

<sup>7</sup>See online appendix Figure AA15

## 3 Chile

### 3.1 The Process of Re-democratization

Chile broke from Spanish rule in 1818 and sealed its political stability with the signature of the Constitution of 1833. Over the 19th century, the conservatives and liberals alternated in power and the economic elites had an important influence on the different governments. With the beginning of the twentieth century, several left movements appeared and a modern center-left alliance rose for the first time to power in 1938. In 1964, the centrist Christian Democratic Party (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano*, PDC, or DC) founded in 1957 formed a new government with the support of right-wing parties. This new party remained in power until 1970, after which Salvador Allende became the first president from the Socialist Party. Allende's government, marked by a deep economic crisis and hard negotiations with the opposition, ended with a military coup in 1973, instating Augusto Pinochet as military and political leader (Collier and Sater, 2004).

The dictatorship lasted nearly two decades and was characterized by the repression of left-wing organizations and trade unions, as well as economic reforms with a free-market profile. Towards the end of the dictatorship, economic and political demands united several social actors. In 1988, a national referendum took place and the Chilean population denied Pinochet a new mandate, opening the way for the reestablishment of democracy in 1990 (Bresnahan, 2003; French-Davis, 2002).

The regime left behind a fragile democratic system. In particular, the electoral system was binomial until 2013,<sup>8</sup> which implied that only two coalitions could realistically aspire to participate in the National Congress (Riquelme et al., 2018). The byproduct was a system of consensus politics, and a two-bloc party structure: the center-left bloc Coalition of Parties for Democracy (or *Concertación*) supported the no-position in the referendum, while the right-wing bloc (Democracy and Progress, *Democracia y Progreso*) supported the continuation of Pinochet in office for another mandate (Saavedra, 2013). The main parties in the center-left coalition were the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, and the Party for Democracy founded in 1987 (Collier and Sater, 2004). The right-wing alliance consisted of the Independent Democrat Union (*Unión Demócrata Independiente*, UDI) founded in 1983,

the heir of Pinochet, and National Renewal (*Renovación Nacional*, RN) founded in 1987, a more moderate right-wing party (Huneus, 2001; Agüero, 2003).

The center-left alliance nominated a consensus Christian-Democrat candidate, Patrio Aylwin, who won the 1989 election. During the 1990s and early 2000s, all presidents were from *Concertación*, including the socialist Michelle Bachelet. However, structural reforms were not implemented to combat high levels of economic inequality (Flores et al., 2020), leading to social dissatisfaction, a decay in turnout and the consequent loss of absolute majority by *Concertación*. Bachelet's government faced the first major social conflict, the Penguins' Revolution, led by high school students demanding higher equality in the educational system (Chovanec and Benitez, 2008).

In 2009, Chileans chose the first right-wing democratically elected government since 1958, led by Sebastian Piñera (RN). His government was also marked by protests of university students followed by secondary ones criticizing inequality in the educational system and its for-profit character (Guzman-Concha, 2012). The social discontent, together with the replacement of the voluntary registry with compulsory voting by an automatic registration but voluntary voting system in 2012, led to a large fall in turnout (Contreras-Aguirre and Morales-Quiroga, 2014; Bunker, 2014). In 2013, the center-left alliance moved further to the left, by incorporating the Communist party, and Bachelet came back to power (Von Bülow and Ponte, 2015). She introduced important constitutional, educational, and fiscal reforms to deal with the social critics, but they were not sufficient for some factions of the left (Alvarez and Navarrete, 2019). The end of the binomial system in 2015 paved the way for the alliance's final breakup in the last electoral process in 2017 (Bunker, 2018). The new coalition Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*) emerged to the left of The Force of the Majority (*La Fuerza de la Mayoría*), a continuation of *Concertación*, leading to a more polarized political structure.

Piñera won again the elections in 2017 and his government faced an even more salient

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<sup>8</sup>Under this system, parties and independent candidates group themselves into lists or coalitions. Each list can propose up to two candidates per electoral region, province, or other geographical unit. Votes are counted by list and unless the list with the majority of votes doubles the voting of the second majority, each of the two lists gets the candidate who got the majority of votes into office. Hence, the first and the second majority get equal representation whenever the first majority does not double the second. See (Luna and Mardones, 2010).

unrest known as the Social Outbreak. The students' protests started in October 2019, triggered by the increase of the subway price and the movement rapidly spread to the rest of the society, leading to an agreement to change the constitution. The result from the October 2020 referendum was an overwhelming support (almost 80 percent) for rewriting the constitution by an entirely popular elected body.

### **3.2 Social Unrest and Political Cleavages during Redemocratization**

In what follows, we analyze the changing relationship between party support and socioeconomic characteristics during the recent redemocratization process using electoral surveys from 1989 until 2019.<sup>9</sup> Figure 3 summarizes the election results by the most important parties during our period of analysis. On the left of the political spectrum is *Concertación*, representing the center-left, the Communist Party, the Humanist Party and since 2017 the Broad Front.<sup>10</sup> On the right is the alliance between RN and UDI (Figure 3).<sup>11</sup>

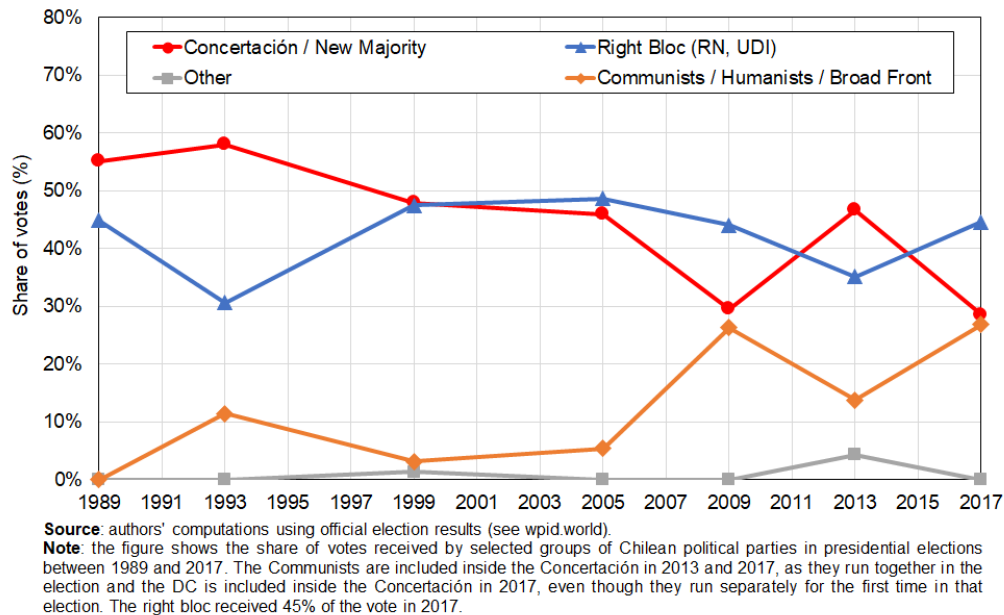
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<sup>9</sup>See appendix Table BC1 for data sources.

<sup>10</sup>The Humanist Party participated in the *Concertación* until 1993 and the Communist Party in 2013 and 2017.

<sup>11</sup>To classify the parties, we use the coding proposed by Huber et al. (2012) for the 1989–2012 period, and the work by Bunker (2014, 2018) for the most recent period.

FIGURE 3: Election results in Chile, 1989 - 2017



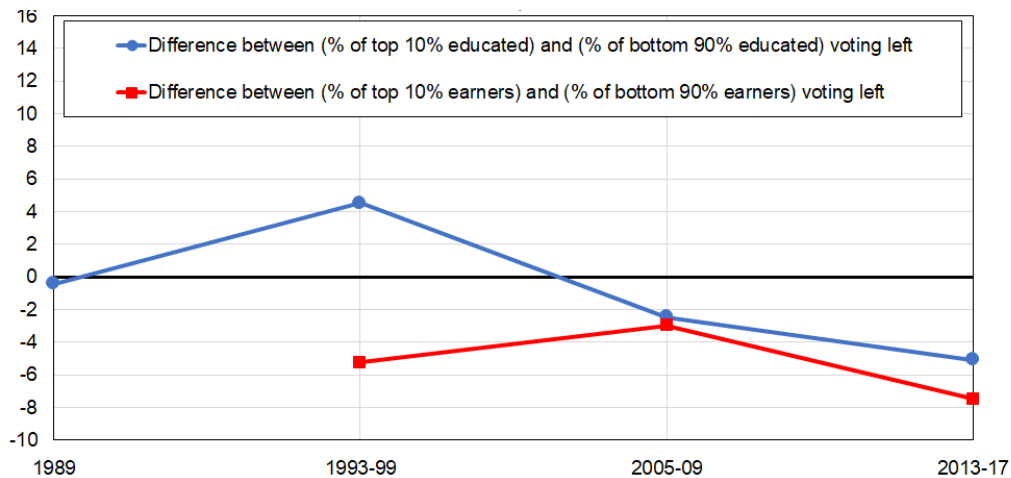
The pre-dictatorship political structure in Chile was characterized by the existence of three main historical cleavages, which created the so-called “three-thirds” structure (left, right, and center) in the political system until 1973 (Scully, 1990). The first cleavage was defined by the religious conflict initiated in the second half of the 19th century that split political support into a clerical bloc and an anti-clerical bloc. In the beginning of the twentieth century, urbanization and industrialization fueled a clear class cleavage, which led to the emergence of left-wing parties and divided the political system along a left-right axis. Finally, the class cleavage extended to the countryside between 1950 and 1970, where the Christian Democratic Party solidified the political center (Scully, 1992).

Recent studies have challenged Lipset and Rokkan’s “freezing hypothesis” that would imply that pre-dictatorship cleavages would be preserved (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). They have proposed instead a fourth democratic-authoritarian cleavage that splits voters by critics or apologists of the military regime, which dominates the previous historical conflicts. The critics argued that the need to end with the authoritarian regime (i.e., political and economic instability) did not justify the means (i.e., human rights violations and the suspension of democratic politics). The apologists instead believed that the ne-

oliberal economic model developed during authoritarian rule deserved political protection (Bonilla et al., 2011). Other researchers document that there was a general process of dealignment between the 1990s and 2000s, marked by the decreasing association between political preferences on the one hand, and class, religion, and regime preferences on the other (Bargsted and Somma, 2016).

In line with these results, we do not find a strong division along the left-right axis by income nor education group after the dictatorship. Top-income earners have been slightly more likely to vote for the right, and this pattern has intensified in the last two elections. Meanwhile, university graduates were somewhat more left-wing relative to the rest of voters in the 1990s but have progressively become less left-wing since the early 2000s (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: The left-wing vote, income, and education in Chile, 1989-2017



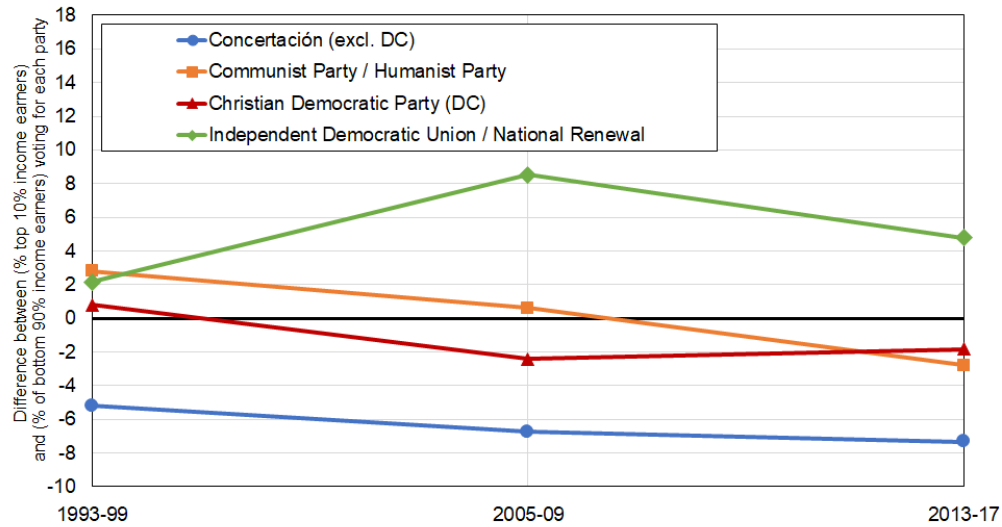
**Source:** authors' computations using Chilean political attitudes surveys (see [wpid.world](http://wpid.world)).

**Note:** the figure shows the relative support of top-income and highest-educated voters for center-left and left-wing parties, after controlling for age, gender, religious affiliation, religiosity, employment status, marital status, union membership, ethnicity, and region. In 2013-2017, top 10% income earners were 7 percentage points less likely to vote for the left. The left is defined as Concertación minus DC plus other left-wing parties that do not belong to the center-left alliance.

While the stratification of the vote by income or education is not very strong along the left-right axis, it becomes more evident when decomposing the center-left bloc. Whereas the *Concertación* (excluding DC) is more popular among low-income earners, the Christian Democrats and the left outside *Concertación* are equally supported by the income-poor and income-rich (Figure 5).



FIGURE 5: Vote and income in Chile, 1993-2017



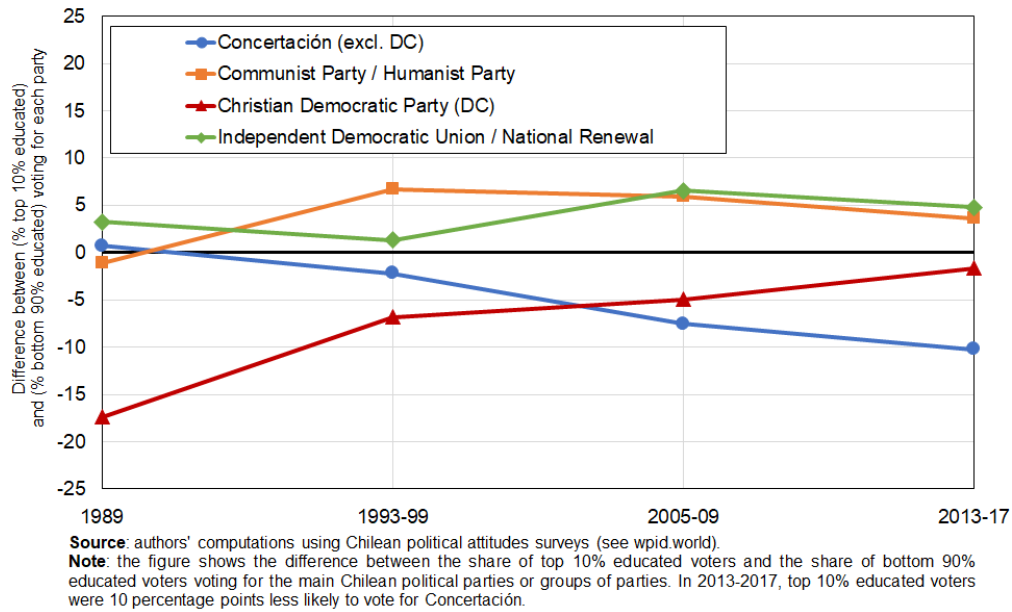
Source: authors' computations using Chilean political attitudes surveys (see wpid.world).

Note: the figure shows the difference between the share of top 10% earners and the share of bottom 90% earners voting for the main Chilean parties or group of parties. In 2013-2017, top 10% income earners were 5 percentage points more likely to vote for the Independent Democratic Union and National Renewal.

The education gradient among political groups has fluctuated more than the income gradient and seems to be a product of the transfer of votes within the center-left coalition (Figure 6). In the last decade, the right bloc and the DC have lost support among the primary educated in benefit of the Communists and Humanists and the other parties within the *Concertación*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>These results align with the exacerbation of the working-class cleavage towards the left in the 2010s (see appendix Figure BA24).

FIGURE 6: Vote and education in Chile, 1989-2017



The 21st century witnessed increasing unrest in the Chilean society, spurred by rising income concentration, market-oriented education, and failures in the pension system. As the governing coalitions were unresponsive to social demands, political polarization increased (Fábrega et al., 2018). Intermittent protests were staged throughout the period, culminating in the nationwide conflict in October 2019. This united the population around issues of social and economic inequality, exacerbating the class cleavage and thus aligning the vote by income and education, as shown in Figure 6.

The increase in polarization is also linked to the large fall in support for the DC. The weakening of Christian religious beliefs and the rapid process of urbanization have led voters to become less identified with the center ideology promoted by the DC and historically attached to Christianity and rural origins (Herrera et al., 2019). The religious cleavage has thus been reduced, and the support from the left comes from a wide base of believers and non-believers.<sup>13</sup>

The recent political polarization is most pronounced among the youth and those living in the center of the country (Table 2). The fall of around 30 percentage points of youth

<sup>13</sup>See appendix Figure BA21.

votes for the DC has been mostly divided between the two tails of the ideological spectrum, the left outside of *Concertación* and the right bloc. Left-wing parties within *Concertación* have also received a share of the young vote, but they still fare better among middle-aged and old voters. Historically, the north and the south have been associated with higher support for the left and the right, respectively. Support for the left has nonetheless considerably increased in the center in the last decade, the area that has seen the largest social unrest.

TABLE 2: The structure of political cleavages in Chile, 2017

	Share of votes received (%)			
	Communist Party / Humanist Party / Broad Front / Other left	The Force of the Majority (excl. Communists)	Christian Democratic Party	Independent Democratic Union / National Renewal
<b>Education level</b>				
Primary	19%	27%	6%	48%
Secondary	27%	23%	5%	45%
Tertiary	24%	29%	4%	43%
<b>Income group</b>				
Bottom 50%	26%	24%	5%	45%
Middle 40%	21%	26%	6%	47%
Top 10%	16%	31%	3%	51%
<b>Region</b>				
North	25%	26%	2%	47%
Center	26%	27%	5%	42%
South	21%	25%	4%	51%
<b>Age</b>				
20-39	33%	19%	2%	47%
40-59	21%	29%	5%	44%
+60	16%	34%	9%	42%

**Source:** authors' computations using Chilean political attitudes surveys.

**Notes:** the table presents the share of votes received by the main Chilean political groups in the 2017 election by selected individual characteristics. In 2017, 48% of primary-educated voters voted for the Independent Democratic Union or National Renewal, compared to 43% of university graduates.

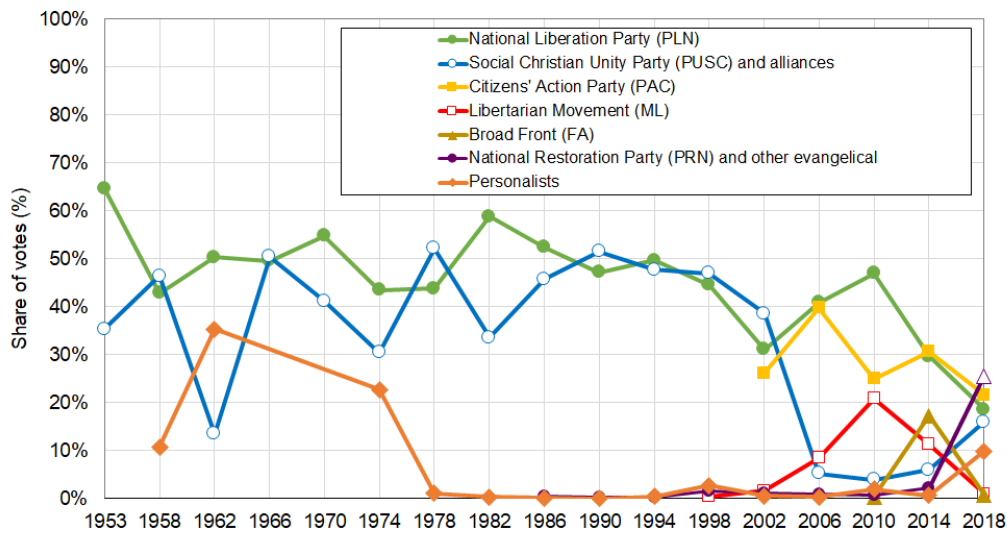
## 4 Costa Rica

Modern political history of Costa Rica starts in the aftermath of the 1948 Civil War, triggered by the annulation of the elections results of February 1948. A group of rebels led

by José Figueres Ferrer formed the National Liberation Army and successfully toppled the government of Teodoro Picado (1944-1948) (Molina Jiménez, 2001). Among the social and political achievements of this period were the establishment of the Supreme Electoral Court of Costa Rica, the abolishment of the army, the end of racial segregation and women’s suffrage. The outcomes of the war also included exile for the losers and the ban of communist parties to take part in elections (revoked in 1974).

The two sides of the Civil War were at the origin of the dichotomous political environment that dominated Costa Rican politics for the next five decades. The winning side, led by Figueres Ferrer, established the National Liberation Party (*Partido Liberación Nacional*, PLN), of center-left social democratic orientation, which would become the dominant political party. The losing side, led by Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia, reconstituted into a number of political parties and coalitions of center-right Christian democratic orientation that won the presidential elections three times before establishing the Social Christian Unity Party (*Partido Unidad Social Cristiana*, PUSC) in 1983. The successful transfer of control to the center right in 1958 marked the beginning of a tradition of alternation of power that crystallized in the following decades (Figure 7) (Solís Avendaño, 2006).

FIGURE 7: Election results in Costa Rica, 1953-2018



**Source:** authors' computations using official election results (see wpid.world).  
**Note:** the figure shows the share of votes received by selected Costa Rican political parties and groups of parties in presidential elections between 1953 and 2018. The National Restoration Party received 26% of the vote in 2018.

While we can only strictly define a two-party system from 1983 onwards, the alliances on the right constituted after the Civil War and the weakness of socialist parties contributed to the predominance of a bipolar party system since 1948 (Sánchez, 2003). Interestingly, no political party has won the elections more than twice in a row, not even in the most dominant years of the PLN during the 1970s and 1980s. Hence, some have interpreted the political history of Costa Rica as an affair of a dominant party versus everyone else (Alfaro Redondo, 2019).

This institutional model however already started to deteriorate in the late 1970s, with the combination of economic factors (i.e., high levels of public debt, inflation, capital flight, etc.) and political violence in Central America. After the political pact between Calderón Fournier from the PUSC and his successor from PLN Figueres Olsen in 1995, which intended to continue the process of adjustment and reform of the State that started in the 1980s, social discontent mounted, breaking the basis that had supported the PLN in the construction of the Welfare State (1950-1978) (Vargas Cullell and Alpízar Rodríguez, 2020).

The erosion process of the 1990s thus revealed growing dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole, which translated first into an increase in electoral abstention in 1998, and then with the emergence of the Citizens' Action Party (*Partido Acción Ciudadana*, PAC) in 2002 in a process often called *partisan dealignment* (Sánchez, 2003). As traditional parties converged towards the center in the 1980s and 1990s, the once center-left PLN suffered the most (Raventós Vorst et al., 2005). In this context, PAC took the social democratic baton and attracted many intellectuals and prominent figures from the PLN and other parties. After two PLN governments, PAC won the election for the first time in history, as the PLN collapsed in the second round in 2014 (Alfaro Redondo et al., 2015). Finally, the PLN finished third for the first time in 2018, when the PAC defeated the evangelical Christian National Restoration Party (*Partido Restauración Nacional*, PRN), founded in 2005. While support for non-established parties increased, and a candidate from a previously fringe party made it to the second-round vote in 2018, established parties have survived, and the party system has not collapsed, prompting some authors to favor the concept of *realignment* instead (Perelló and Navia, 2020).

## 4.1 A Multi-Class Party Cleavage

In what follows, we study political cleavages in Costa Rica since the 1970s until the present by classifying parties as left-wing (PLN, PAC, Broad Front) or right-wing (PUSC, PRN, Libertarian Movement, and other center-right parties). While the PLN has been a member of the Socialist International since the 1960s, it is arguable if it still remains a center-left party, especially after 2006 when Óscar Arias, usually associated with the so-called neo-liberal forces within the PLN, was reelected president for the second time (Arias-Chavarría, 2019; Martínez Franzoni and Sanchez-Ancochea, 2017; Wilson, 1994). In the interest of historical consistency, we have considered the PLN as a left-wing party, but we show that our results are unchanged whether we consider PLN a left-wing party or not (Coppedge, 1997; Huber et al., 2012).

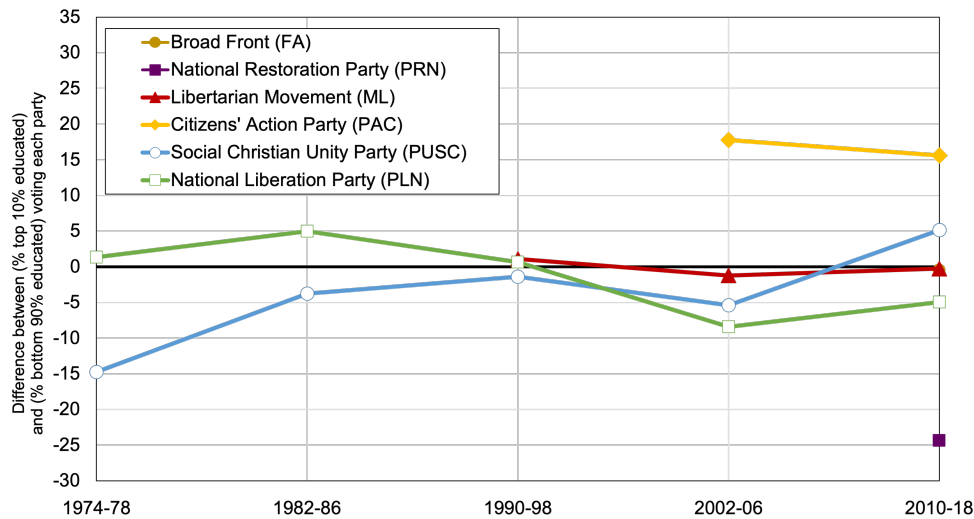
The leaders of the 1940s polarized the population into two major political forces. Hence, the bipolar system between the 1950s and 1970s, was motivated by the tension between PLN and “anti-PLN (*antiliberacionismo*)” (Sánchez, 2003). However, great fragmentation within the “anti-PLN” camp, prevented the system to become two-party based from the beginning. The socialist left could not take part in elections before 1974, which made the process not strictly competitive (Vargas Cullell and Alpízar Rodríguez, 2020). Therefore, the principal political cleavage of Costa Rica from 1948 through 2000 was between PLN’s supporters and its adversaries (Coppedge, 1998).

The hegemony of the PLN until the 1970s was partly due to a growing middle class of urban professionals and small coffee producers who relied on the state to support its production activities, strengthen the bureaucracy and expand public employment, and manage conflict in the rural sector and between capital and labor (Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez Ancochea, 2013). In this process of “state colonization”, successive governments embarked in the project of developing the country, while simultaneously nurturing a faithful party base (Vargas Cullell and Alpízar Rodríguez, 2020). Hence, during the hegemonic period of PLN, the elites supported the left, because they benefited directly from the reforms undertaken by the party. This explains to a large extent why the party was slightly more supported by highest-income earners until the 1990s, while lower-income

voters who did not benefit as much from these policies supported more the PUSC (Figure 8).

Dissatisfaction with the deterioration of the welfare state during the economic recession of the 1980s, the neoliberal turn of the PLN from socio-democratic to neoliberal policies and corruption scandals, led to an increase in political dissatisfaction with traditional parties, the rise of abstention (mainly among lower-income earners, see Raven-tós Vorst et al. (2005)) and a large shift of voters towards new parties such as the Libertarian Movement and the PAC especially among highest-income earners, the PRN among lower-income earners, and the Broad Front among all classes, as shown on Figure 15.8. The enlargement of the multi-party system thus resulted in a reconfiguration of the socio-economic structure of the electorate with different competing pro-poor (i.e., PLN and PRN) and pro-rich parties (i.e., PUSC and PAC) since the 2000s.<sup>14</sup> The same findings are obtained when looking at the voting patterns by education (Figure 9).

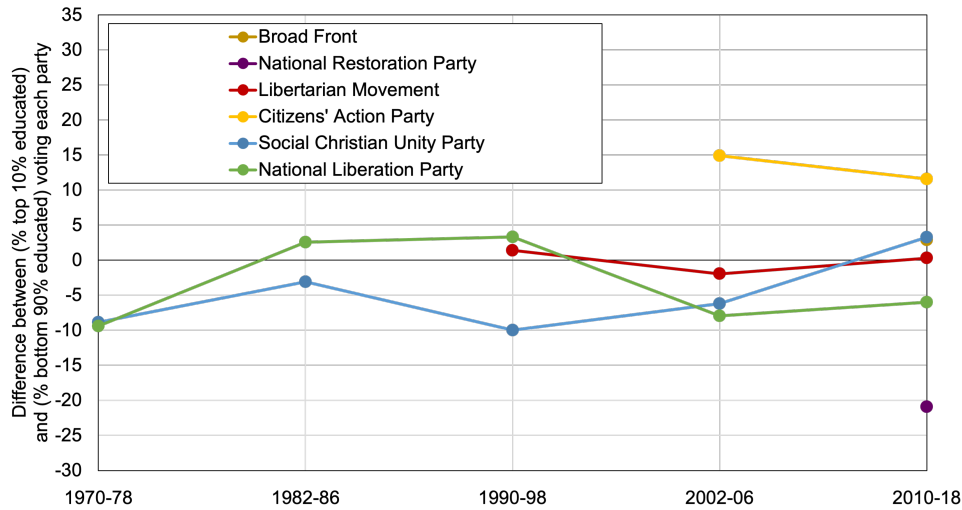
FIGURE 8: Vote and income in Costa Rica, 1974-2018



**Source:** authors' computations using Costa Rican political attitudes surveys.  
**Note:** the figure shows the difference between the share of top 10% earners and the share of bottom 90% earners voting for the main Costa Rican political parties. In 2010-2018, top 10% income earners were 16 percentage points more likely to vote for the Citizens' Action Party.

<sup>14</sup>Note that some of these parties, in particular the PLN, have historically had multi-class electorates. We refer to them as pro-poor and pro-rich, as they have had a larger share of bottom- and top-income earners since the 2000s, respectively.

FIGURE 9: The education cleavage in Costa Rica, 1974-2018



Source: authors' computations using Costa Rican political attitudes surveys.  
 Note: the figure shows the relative support of highest-educated voters for the main Costa Rican parties.

While our data allows us to characterize the electorate, we also notice a gap between the leadership and party base of the PLN. During the second round of the presidential elections in 2018, despite explicit public support from the leadership of the PLN to the PRN (Rosales Valladares, 2018), most of its electorate supported the PAC thus helping this party to win the election and portraying a disconnection between leadership and voters inside the PLN camp. Hence, while PLN and PAC voters follow indeed different voting patters in terms of income and education, the second round in 2018 showed that the elites of PLN have lost control of their political base (Cascante et al., 2020).

The reconfiguration of the political landscape in the last two decades has also changed the dynamics of the vote along occupational, regional and religious lines. Left-wing education and economic elites vote strongly for PAC and are mostly composed of professionals, wage earners and public sector workers, many of which used to vote for the PLN (Table 3). Moreover, regional cleavages are key explanatory factors of voting in Costa Rica. The PAC vote is clearly urban, as since its first election in 2002 the party has never won in any of the peripheral provinces in the first round of presidential elections, not even in 2014 or 2018 when it went on to win the presidency (Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones, 2018). The PLN, on the other hand, has persistently made better scores in rural



areas and in the lowlands until today, but a large share of its vote and that of PUSC has been captured by the conservative PRN in the 2018 last election (Table 3).

A protestant cleavage became very salient in the last 2018 presidential election. After a nonbinding sentence by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights that recommended Costa Rica to approve same-sex marriage (Programa Estado de la Nación en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible, 2018), the Evangelical Christian PRN managed to finish first in the first round obtaining 73 percent of the protestant vote.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to Peru and Mexico, the politicization of ethnicity has been weak in Costa Rica and thus there are no strong ethnic divisions in voting patterns (Table 3).

This analysis tells the story of two Costa Ricas: a prosperous, educated and modern one in urban areas of the center of the country who mainly supports PAC, and a low-educated and poor one on the coasts and along the borders, who support the old center left (PLN) and conservative parties (e.g., PRN). The challenges brought about by this geographical and social polarization will probably exacerbate with current levels of growing inequality.

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<sup>15</sup>See appendix Figure CC52.

TABLE 3: The structure of political cleavages in Costa Rica, 2010-2018

	Share of votes (%)					
	FA	PAC	PLN	ML	PUSC	PRN
<b>Education</b>						
Primary	4%	27%	40%	4%	5%	15%
Secondary	6%	34%	26%	4%	6%	17%
Tertiary	8%	40%	20%	4%	14%	9%
Postgraduate	5%	46%	25%	3%	10%	7%
<b>Income</b>						
Bottom 50%	6%	28%	32%	3%	6%	20%
Middle 40%	5%	34%	27%	5%	8%	15%
Top 10%	5%	47%	25%	4%	12%	5%
<b>Region</b>						
Metropolitan Area of San José	7%	33%	27%	2%	10%	13%
Central-Urban	5%	42%	29%	4%	6%	8%
Central-Rural	3%	31%	34%	6%	6%	14%
Lowlands-Urban	6%	27%	33%	5%	7%	19%
Lowlands-Rural	5%	28%	33%	3%	5%	21%
<b>Worker type</b>						
Business owner/partner	6%	37%	21%	4%	10%	14%
Wage earner	7%	34%	28%	4%	8%	13%
Self-employed	4%	33%	29%	5%	7%	15%
<b>Sector of employment</b>						
Private/mixed sector	6%	34%	28%	4%	7%	15%
Public	8%	37%	28%	5%	10%	9%
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
White	6%	31%	33%	4%	7%	13%
Mestizo	5%	35%	29%	4%	8%	14%
Indigenous	7%	34%	31%	2%	6%	11%
Black / Mulatto	5%	38%	25%	2%	5%	18%
Other	5%	35%	25%	3%	4%	26%

**Source:** authors' computations using Costa Rican political attitudes surveys (see [wpid.world](http://wpid.world)).

**Notes:** the table shows the average share of votes received by the main Costa Rican political parties by selected individual characteristics over the period 2010-2018. 40% of primary-educated voters voted PLN during this period, compared to 25% of postgraduates.

## 5 Colombia

### 5.1 Colombia's Historical Two-Party System

Colombia became independent from Spain in 1810, obtaining full detachment from colonial rule after the Battle of Boyacá in 1819. After the *Libertador* Simon Bolívar died in 1830, the country set a two-party system (Conservative-Liberal) for more than 150 years (Bushnell, 1993). The Liberals' ideals were anticlericalism, federalism, and free trade, while Conservatives defended the Church and favored centralization, and protectionism.

Inter-party violence was widespread during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reaching its peak between 1948 and 1953, a period known as *La Violencia*. To pacify the country, the Conservative and Liberal parties agreed to the National Front (*Frente Nacional*, FN) deal, under which the presidency alternated every four years between 1958 and 1974, and parity in party representation across all government bodies was ensured. The FN's deal excluded radical civil sectors, peasants, workers and all those ideologically aligned with the left, and some of their most important demands, in particular land reform (Delpar, 2002). Traditional parties represented the interests of the landed elites, who were ideologically closer to the right (Leal Buitrago and Dávila Ladrón de Guevara, 2010). The prolonged and intense fighting forged the public's strong identification with the two traditional parties so that bipartisan dominance persisted until the FN formally ended in 1974, and only collapsed in the early 2000s, after the adoption of the electoral reforms included in the 1991 constitution.

The absence of political opportunities for outsiders, combined with the lack of state presence in the Colombian periphery, the survival of Liberal rural guerrillas from *La Violencia*, and the inspiration from the Cold War, led to the formation of left-leaning guerrilla movements in the early 1960s. The most powerful was the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) (Ayala Diago, 1995). The guerrillas were backed by the Colombian Communist Party, which approved the thesis of the combination of all forms of struggle, establishing that armed conflict is inevitable and necessary as a factor in the Colombian revolution (Escobar Escobar, 2015).

In the 1980s, the government was forced to negotiate with insurgents due to increasing

violence in rural areas and repression of left-leaning supporters. As part of the peace talks, a fraction of the guerrilla formed a left-wing political movement, the Patriotic Union (*La Union Patriótica*, UP), to provide outsiders with a political platform to participate in politics. The 1991 constitution further consolidated the opening of the political system by allowing historically excluded groups (left-wing or religious movements, peasants, indigenous people, union workers, etc.) to participate in elections.

## 5.2 A New Political Dichotomy: Uribism vs. Anti-Uribism

With the beginning of the 21st century, Colombia's political landscape experienced a profound transformation. The two traditional parties lost part of their hegemony in benefit of left-leaning political groups. In 2002, the independent Álvaro Uribe became president of the Republic by offering a new right-wing populism, economic liberalism and promoting a military confrontation to resolve the conflict against the FARC, known as *Uribism*. His main contenders were the liberal Horacio Serpa and an emerging party, the Alternative Democratic Pole (*Polo Democrático Alternativo*, PDA), which represented the left-wing ideology and obtained the third position. Álvaro Uribe was reelected in the first round in 2006, beating the intellectual left-wing candidate Carlos Gaviria (PDA), who won 22 percent of the votes, the highest share of votes obtained by a left-wing party in Colombian history. In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos, Uribe's former Ministry of Defense and candidate of the Party of the Union (*Partido de la Unidad Nacional*, or Party of the U), was elected president with Uribe's support, against the intellectual progressive Antanas Mockus from the Green Party (*Partido Verde*).

Santos differed from Uribe in his ideological approach to the conflict, he was not in favor of a military intervention and set up a third peaceful attempt to negotiate with the FARC. The negotiation precipitated Uribe to form a new right-wing movement, the Democratic Center (*Centro Democrático*, CD). The CD won the 2010 election and thus led Santos' government to the opposition, whereas the Party of the U turned more progressive. Santos ran for a second consecutive term in the 2014 election, winning against Óscar Iván Zuluaga (CD), the Uribist candidate, and the left-wing candidate Clara López (PDA).

Santos signed a historic peace agreement with the FARC in 2016, thus ending almost 60 years of military confrontations.

In 2018, Iván Duque, the Uribist candidate from the CD, was elected president against the left-wing candidate of the new party *Colombia Humana*, Gustavo Petro, a dissident from the PDA. His victory resulted from divisions between anti-Uribist candidates, who failed to agree for the runoff despite their higher cumulated scores in the first round.

### **5.3 Uribism, Class Cleavages, and the Peace Process**

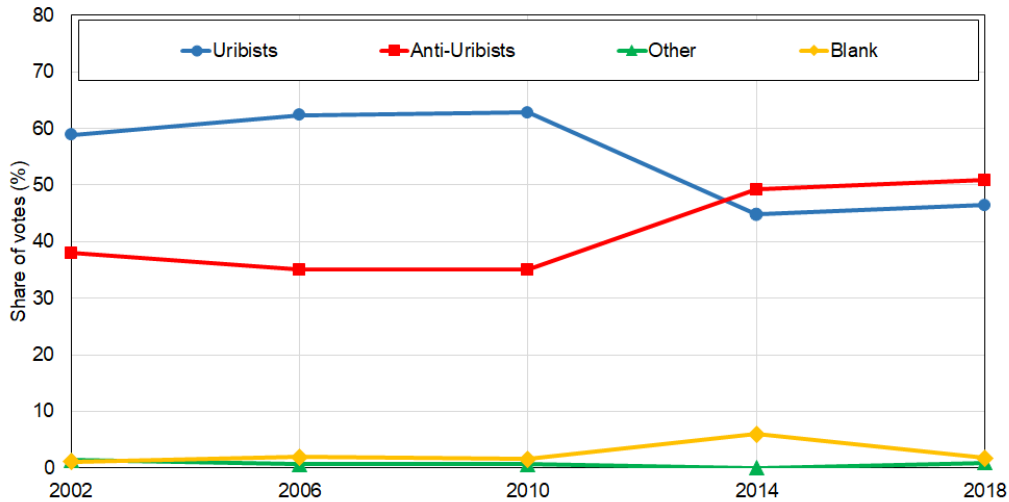
In what follows, we will analyze the link between electoral behaviors and socioeconomic factors in Colombia using post-electoral surveys covering all presidential elections between 2002 and 2018<sup>16</sup>. To do so, we classify Colombian parties as right-wing if they have a conservative root on its statutes if Álvaro Uribe was a member or if the party was openly allied with an Uribist party, and as left-wing if they are openly anti-Uribist or if their programs included open support for the peace negotiation with the FARC (Figure 10). The Party of the U is considered to be Uribist when it was supported by Uribe and anti-Uribist after 2014<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>See online appendix Table DC1 for data sources

<sup>17</sup>We use right- and left-wing labels to facilitate comparative analysis. However, these categories are not precise in the Colombian context as left/right labels are usually associated with criminal left/right groups.

FIGURE 10: Election results in Colombia, 2002-2018

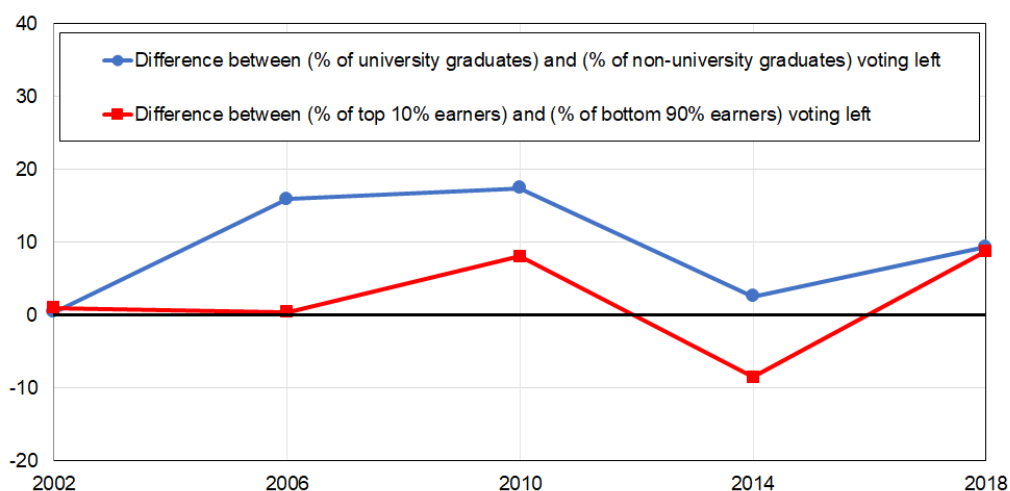


**Source:** authors' computations using official election results (see wpid.world).  
**Note:** the figure shows the share of votes received by selected groups of Colombian political parties in general elections between 2002 and 2018. Right-wing parties (Uribists): Partido de la U (2010), Partido Conservador, Cambio Radical, Primero Colombia, Movimiento Si Colombia, and Centro Democrático. Left-wing parties (Anti-Uribists): Polo Democrático, Partido de la U (2014), Partido Liberal, Alianza Social Independiente, Partido Verde, Colombia Humana, and Compromiso Ciudadano. Left-wing parties received 51% of the vote in 2018.

Our results show that with the exception of 2014, the anti-Uribist vote has been more pronounced among highest-educated and top-income voters (Figure 11). Uribe’s popular support was indeed largely driven by his social agenda aimed to tackle poverty. During his term, Uribe massively extended social programs, such as the conditional cash transfers scheme Familias en Acción, and held frequent public meetings with citizens throughout the country<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup>Inter-Regional Inequality Facility, “Policy Brief 2” (Technical Report, 2006).

FIGURE 11: The anti-uribist vote, income, and education in Colombia, 2002-2018



**Source:** authors' computations using Colombian post-electoral and political attitudes surveys (see wpid.world).

**Note:** the figure shows the relative support of tertiary-educated and top-income voters for left-wing (anti-uribist) parties, after controlling for age, gender, region, rural-urban location, employment status, marital status, sector of employment, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. In 2018, university graduates were 9 percentage points more likely to vote for anti-uribists.

The reversal in the education and income gradients in 2014 was mainly due to the dramatic shift of the lowest-educated and low-income voters towards the Party of the U.<sup>19</sup> This strong support for Santos among the lower classes can be explained by his new progressive pro-peace ideology, as well as by the social programs that were implemented during the previous presidency when he was an Uribist. Indeed, the popular support received by Uribe for his re-election in 2006 matches with Santos' popular support in 2014. The education and income gradients came back to their 2011 levels in 2018, as Santos could not run for office for a third time and as a consequence, lower classes shifted back to Uribism.

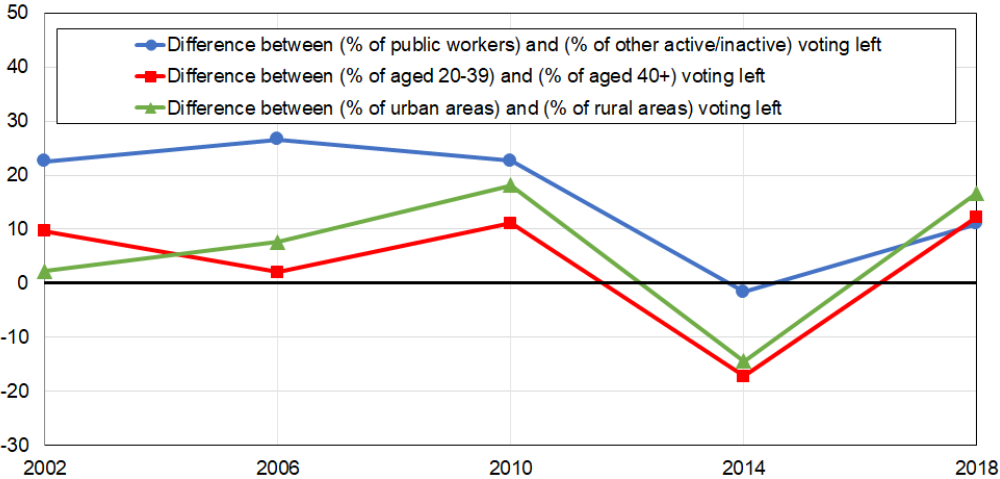
To what extent have positions towards the conflict represented class cleavages since the beginning of Uribism? The armed conflict was more salient for anti-Uribist voters, as they are strongly represented in rural areas where the *guerrillas* had most of their presence. In Uribe's view, the guerrillas were terrorist groups that constituted the primary source of Colombia's problems. Hence, more than 70 percent of those considering violence as the main problem in Colombia voted for Uribists from 2002 to 2010. However, those

<sup>19</sup>See online appendix Figures DA2 and DA3.

who considered that violence was the main problem in Colombia began to believe that Santos' negotiation could succeed and voted for him in 2014. In contrast, for anti-Uribists corruption was the main problem of the country<sup>20</sup>.

Class divisions and the position towards the conflict are also aligned with generational, rural-urban, and sectoral cleavages. The anti-Uribist vote is highest among young, urban voters working in the public sector (Figure 12). In line with the voting patterns by income and education level, the dramatic drop in the difference in left-wing vote between urban and rural areas in 2014 can be associated to both the interest in rural areas to support the peace process and the great share of rural beneficiaries from social assistance policies. Generational and sectoral cleavages also reverted in 2014, as a large share of old and non-public sector voters shifted towards the left and voted for Santos. The rural-urban cleavage is not a recent phenomenon, as Colombian cities have historically been the strongholds of the independent vote outside of the Liberal-Conservative tradition (Kline, 1983).

FIGURE 12: The anti-uribist vote in Colombia, 2002-2018: public workers, new generations and urban areas



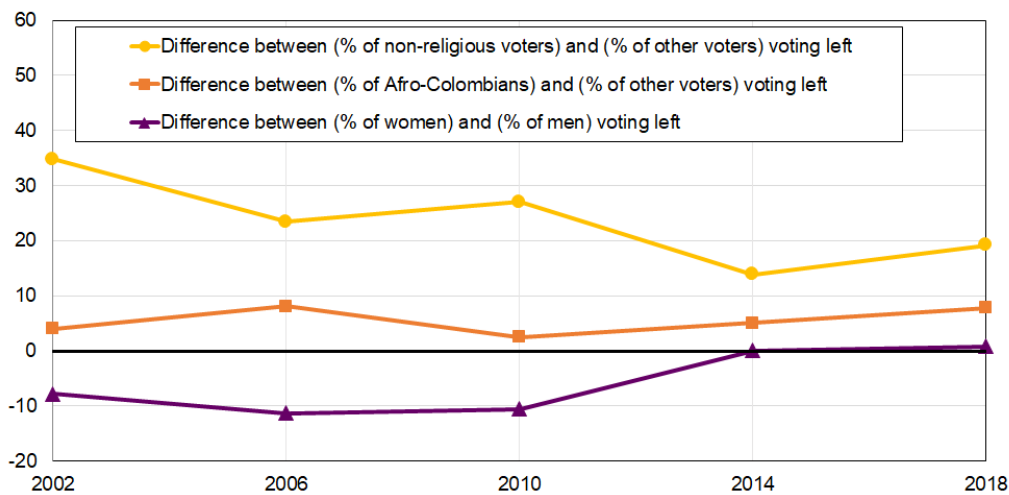
**Source:** authors' computations using Colombian post-electoral and political attitudes surveys (see wpid.world).  
**Note:** the figure shows the relative support of public workers, young voters, and urban areas for left-wing (anti-uribist) parties, after controlling for income, education, gender, region, employment status, marital status, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. In 2018, voters aged 20 to 39 were 12 percentage points more likely to vote for anti-uribists.

<sup>20</sup>See online appendix Figures DA18 and DB10.



Religion has also historically been an important dividing variable. The Conservative Party was allied with the Catholic Church to control the education system and privilege Conservative areas. Given literacy restrictions on the right to vote, only lifted in 1936, the uneven spread of literacy skills along partisan lines also unevenly broadened the electorate, thereby helping the Conservative Party in its pursuit of political hegemony (Sanchez Talanquer, 2017). This pattern reverted as education became more secular, and anti-Conservative voters gradually turned more educated. The Church and new religious groups thus consolidated their influence on the low-educated and low-income groups. Even though left-wing candidates openly declare themselves to be atheists, they have gradually made their speech more flexible and avoided entering into the religious discussion. This explains why the difference in the left vote between non-religious and religious (mainly Catholics and Protestants) voters has progressively declined (Figure 13).

FIGURE 13: The anti-uribist vote in Colombia, 2002-2018: non-religious, Afro-Colombians and women



**Source:** authors' computations using Colombian post-electoral and political attitudes surveys (see wpid.world).  
**Note:** the figure shows the relative support of non-religious voters, Afro-Colombians, and women for left-wing (anti-uribist) parties, after controlling for income, education, age, region, rural-urban location, employment status, marital status, and sector of employment. In 2018, non-religious voters were 19 percentage points more likely to vote for anti-uribists.

Colombia also had a historical gender gap according to which women were more conservative than men. This division has been closed since 2014, due likely to gradual decline in religiosity and the introduction of new social issues in the political agenda that match with gender interests, such as abortion approval and gender violence. In contrast

to other Latin American countries, finally, ethnic cleavages are weak in Colombia: Afro-Colombians, the largest ethnic minority, have only been slightly more left-wing relative to the rest of the population (Figure 13).

## 6 Mexico

Since its independence from Spain in 1821, the United Mexican States has had a long and rich political history that goes from two Empires in the 19th Century, to the one-party system by the hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI) and the first alternation of power after democratic elections in the 2000s (Espinoza Valle and Monsiváis Carrillo, 2012). The rule of the PRI as the hegemonic party of the twentieth century started at the end of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). The initial aim of this armed conflict was to put an end to the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911). After Díaz left Mexico in 1911, elections were organized and Francisco Madero was elected president.

The PRI was created in 1929 as the direct heir of the revolutionary movement and immediately became the dominant party. Plurality of parties was only accepted with great limitations in the lower house of the Congress from 1963 onwards. Between 1946 and 1976, the party exhibited its strongest authoritarian control over the electoral process. As a result, repression and violence rose in the 1960s, which culminated in the infamous Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968 (Pinelo López, 2019). This period ended with the presidential election of 1976, the only election in Mexican history with a single candidate, José López Portillo.

Political plurality in Mexico was only confirmed with the electoral reform of 1977, which sought to include groups previously banned and promoted the creation of new political parties. However, the reform did not appease the public who was increasingly discontent with corruption and electoral fraud, setting the basis for a succession of strong left-leaning parties that would play a key role in the following decades (Cantú, 2019).

Two strategies exploited during the heyday of the one-party system deserve special attention. Firstly, many labor union leaders were themselves members of PRI (Baz-

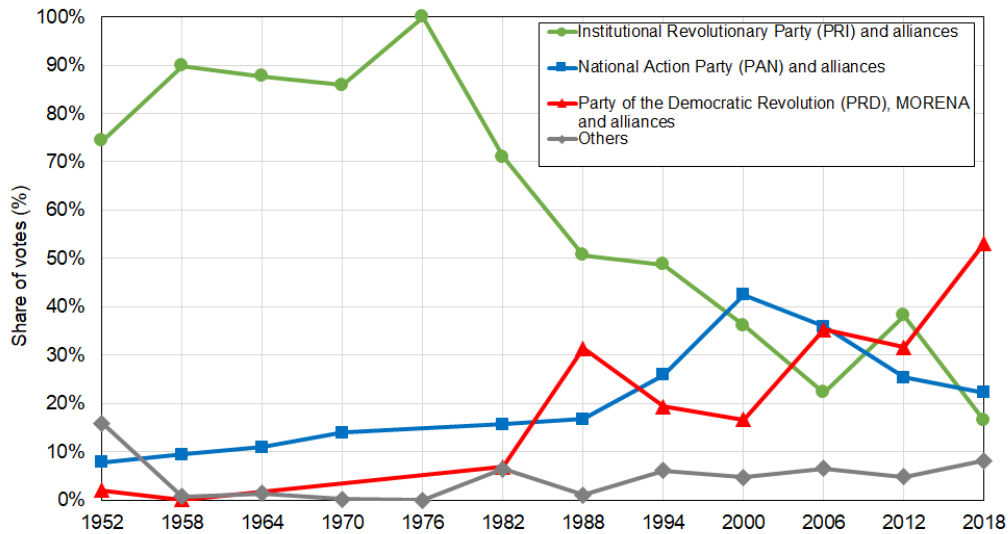
dresch and Levy, 1991). However, PRI lost the monopoly of support from labor unions in the 1980s, when technocrats who increasingly favored neoliberal reforms replaced the old guard of the party and unions began to lose influence within the PRI structure (Aguilar Garcia, 2009). Secondly, the political establishment used the so-called para-state parties to project competitive elections while being controlled by PRI. Real opposition only came from the National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*, PAN) and the Mexican Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Mexicano*, PCM), both of which were illegal and persecuted until the electoral reform of 1977.

The creation of an independent body with the mandate of organizing elections in 1990 was followed by increasing transparency and competitiveness of the electoral process. In the subsequent elections, the PRI saw its share of votes decrease until finally losing the presidency to the PAN in 2000 (Figure 14) (Klesner, 2001). Simultaneously, violence and drug trafficking dominated the 1990s, prompting some authors to call Mexico a “narco-democracy” (Patenostro, 1995). Therefore, the quick recognition of the electoral results by PRI president Ernesto Zedillo, and the subsequent peaceful transfer of power, set up a milestone in Mexican political history. The ghost of electoral fraud nonetheless came back after the 2006 and 2012 elections.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>BBC, “Mexico Faces Partial Recount in Presidential Election,” BBC, July 5, 2012 (accessed October 2, 2020).

FIGURE 14: Election results in Mexico, 1952-2018



Source: authors' computations using official election results (see wpid.world).  
 Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by selected groups of Mexican political parties in presidential elections between 1952 and 2018. The Institutional Revolutionary Party received 16% of the vote in 2018.

The last decade saw the return of the PRI in 2012 after 12 years of PAN governments, but also its worst defeat in the country's history in 2018. Simultaneously, left-wing forces continued to crystallize during this period. The left first organized itself behind the National Democratic Front (*Frente Democrático Nacional*, FDN) during the 1988 elections, led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The party was known as the Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, PRD) thereafter, and Cárdenas was replaced by his protégé Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) for the 2006 elections. AMLO became the first left-wing president in Mexican history with the National Regeneration Movement (*Movimiento Regeneración Nacional*, MORENA) in 2018.

## 6.1 Mexico's Multi-elite Party System

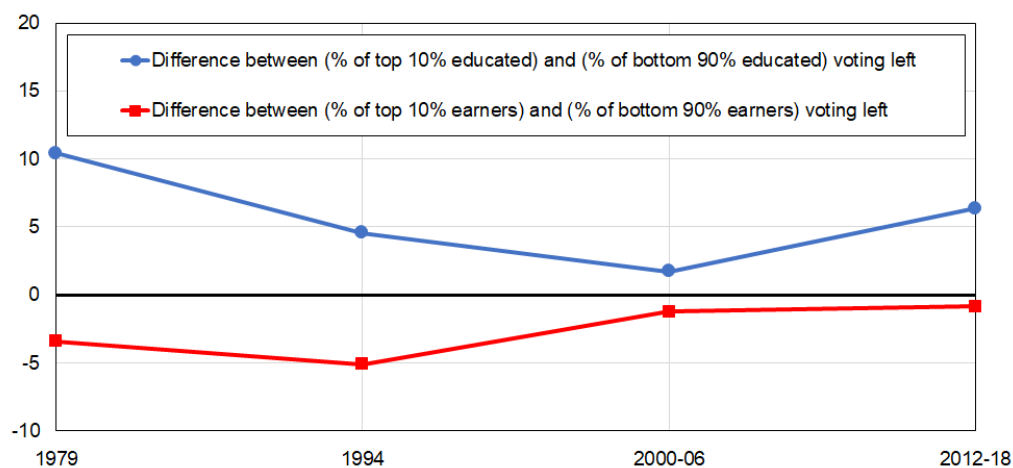
We now turn to studying the changing relationship between left-right party choice and socioeconomic characteristics during Mexico's transition from a one-party to a multi-party system since 1952.<sup>22</sup> The main parties on the right are the PRI and the PAN, while the main parties on the left are the PRD and more recently Morena (Figure 14). Although the

<sup>22</sup>See appendix Table ED1 for data sources.

PRI was initially a center-left party that drew inspiration from the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, its orientation can be considered as center-right in recent years (Coppedge, 1997; Huber et al., 2012). Since the late 1970s, a series of reforms indeed took the party to the center right, such as the privatization of state-owned companies and the reestablishment of relations with the Church. The party is still part of the Socialist International, but it is not currently considered socialist nor social democrat by most contemporary analysts.

Despite Mexico's profound transformation from a one-party to a multi-party system since the 1970s, the country seems to have maintained during this process a reasonably stable multi-elite party system: higher education is associated with a generally greater propensity to vote for the left, whereas higher income is associated with slightly lower support for the left (Figure 15). This pattern is largely due to the PAN and left-wing parties being more popular among top-income earners and the highest educated, respectively (Figures 16 and 17). The PRI's traditional base instead are the lower educated living in poor rural areas, and in recent years older voters who remember the years of the "Mexican miracle" (1940-1970).<sup>23</sup> The latter benefited from PRI support thanks to political clientelism and, more recently, to social programs such as *Progresa*.

FIGURE 15: The social-democratic vote, income, and education in Mexico, 1979-2018



Source: authors' computations using Mexican political attitudes surveys (see wpid.world).

Note: the figure shows the relative support of highest-educated and top-income voters for social democratic parties (PRD / MORENA / Other social democrats and progressives), after controlling for age, gender, religion, employment status, marital status, occupation, perceived class, union membership, rural-urban location, region, and ethnicity. Over the period 2012-2018, university graduates were 6 percentage points more likely to vote for social democratic and progressive parties.

<sup>23</sup>See appendix Figure EC14.

The education gradient weakened during the 1990s and 2000s with the decline in the PRI's vote share and the overall increase in support for the PAN and the left. The influence of the "useful" vote to oust the PRI after 71 years of political domination may have contributed to this tendency (Klesner, 2001). Despite genuine electoral competition, however, alternation of power did not improve political satisfaction after fiscal and monetary orthodoxy failed to solve urgent problems such as jobs and poverty (Crow, 2010). Dissatisfaction reached its peak under the term of PRI president Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) (García Magos, 2018). As the left attracted unprecedented support in 2018, especially among the higher-educated and low-income earners, these last elections were marked by a return of the educational divide, at the same time as a reduction in the link between income and voting.

FIGURE 16: Vote and education in Mexico, 1952-2018

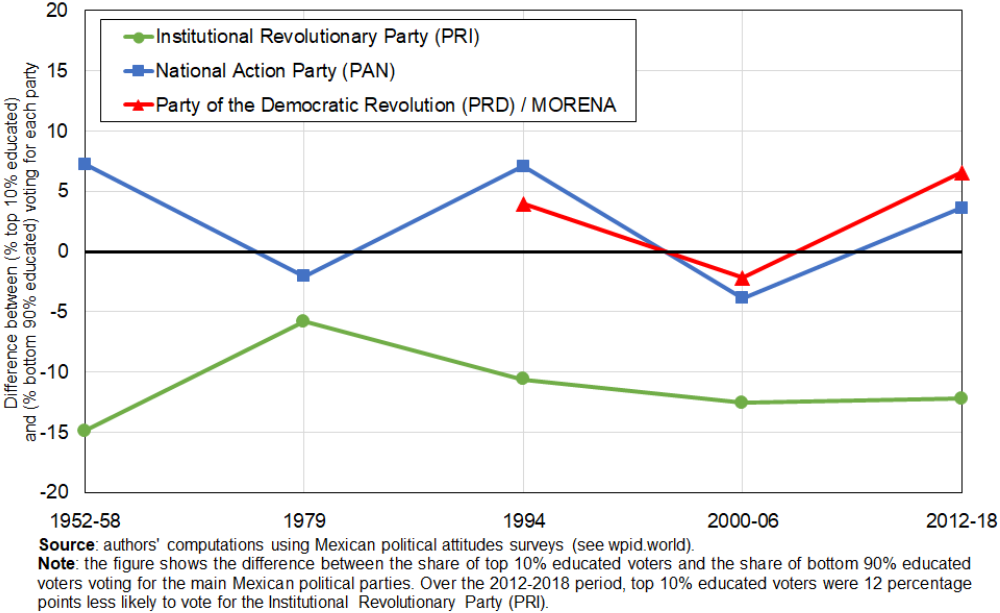
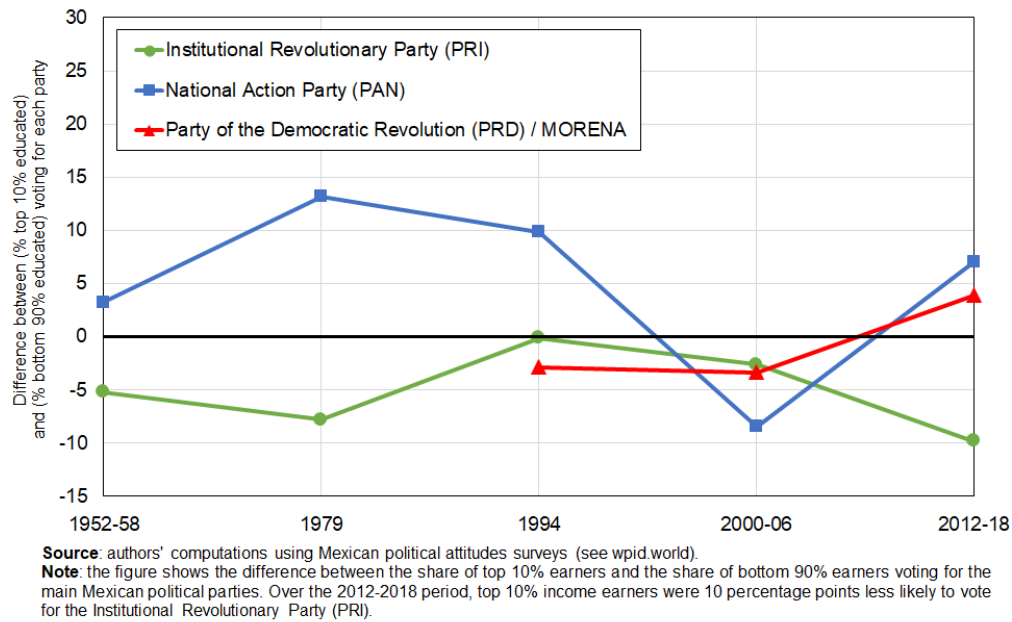


FIGURE 17: Vote and income in Mexico,1952-2018



## 6.2 The Decadence of the PRI and the Rise of the Mexican Left

Support for the left in Mexico has increased from less than 10 percent in the 1970s to more than 50 percent in the 2010s. This transition coincided with a series of iterations of electoral fraud, opposition protests, and electoral reforms, which leveled the political playing field and opened new opportunities for electoral competition (García Magos, 2018). The freedoms and opportunities brought about by democratization were responsible for the emergence of a figure like AMLO and his ascent to the presidency. To understand the drivers behind the rise of the Mexican left, it is useful to analyze other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of voters (Table 4).

First, the left has managed to attract an increasing share of indigenous voters.<sup>24</sup> Recent studies have challenged the idea of an “indigenous vote” and its distinctiveness from other sociodemographic factors (Sonnleitner, 2020). We document that indigenous voters have progressively shifted towards the left, reaching its highest level in 2018, when 74

<sup>24</sup>Persons of indigenous background are those who descend from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization. Persons of mestizo background are, instead, those who have both Spanish and indigenous descend

percent of indigenous voters voted for Morena after AMLO's promise of more protection and security in indigenous communities.

Second, there has also been an increase in the support of farmers for the left in the 2010s. Poor farmers traditionally supported the PRI, based on patronage politics, and their vote share was still the greatest during the 2000s (Díaz Cayeros et al., 2012). Farmers went from being the biggest supporters of the PRI to being the biggest supporters of the left in the 2010s, with 71 percent of them voting for Morena.<sup>25</sup>

Third, the left has managed to attract votes from outside the National Capital, in particular in the North and South, the old strongholds of the PRI since the Mexican Revolution. The PRI is the only party that is proportionally stronger in rural areas, while both the PAN and the PRD have traditionally drawn most of their support from urban areas (Díaz Cayeros et al., 2012). However, strictly rural areas are only a small part of the vast Mexican population and links between rural, semi-urban, and urban areas are increasingly closer (FAO, 2018). While support for the left used to mainly come from the National Capital, the preference for the left in the North and the South surpassed that of the Center in the 2018 election.

Finally, growing support for the left has also come from a mobilized young population. Younger voters were slightly more supportive of the left in the 1990s, and the PAN in the 2000s, than of the PRI<sup>26</sup>. Support for the left increased among all age groups in 2018, but this rise was most prominent among the young. Younger cohorts, born after the democratic transition and with no recollection of the hegemonic PRI, therefore seemed to have been particularly hostile to the preservation of the common practices of corruption and clientelism of PRI.

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<sup>25</sup>See appendix Figures EC45.

<sup>26</sup>See appendix Figures EC24 and EC41.



TABLE 4: The structure of political cleavages in Mexico, 2018

	Share of votes received (%)		
	PRI	PAN	PRD / Morena
<b>Education</b>			
Primary	25%	19%	48%
Secondary	17%	18%	57%
Tertiary	13%	26%	50%
<b>Income</b>			
Bottom 50%	19%	19%	54%
Middle 40%	18%	20%	55%
Top 10%	14%	26%	53%
<b>Age</b>			
20-39	16%	21%	52%
40-59	20%	20%	54%
60+	21%	19%	53%
<b>Region</b>			
North	20%	22%	53%
Center West	15%	25%	46%
Center	22%	20%	49%
South	12%	14%	69%
<b>Ethnic group</b>			
White	25%	30%	39%
Mestizo	18%	17%	56%
Indigenous	6%	14%	74%
Other	19%	28%	48%

**Source:** authors' computations using Mexican political attitudes surveys (see [wpid.world](http://wpid.world)).

**Notes:** the table shows the average share of votes received by the main Mexican political parties by selected individual characteristics in the 2018 election. 25% of primary-educated voters voted for the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2018, compared to only 13% of university graduates. PAN: National Action Party; PRD: Party of the Democratic Revolution.

## 7 Peru

### 7.1 From Colonial Rule to Independence

The political history of Peru has been very turbulent and dates back to the almost 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, which gave rise to the economic, ethnic, and geographic

divisions that characterize Peruvian society today. After its independence in 1821, the country took much longer than most Latin American countries to evolve towards a reasonably stable political and economic system, and faced alternating periods of democratic and authoritarian rule.

The 1823 Constitution assumed a culturally homogenous nation in which Spanish was the sole official language and Catholicism the sole official religion (Stavenhagen, 1992). Inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment, liberators recognized the indigenous as citizens and attempted to provide them with the same rights as whites and mestizos (people of mixed descent). In spite of these declarations, the oligarchic republic that emerged in Peru after independence was based on restricted citizenship, slavery, forced labor, and ethnic discrimination.

The exclusion of a majority of the country from the life of the republic was a major source of the failure of state-building, and the need for integration remained the main theme of Peruvian politics over the twentieth century (Crabtree, 2011). The lack of integration was also reflected in the limited political participation of the indigenous. The Electoral Law of 1896 restricted voting rights to male literates older than 21 or married male literates that had not reached that age, thereby excluding the majority of indigenous people, who were illiterate. According to the 1876 census, 58 percent of Peruvians were of indigenous origin (Yashar, 2005). This amendment was included in the subsequent Constitutions and only modified in the 1979 Constitution that gave illiterates the right to vote for the first time in national and municipal elections.

## **7.2 The Emergence of the Multi-Party System**

After independence, Peru and its neighbors engaged in intermittent territorial disputes and numerous brief aristocratic and authoritarian governments followed one another. It was only in the first decades of the twentieth century that left-wing ideologies emerged. In 1924, Peruvian leaders exiled in Mexico founded the Peruvian Aprista Party (*Partido Aprista Peruano*, APRA): the movement led by Haya de la Torre drew its influences from the Mexican revolution and to a lesser extent from the Russian revolution. In 1928, the

Socialist Party of Peru, later the Peruvian Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Peruano*, PCP), was founded under the leadership of José Carlos Mariátegui, himself a former member of APRA. The two parties were the first that tackled the social and economic problems of the country. Although Mariátegui died at a young age, Haya de la Torre was elected president twice, but prevented by the military from taking office.

In the 1950s and 1960s, two important right-wing parties were founded, Popular Action (*Acción Popular*, AP) in 1956 and the Christian People's Party (*Partido Popular Cristiano*, PPC) in 1966. Moreover, old members from APRA and the PCP gave birth to rebel political organizations. In 1959, in particular, a clandestine faction within the PCP emerged in Ayacucho, one of the nation's poorest departments, where until midcentury bankrupt landowners used Indians as slaves. This new political group aligned with the Maoist faction of the PCP and defended a new social order where peasant communities would have the same opportunities as people from urban areas in Lima (Palmer, 1992). It was not until the beginning of the 1970s that this faction became the PCP - Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) and only in 1980 did it move to violence.

### **7.3 From Authoritarian Rule to Redemocratization**

Peru's most recent transition to democracy occurred in 1980 after more than a decade of military rule. The candidate from the center-right AP, Fernando Belaúnde, served as president between 1980 and 1985. After a promising beginning, Belaúnde's popularity however eroded, due mainly to a prolonged economic crisis and the government's unsuccessful struggle to quell a radical guerrilla insurgency promoted by *Sendero Luminoso*.

Belaúnde's inability to reactivate the economy and stop the violence led to a rise in support for the APRA. After years of repression and clandestinity during the period of military rule, the oldest surviving party of Peru was finally legalized in 1980. In 1985, the leader of the APRA, Alan García since the death of Haya de la Torre, was elected president. His term was characterized by a continuation of the severe economic crisis, social unrest, and violence.

By 1990, many Peruvians had found in the independent candidate from the party

Change 90 (*Cambio 90*), Alberto Fujimori, the transformation they were looking for. Fujimori was initially applauded for his aggressive economic reform program and for stepping up counterinsurgency efforts. Nonetheless, with the passing of time, he displayed increasing autocratic tendencies. He dissolved the legislature in 1992, launched a new constitution in 1993, which allowed him to run again and win in 1995, and engaged in military tactics to eradicate *Sendero Luminoso* incurring human rights abuses. Fujimori was reelected in 2000, but his government collapsed after revelations of electoral fraud and high-level corruption, forcing him to exile in that same year.

Peru then underwent a period of relative political stability, economic growth, and poverty reduction, led by Peru's first president of indigenous descent, Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006), the candidate from the center-left party Possible Peru (*Perú Posible*, PP). Former president García launched a political comeback and won the presidential race in 2006 against his left-wing opponent, Ollanta Humala, from the Peruvian Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Peruano*, PNP). Economic growth continued under García, but it was not inclusive enough to improve the social conditions of Peru's poorest people. Humala moderated his stance to a more center-left position, and won the presidency in 2011 against the conservative Keiko Fujimori, daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori.

In 2016, the center-right bloc Peruvians for Change (*Peruanos por el Cambio*, PPK), led by Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, won against two other large blocs, the right-wing coalition Popular Force led by Keiko Fujimori and the left-wing coalition Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*). After some corruption scandals, Kuczynski announced his resignation in 2018 and his vice-president Martín Vizcarra took office. He dissolved the Congress in September 2019 and issued a decree for legislative elections to be held in January 2020. The election, one of the most divisive in Peruvian history due largely to the corruption scandals of current and previous members of the two right-wing coalitions, opened a new political era in the country (Soldevilla, 2017). Fujimorists lost most of their seats, while the APRA made the worst result in its history, failing to win a seat for the first time since 1963. Vizcarra was, however, impeached by the Peruvian Congress in November 2020 accused of corruption and a mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Vizcarra's impeachment led to social unrest and Manuel Merino, President of the Peruvian Congress who succeeded him

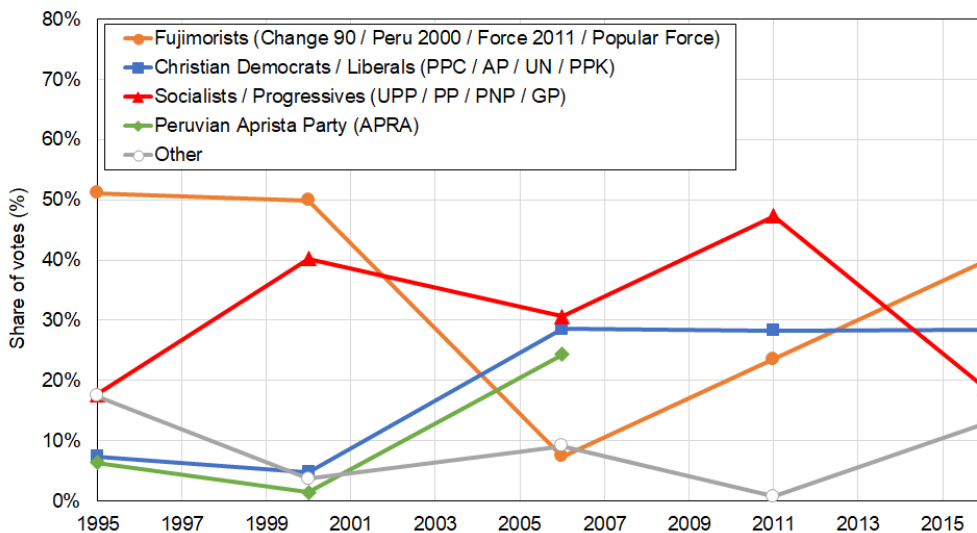
as president, resigned on November 15th. Francisco Sagasti was then elected President of Congress on the 16th and became President of Peru on November 17th.

## 7.4 Socioeconomic Cleavages during Redemocratization

The return to constitutional government in 1980 facilitated the institutionalization of procedures for participation in political life, and political parties – some new and some old – emerged from the years of military rule. In what follows, we will analyze how this process of redemocratization shaped political polarization along social dimensions using post-electoral surveys for all presidential elections held between 1995 and 2016.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 18 summarizes election results for the most important parties since 1995. Right-wing parties include the Fujimorists, the PPC, the Christian democratic alliance National Unity (2000-2008), the AP, and since 2016 the PPK. Left-wing parties include the Union for Peru (*Unión por Perú*, UPP), the PNP, Peru Wins (*Gana Perú*, GP), the PP, and APRA.<sup>28</sup>

FIGURE 18: Election results in Peru, 1995-2016



Source: authors' computations using official election results (see wpid.world).

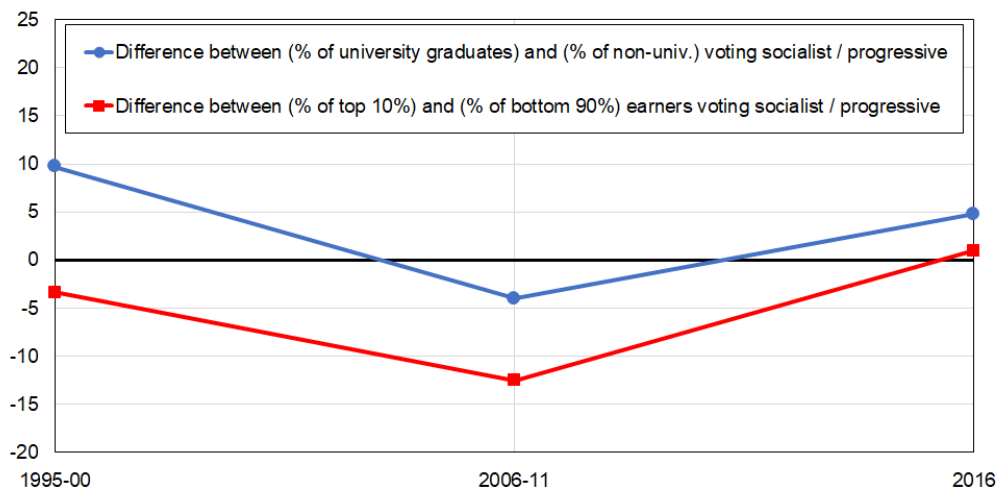
Note: the figure shows the share of votes received by selected Peruvian political parties or groups of parties in presidential elections between 1995 and 2016. Note that the APRA still exists in the 2010s but does not appear separately in the survey. Fujimorists (Keiko Fujimori, Popular Force) received 40% of the vote in 2016.

<sup>27</sup>See appendix Table FE1 for data sources.

<sup>28</sup>There is some controversy with respect to the classification of APRA. We follow Planas (2000) and classify the party to the center left. Nonetheless, we carry the whole analysis excluding APRA and show that it barely affects the results. To categorize other parties, we use the classification of Marino (2019).

Until the mid-twentieth century, Peru was mainly characterized by multiclass electoral constituencies mobilized by oligarchic leaders based on clientelistic networks (Cameron et al., 1994). Strong class divisions in voting patterns did not emerge until the 1980s, following the rise of labor unions and urban social organizations. The strength of labor unions and popular organizations already eroded by the end of the 1980s, due to the deep economic crisis and political violence. This process gave room to a new type of personalist leadership initiated by Fujimori, which broke with traditional class-based voting patterns and continued with all other leaders until today (Roberts and Arce, 1998). Peru thus presents strong divisions among education and income groups since the mid-1990s, but they have fluctuated, not persisting over time (Figure 19).

FIGURE 19: The socialist / progressist vote, income, and education in Peru, 1995-2016

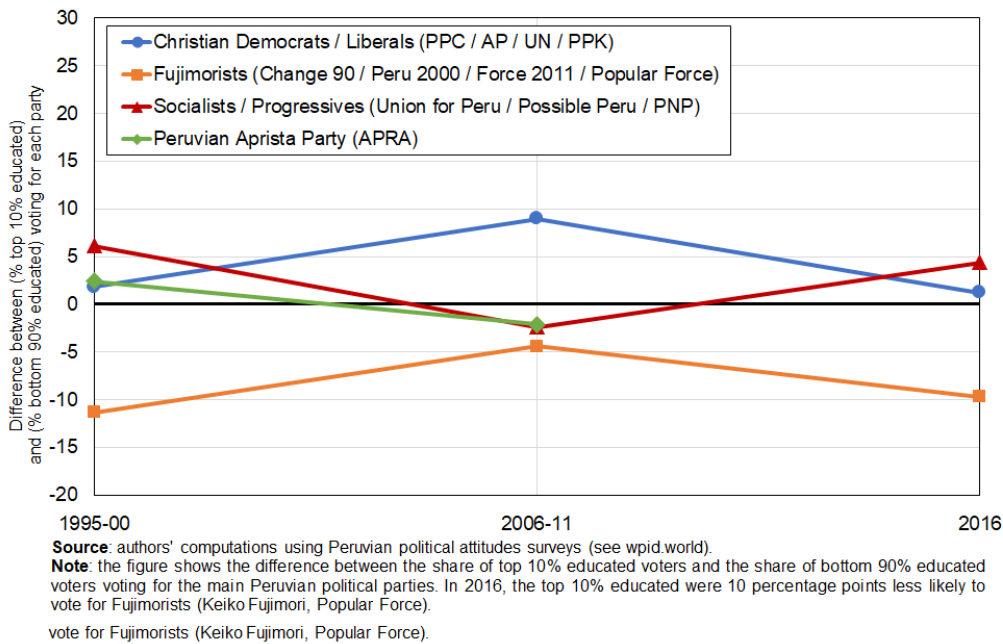


**Source:** authors' computations using Peruvian political attitudes surveys (see [wpid.world](http://wpid.world)).  
**Note:** the figure shows the relative support of highest-educated and top-income voters for center-left and left-wing parties (UPP / PP / PNP / GP / APRA / Other left), after controlling for age, gender, religious affiliation, employment status, marital status, rural-urban location, ethnicity, and region. In 2016, university graduates were 5 percentage points more likely to vote for socialists / progressives.

The education gradient for right-wing parties has been quite stable throughout the whole period. Even though Fujimorism is a multi-class political coalition, it attracts relatively more the lowest-educated vote, while the other right-wing parties (PPC, UN, AP, PPK) are more popular among the highest educated (Figure 20). Fujimori did not attract massive support based on class solidarity, but on hard work and individual initiative (Roberts and Arce, 1998). The education cleavage turned negative between 1995-2000

and 2006-2011 due mainly to a substantial reduction in support for Fujimorism after revelations of electoral fraud and corruption, to the benefit of the APRA, UPP, and GP, that happened among all education groups but was more pronounced among the lower educated.<sup>29</sup> Following Humala's corruption scandals, in the 2016 election the education cleavage turned positive again, as the reduction in the left vote share was more intense among lowest-educated voters than among the highest educated.

FIGURE 20: Vote and education in Peru, 1995-2016

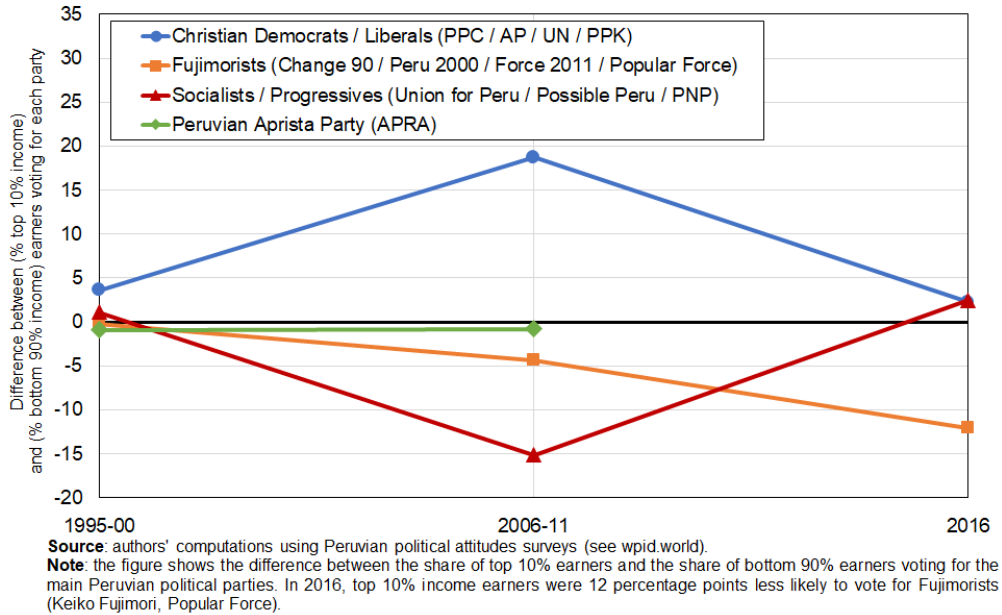


Voting differences between income groups have been more pronounced. Support for Fujimorism during the 1990s was nearly the same between top 10 percent and bottom 90 percent earners, but the lost in support since the 2000s was larger among top-income earners, who are better represented among the other right (Figure 21). Hence, the Fujimorist Popular Front became in 2016 the most important party among the low-educated and low-income electorate. Keiko Fujimori's success relied on political platform that emphasized significant measures to tackle violent crime and that distanced herself from the legacy of authoritarianism and graft of her father (Soldevilla, 2017). Taken together, recent fluctuations in class-based cleavages are largely determined by changes in the electoral

<sup>29</sup>See appendix figures FC1 and FC17.

behaviors of the lower educated and the poor, whose vote seems to be driven more by specific leaders than by party ideology.

FIGURE 21: Vote and income in Peru, 1995-2016



## 7.5 The Recent Politicization of Ethnic Identities

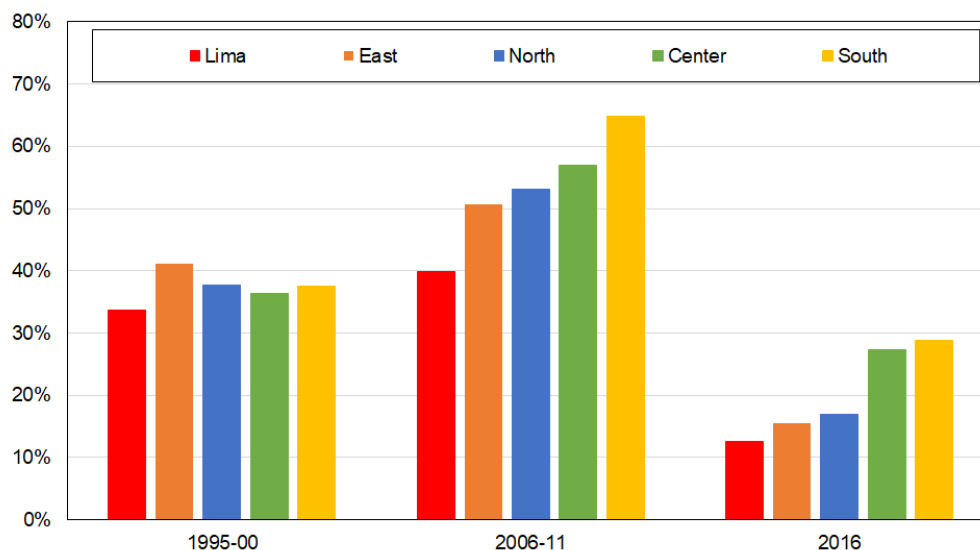
When compared to neighboring and ethnically similar Andean countries like Ecuador and Bolivia, Peru appears as an exceptional case, characterized by the weak activism of nationally-organized indigenous movements and parties (Yashar, 2005). Since redemocratization, indigenous issues have, however, been gradually incorporated into the political process, but their salience for party competition only recently emerged during the presidential campaign of Alberto Fujimori in 1990.

Although from Japanese origin, Alberto Fujimori managed to attract with a pro-ethnic and pro-poor discourse a substantial share of the poor indigenous and Asian vote in the 1990 presidential run-off elections against Mario Vargas Llosa, who symbolised the white Lima upper class (Madrid, 2011). Fujimorism continued attracting a large share of the Asian vote, but the indigenous support shifted towards Alejandro Toledo in the 2001 election, when he became first elected president of Andean roots. He frequently used



indigenous symbols and discussed issues relevant to indigenous voters during his presidential campaign. In line with Toledo, Humala also referred to ethnic issues during his campaign. Hence, the two presidential left-wing campaigns politicized ethnic divisions to attract more votes in indigenous areas (Raymond and Arce, 2013). This strategy proved to be successful, as the share of votes towards Humala grew significantly after 2006 in the South, where the share of indigenous people is larger (Figure 22).

FIGURE 22: The socialist / progressist vote by region, 1995-2016

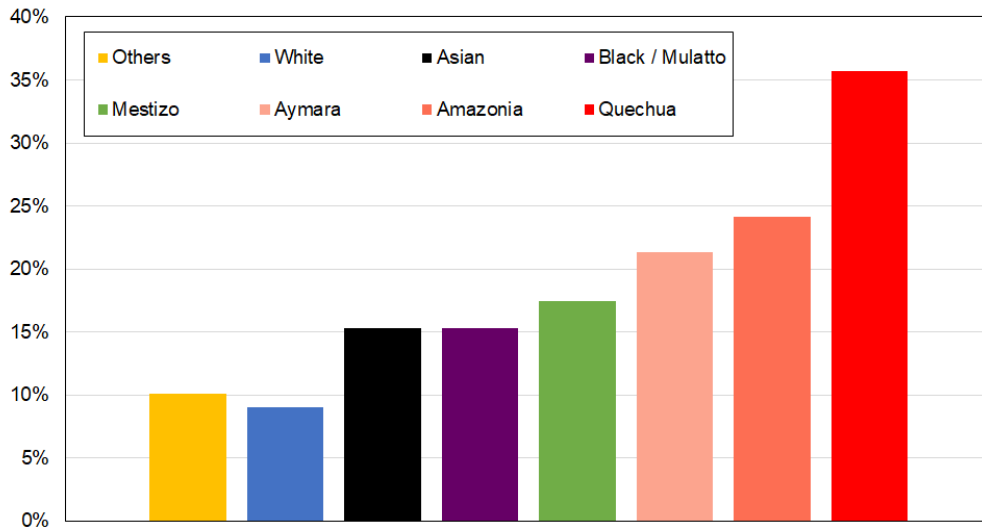


**Source:** authors' computations using Peruvian political attitudes surveys (see [wpid.world](http://wpid.world)).  
**Note:** the figure shows the share of votes received by center-left and left-wing parties (UPP / PP / PNP / GP / APRA / Other left) by region. The socialists and progressives received 29% of the vote in the South in 2016.

Progressive parties were also significantly more popular among indigenous voters in the 2016 election, in particular the Quechuas (Figure 23). As the indigenous population is poorer and less educated than the Mestizo and White population, this politicization of ethnic identities is clearly behind the fluctuations in the education and income cleavage since Fujimori.<sup>30</sup> Overall, these findings show that ethnic cleavages have gained increasing importance in recent decades and that the pro-poor Asian and indigenous coalitions have contributed to blurring class cleavages in Peru.

<sup>30</sup>Appendix Figures FD2 and FD11 show the composition of income and education groups by ethnicity.

FIGURE 23: The ethnic cleavage in Peru, 2016



**Source:** authors' computations using Peruvian political attitudes surveys (see [wpid.world](http://wpid.world)).

**Note:** the figure shows the share of votes received by center-left / left-wing parties (UPP / PP / PNP / GP / APRA / Other left) by ethnic affiliation. In 2016, 36% of Quechua voters voted for the socialists and progressives, compared to 9% of White voters.

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