

Electoral Coordination Failures in a Multi-Party Systems: Chile 1961-1973

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In this paper we study the effectiveness of political parties in taking advantage of electoral rules to maximize the number of seats they can obtain given their electoral support. Analyzing the electoral results for parliamentary elections in Chile between 1961 and 1973, we show that leftist and conservative political parties used sub-optimal seat maximizing strategies for the Chamber of Deputies elections by failing to form coalitions with other leftist and conservative parties. In addition, we suggest that, contrary to a widely shared belief, the under representation of urban areas, where the left was strong, did not adversely affect the parliamentary representation of leftist parties. We speculate that because parties could anticipate that fewer votes were required to win a seat in parliament in rural districts, under representation of large urban areas created the incentives for all parties to build rural electoral presence. Because rural districts were over represented, the left had more incentives to capture votes there than to seek to enfranchise and win over recently urbanized city dwellers. Whereas electoral rules incentives might have facilitated political activism in rural areas, those incentives did not lead to the unification of the left or right. This paper will be of general interest for those interested in historical processes of political and revolutionary change in Latin America, for those interested in understanding how political parties design seat-gain maximizing strategies given existing electoral rules and for those who have sought to explain the demise of democracy in Chile before 1973.

In what follows, we first discuss the political background to the 1961-1973 parliamentary elections, focusing on the over representation of rural areas and the exclusion of the countryside from the competitive political process before the 1960s. Then, we outline the apparent failure among the parties of the left and right to coordinate and form unified coalitions for parliamentary elections. In the second part of the paper, we run simulations for each of those elections reassigning seats based on each district's share of the national population. We show that under strict proportionality of seat allocation (that is, without over representing rural areas), the number of seats held by leftist parties would not have increased. Running simulations with the mal apportioned seat allocation, we show that the parties of the left (Socialist and Communist) and the parties of the right (Liberal and Conservative) would have done better if they had merged into a Left and Right wing party respectively. We also run simulations assuming strictly proportional allocation of seats to each district and combining the votes for the hypothetical Left and Right parties to show that the combined effect of coalition and strict proportional allocation of seats would have resulted in a larger share of seats for conservative and leftist parties in each election between 1961 and 1973.

Political Background: Exclusion of the Countryside and Rural Over Representation

In this section we describe how the major political parties entered in a series of implicit and explicit agreements that resulted in the exclusion of the countryside from political competition until the late 1950s. Then we explain how the failure to reapportion

electoral districts to reflect demographic changes, as prescribed by the 1925 Constitution, created a severe over representation of rural areas by the 1960s. Lastly, we discuss how after 1958 the parties in the right and left repeatedly formed alliances to support common presidential candidates, but failed to form national electoral coalitions for parliamentary elections.

After the restoration of constitutional government with the Alessandri administration (1932-1938), the Popular Front (FP) governments (1938-1952) helped consolidate a party system based on stable social cleavages by successfully incorporating Marxist parties to the political arena. The FP, formed in 1936 by the Socialist Party (PS) and the Communist Party (PC) and later expanded to include the Radical Party (PR), supported the presidential candidacy of PR's Pedro Aguirre Cerda in 1938. With occasional crises and regular cabinet reshuffles that temporarily left the PS or PC out of the government coalition, the Popular Front survived for most of the 1940s.¹

During this period, the hacienda system provided the Chilean landowning elite with control over the rural vote through manipulation of elections in the countryside and the lack of an effective secret suffrage system. The close ties of the Conservative (PCo) and Liberal (PL) parties with the landed elite allowed the right to maintain a solid congressional representation of over one third of the seats of the Chamber of Deputies between 1932 and 1961. Because of a number of procedural tricks, the control of one third of the legislature effectively gave conservative parties veto power over any social legislation that threatened to modify the traditional social order. Moreover, the congressional strength of the right forced PF governments into a political compromise in which the right acquiesced to the FP's legislative agenda (government-led

industrialization, social benefits for the urban middle class, and unionization rights for the urban workers) and the FP moderated the social demands of the urban working class, and maintained social and political ‘calm’ in the countryside, by opposing rural unionization and any other social laws regarding rural conditions.

In the presidential campaign of 1938, Aguirre Cerda promised to enact land reform and rural unionization legislation. Although the latter was legalized in the Labor Code of 1931, it had been temporarily suspended by the Alessandri administration in 1933 after complaints by the National Agricultural Society (SNA) on behalf of landowners. In the first months of the PF government, Marxist activists launched an accelerated drive for unionization in the countryside. Landowners reacted with repression and dismissal of workers. But as labor inspectors forced them to comply with the law, landowners complained directly to the President through the SNA. President Aguirre Cerda acceded to the landowners’ demands and established a joint commission of landowners and rural labor representatives. In order to achieve a temporary settlement, the SNA agreed to “attempt to prevent its members from dismissing workers and throwing them off the land, as they had been doing in retaliation for unionization and presentation of labor petitions.”² The representatives of rural labor—including the Workers Confederation of Chile (CTCH)—and the PS and PC agreed to a temporary suspension of unionization rights. The left sacrificed the rural labor force to support the PF government and advance its urban agenda.

The suspension was reinforced in 1947, when president González Videla, contradicting campaign promises, pushed for the Peasant Unionization Law that permanently outlawed rural unionization and eliminated the right to strike and to present

legal labor petitions.³ “Rural labor found itself in a worse legal position than in 1924 and stripped of the gains formally made in the labor Code of 1931.”⁴ The following year, Gonzalez Videla passed the Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy that outlawed the PC, providing an additional justification for repression of rural labor leaders. In that way, “the [PF] governments provided the coercive means necessary for the hacendados to retain control of the countryside.”⁵ After the end of the PF governments, there were renewed efforts by Marxists and Catholic groups to gain rural unionization rights, but they only obtained modest success until the passage of the Electoral Reform Act of 1958. The Peasant Unionization Law was only replaced by a more lenient legislation in 1967.

Concurrent with the struggle in the countryside, Chile was undergoing a process of rapid urbanization and an expansion of the electorate. The electorate grew from 430,000 registered voters in 1930 to more than 830,000 in 1950. By 1970, more than 3.5 million people were registered to vote. In part, this reflected a rapid population growth during the period, the number of Chileans doubled between 1930 and 1970. However, the expansion of the electorate also resulted from the rapid urbanization. While the urban population stood at 32% in 1930, by 1960 it has already surpassed the 50% mark and by 1970 it was already over 70%.

As in other countries, the growth of the electorate was positively correlated with the electoral strength of the PDC and the left.⁶ As more people voted, the left and PDC became stronger. With 56% of the vote in 1964, PDC Eduardo Frei became the president with the largest margin of victory since 1932 and his party went on to get 42.3% of the vote in the 1965 parliamentary election. The PDC growth did not come at the expense of the PS and PC, as the left secured 22.7% of the vote in 1965, over 29% in 1969 and

43.5% in 1973. In 1970, Allende won a plurality with 36.2%. Although the left always failed to achieve a majority of votes, its growing electoral strength forced the PDC and conservative parties to form an electoral alliance in 1973. The left's electoral success increased as a result of several factors, but the enfranchisement of new voters aided substantially. Although the system's unresponsiveness to adjusting the relative weight of different provinces in the seat distribution in the Chamber of Deputies made it more difficult for the left and PDC to rapidly transformed its larger electoral support into more seats in parliament.

Initially, the 1925 Constitution set a varying district magnitude for the Chamber of Deputies. Article 37 of the Constitution stated that there should be one deputy for every 30,000 inhabitants (and an additional one for every residual of 15,000 'souls'). The 1932 Electoral Law, based on the 1930 Census returns and slightly modified in 1933 and 1937 (when new districts were created and others were assigned additional deputies) determined that 147 deputies should be elected representing 28 districts. In 1969 an extra district was created and 3 additional seats were allocated.⁷ No additional allocation of seats was made between 1937 and 1969. Because of the failure to keep up with population changes in the 1940s and 1950s, complying with the constitutional mandate became increasingly more difficult towards the late 1960s. By 1970, Chile had 8.9 million inhabitants. To redistrict according to the specifications of the Constitution, the Chamber of Deputies would have had to be comprised of 296 seats (twice as many as there were then). Alternative solutions (such as increasing the number of inhabitants represented by one deputy) would have properly addressed the issue of malapportionment. President Allende's proposal of assigning one seat in the Chamber of

Deputies for every 70,000 inhabitants and for residuals larger than 35,000, would have resulted in a Chamber of no less than 127 seats.⁸ Conservative parties, however, rejected the formula, as they perceived themselves as beneficiaries of mal apportionment.

The Santiago Province was most negatively affected by under representation. Large migrations from rural areas starting in the late 1950s and consolidating between 1960 and 1970 radically worsened Santiago's under representation in the Chamber of Deputies by 1970. For example, Santiago's third Chamber of Deputies district increased its population from 930,320 in 1960 to 1,483,021 in 1970. This 60% increase was the highest nationwide and contrasted deeply with the mere 7% population increase in the rural Cautín Province. Yet, the electoral system was not responsive to demographic changes. While enfranchisement of new voters favored the left and PDC, urban population growth could not directly benefit the PS and PC since no new seats were added to urban districts to reflect population changes. Santiago's third Chamber of Deputies district, for example, elected 5 seats to the Chamber since 1930, while the Cautín province elected 10 deputies, but Santiago's third district was 3 times as populated as Cautín in 1960 and more than 4 times in 1970.

The 4 districts in Santiago elected a combined number of 37 deputies, but its population in 1960 would have given it 49 Deputies if seats were assigned strictly on proportional grounds. By 1970 Santiago should have been assigned 55 seats. Within the Province of Santiago—comprised of districts 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 8—mal apportionment was not uniformly distributed, most of its under representation came at the expense of newly populated areas in the southern and northern metropolitan area. District 7.2 and 7.3 were significantly more under represented than District 8 (rural area). Whereas, District 7.1

(Santiago's downtown and older neighborhoods) was over represented. Other rapidly growing urban areas, such as Valparaíso and Concepción were also under represented, though to a lesser extent. The rural southern region (Malleco and Cautín) and the mining northern provinces (Antofagasta) were the most over represented.

Overall, each rural province was slightly over represented in the number of seats received for the Chamber of Deputies while the large urban provinces were severely under represented. The left perceived that such mal apportionment hindered its chances of winning more seats in the Chamber and had repeatedly called for a move to reapportion seats.⁹ Among political analysts there is also a wide perception that the unresponsiveness of the electoral system to population changes hampered the parties of the left. Yet, as we show below, that over representation of rural areas and under representation of urban areas did not adversely affect the parliamentary representation of leftist parties whose stronghold was located in urban areas.

Table 1. Representation of Chilean Provinces in the Chamber of Deputies, 1960-70

District # / Province	Population			Seats		Number of seats under strict proportionality			# Seats Under Allende's proposal	
	1930	1960	1970	1937-67	1967-73	1930	1960	1970	1972	
1	Tarapacá	113,331	123,070	175,891	4	4	4	3	3	3
2	Antofagasta	178,565	215,219	251,557	7	7	7	4	4	4
3	Atacama	61,098	116,235	152,758	2	2	2	2	3	2
4	Coquimbo	198,336	308,991	339,439	7	7	7	6	6	5
5	Aconcagua	103,054	140,543	161,451	3	3	3	3	2	2
6	Valparaíso	360,490	617,510	736,789	12	12	12	12	12	11
7.1	Santiago 1	542,434	771,837	724,646	18	18	18	16	12	10
7.2	Santiago 2	140,332	470,283	697,955	5	5	5	9	12	10
7.3	Santiago 3	155,629	930,320	1,483,021	5	5	5	19	25	21
8	Santiago 4	129,220	266,985	325,168	5	5	5	5	5	5
9	O'Higgins	170,536	259,400	306,375	6	6	6	5	5	4
10	Colchagua	126,408	158,509	168,450	4	4	4	3	3	2
11	Curico	75,035	105,802	114,737	3	3	3	2	2	2
12	Talca	142,219	206,154	232,138	5	5	5	4	4	3
13	Maule	75,021	79,736	82,785	3	3	3	2	1	1
14	Linares	123,085	171,350	189,053	4	4	4	3	3	3
15	Ñuble 1	82,847	103,225	96,553	3	3	3	2	2	1
16	Ñuble 2	148,765	132,414	220,409	5	5	5	3	4	3
17	Concepción	268,421	539,521	643,836	9	9	9	11	11	9
18	Arauco	61,074	89,460	98,664	2	2	2	2	2	1
19	BioBio	113,390	168,718	193,536	4	4	4	3	3	3
20	Malleco	135,825	174,300	175,308	6	6	6	4	3	3
21	Cautín	315,264	394,654	420,995	10	10	10	8	7	6
22	Valdivia		259,794	277,808	5	5	5	5	5	4
23	Osorno	236,115	144,005	160,125	3	3	3	3	3	2
24	Llanquihue	82,772	167,671	198,830	3	3	3	3	3	3
25	Chiloé	92,673	99,211	111,132	3	3	3	2	2	2
26	Aysén	8,886	37,770	48,858	1	2		1	1	1
27	Magallanes	37,913	73,156	89,443	0	2	1	2	2	1
	Total	4,278,738	7,325,843	8,877,710	147	150	147	147	150	127

Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. *División Político Administrativa. Actualizada al 31 de diciembre de 1973* (Santiago: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1973); Dirección de Estadística y Censos, *Población del país clasificada según sexo. Censo de 1960* (Santiago: Dirección de Estadística y Censo, 1964) and Dirección del Registro Electoral, *Ley General de Elecciones. Texto definitivo con todas sus modificaciones* (Santiago: Sociedad Imprenta y Literaria Universo, 1938).

The Left and Right's Failure to Form Electoral Coalitions

From 1932 until the Electoral Reform Act of 1958, parties widely used the strategy to form an election-specific coalition to maximize the number of seats gained by each party. Political parties formed ad hoc coalitions in individual provinces (electoral districts) to maximize their chances of winning seats in Chamber of Deputies. Candidates were elected to the Chamber representing a multiplicity of parties, many of which mushroomed before every election and disappeared shortly after. In 1957, for example, a total of 18 parties presented candidates in at least one of the 28 electoral districts and 13 actually won seats. Aiming to end corrupt electoral practices—widespread in Chilean politics since the XIX century—and to reduce the number of mushroom parties, the Electoral Reform Act of 1958 introduced the Australian Ballot and prohibited existing parties from forming ad hoc, election-specific and district-specific political coalitions.¹⁰ The reform produced the intended effects as fewer parties ran for elections starting in 1961. Although the law only proscribed coalition formation at the local level, no national coalition of parties was formed in parliamentary elections between 1961 and 1973. That year, opposition parties asked the Electoral Tribunal to rule in favor of allowing individual parties to form national coalitions without losing their separate party identity.¹¹ The Electoral Tribunal ruled that the 1958 Electoral Reform had simply forbidden district-specific coalitions but not the formation of national multi-party coalitions.

In presidential elections, however, the strategy to form multi-party coalitions to support the same presidential candidate was widely used throughout the period. Between 1938 and 1973, the PS and PC repeatedly formed alliances to support the same presidential candidate. Although after the legislation outlawing the PC in 1948, some

tensions aroused between several PS splinters that supported González Videla and the banned PC.¹² In 1952, socialist Salvador Allende ran a symbolic presidential campaign with the support of a PS splinter and the banned PC. The legal political restoration of the PC in 1957 paved the way for a formal PS-PC coalition to support Allende in 1958, 1964 and 1970. Notwithstanding the problems and conflicts that arose between the two working class parties, there was more cooperation and coordination between those parties than actual confrontation during most of the 20th century.¹³ Yet, the two parties failed to form a unified political party—or at least a national electoral coalition for parliamentary elections—to strategically use the incentives of the electoral reform of 1958 to win more seats for the left.

In the right, the PCo and PL parties also voted as blocks in parliament and supported the same presidential candidates throughout the period. In the 1958 presidential election, the two parties supported conservative independent Jorge Alessandri (1958-64) and their parliamentary delegations provided him with a strong and veto-proof 50-seat delegation in the 147-member Chamber of Deputies.¹⁴ In the 1964 elections, the PL and PCo non-actively endorsed PDC's Eduardo Frei to prevent the victory of PS' Allende. Neither party entered a government coalition after the election and each suffered severely from the PDC's electoral sweep in the 1965 parliamentary elections. After a devastating loss of seats, the two parties joined forces and merged into the National Party (PN) in 1967 to become the second largest party in the 1969 parliamentary election. For the 1970 presidential election, the PN supported former president Jorge Alessandri. By simulating what would have happened if that merger had occurred before 1967, we will identify how

electoral strategizing hindered the parliamentary representation of conservative forces between 1961 and 1969.

In 1961, the PR won a plurality of seats, capturing 26.5% of the 147-seat Chamber. The PL and PCo together captured 30% of the seats, falling short of securing enough seats to prevent the opposition from overriding president Alessandri's vetoes. After the election, Alessandri swiftly moved to reshuffle his cabinet to bring in the PR as a coalition partner. Altogether, the PCo-PL-PR coalition controlled 84 seats, or 57% of the Chamber. In the opposition, the PDC (23 seats), PS (12) and PC (16) did not act as a unified block. The coalition formed by Alessandri with the conservative parties and the PR ended in 1964, when the PL and PCo decided not to support the PR presidential candidate and instead abstained to facilitate the election of PDC's Eduardo Frei. The 1965 parliamentary election is generally perceived as a continuation of Frei's impressive victory six months earlier. Frei's success trickled down and strengthened electoral support for the PDC in March of 1965. The PDC went from 23 seats to obtaining a commanding majority of 82 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The conservative PL and PCo were crushed as their parliamentary delegation fell from 28 and 17 seats to 3 and 6 respectively. The PR lost half of its seats (39 to 20). The left marginally improved as the PS went from 12 to 15 seats and the PC increased its representation by 2 seats to secure a total of 18. The reductive effect of the 1958 Reform was apparent in 1961 when only 7 parties filled candidates in one or more of the 28 Chamber of Deputies districts. However, new parties formed by 1965 when 12 parties competed, but only the 7 parties with parliamentary representation in 1961 gained seats in 1965.¹⁵

Table 2. Electoral Results by Party 1961-1965

Party	1961				1965			
	Seats	%	Votes	%	Seats	%	Votes	%
National Action							15,173	0.6
Conservative United (PCo)	17	11.6	197151	14.8	3	2.0	121,882	5.2
Liberal (PL)	28	19.0	221361	16.6	6	4.1	241,593	10.3
Democratic Agrarian Labor							22,554	1.0
Democratic							21,518	0.9
National Democratic	12	8.2	95282	7.2	3	2.0	74,583	3.2
Christian Democratic (PDC)	23	15.6	213559	16.0	82	55.8	995,187	42.3
Radical (PR)	39	26.5	296704	22.3	20	13.6	312,912	13.3
Communist (PC)	16	10.9	157651	11.8	18	12.2	290,635	12.4
Socialist (PS)	12	8.2	149420	11.2	15	10.2	237,081	10.1
Nat'l Vanguard of the People							5,637	0.2
Popular Commands							3,121	0.1
Independents							6,132	0.3
Total	147	100.0	1331128	100.0	147	100.0	2353123	100.0

Sources: Charles J. Parrish, Arpad J von Lazar and Jorge Tapia Videla, *The Chilean Congressional Election of March 7, 1965: An Analysis* (Washington: Institute for the Comparative Study of Political Systems, 1967) and Gil, *El sistema político*, p. 254.

The PDC boom partially deflated in 1969 as the party lost control of the Chamber but remained the plurality among all seat-winning parties. The merger of the PL and PCo into the PN in 1967 considerably improved the parliamentary representation of the right in 1969 (from 9 to 33 seats). The PS held on to the same number of seats and the PC picked two new seats. The PR recovered and picked 4 new seats. Like in 1961 and unlike in 1965, no single party had a majority in the 150-seat Chamber of Deputies after 1969. With the presidential election of 1970 looming larger in the political horizon, president Frei continued to govern exclusively with its minority PDC support in the Chamber, which held enough seats to support any presidential veto.

The 1970 presidential elections was a three-way contest between the conservative and PN-backed candidate, former president Jorge Alessandri, the Popular Unity (PS, PC, PR and minor groups) candidate Salvador Allende and PDC's Radomiro Tomic. In a very

close race, Allende obtained the first plurality of votes and went on to win the presidency when Congress elected him over runner up Alessandri. The March 1973 parliamentary election—the last contest before the democratic breakdown of September of 1973—took place under conditions of extreme political polarization. The UP coalition partners were pushing for a revolutionary program that included nationalization of enterprises, agrarian and educational reform. The conservative opposition vehemently opposed those reforms and actively sought to undermine the legitimacy of the Allende government. The PDC failed to serve as a broker between the two extremes and by 1973 had already joined the conservative opposition in the CODE coalition, comprised primarily of the PDC and the PN. The CODE won a clear 54.6% majority of the vote and 87 seats in the Chamber and the UP won 43.5% of the vote and 63 seats. The opposition had a clear majority of seats, but fell short of the two-thirds majority required to impeach president Allende in the Senate. Six months after the election, a military coup brought an end to 41 years of uninterrupted constitutional democracy. Democracy would only returned to the country 17 years later. During the first 8 years of the period under analysis, 1961-1969, a total of 7 parties won seats in the 3 elections held for the Chamber of Deputies. In 1973, although 8 parties won seats, all of them ran either in the UP or CODE coalitions.

Table 3. Electoral Results by Party, 1969-73

Party	1969				1973			
	seats	%	Votes	%	Seats	%	Votes	%
National (PN)	33	22.0	480,523	20.8				
Radical Democratic								
National Democratic	0	0.0	44,818	1.9				
Christian Democratic (PDC)	56	37.3	716,547	31.1				
Total Democratic Confederation					87		2,013,592	54.6
Radical (PR)	24	16.0	313,559	13.6				
Communist (PC)	22	14.7	383,049	16.6				
Social Democratic			20,560	0.9				
Socialist (PS)	15	10.0	294,448	12.8				
Total Popular Unity					63		1,605,170	43.5
Independent	0	0.0	2,104	0.1				
Popular Socialist Union			51,904	2.2			10,287	0.3
Total	150	100.0	2,307,512	100.0	150	100.0	3,687,105	100.0

Source: Germán Urzúa Valenzuela, *Diccionario político institucional de Chile* (Editorial Jurídica de Chile, 1984), *Historia política electoral de Chile, 1931-1973* (Santiago: Tamarcos-Van, 1986), *Partidos políticos chilenos* (Editorial Jurídica de Chile, 1988) and *Historia política de Chile y su evolución electoral. Desde 1812 a 1992* (Editorial Jurídica de Chile, 1992).

The Simulations

Historical accounts of political activism by the PDC and leftist parties in rural areas,¹⁶ suggest that the left might have indeed strategically reacted to the incentives of the electoral rules and, after 1958, concentrated in winning support in rural areas where mal apportionment made it easier, in terms of absolute number of votes, to clinch seats. Because a party needed fewer votes in rural areas to win seats, leftist parties and the PDC found it convenient to mobilize rural voters. We suggest that had the conservative parties agreed to reduce mal apportionment, the right could have been adversely affected by the new distribution of seats but it would have reduced the incentives for the left and PDC to challenge conservative parties' control of the rural vote. By agreeing to equalize the 'costs' of clinching a seat in urban and rural areas, the conservative parties would have

reduced the incentives for the parties of the left to actively campaign in the countryside and push for issues like agrarian reform and rural unionization rights. Leftist parties would have had incentives to concentrate on enfranchising newly urbanized voters and build on their already established urban strengths. In other words, by defending the over representation of rural areas, conservative parties fostered the left's strategic choice to extend its influence and seek votes beyond urban centers. If mal apportionment had been corrected, the left and PDC would have had more incentives to enfranchise newly urbanized voting age Chileans to maximize the total number of seats they could obtain in the Chamber. The conservative parties would have lost a few seats to the left and center in urban areas because of the newly enfranchised voters, but they would have retained its quasi monopoly control of the rural areas. By rejecting efforts to reduce mal apportionment, the right effectively invited the left and center to design strategies to capture the rural vote.

Following standard procedures for handling simulations with electoral results,¹⁷ we took the 1960 and 1970 census data and reassigned seats to each district based on their respective population. As discussed above, under strict proportional allocation of seats, urban districts (Santiago and Concepción) would win seats while rural districts would lose seats. Then, to measure the over representation of rural areas in the Chamber of Deputies, using the actual electoral results for each district, we allocated the 'new' seats using the same d'Hondt allocation formula.¹⁸ We then ran a second set of simulations to artificially create a 'Left' and 'Right' party. We combined the votes of the PS and PC for the "Left" for 1961, 1965 and 1969 and the PCo and PL for the 'Right' party for the 1961 and 1965. We then allocated seats as if the PS and PC votes were cast

for one leftist party and the PCo and PL were cast for one conservative party. Although the argument can be made that some voters who supported either the PC or PS would have not supported a 'Left Party', the standard procedure for simulations assumes that if a merger were to occur, the new party would capture the combined votes of the individual parties involved in the merger.¹⁹ That set of simulations allowed us to measure the effect of the strategic decision made both by the leftists and rightist parties to compete as separate parties. Finally, we combined both simulations and allocated seats assuming that each district received as many seats as its share of the national population and that the PS and PC constituted one leftist party and the PCo and PL one conservative party. The results of those simulations are presented in Tables 4-7. In what follows, we discuss the simulations for each election separately and then speculate about our findings.

1961 Simulations

Little would have changed in the overall allocation of seats in the 1961 election if seats were assigned to each district according to its share of the national population (Simulation 1). The PCo would have picked three seats but the PL would have lost three seats. The parties of the left (PS and PC) would have merely won one additional seat each. However, when we combine the support for right and left into a PCo+PL and PS+PC parties (Simulation 2), the Right Party would have picked 6 seats and the Left Party would have picked 5 seats. The PR and PDC would have lost 4 seats each and the National Democratic Party would have lost 3. When we combine both simulations and

assign seats to the Left, Right and other parties under a strict allocation of seats to each province according to its population (Simulation 3), the gains for the Left Party and Right Party increase. The Right Party would have picked a total of 7 additional seats while the Left Party would have obtained nine additional seats. Strict allocation of seats by itself would not have benefited either the Left or Right significantly, but combined with a unification of the PS and PC on the left and PCo and PL in the right, a strict allocation of seats would have significantly favored both groups.

Although the actual number of seats that would have changed hands after 1961 was relatively small (6-seat gain for the right, 11-seat loss for the center and 5-seat gain for the left, under Simulation 3), it would have been enough to radically alter political developments after the election. Immediately after the election, president Alessandri brought the PR into the government, to strengthen its his PL-PCo coalition and give it enough seats to obtain a commanding majority in the Chamber of Deputies. As discussed above, a president needed a majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies to pass legislation, but control of 1/3 of the seats was sufficient to uphold presidential vetoes. The decision to incorporate the PR into the government in 1961 resulted from the government's effort to control a majority of seats as much as from the Alessandri government's need to have enough seats to support a presidential veto. After the election, the PL and PCo together controlled 45 seats, 2 seats short of the required votes to uphold a presidential veto. Under a strictly proportional allocation of seats, a Right Party would have had 52 seats. The Alessandri government would have not needed to add additional parties to the coalition because it would have enough seats to govern via presidential vetoes.

Table 4. Simulations for 1961 Chamber of Deputies Election

Party	Official Results				Simulation 1 Strict proportional allocation of seats to each district		Simulation 2 (W/actual number of seats assigned to each district)		Simulation 3 (W/strictly proportional seat allocation to each district)	
	Seats		Votes		Seats		Seats		Seats	
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Conservative	17	11.6	197,151	14.8	20	13.6	51	34.7	52	35.4
Liberal	28	19.0	221,361	16.7	25	17.1				
Nat'l Democ	12	8.2	92,282	6.9	12	8.2	9	6.1	9	6.1
PDC	23	15.6	213,559	16.0	22	15	19	12.9	15	10.2
Radical	39	26.5	296,704	22.3	38	25.9	35	23.8	34	23.1
Communist	16	10.9	157,651	11.8	17	11.6	33	22.4	37	25.2
Socialist	12	8.2	149,420	11.2	13	8.8				
Total	147	100%	1,331,128	100%	147	100%	147	100%	147	100%

1965 Simulation

A strict population-based allocation of seats in 1965 would have caused little change to the distribution of seats in the Chamber. The PL and PC would have won one additional seat each and the PDC and PS would have lost the same number (Simulation 1). When we combined the votes of the PS and PC in the left and PCo and PL in the right, the distribution of seats changed moderately (Simulation 2). The Right Party would have picked 6 additional seats (going from 9 to 15) and the Left Party would have won 3 additional seats. When we combined both simulations, the Right Party picks 8 additional seats (for a total of 16). The two most notable results of the 1965 elections were the demise of the PL and PCo and the impressive victory of the PDC. With these simulations we show that the demise of the right would have been partially averted had the PCo and PL merged before (rather than after) the 1965 parliamentary election. Regardless of the

mal apportionment level existing by 1965, the independent decision by the PCo and PL to merge before the election would have prevented their electoral demise in 1965.

At least partially, the sweeping victory by the PDC in 1965 was an artifact of the electoral rules and the strategies developed by the existing political parties to respond to electoral rules incentives. Had the PS and PC also merged into a single party—like the electoral coalition created to support Allende’s candidacy a year earlier—the combined votes of the Left Party would have, together with the Right Party, prevented the PDC from achieving a working majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The landslide victory of the PDC would have lost much of its overwhelming seat gain. The PDC would have received 74 seats, instead of the 82 that it actually got. Because 74 seats would have given the PDC the slimmest possible control of the 147-seat Chamber, the PDC would have probably felt more obliged to seek out support from other parties to carry out its reformist agenda. Although the PDC only obtained 43.7% of the vote—short of a clear majority—its impressive gain of seats in parliament led many to believe that they did not need to obtain additional support from other parties to push through its legislative agenda. Fewer seats for the PDC in 1965 would have strengthened those within the party that advocated building a wider coalition. Gaining an overwhelming control of the Chamber a year after winning the presidential election led the party to wrongly believe that it could push its program through parliament and the nation without achieving majority support. Eduardo Frei’s victory had been made possible because conservative parties withdrew the presidential candidate and supported the PDC to prevent socialist Allende from winning, not because conservative parties supported Frei and his program. When the PDC gained a majority of seats in parliament a year later, many within that party misunderstood the

electoral message. They thought they had a popular mandate to carry its program and pushed forward with its *camino propio* (own way) approach. According to most account, it was the polarization of the political center, represented by the PDC's failure to build larger political alliances with the left or right, what eventually led to the demise of Chile's democratic system. Had the left merged into a Left Party and the conservative parties into a Right Party, it would have been more difficult for the PDC to adopt the *camino propio* approach in 1965.

Table 5. Simulations for 1965 Chamber of Deputies Election

Party	Official Results				Simulation 1 Strict proportional allocation of seats to each district		Simulation 2 (W/actual number of seats assigned to each district)		Simulation 3 (W/strictly proportional seat allocation to each district)	
	Seats		Votes		Seats		Seats		Seats	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Conservative	3	2.0	121,882	5.3	3	2.0	15	10.2	17	11.6
Liberal	6	4.1	171,979	7.5	7	5.1				
National Democratic	3	2.0	74,583	3.3	3	2.0	4	2.7	3	2.0
Christian Democratic	82	55.8	995,187	43.7	81	55.1	73	49.7	74	50.3
Radical	20	13.6	312,912	13.7	20	13.6	18	12.2	17	11.6
Communist	18	12.2	290,635	12.8	19	12.9	36	25.2	36	24.5
Socialist	15	10.2	241,573	10.6	14	9.5				
Total	147	100%	2,279,106	100%	147	100%	147	100%	147	100%

1969 Simulation

By 1969, the PL and PCo had merged into the PN, but the PC and PS continued to run separately in parliamentary elections. A strict allocation of seats, still using the 1960 Census figures, would have resulted in small 2-seat gains for the PS, PC and PDC respectively. The PR would have lost a total of 6 seats. However, when we combine the

votes of the PS and PC without correcting for mal apportionment, the Left Party would have increased its representation by 8 seats, from 36 to 44. When we combine the two simulations, the gain for the Left Party reaches an impressive 12 seats. In this election, the PS and PC would have individually benefited directly with the elimination of mal apportionment, but their combined gains had they ran as a single party would have been even more impressive, 8% of the Chamber of Deputies seats. The main beneficiary of a merger of leftist parties would have been Salvador Allende, elected to the presidency a year later. When Allende became president, he commanded the support of PC, PS and most PR deputies. The PS and PC combined had 37 seats, while the PR had 24 seats. Under strict allocation of seats, the Left Party (Popular Unity, without the PR) would have controlled 48 seats in the Chamber, 2 seats short of the required votes to uphold a presidential veto. The support of the leftist PR faction would have put the UP coalition above the threshold required to uphold vetoes. Allende would have still fallen short of a majority control of the Chamber, but his coalition would have been more homogeneous, and presumably more disciplined.

Table 6. Simulations for 1969 Chamber of Deputies Election

Party	Official Results				Simulation 1 Strict proportional allocation of seats to each district		Simulation 2 (W/actual number of seats assigned to each district)		Simulation 3 (W/strictly proportional seat allocation to each district)	
	Seats		Votes		Seats		Seats		Seats	
		%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Nat'l Party	33	22.0	480,523	20.8	33	22.0	32	21.3	32	21.3
PDC	56	37.3	716,515	31.1	58	38.7	53	35.3	55	36.7
Radical	24	16.0	313,278	13.6	18	12.0	21	14.0	15	10.0
Communist	22	14.7	382,869	18.2	24	14.7	44	29.3	48	32.0
Socialist	15	10.0	294,448	16.6	17	11.3				
Other	0	0	117,287	5.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	150	100%	2,304,902	100%	150	100%	150	100%	150	100%

Under any of the three simulations, the weight of the PR would have been much smaller. Although a strict proportional allocation of seats to each province (Simulation 1) would have cost the PR six seats and would have resulted in 2 additional seats for the PC and PS, those parties would have still fallen short of getting 1/3 of the Chamber of Deputies seats which would have given Allende more leeway to negotiate with the parliament a year later. In addition, by having fewer deputies, the PR would have become less fundamental in deciding whether Allende's Popular Unity coalition could manage to obtain enough seats to control the Chamber of Deputies in 1970. Simulation 1 also shows that the PN would not have been hindered by correcting mal apportionment. The number of seats the PN would have obtained if the over representation of rural areas was corrected would not have changed. Yet, correcting the under representation of urban areas could have conceivably deterred the left from targeting rural votes to win more seats in the Chamber of Deputies

In Simulation 1, the PDC and RN would have turned out to have the same number of seats combined, but additional seats for the left could have made it easier for fewer leftwing PDC defectors to tilt the balance of power in parliament in favor of the UP coalition. Though it is true that the left could not unilaterally correct mal apportionment, the left could have still made seat gains in spite of existing mal apportionment if the political alliance they formed for presidential elections had survived for parliamentary elections. As Simulation 2 shows, the UP coalition could have obtained 44 seats in the Chamber, rather than the 37 seats obtained by the PS and PC separately. Rather than being 14 seats short of a veto proof 1/3 control in the Chamber, the UP coalition could

have ended up only 7 seats short of that critical threshold necessary to uphold presidential vetoes.

1973 Simulation

The 1973 elections were special in many regards. The parties of the left formed a coalition to run as a single party and all the opposition parties also formed a single coalition (Democratic Confederation, CODE). Thus, the only possible simulation we can do here is to assign seats to the two coalitions using a strict allocation of seats to each electoral district based on its 1970 census population. The findings are not trivial. The left would have benefited little by a strict allocation of seats. A net gain of 2 seats would have been the only benefit the left would have obtained if the outdated 1932 electoral district seat allocation rules were replaced by an up-to-date 1970 census seat allocation scheme. By 1973, the political conflicts that had brewed over the previous decade had reached a point where no compromise seemed possible. The stage was set for confrontation and it is unlikely that a different institutional arrangement would have prevented such confrontation by then. Correcting mal apportionment would have, however, helped prevent the developments that led to the situation of extreme political polarization that characterized the 1973 election.

Table 7. Simulation for the 1973 Chamber of Deputies Election

Party	Official Results				Simulation 1 Strict proportional allocation of seats to each district	
	Seats		Votes		Seats	
Popular Unity	63	42%	1,605,170	43.5	65	43.3
Democratic Confederation	87	58%	2,013,592	54.6	85	47.7
Total	150	100%	3,627,006	100%	150	100%

Conclusion

Though it is true that no single political party had the ability to correct mal apportionment unilaterally, our simulations show that the conservative parties (PL, PCo and PN) would not have experienced significant seat losses. Their opposition to the reallocation of seats was unwarranted. Conservative parties should have been indifferent to reallocation or, as we speculate, they should have favored it because it would have deterred the parties of the left and the PDC from targeting the over represented rural vote.

Our findings are striking in two other regards. First, the PS and PC lost more by not merging into a unified leftist party than because of mal apportionment. Had those two parties reproduced their alliance for presidential elections in parliamentary elections, the number of seats held by the Left would have increased in every election in the period. Combined with a strict allocation of seats to each province based on the provinces' share of the national population, a unified Left Party would have benefited more than a unified Right Party. We do not underestimate the well-documented profound ideological differences existing between the PS and PC, but we do claim that the two leftist parties did manage to form coalitions to support the same presidential candidate in this period. Forming a unified slate of candidates should be easier to accomplish than agreeing on a presidential candidate simply because seats can be distributed but the presidential chair

cannot be divided. Yet, the PS and PC failed to form a unified Left Party and instead blamed the over representation of rural areas for their inability to convert their electoral support into a larger number of seats in parliament. True, correcting mal apportionment would have partially benefited the left, but more than anything, the left's inability to merge into a unified political party, a Popular Unity Party, for example, did more damage to the conversion of seats into votes than the over representation of rural areas.

Second, correcting the under representation of urban areas would not have adversely affected conservative parties between 1961 and 1973. Yet, we speculate that because it took fewer votes to win seats in over represented rural areas, the failure to correct for population changes might have fostered the migration of the parties of the left from seeking seats in urban areas to campaigning and building support in rural areas. There is no certainty that by correcting the under representation of urban areas, conservative parties would have averted a centrist and leftist move to promote agrarian reform and unionization of rural workers, but we do suggest that, by simulating the results under a strictly proportional allocation of seats, the conservative parties would not have suffered significantly from correcting mal apportionment. Although it is far fetched to suggest that history would have been different had mal apportionment been corrected, by showing that mal apportionment did not dramatically favor the right, we do cast a shadow of doubt over the apparent inevitability of the political developments in Chile that led to the bloody 1973 coup. Had the right simply agreed to correct mal apportionment and had the left merged into a unified party, some of the political decisions and dynamics observed during the period could have been avoided and a democratic system might not have perished.

Endnotes

¹ Julio César Jobet, *El Partido Socialista de Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones Prensa Latinoamericana, 1971); Paul Drake, *Socialism and Populism in Chile. 1932-1952* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Francisco Díaz Verdugo “El PS en Chile: orígenes, historia e ideología; funcionamiento, militancia y futuro” *Material de Discusión* No. 22 (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, Instituto de Ciencia Política 1978); Manuel Dinamarca, *La república socialista. Orígenes legítimos del Partido Socialista. 2ª edición* (Santiago: Ediciones Documentas, 1987).

² Brian Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside: Politics and Rural Labor in Chile, 1919-1973* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) pp 128-129.

³ The Peasant Unionization Law (*Ley de Sindicalización Campesina*) formally allowed for rural unionization, but the requirements were so stringent that the law de facto eliminated the possibility establishing legal unions in about 85% of rural properties. See Timothy R. Scully, Rethinking the Center. *Party Politics in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Chile* (Stanford University Press, 1992) pp. 118-124.

⁴ Loveman, *Struggle in the Country Side*, p. 128.

⁵ Loveman, *Struggle in the Country Side*, p. 128.

⁶ Adam Przeworski, Adam and Glaucio Soares, “Theories in Search of a Curve: A Contextual Interpretation of the Left Vote” *American Political Science Review* 65 (1971) pp. 51-68; Ricardo Cruz Coke, *Historia electoral de Chile. 1925-1973* (Editorial Jurídica de Chile, 1984) and Patricio Meller, *Un Siglo de Economía Política Chilena* (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1996) p. 102.

⁷ The 29 Chamber of Deputies districts were mostly comprised of individual provinces, except in the case of Santiago (divided in 4 districts) and Ñuble (2 districts). Magallanes (district 27) was a part of District 26 until it was made an independent district two years before the 1969 election (Law 16,672 enacted on October 2, 1967).

⁸ Salvador Allende, *Salvador Allende. 1908-1973. Obras escogidas*. (Madrid: Fundación Presidente Allende, 1992), p. 479.

⁹ Allende, *Salvador Allende*, p. 479 and Stefan De Vylder, Allende’s Chile. *The Political Economy of the Rise and Fall of the Unidad Popular* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).

¹⁰ Mario Bernaschina González, *Cartilla electoral* (Santiago: Editorial Jurídica de Chile, 1958) and Federico Gil, *The Political System of Chile* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966). Although some have mistakenly claimed that the 1958 reform prohibited all types of electoral pacts, the reform did not exclude pacts at the national level. See Federico Gil, *El sistema político de Chile* (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1969), p. 236 and Genaro

Arriagada, *De la vía chilena a la vía insurreccional* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1974), p. 260.

¹¹ The ruling of the Tribunal was not controversial and, according to most accounts, it was simply an interpretation of the existing electoral law made by the tribunal at that time and not before because it had not been pressed by parties to do so. See Arriagada, *De la vía chilena*, p. 260.

¹² Jobet, *El Partido Socialista*, and Drake, *Socialism and Populism*.

¹³ Alan Angell, "Chile Since 1958" in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Chile Since Independence*. (Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Drake, *Socialism and Populism*.

¹⁴ Presidents needed to command the support of 1/3 of both chambers to block legislative initiatives by the opposition and to govern by decrees and other legal tricks. See Luis Maira, *Chile: Autoritarismo, Democracia y Movimiento Popular* (México: CIDE, 1984), pp. 63-68.

¹⁵ Following Gary Cox, *Making Votes Count* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), we claim that the number of political parties that will exist in any district will be determined by the upper bound of the magnitude of the district (number of seats) plus one. Thus, a 6-seat district should observe a maximum of 7 parties competing. Because the figure is an upper bound limit, there could also be fewer parties competing in every district.

¹⁶ Robert R. Kaufman, *The Politics of Land Reform in Chile. 1950-1970. Public Policy Institutions and Social Change* (Harvard University Press, 1972); Barbara Stallings, *Class Conflict and Economic Development in Chile, 1958-1973* (Stanford University Press, 1978) and Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*.

¹⁷ For recent simulations that hold electoral preferences constant and vary district boundaries and electoral rules see Kenneth Benoit and John Schiemann, "Institutional Choice in New Democracies. Bargaining Over Hungary's 1999 Electoral Law," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13:2 (2001), pp. 153-182; Marek Kaminski, "How Communism Could Have Been Saved. Formal Analysis of Electoral Bargaining in Poland in 1989," *Public Choice* 1-2, 98 (1999), pp.83-109 and Marek Kaminski, Grzegorz Lissowski and Piotr Swistak, "The 'revival of communism' or the effect of institutions?: The 1993 Polish Parliamentary Elections" *Public Choice* 97 (1998), pp. 429-449.

¹⁸ A good description of the most common allocation rules—d'Hondt, Saint-Lague, Hare Quotas and Largest Remainder—can be found in <http://www.aceproject.org/main/english/es/esc06.htm>.

¹⁹ The articles cited above initially use the same assumption.