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**CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND  
POLITICAL TURNOVER IN URUGUAY:  
WINNING A BATTLE, LOSING THE WAR**

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**Constitutional Reforms and Political Turnover in Uruguay:**

**Winning a battle, losing the war\***

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“Seremos una pobre y oscura republiquita,  
pero tendremos leyecitas adelantaditas”

José Batlle y Ordóñez in *El Día*

## **Introduction**

Constitutional reforms are a crucial intervening variable mediating between “historical causes” at the time of their implementation and the quality of democracy in their aftermath. Consequently, constitutional reforms are endogenous to the will of significant stakeholders at the moment of approval depending on the political-institutional and international context in which they transpire. Simultaneously, as an independent variable and across time, reforms vary in terms of the effects and externalities they produce and the ratchet effects (the irreversibility of enacted reform measures) they create (Pierson 2004).

Uruguay provides a rich milieu to examine the project’s theoretical framework. By almost any criteria, the country has been an institutionalized liberal democracy for a significant part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with political conflict and change following institutionalized and democratic procedures. Therefore, recent constitution-making has not been advocated or sought as a vehicle for introducing broad “democratizing” reforms (as in other Latin American cases, particularly in the Andes). However, in spite of being the Latin American country with more years of democratic experience since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, no constitutional regime in Uruguay has survived more than 18 years without suffering significant changes. In particular, the country has seen continuous turnover regarding electoral rules and the structure of the executive branch.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these reforms have been usually negotiated and put forth by coalitions of different political fractions benefiting from a contingent convergence of their

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(electoral) short-term interests.<sup>1</sup> Overall, constitutional “engineering” was frequently introduced to isolate the Uruguayan party-system (bipartidist, fractionalized,<sup>2</sup> and with a long tradition of co-participation of both parties in government) from socioeconomic change, enabling continuity and stability through electoral and constitutional reforms.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop, the constitutional reform of 1996 is consistent with the long-term trajectory of the country. This reform pursued an explicit objective for both traditional parties: to prevent Frente Amplio (the leftist opposition to traditional parties) from arriving into presidential office, at a time when the traditional electoral formulas that ensured bi-partisan continuity had stopped working with the creation and continuous electoral growth of Frente Amplio. In the short run, the main objective of the reform was accomplished, with the Colorado party maintaining the presidency in 1999. Moreover, in the short-run, internal

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<sup>1</sup> There is disagreement on whether to use the concept ‘fraction’ or ‘faction’ in the context of the Uruguayan party system. Some authors have called these political units factions (see Coppedge 1994: 199; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997b: 425). Following Sartori (1976), we will not use the term faction because it has derogatory connotations: it is deemed ‘a political group bent on a disruptive and harmful *facere*’. Also, we consider this definition misleading since fractions are more permanent than factions (such as the circumstantial ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ groups formed in Venezuelan parties; Coppedge, 1994). Moreover, an important part of political identities is directed toward *fraction* rather than political parties. (Altman 2000: ft7 at p.278-279). Even though it is relatively common for political parties to be internally divided into fractions and sometime factions, the peculiarity of the Uruguayan case is that these party fractions show great political visibility, to the point that in many cases they have been considered as real parties inside parties (Lindahl 1977). Nevertheless, Uruguayan parties are still parties, as many scholars have argued (González 1993; Mieres 1992), and they are thus best described as “fractionalized parties” (Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes 1998).

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, party fragmentation refers to the number of political parties in the party system, and party fractionalization refers to the number of fractions within parties (or *lemas* to be more precise).

<sup>3</sup> Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the relations between the two parties were mostly belligerent. Although Uruguayan politics during the nineteenth century were basically centered on fraud, abstention, and uprisings, agreements between political elites were frequent. The so-called “traditional” parties in Uruguay (Colorado and Blanco) are older than the country itself. There is scholarly consensus that these two political groups emerged in the battle of *Carpintería* (1836), when they fought against each other in a civil war, the *Guerra Grande*, six years after the adoption of the first constitution and eight after the country’s independence. “Certainly in the past century they were not political parties in the present sense of the term, but they were strong political organizations with mass following –and even armies– and they survived to the present” (González 1995: 140).

debate on the constitutional project triggered significant conflicts within FA leading for instance, to the resignation of Liber Seregni, the party's historical leader, in February 1996. Therefore, "electoral engineering" seemed to serve once again the purpose of protecting the traditional party-system from its challengers.

Notwithstanding, the 1996 constitutional reform process was punctuated by intense negotiations among the traditional parties, the Nuevo Espacio, and some moderate leaders of Frente Amplio. Although such a broad coalition was unnecessary to approve the Constitutional reform in Congress, the project should also be ratified in a popular plebiscite. Therefore, the project should not only be functional to the *interest* of both traditional parties, but should also seek to accommodate broader *interest* in order to generate a critical mass of partisan support for the reform. Moreover, facing the challenge of making the reform legitimate and worthy in the eyes of the citizenry, *interest* should be dressed with *reasons*. Therefore, while the reform left some historical features of the system untouched (i.e. strict proportional representation, the number of seats in both chambers, the size of electoral districts, and compulsory voting), a series of additional measures besides the introduction of a runoff electoral system to substitute the plurality vote for the presidential election were included: a) the double simultaneous vote (DSV) was eliminated for the presidency and mandatory party primaries were introduced, compelling parties to present only one presidential candidate; b) for congressional elections, deputies were forbidden to build ad-hoc intra-party electoral alliance ('electoral cooperatives', in Uruguayan jargon) among diverse groups in order to win within the party (i.e. it no longer made it possible for deputies from different fractions within the same party to ally seeking to accumulate their votes); and c) the absolute concurrency of elections (presidential, congressional, and municipal) ended. Whereas the first two of these reforms addressed historical concerns of the left (Frente Amplio and the Nuevo Espacio), the third was sought to benefit the Blanco party by splitting municipal elections (in which this party was stronger than the Colorado) from presidential and congressional races.

It has to be said that, since its maturity in 1942, the Uruguayan electoral system presented a series of characteristics that, taken together, make this a very unusual case in the democratic world (Altman 2002; Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes 1998). One of its most original characteristics was the use of the double and triple simultaneous vote, with voters simultaneously electing at two levels: within and between parties (Altman and Chasquetti 2005). All elections in

Uruguay used to be connected (*vinculadas*) and concurrent, making the voter cast a ballot for the same party at all office-levels (see Figure 5 of a ballot paper in Uruguay). Actually, voters simultaneously selected candidates to six representative posts: 1) President and Vice-president, 2) Senate, 3) Deputies, 4) Departmental Major, 5) Departmental Legislators (*ediles*), and 6) Departmental Electoral Courts.

In Uruguay Congress is still elected with proportional representation in both chambers. For the thirty members of the senate the whole country forms a unique national district. Also, in lower-chamber elections (99 members) the entire country is taken as a unique national district for distributing legislators among the *lemas*. However, Uruguay has 19 districts for distributing deputies among the *sublemas* and fractions within each *sublema*. Due to the fact that the 19 circumscriptions vary considerably in their size (from 2 to 45), there is another electoral operation that fits (corrects) the national vote for that list and the number of deputies that each department has.<sup>4</sup> In this mathematical correction, it is possible to observe that some departments yield deputies to others in order to maintain the most proportional system of representation possible. It is interesting to note that although Uruguay has two chambers, both overlap their representativeness and both are elected through an *integral* proportional representation system.

The Uruguayan electoral system was designed to maintain a two-party system, allowing fractions within parties to compete with each other without hurting the party's chances to get elected. In other words, the electoral system was both a cause and a consequence of Uruguay's fractionalized bipartism. The DSV created a strong incentive for *cooperation* among sub-lemas, while nationwide PR actuates as a strong incentive for *competition* among them. Nonetheless, the system did not succeed in avoiding the emergence of a third force. The bipartisan configuration ended in 1971, with the creation of the Frente Amplio (FA) (González 1993: 43). Table 1 below illustrates the evolution of the main characteristics of Uruguayan constitutions and the country's presidents.

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<sup>4</sup> This is called the "tercer escrutinio."

**Table 1: Uruguayan presidents and Constitutions since Polyarchy**

1919 Baltasar Brum	PC	1919 NCA: Feliciano Viera	PC	Constitution of 1917. Semi-Collegiate (Executive power was divided between two bodies, the President and the National Council of Administration). Chamber: 123 (PR); Senate: 19 (PLU) Renovation of NCA every two years.
		1921 NCA: José Batlle y Ordóñez	PC	
1923 José Serrato	PC	1923 NCA: Julio M. Sosa	PC	
		1925 NCA: Luis A. de Herrera	PN	
1927 J.Campisteguy	PC	1927 NCA: Luis C. Caviglia	PC	
		1929 NCA: Juan P. Fabini	PC	
1931 Gabriel Terra	PC	1931 NCA: Baltasar Brum	PC	
		1933 NCA: Antonio Rubio	PC	
1933-1934- Gabriel Terra				Terra's Coup
1934 Gabriel Terra			PC	Constitution of 1934.
1938 Alfredo Baldomir			PC	Chamber: 99 (PR); Sen. 30 (15 y 15). Obligatory participation of both parties in Ministers council.
1943 Juan José de Amézaga			PC	Constitution of 1942.
1947 Tomás Berreta			PC	Chamber: 99 (PR); Senate 30 (PR).
1947 Luis Batlle Berres			PC	Freedom for the president in his power of appointment of ministers
1951 Andrés Martínez Trueba			PC	Constitution of 1952. "Pure" Collegiate. Executive Power: <i>Consejo Nacional de Gobierno</i> , (composed by 9 members directly elected by citizens. Six counselors for the most voted list of the most voted lema and three for the lema that follows in number of votes but distributed proportionally among its lists). <sup>5</sup>
		1952 NCG: Andrés Martínez Trueba	PC	
		1955 NCG: Luis Batlle Berres	PC	
		1956 NCG: Alberto F. Zubiría	PC	
		1957 NCG: Arturo Lezama	PC	
		1958 NCG: Carlos L. Fischer	PC	
		1959 NCG: Martín R. Echegoyen	PN	
		1960 NCG: Benito Nardone	PN	
		1961 NCG: Eduardo V. Haedo	PN	
		1962 NCG: Faustino Harrison	PN	
		1963 NCG: Daniel Fernandez Crespo	PN	
		1964 NCG: Luis Giannattasio	PN	
		1965 NCG: Washington Beltrán	PN	
		1966 NCG: Alberto Heber	PN	
1967 Oscar D. Gestido			PC	Constitution of 1967: Uni-personal presidency. Incorporation of mechanisms of referendum and popular initiative).
1967 Jorge Pacheco Areco			PC	
1971 Juan María Bordaberry			PC	
1976 Alberto Demicheli				Dictatorship (1973-1985) (Constitution of 1967 suspended)
1976 Aparicio Mendez				
1980 Lieutenant Gral. Gregorio Álvarez				
Interim: Rafael Addiego Bruno				
1985 Julio María Sanguinetti			PC	Constitution of 1967.
1990 Luis Alberto Lacalle			PN	
1995 Julio María Sanguinetti			PC	
2000 Jorge Batlle			PC	
2005 Tabaré Vázquez			FA	

Maturity of Uruguayan Electoral System

<sup>5</sup> More on collegial executives could be found at Altman (2008), Sacchi (1999).

The *reasons* on which citizen support for the reform of 1996 was requested derived from some of the anticipated consequences of the four amendments address above. On the one hand, the runoff would enable the crafting of stronger government coalitions, breaking the frequent congressional stalemate that the previous system created. On the other hand, the introduction of unique presidential candidacies, the restriction of the DVS, and the separation of elections would provide the citizen a better capacity to know “exactly who gets favored by her vote”, while enhancing her liberty to select candidates from different parties at different governmental levels.

Whereas our evidence will show that the first *reason* on which reform was advocated was unfunded (coalitional politics was further complicated after the reform was introduced), we will claim that the second series of *reasons* used to “sell” the reform to the public was more accurately predicted and promised. Precisely, the effects of the additional reforms introduced to accommodate the *interests* of a broad partisan coalition and to lower the prominence of the runoff system within the reform package, ended up producing more harm than good to traditional parties.

Interacting with long-term sociopolitical and economic processes, the negative externalities (from the point of view of reformers) produced by the 1996 Constitutional reform significantly favored the electoral chances of Frente Amplio, which reached presidential office in the election of 2004 on the basis of an absolute majority of the popular vote. Eloquently, for the first time in Uruguay’s 176 years as an independent state, neither of the two traditional parties won the presidency. Although such outcome cannot be explained only as the by-product of the unanticipated consequences of the 1996 Constitutional reform (see i.e. the works in Buquet 2005; see i.e. the works in Lanzaro 2004), we will claim that those externalities contributed to reduce the ability of traditional parties to compete with Frente Amplio.

The paper is organized around two sections. We first enter to a more detailed description of political negotiation and the reform process leading to the enactment of the 1996 Constitutional reform, providing evidence on the conjunction of *interests* and *reasons* that crystallized in the popularly approved reform package. Because of limitations of space, this paper skips a historical constitutional evolution of Uruguay since 1917, focusing on the



most important differences existing among the country's numerous constitutions (1917, 1934, 1942, 1952, 1967, and 1996), but this could be found elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> In any case, an historical overview would be illustrative on how the traditional use of "electoral engineering" in the country serve as a particular instance of constitution-making as normal politics in Latin America. In this case, those processes of constitution-making were essentially targeted at maintaining the primacy of the traditional party-system and were usually introduced in the context of democratic procedures. The second section explores the long-term consequences of the reform. Finally, we conclude stressing the theoretical contributions of this case to the comparative project on constitutional reforms.

## **2. Political and Institutional Causes of the 1996 Reforms**

In this section, we first describe the political context in which the 1996 Constitutional reform was proposed. We then impute *interests* to relevant political actors and describe the *reasons* they provided for favoring or opposing the reform. Finally, a description of the enacted reforms is provided. Both interests and reasons are treated as the expected outcomes of the reform. In the third section of the paper, we then explore short and long-term outcomes linked to the reform, assessing the degree to which those expected outcomes were fulfilled.

Lacalle's government (1990-1995) started with a call for a "National Coincidence," which once again proved short-lived (Altman 2000). Growing inflation and declining real wages led to a sharp-decline of the President's popularity ratings in six months, achieving the same levels than those shown by Sanguinetti at the end of the previous term. During his first years in office, Lacalle promoted liberalizing and privatizing measures, crystallized in the Ley de Empresas Públicas approved in Congress. However, this law was challenged by a referendum promoted by state-unions and Frente Amplio and then supported by *Foro Batllista* (the Colorado fraction led by Sanguinetti). In December of 1992, the citizenry rejected the law leaving the government without one of its main policy platforms. Additionally, during this period, five proposals to reform the pension system were introduced, with all of them, failing to crystallize in a consensual agreement (Castiglioni 2005).

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<sup>6</sup> For a more legalistic description of the Constitutional evolution of Uruguay see (Gros Espiell 2002).

Meanwhile, resulting from his governing style in Montevideo, Tabaré Vázquez consolidated as a highly popular leader, becoming a central player for the election of 1994. In those elections, Sanguinetti from the Colorado party succeeded in winning his second presidential election, while Frente Amplio was re-elected to the Municipal Government of Montevideo. However, at the presidential level, this time the electorate was divided in almost equal thirds, with the Colorado Party (PC) obtaining 32.3%, the Blanco Party (PN) 31.2%, and Frente Amplio 30.6%. This electoral outcome catalyzed the creation of a stronger traditional-party coalition after the election.

Therefore, Frente Amplio's "almost victory" provoked a fundamental watershed on the country's recent history, increasing the perceived costs of losing office for both traditional parties. While before 1994 losing office meant that the other traditional party would win but without a majority, now the implications were far more drastic as both traditional parties would be left out of office. Historically, both traditional parties shared access to the state and were therefore able to distribute patronage and pork on that basis. If neither the Blanco nor the Colorado party were in office, the very sources of both traditional parties' electoral loyalties would be seriously hindered. However, there is a qualitative shift from co-participation towards coalitional rule.

Filgueira and Filgueira (1997) have argued that the incentive structure for the usual "free rider strategy" of these parties have substantially changed in 1995. Such strategy was conducive to frequent decisional stalemates and allowed the traditional party in the opposition to benefit from the votes lost by the incumbent. Moreover, co-participation practices were mostly based on pork distribution not frequently tied, as this time, to an explicit reformist agenda. Interestingly, the coalition between the two traditional parties arose when the growth of the left substantially brought into question their capacity to maintain the presidential office. In this scenario and together with other significant reforms (social security and education) both traditional parties promoted changes on electoral rules from a simple plurality election to a runoff electoral system, closing the door on an immediate electoral victory of the left. Thus, in spite of their shrinking electoral support, a second-round electoral alliance between both parties would imply the need for the left to get more than 50% of the vote on its own, in order to gain the presidential office.

The rationale behind the establishment of this new instance seems clear, as its most important justification was to prevent the victory of the left. Given that the electoral bases of

the traditional parties are ideologically closer each other than to the FA, if forced in a second round to choose between a traditional party against a leftist candidate, they should arguably vote for the former rather than for the latter. Although it implies a counterfactual, it seems extremely plausible to think that, without having changed the rules, the Frente Amplio would have won the 1999 election, as it obtained almost 40% of the votes in the first round (Buquet 2000).

In 1999, and for the first time since the transition, the same party was able to maintain the presidency. Although Frente Amplio won the first electoral round, the coalition of Blancos and Colorados was able to defeat the left in the presidential runoff. This time, after successfully contesting the primary against *foristas*, it was Batlle's and List 15 turn. Although Lacalle successfully won the Blanco primary on the basis of his political apparatus (defeating an adversarial Juan Andrés Ramírez who competed on the basis of corruption charges against Lacalle and Alberto Volonté), his candidacy was fatally wounded as a result of that process of internal competition. This led to an historical defeat of the Blanco Party, which only obtained 22% of the vote. Within Frente Amplio, the primary between Vázquez and Danilo Astori confirmed once again the absolute primacy of the former in the fight for leading the leftist coalition. The Nuevo Espacio (a small center-left party) contested the election on its own, obtaining half of its original support, and quickly allied with Frente Amplio after the first round.

The inclusion of this set of additional provisions in the reform, seen as positive steps removing some of the sources of traditional parties' flexibility and adaptation capacity, moved Astori and Seregni from the Frente Amplio to favor the reform openly contesting Vázquez's stance. This fact fueled important degrees of internal dissent in the party that ended up with Seregni's resignation to the presidency of the Frente Amplio and the strengthening of Vázquez's leadership.

### *Negotiating the Constitution of 1996*

The proposal, discussion, and establishment of constitutional reforms is not a symptom of any particular stressful situation in Uruguay, since the expedient of constitutional reform has been, as previously seen, used many times during the last century as a mechanism to overcome different political stalemates that challenged the traditional party politics. In

Uruguay, politics have a strong emphasis on a juridical dimension and its most important political institutions are included in the constitution, with relatively highly detailed regulations. In other words, the constitution must be changed whenever there is a move to introduce some institutional experiment. Even though the political reform was a permanent discussion topic from the very beginning of the democratic restoration (1985), the actual reform process took place during Sanguinetti's second administration (1995-1999).

Nonetheless, the requisites to pass the reform were extremely high, requiring the support of two thirds of the legislature and a popular ratification in a plebiscite. So, the amendment process required crafting a great consensus among the political elite. Moreover, after such consensus was built, the proposal should also look legitimate and worth-pursuing for the citizenry. Therefore, reforms needed to accommodate the interests of a diverse set of political actors (parties and fractions), while remaining attractive to the public.

The sixth constitutional reform in the history of the country was finally approved in December 1996, with the support of 50.4% of the valid vote, one of the closest results in the country's electoral history. That day, citizens ratified the constitutional reforms agreed by both traditional parties and the Nuevo Espacio. Meanwhile, the reform was opposed by the Frente Amplio. The reform introduced significant changes in the rules of the political game; especially in the structure of the electoral system. Additionally, a regulatory framework for partisan activities was included, along with some changes regarding executive-legislative relations.

The new electoral rules, first applied for the 1999 electoral cycle, modified three of the four main characteristics of the Uruguayan electoral system. The only feature that was left intact was the use of proportional representation for legislative elections (Espíndola 2001; Finch 1995). First, the plurality system for the election of the President was replaced by the two-ballot majority system. Second, the use of multiple simultaneous vote was drastically reduced as now each party could only run one presidential candidate and a maximum of three candidates for municipal mayor. Moreover, the accumulation by *sublemas* for the election of representatives was eliminated. Third, the all-concurrent election system changed to a partially non-concurrent system, in which elections were disconnected and separated (the primaries from the general election, the national from the municipal election, and, to a certain extent, the parliamentary from the presidential election). The 1996 Constitution broke down the electoral process into four stages: mandatory party primaries, legislative and presidential elections, a

second round or ballotage if no presidential candidate obtained at least 50% of the vote, and municipal elections. A fourth important change was the elimination of the distinction between “permanent” and “accidental” *lemas*, allowing new parties to present a series of lists for the parliamentary election.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the electoral system underwent so significant changes that in the long term, massive transformations in the dynamics of the political system can be expected.

Additionally, relevant changes were also introduced in regulations affecting the functioning of political parties. First, the restriction forcing parties to present only one candidate to the presidency has brought a fundamental change in the patterns of traditional parties internal competition. Since 1999, all parties should hold simultaneous and mandatory primary and internal elections. The results of the primaries are then subjected to a Sore Loser Law: those who are not elected in this instance cannot run again under other party level in any other election of the electoral cycle. In other words, if someone loses, she must wait for another five years in order to run under another party’s label (Altman and Castiglioni 2006). This rule, also obliges parties to select national conventions of 500 members plus an equal number of substitutes. Additionally, those parties who seek to take part in municipal elections should also elect departmental conventions with a minimum of 50 members. This set of requirements has acted against the survival of tiny parties that used to be part of Uruguayan electoral folklore.

Overall, the main strategic goal of the constitutional reform has been achieved insofar as the new electoral rules, specifically the majority run-off, favored the maintenance of the reformist coalition in office. But things turned out differently to what had been originally planned. The winning party was the PC and not the PN, and the majority factions within the parties were radicals rather than moderates. The difference between the actual outcome and what was expected stems from a number of erroneous calculations in the original plan, and some strategic mistakes made during the electoral campaigns (Buquet and Piñeiro 2000). The remainder of this paper is devoted to explain the short and long-term effects of the 1996 Constitutional reform.

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<sup>7</sup> From 1966 until the 1994 election, only "permanent" parties, i.e. those that already has parliamentary representation, had the prerogative to present more than one candidate/list per party, that is to say to benefit from the multiple simultaneous vote.

### 3. Causes and Effects of the 1996 Reform

In this section we contrast the *reasons* and *interests* of reformers with the short and long-term effects of enacted reforms. As we shall see, several externalities (frequently contradicting the reformers intentions) can also be observed in this case. We organize this section around three bundles that combine specific reforms enacted in 1996: a) the introduction of a runoff system, b) the introduction of primaries, unique-presidential candidacies, and partially non-concurrent elections; and c) the restriction of the Double-Simultaneous Vote. For each bundle we identify the expected effect of the reform (from the point of view of reformers), the observed effect (in the short and long run), and the presence and character of externalities. Table 2 summarizes the argument we present in this section.

#### 3.1 The Majority run-off

##### *Interests and Reasons*

Historically, both traditional parties shared access to the state and were therefore able to distribute patronage and pork on that basis. If neither the Blanco nor the Colorado party were in office, the very sources of both traditional parties' electoral loyalties would be seriously hindered. In this scenario and together with other significant reforms (social security and education),<sup>8</sup> both traditional parties promoted an electoral reform changing the electoral rules from a simple plurality election to a runoff electoral system, closing the way for an immediate electoral victory of the left. Thus, in spite of their shrinking electoral support, a second-round electoral alliance between both parties would imply the need for the left to get more than 50% of the vote on its own, in order to gain the presidential office.

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed description of these reforms see (Castiglioni 2005).

**Table 2: Mapping-up incentives, reasons, and externalities**

Instrument	Expected Effect		Observed Effect		Relation to Interest	Externalities?
	Interest	Reason	Short Term	Long Term		
<b>a) Runoff</b>	Stop the left	Stopping voter draining to the left Improve Governance (through coalition-building)	Colorado Party remaining in office, Governance not improving	Left with super-majority, no improvement in coalition building	<b>Achieved, then Opposite</b>	<p>Consolidation of two "ideological families" and a bi-polar logic of competition among the three significant parties. Consequently, this dynamic reduced the capacity of both traditional parties to keep their programmatic appeals differentiated.</p> <p>The combination of single candidates and the majority run-off system that the electoral reform set up could yield a President with even weaker congressional support. Indeed, this outcome occurred in 1999 with President Batlle, the first time the reform was put into practice.</p> <p>Currently, Uruguay is being governed by a majority single-party (as opposed to a coalitional government), a rarity that did not occur since the presidency Gestido-Pacheco in 1966</p>
<b>b) Primaries, unique presidential candidacies and partially non-concurrent elections</b>	Generate support among moderates in the left, consolidate support from Blancos, and among the citizenry	Increase the transparency of the electoral system giving voters greater freedom in their vote	Reform (barely) passed	Enhance visibility of connection between vote and outcome, greater voter freedom	<b>Achieved</b>	<p>In general, the electorate has greater certainty with respect to the consequences of its vote. Nonetheless, electoral campaigns were extended, increasing the cost of campaigns and risking a potential exhaustion of voters over such a long electoral period. The increasing cost of campaign might also induce a process of <i>oligarchization</i> within parties.</p> <p>The obligation of presenting a unique presidential candidate per party was one way of solving some of the chronic competition within parties. Nonetheless, primaries could even amplify those internal disputes. Here the prisoner's dilemma structure of incentives is clear, as cooperative solutions are difficult to find.</p> <p>Primary winners might be "extremists" in relation to the median-voter. However, this has not always been the case and it is also unclear that these relatively extreme candidates are poor general election competitors, perhaps because every party obtains sub-optimal primary results.</p> <p>Increasing detachment between local and national leaders, dealigning traditional "transmission belts." Additionally, the weakening of party territorial structures enhanced the need of individual congressmembers to stay personally in the field to serve constituents.</p>
<b>c) Limit electoral cooperatives</b>	Generate support among moderates in the left and among the citizenry	Limit party-fragmentation and fractionalization (therefore improving governance); do away with the "unpopular" DVs	Reform (barely) passed	Centralized partisan apparatuses and favored major fractions	<b>Achieved, then, relative reduction of fractionalization observed in traditional parties (not the FA)</b>	<p>As long as electoral rules for the Senate did not change we should not expect any changes in party fractionalism, but it could be argued that single presidential candidates pose incentives to more fragmented parties as long as the competition for president and for senate seats is disconnected</p> <p>Weakening of territorial structure of traditional parties vis a vis that of FA.</p>

Different reasons were advocated in favor of the run-off. Some were very explicit about traditional parties' primary interest. For instance, the Colorado Senator Luis Pozzolo bluntly stated:

*“En Uruguay se producía una votación entre dos partidos que, aunque tienen filosofías distintas, representan en lo institucional, como respeto democrático, las mismas raíces, porque nacieron juntos”. [Pero las cosas han cambiado,] “ahora puede ganar el gobierno del país una fuerza diferente; el país puede llegar a tener, si no hace esta reforma, un gobierno de signo marxista. Y esto es lo que tenemos que pensar” (Búsqueda N° 844, 23/05/1996, p.6).*

In a somewhat more veiled way, Ope Pasquet (former deputy of the PC) argued that the runoff would serve as an electoral instrument to allow Blancos and Colorados to “vote together” (“votar juntos”) (Búsqueda N° 844, 23/05/1996, p.6).

In general, more prominent traditional party leaders argued for the reform on the basis of more sophisticated reasons, usually stressing the capacity of the runoff to induce more effective coalition building and governance. For instance, former President Luis Alberto Lacalle argued that:

*“[antes de la segunda vuelta cada candidato va a tratar de] aumentar su base de apoyo [dedicándose a] conquistar, enrolar, negociar y conceder ciertas cosas a otras fuerzas políticas para fabricar de antemano una coalición que le asegure el gobierno [...] De manera que en el ballottage lo que se plebiscita es la coalición así armada” (Lacalle, Búsqueda N° 867, 31/10/1996, 13).*

In this line, promoters of the reform argued that single presidential candidates and less fractionalized parties would induce more disciplined legislative behavior and greater incentives for coalition building. Former President Julio María Sanguinetti argued this point stating that:

*“Todos los partidos estuvieron de acuerdo en que se debe procesar una reforma y ella es necesaria ante tiempos nuevos, con problemas distintos (y) con una enorme fragmentación electoral [...] Es necesario ajustar estructuras” (Búsqueda N° 866, 24/10/1996, p.4).*

Conversely, most leaders of the left opposed this reform on the basis of one simple institutional reason. As Senator Korzeniak (Socialist) warned:

*“Un ballottage que traiga a un presidente con 55% o 60% de apoyo y un Parlamento (en el) que tiene 30% de apoyo puede generar una situación política de enfrentamiento que conduzca a soluciones autoritarias” (Búsqueda N° 867, 31/10/1996, p. 13).*

Likewise, Tabaré Vázquez alleged that:



*“Creamos la figura del presidente emperador. Esto es peligroso para cualquiera que sea el presidente de la República, porque va a tener el 51% de los votos con un Parlamento dividido, va a haber un enfrentamiento de poderes, el Poder Legislativo va a estar disminuido en sus poderes, vamos a tener un super-presidente ... y esto es crear conflictos” (Búsqueda, N° 868, 7/11/1996, p.10).*

Moreover, FA leaders essentially campaigned unveiling the short-term interest (and its consequences) hidden behind the reasons advocated by traditional party leaders. Vázquez foresaw the short-term outcomes of the reform brilliantly:

*“No le quepa a nadie dudas que si gana la elección el Encuentro Progresista [Frente Amplio] como seguramente las va a ganar en 1999, y esta es la gran preocupación por esta reforma constitucional que es más una reforma electoral, y sale segundo un partido tradicional, van a acumular los partidos tradicionales en la segunda vuelta para la candidatura a la Presidencia. Esto lo han dicho los propios dirigentes de los partidos tradicionales” (Vázquez, Búsqueda N° 870, 21/11/1996, p. 7).*

*Short-term effects: Winning the 1999 Election but without Improving Coalition Building and Governance (1999-2005)*

The runoff for the presidency was one of the most relevant of the changes introduced in the 1996 reform, if not the most. As previously explained, the short term interest of reformers was to avoid having the left arriving into the national executive. This objective was fulfilled in the short-run, with Jorge Batlle (coming second in the first round) defeating Tabaré Vázquez from the Frente Amplio in the runoff. At that point, Batlle received the support from leaders of the Blanco Party.

The second advocated reason for reform was to improve coalition building. This reasoning involved the assumption that by inducing an electoral coalition for the second presidential round, the reform will definitely strengthen the presidential coalition. This would also be reinforced by other expected effects of the runoff (and a series of other reforms introduced in 1996) as the reduction of the effective number of parties which would put a halt to partisan fragmentation. We now explore the effects of the reform in regard to these objectives.

A first reading of the introduction of the runoff system from the point of view of coalition building would indeed suggest that this new institutional device would strengthen post-electoral coalition formation and party discipline. Yet an overlooked fact suggests

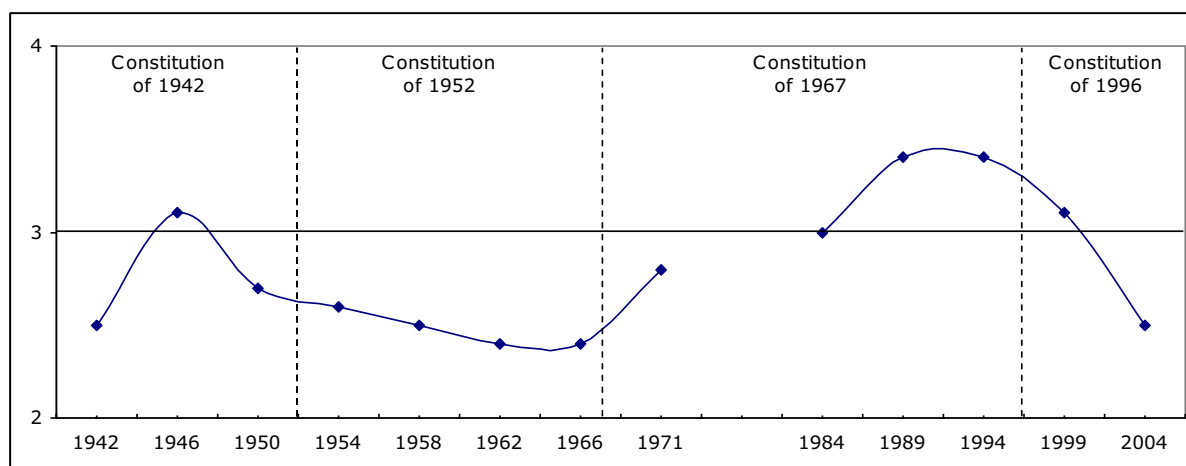
exactly the opposite. In order to gain office, a traditional party only had to have a bigger share than the other in the first round. As it was unthinkable that the other traditional party would then shift its vote to the left and given vote share distribution among the three parties, office was secured. Thus, while in one sense coalitions should have become more stable, other forces and logics pushed exactly in the opposite direction. The end result was a coalition in which neither partner wanted to stand out with unpopular measures and especially with fiscal adjustment. Eventually, this coalitional configuration ended-up contributing to deepen the country's financial collapse in 2002, which in turn proved fundamental in catalyzing popular support for the opposition in the subsequent election (the Frente Amplio).

With regard to the effects of the runoff on the effective number of parties (N) and candidates, extant research consensually claims that N is systematically higher when that institutional device is used in presidential elections.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in theory, Uruguayan politicians were mistaken in expecting less fragmentation to occur under the new system. However, strictly speaking, under the new majority runoff system party fragmentation did not increase in Uruguay. In fact, it decreased from 3.4 to 2.5, contradicting the theory and matching traditional politicians' expectations (see Figure 1). Nonetheless, a more careful reading of election results shows that fragmentation did in fact increase (Buquet 2004). In short, the observed fall in the magnitude of N could be better explained as the result of a tendency that began before the reform was introduced and could not be attributed to a direct effect of the new electoral system.

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9 See Shugart and Carey (1992), Jones (1995), and Mainwaring and Shugart (1997a) on this point.

**Figure 1: Effective Number of Parties**



*Source: authors' elaboration based on information from the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de la República, Data Bank.*

To illustrate this claim, the impact of the new electoral system can be better observed by comparing the electoral results of the national elections for which the majority run-off system was used with the electoral results obtained in the subsequent local elections, in which the plurality system was maintained. The comparison is reasonable because parties and voters were the same in both contests, within a short time span. The next table shows the values of N for the 19 local electoral districts in Uruguay, both for national and local elections held after the electoral reform. When compared to the results obtained in the corresponding national election, the value of N is strictly less in 37 of the 39 local elections. Therefore, we can see a clear pattern of strategic electoral concentration in local elections that did not occurred at the national level. This could happen because the plurality system poses incentives to vote strategically that the majority run-off system does not promote.

Furthermore, we have classified departments into two sub-groups (“modern” and “traditional”) that show different patterns of evolution in the reduction of their respective N's due to the growing trend of the FA (Table 4 below). By “modern departments” we understand those where the left has had historically its best electoral performances. This group shows a clear descending trend in the number of parties due to the electoral growth of the FA. By “traditional” departments, we understand those where the traditional parties still retain an important electoral share. These ones show a clear contrast in the number of parties contesting local and national elections. While for national elections and under a majority runoff N is

higher, at local elections the number falls down to form a strict bipartisan system. In this case and besides the national trend of reduction in the number of parties, we can observe the strategic incentives introduced by the plurality system. Indeed, the observed reduction of N (from 3 to 2.6 in the effective number of parties) in between national elections (1999 and 2004) occurring in traditional departments can be solely explained by the electoral growth of FA. Meanwhile, the 2.1 N observed for both local elections (2000 and 2005) is obviously caused by strategic voting.

**Table 4: Effective Number of Parties by Uruguayan departments**

Department	1999	2000	2004	2005
Montevideo	2,7	2,3	2,2	2,2
Canelones	3,2	2,6	2,4	2,0
Maldonado	3,2	3,0	2,5	2,2
Rocha	3,2	2,7	2,6	2,3
Salto	3,1	2,9	2,6	2,9
Paysandú	3,1	2,8	2,3	2,3
Río Negro	3,1	3,0	2,6	2,3
Soriano	3,1	2,9	2,5	2,3
Colonia	3,3	2,8	2,6	2,2
Florida	3,2	2,9	2,7	2,6
Mean "moderns"	3,1	2,8	2,5	2,3
Treinta y Tres	3,1	2,3	2,5	2,4
Cerro Largo	3,1	2,0	2,5	2,1
Rivera	2,9	2,5	2,8	2,6
Artigas	2,9	2,3	2,6	2,9
San José	3,2	1,8	2,5	2,0
Flores	3,0	1,5	2,6	1,7
Durazno	3,0	2,4	2,7	2,2
Lavalleja	3,0	2,4	2,7	1,8
Tacuarembó	3,0	1,8	2,4	1,7
Mean "traditionals"	3,0	2,1	2,6	2,1

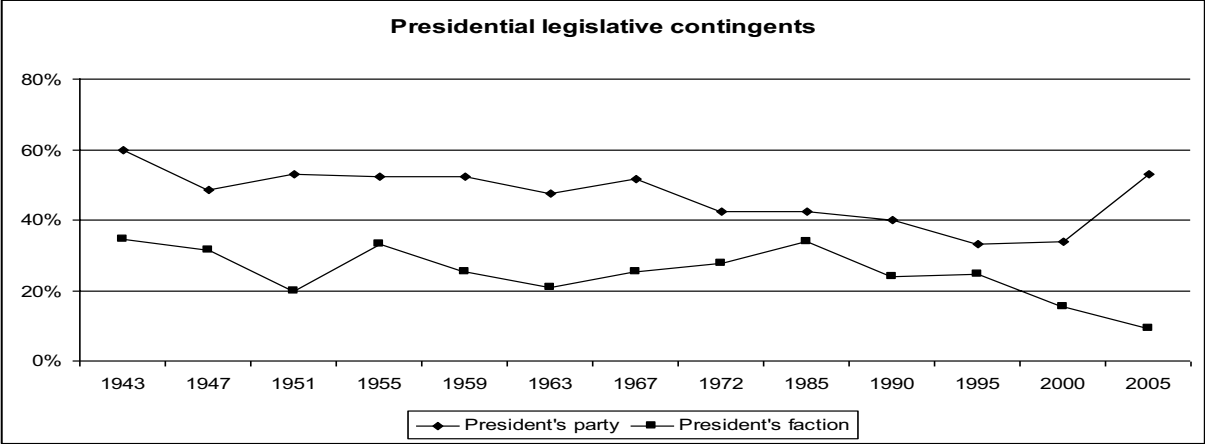
*Source: Author's elaboration based on information from the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales Data Bank.*

Therefore, we can argue that the decreasing N observed after the implementation of the majority runoff system is not an effect of this institutional devise. Conversely, our evidence shows that if the continuity of the plurality system could have granted a greater decrease in fragmentation than the one obtained after the 1996 reform was implemented.

Another explicit objective for introducing the runoff was to avoid Presidents having to govern with minority legislative support. However, the combination of single candidates and the majority runoff system that the electoral reform set up, could contribute to worsening the

parliamentary position of the elected President, and this is in fact what happened the first time it was put into practice.

**Figure 2: presidential legislative contingents**



*Source: Authors' elaboration based on information from the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales Data Bank.*

The old Uruguayan electoral system made for at least two absolute certainties: the party of the President would have a plurality (at least) in parliament, which meant that it would have more party representatives than any other party, and that the President's faction would have a plurality within his own party as well. Congress-members directly supporting the President had, up to that time, necessarily been the biggest group in the biggest party. This was guaranteed by the connection existing between presidential and legislative elections. In short, to win the Presidency it was simultaneously necessary to belong to the party that received the most votes for the legislature and to head the fraction within that party that received the largest plurality.

Under the current rules, the legislative representation of the party in government does not have to be the biggest in parliament because there is nothing to stop the election of the candidate of the second party, whose representation would be second in number of legislators. This happened in the 1999 election. Along with the reduction in the legislative weight of the President's party which can result from the majority runoff (Jones 1995) there is no disposition in the new constitution which guarantees legislative weight to the President's faction. The President elected is the only candidate from his party, and he can be voted along with any of the parliamentary lists of that party. The votes that the President's faction obtains

are relatively independent from the electoral potential he has, and consequently, he may be in a minority position within his party. Therefore, nothing ensures that the President will enjoy a majority in her party because there is nothing that could stop fractions that were defeated in the internal party elections from emerging triumphant in the legislative election.

*Main Externality of the runoff system: Consolidating a bi-polar logic of partisan competition*

With the resumption of democratic politics the main features of the traditional system were restored. However, facing a growing and powerful leftist opposition and confronting increasing public deficits and inflationary pressures, both traditional parties embarked on reformist agendas. The fiscal crisis of the state also limited the scope for reproducing loyalties on the basis of traditional clientelistic and patronage appeals, which became increasingly inefficient for competing with a leftist party that had programmatically appropriated the defense of *batllismo* and was able to mobilize discontent against *neoliberal* reformers.

Although the Uruguayan party system lacked a strong advocate for neoliberal reform in spite of the specter of a crumbling economy and increasing international pressure, once in office the traditional parties embarked on gradual attempts at state-reform. Given the omnipresence of batllista or statist/redistributive ideology and significant policy feedback from ISI, these reforms were, not surprisingly, extremely unpopular. In this context, the Frente Amplio gave political expression to a “veto-coalition” of ISI beneficiaries while at the same time, drawing on a reinterpretation of *batllismo* to attract votes from the sectors that became increasingly alienated from the traditional system in the wake of the “happy Uruguay” crisis. Ideologically, this coalition put forth a statist platform advocating and enacting legislation (through the use of direct democracy mechanisms) to roll-back reformist legislation in favor of the status-quo (strong state intervention in the domestic economy). Additionally, while the two traditional parties faced surmounting popular discontent and managed increasingly constraining budgets in order to maintain their clientelistic political machines, the Frente Amplio was able to gradually become the most popular political party in the country. The strength of the *frenteamplista* subculture solidified through exile and resistance to the repression and persecution during the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime, combined with the loosening of Blanco and Colorado’s partisan identities, provided further room for the transformation of the party-system.

This dynamic, coupled with electoral results and the constitutional reform of 1996, crystallized two ideological families competing for votes based on programmatic appeals along the state-market divide. Those two “ideological families” consolidated a bi-polar logic of competition among three significant parties: the Blancos and the Colorados (in government) and Frente Amplio (in opposition). This competitive dynamic reduced the capacity of both traditional parties to keep their programmatic appeals differentiated.

Therefore, while before the traditional party not occupying the presidential office could simultaneously benefit from co-participation while opposing the incumbent once the election approached, the runoff system made coalitional arrangements more explicit (though, as argued above, this did not get translated into greater governance efficiency). This helped to consolidate the formation of two clearly distinct (and more or less internally homogeneous) blocks: the government and the opposition; strengthening the latter at a time when economic discontent was on the rise.

### *3.2 Primaries, internal party elections, unique presidential candidacies, and split elections*

#### *Interests and Reasons*

Confronting the need to approve the reforms through a popular plebiscite, and having failed to do so in 1994, reformers needed to ensure a wide basis of support for this initiative. In this respect, the introduction of party-primaries and single presidential candidacies were advocated as natural counterparts of the majority runoff system. These particular reforms also addressed a long-standing claim of the left.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, “moderates” within Frente Amplio supported the reform due to this fact. For instance, Danilo Astori, leader of the largest fraction of Frente Amplio in the elections of 1994 persisted in favor of:

*“aniquilar las trampas (el DVS y el uso de candidaturas presidenciales múltiples) que, pulverizándolo, alejan al sistema político de la gente, es verdaderamente un objetivo revolucionario, en el sentido estricto del concepto” (Búsqueda N° 844, 21/03/1996, p.10).*

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<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, the reforms of 1994 failed in part because the leftist parties accepted the primaries but not the ballotage.

Indeed, the historical leader of Frente Amplio perfectly acknowledged the short-term effects of the reform:

*“Debemos de entenderlo como una lógica de la vida política y de la situación política [...] que nuestros adversarios no quieran que nosotros alcancemos el gobierno y el poder y mantenerse ellos en el ejercicio del mismo. [...] ¿O es que alguno de nosotros piensa que blancos y colorados van a pavimentar de pétalos de rosa nuestro camino de acceso al gobierno y al poder? (Liber Seregni, Búsqueda N° 830, 08/02/1996, pág. 4).*

Nonetheless, Seregni also supported the 1996 initiative due to the elimination of multiple presidential candidacies and the restriction of the DSV (we address the latter below).

Interestingly, from within traditional parties, these elements of the reform were not consensually supported. For instance, Alem García (a Blanco congreso-member) argued that:

*“Se propone un centralismo electoral, aumentar el poder de las cúpulas partidarias y, prácticamente, la eliminación de los dirigentes medios y departamentales” (Búsqueda N° 863; 3/10/1996, p.12).*

Meanwhile, the separation of the municipal elections, which allowed voters to cast votes for different parties at different political levels, also provided greater legitimacy to the reform. In particular, this piece of legislation fulfilled the interest of the PN, which had deeper roots than the PC at the local level, in the interior of the country.

#### *Short-term effects: Passing the reform and increasing voter-freedom*

Reformers needed to create a wide basis of partisan and popular support to ensure that the runoff was enacted. These additional measures collected a great deal of support in the partisan spectrum, as well as in the public eye and provided the reform the necessary legitimacy to be (barely!) approved. Moreover, dissent within Frente Amplio launched an internal crisis, that in the short-term, might have also favored the electoral chance of traditional parties.

Moreover, presidential elections with one single candidate per party along with the elimination of DVS for lower-chamber elections, have evidently given the electorate greater certainty with respect to the consequences of its vote. The splitting of the electoral cycle also made for a notable increase in voter freedom since it allowed them to opt for different parties at different governmental levels.

#### *Long-term effects: Are Primaries an effective mechanism for selecting presidential candidates?*



It is hard to argue that mandatory party primaries provide a better mechanism for selecting candidates than the DSV (Buquet 2003).

The constitutional reform of 1996 removed the double simultaneous vote for presidential elections, forcing parties to present single presidential candidates. In order to maintain the open competition that characterized traditional parties, the amendment established mandatory open primary elections. Since the new rules are in force, all parties wanting to participate in the electoral process must have “internal” elections on the same date.<sup>11</sup> Internal elections serve two purposes: i) selecting the presidential candidate at each party, and ii) electing delegates to the national convention and the 19 departmental party conventions. The national party conventions are comprised of 500 members (elected by proportional representation) and have two purposes: a) to select the presidential candidate if no candidate received more than 50% of the popular vote, or more than 40% with at least a 10 point margin over the second front runner; and b) to select the vice-presidential candidate.

At first sight, the electoral reform would not seem to have generated any significant alterations from the previous model relating to the mechanisms of presidential candidate selection, since as before the fractions could designate pre-candidates. There are numerous forces at work, however, that will change the competition within and among parties. First, the rules to select the party presidential candidates have changed; under the new rules, candidates must win a primary by gaining either 50% of the vote or at least 40% with an advantage of 10 points over the second front runner. If no candidate meets these requirements, a party convention chooses the candidate. This high threshold for winning the primary with the possibility of having the candidate chosen through the convention could yield a more fragmented system, as those observed under two-round electoral systems (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997b).

In short, primary elections force candidates belonging to the same party to compete among themselves, highlighting their differences and potentially generating internal confrontations. Here the prisoner’s dilemma structure of incentives is clear, as cooperative solutions are difficult to find. The way a party handles the primary competition, then, has a great impact on

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<sup>11</sup> Citizen may vote in any party primary, but they may only participate in one. Part of the reasoning behind holding the primaries on the same day for all parties was to prevent voters from intervening in the affairs of more than one party.

the subsequent general election. It is normally accepted that parties that contain internal conflict do better in general elections. This is not different from the U.S. system where: “all studies point toward divisive nomination campaigns contributing a negative effect to general election outcomes” (Atkeson 1998: 257). Kenney and Rice (1987: 31) also found that “when one party has a divisive primary season while the other party’s nominee is essentially uncontested, the divided party will be adversely affected in November.” Uruguayan evidence does not yet confirm these findings, but rather seems to suggest the existence of something like an optimal level of competitiveness in primaries, beyond which either higher or lower competition could damage the party.

The three main parties have chosen different strategies to deal with the new primary system, and each party dealt with the situation differently in 2004 than they had in 1999. Most notably, there was a significant decrease in the primary competition in the more recent election. The FA had a somehow symbolic internal competition in 1999, but put forth only a single candidate in 2004. The PC had had a well-balanced competition between two candidates in 1999, but also put forth a hegemonic candidate in 2004. The PN, which in 1999 had been excessively fragmented, ran just two main candidates in 2004 who competed without high levels of vitriol. If we link the degree of competitiveness of each primary contest to the electoral performance of each traditional party at the general election, we can see that when the effective number of candidates was close to 2 the party did well, and when this number moved away from 2, either up or down, the performance in the general election worsened (Table 3). This does not seem to be true for the FA, which had a very low level of competitiveness in both elections while their electoral growth continued an upward trend that started in 1971.

**Table 3: Effective number of presidential candidates in the traditional- parties primaries**

Election Year	Partido Colorado		Partido Nacional	
	Ef. N° Candidates*	Electoral Growth**	Ef. N° Candidates*	Electoral Growth**
1999	2.0	0.4%	2.8	-8.9%
2004	1.2	-22.2%	1.8	12.8%

\* *Effective number of presidential candidates at the primary contest*

\*\* *Percentage of electoral growth related to the previous election*

In sum, the notion of a well-balanced primary contest implies that in addition to running an effective number of candidates close to 2, the parties should work to minimize confrontation between the two front-runners. Therefore, along with an attractive primary contest, the party must offer a united image to avoid losing voters as the result of a conflict-ridden primary. While too much confrontation can lead to an internal deterioration of the party, manipulating primaries to avoid confrontation has also been harmful for traditional parties. In 2004 the major fractions of the PC unified behind a single candidate, thus distorting the primary process. The result, however, proved disastrous as the party lost badly in the general election. Again, since the DSV forces intra-party rivals to focus their campaigns more on inter-partisan rivalries, it allows internal party choice without yielding strenuous and divisive internal fights. The DSV, then, favored these parties, whereas primaries may damage them.

The DSV presented an additional benefit both for parties and voters. Josep Colomer shows how “the candidates selected on a primary elections’ basis tend to be not very popular or losers in the corresponding presidential elections” (2002: 119). This occurs due to the differences in who participates in the two rounds. Resorting to a spatial model, Colomer’s reasoning can be clearly illustrated. The winning pre-candidate of a primary election should be the one who is the closest to the median voter within the partisan electorate. However, a centrist within a party may be an extremist for the whole electorate. A leftist party, therefore, would do better in the general election by choosing a candidate who is to the right of their median member and a rightist party would be best positioned by choosing a candidate to the left of their overall membership. The DSV resolves this problem for the parties too, in that it allows the parties to present a wide array of options to the whole electorate, therefore benefiting both the citizenry, which enjoys a wider menu, and the party, which does not limit its electoral appeal.

Although there are only two elections to consider, Uruguay’s results only partially support these hypotheses. In 1999 the PN’s winning pre-candidate –Lacalle– was without doubt closer to the median Blanco voter, but his defeated contender –Ramírez– was much closer to the whole electorate’s center. Something similar could be said about the FA, whose winner, Vázquez, clearly showed a more radical profile than the defeated Astori. The winner in the Colorado internal election, Batlle, however, was ideologically placed more to the right than the defeated candidate, Hierro, but Batlle was still in a much better position with the entire electorate due to Hierro’s relation with the outgoing government. In 1999, then, the

Colorados chose the best candidate for the general election and were successful. In 2004, the only party with a true primary was the PN, choosing Larrañaga over Lacalle. In this case Larrañaga was closer than Lacalle to the median voter; thus, contradicting Colomer's (2002) claim that party militants would choose more extremist candidates. Even though the Blancos chose a centrist, the Frente Amplio won the general election in a landslide, in spite of running Vázquez who is positioned on the left of the ideological scale as the presidential candidate. In sum, the primaries have not always yielded winners who are more representative of their parties than the full electorate, and it is also unclear that these relatively extreme candidates are poor general election competitors, perhaps in part because the other parties also choose poorly.

Moreover, holding primaries independently of the general election produced to additional consequences: i) it lengthens the political campaigns and therefore ii) it increases the costs of campaigns and electoral processes. It is generally assumed that these are undesirable consequences for a political system, especially in a country where political or government spending is of high concern. The high costs of the electoral organization and the prolonged nature of campaigns can cause loathing and political distrust in the citizenry, thus having an adverse effect on the system's legitimacy. At least one important advantage of the DSV system was its shorter campaign season due to the simultaneous holding of primary and general elections. The legislature did try to deal with the long campaign period by moving the primaries back from April to June, by a law in 2004. Primaries in April forced the parties to define their pre-candidates the previous year, and the move to June has resulted in a shortening of the calendar by considerably more than just two months.

*Main externality of the new election system: The increasing detachment between local and national partisan structures:*

A trend towards the de-nationalization of elections was observed in Uruguay, particularly in 1999-2000, with local electoral contests presenting diverging trends from national elections in some districts. Specifically, whereas the Blanco and Colorado parties benefited from such trend, the FA lost some of the electoral support it received in the presidential election (Guerrini 2000; Magri 2000). This can be explained by the separation of national and local elections, the consolidation of strong local leaderships, and the progressive popular disenchantment with national ones. In this context, Mayors gained autonomy and

were better able to decide whether or not it was convenient for them to “put their apparatuses at play” for the national election. This trend was strengthened by the constitutional provision that established unique presidential candidates for every party contesting the election.

In cases where supporting a national presidential candidacy seemed openly inconvenient to a local leader given the presidential candidate’s low likelihood of winning office and the Mayor’s alignment with a different fraction from the one that had won the primary (and presidential nomination) of their party (e.g. the case of Larrañaga in Paysandú, Da Rosa in Tacuarembó, or Cerdeña in San José), Mayors did not decisively help national leaders in their campaigns. After the first round, covert negotiations between local and national activists of both traditional parties also took place. For instance, in San José, Juan Ciruchí a former and extremely popular *Herrerista* mayor with a great personal following in the district exchanged his support for the candidacy of Colorado Jorge Batlle in the presidential runoff for Lista 15 support in his electoral battle against his former Municipal Secretary and incumbent Mayor: Cerdeña.<sup>12</sup>

In 2005 however, likely following the national wave favoring FA, the levels of national-local divergence were lower, granting the left eight Mayoralties (five previously held by the Blanco Party and three corresponding to the Colorado one), with first time electoral victories in municipal contests outside Montevideo. In turn, while the Colorado Party was only able to win (maintain) one Mayoralty, the Blanco Party obtained ten.

### *3.3 The elimination of electoral cooperatives*

#### *Interests, Reasons, and Short-Term Effects*

Eliminating the accumulation by *sublemas* was in the interest of the main national fractions, which could, as García anticipated, recentralize power within parties and eventually induce greater levels of congressional discipline and more effective governance. Nonetheless, the main short-term interest of reformers was the same than the one pursued through the reforms described in b; namely: to widen the potential political and electoral support for the initiative. Citizen’s poor opinion on “electoral cooperatives” and Frente Amplio’s historical

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Juan Chiruchí, Miguel Zunino, and Jorge Cerdeña in San José (2003).

request regarding their elimination supported this rationale. Indeed, while defending the reform proposal, Danilo Astori from the Frente Amplio also attacked the effects of the triple DVS:

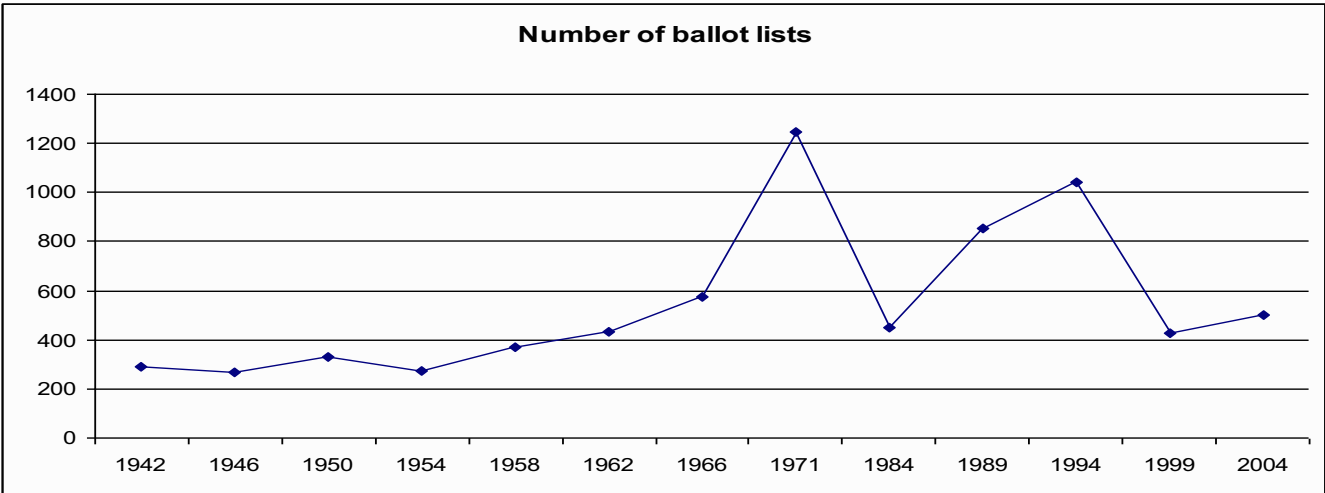
*“[...al sumar sus votos para perjudicar a otra mayoría] las cooperativas electorales tergiversan mucho la voluntad del elector” (Búsqueda N° 871, 28/11/1996, p. 72).*

The approval of the Constitutional reform in 1996 fulfilled the main short-term interest pursued by reformers. In the long-run, the additional interests of reformers were also fulfilled, leading to the centralization of power by national factions and a more direct linkage between upper and lower chamber lists.

*Long-Term Effects: Greater Transparency, a Decreasing Number of Lists for the House, and Greater Centralization of Power within Traditional Parties.*

The elimination of the accumulation of *sublemas* in the election of representatives has made for a very much simpler choice for the electorate, and this can be seen in the reduction in the number of lists presented in 1999 and 2004, which amounted to less than a half of those presented in 1994 (see Figure 2). As long as different lists for the House cannot accumulate their votes, the smaller ones have either to join one of the biggest or to build a single list among several of them.

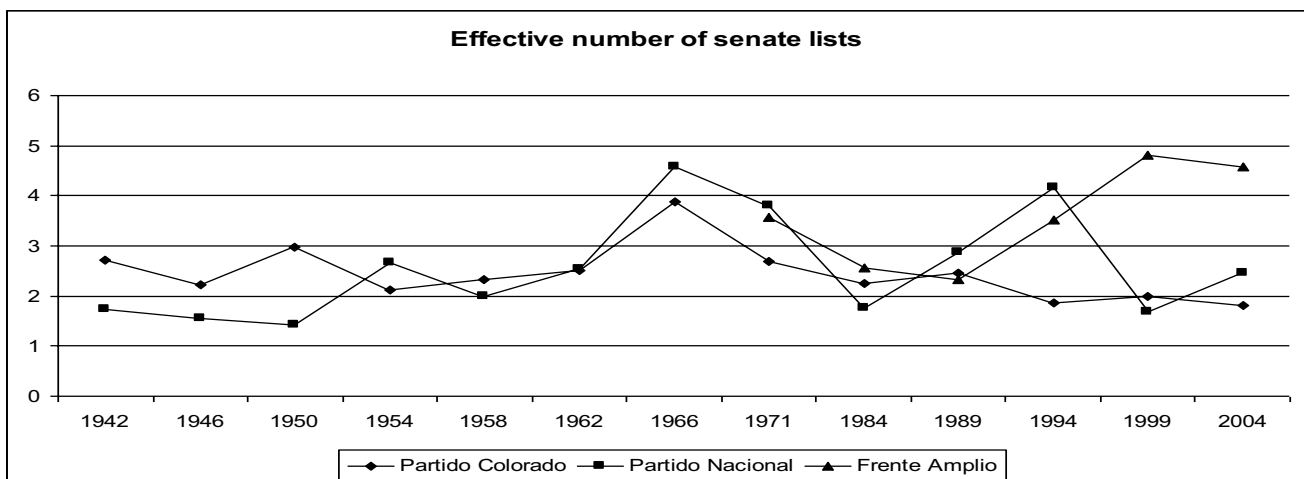
**Figure 3: Number of Ballot Lists for the Chamber of Deputies**



*Source: authors' elaboration based on information from the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales Data Bank.*

Moreover, the reduction in the legislative supply is associated with the predominance of big national fractions over local political groups. Under the new system, a rigid connection between the supply for the Senate and the supply for the House of Representatives is enforced. Consequently, we can expect more disciplined legislative behavior on the part of lower-chamber representatives.

**Figure 4: Effective Number of Senate Lists**



*Source: Authors' elaboration based on information from the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales Data Bank*

In spite of the reduction in the number of lists of candidates, which has enormously reduced and simplified the supply to the electorate, the internal fractionalism of the political parties has not gone the same way. In this area, the reform does not seem to have had any particular impact, since the internal fractionalism of the Frente Amplio increased, that of the Blanco Party has been reduced, and that of the Colorado Party has held steady. As long as electoral rules for the Senate did not change we should not expect any changes in party fractionalism, but it could be argued that single presidential candidates pose incentives to more fragmented parties as long as the competition for president and for senate seats was disconnected (Buquet 2001). The growing trend in FA's internal fragmentation could reflect such a process, while the opposite process at the traditional parties could be better explained due to their declining share of seats.

*Main externality of the elimination of electoral cooperatives: The weakening of traditional parties' territorial apparatuses*

The simultaneous election of national and departmental party authorities in internal elections, combined with the new timing of elections and the elimination of the proliferation of lists in parliamentary elections have altered the internal balance between national and local partisan/fractional organizations.

The joint effect of electoral reforms and the economic crisis that started in 1998 and got deepened during 2002 and 2003, have weakened the two most prominent national political apparatuses of the traditional parties (the Herrerismo in the Blanco Party and the Foro Batllista in the Colorado Party). It seems possible to claim that traditional parties have gone through a process of oligarchization, restricting the historically high levels of internal diversity that characterized each partisan offer and deterring wider participatory processes within parties. Concurrently, the partial elimination in 1996 of the DSV for the congressional lower-chamber (which did away with the “electoral cooperatives”) also introduced higher constraints at the time of keeping the classic “electoral *rastrillos*” (catch-all partisan offer) open.

As both a Colorado (Foro Batllista) and a Blanco (Herrerismo) local leader state:

*"They have discouraged the little ants. We are little, but we are the ones gathering votes for them. Before, every weekend, I went out to the countryside, to little towns, to talk to the people. Today, I don't do it anymore. I have maintained the friendship with the people, but we cannot sacrifice friends for politics. We cannot go out and promise what we don't have. We don't have anything now. So, we set up the list with a group of friends who had a good economic situation, so we did not have to promise anything. If someone came and ask for something, we just told them that we did not have anything to give. The only thing we promised was to try to force an internal change in the party". (Hubaré Aliano, Colorado local activist. interviewed by Luna, 2003).*

*"The political power in Montevideo is forgetting us. And that's a terrible mistake. We cannot be connected only when they need us for the elections, there has to be a better way of staying in touch. That's the tradition of herrerismo, that's why we were so strong. Now, national leaders have disappeared and that hurts the party. This time they did not provide political offices to us. Let's say two or three offices in the state, anything somewhere. In the committee you have people working all year round and they are the ones keeping the presence of the party alive here. Then, when elections come they benefit from that. But when we go there, they shut the door on your face. And if the party has no reciprocity with us, we cannot provide for the people. Then,*



*how can I go and ask them for their vote?" (Juan Creceri, Blanco local activist, interviewed by Luna, 2003).*

Paradoxically, the weakening of party territorial structures enhanced the need of individual congress-members to stay personally in the field. This is particularly important for non-Metropolitan congress-members, which face specific constituent demands that cannot be addressed through the media. Along these lines, a Colorado congress-member points to the changes brought about by the increasing restriction of clientelistic side-payments in the system:

*"New opportunities had been created. You have to get to the ground from the heights and be close to the people. Talk to them, give them opinions, and inform them. Before the congress-member visit every location once a year, at most. And then, people had to go to your office, stand on a line, and present their demands to you. Some congress-member feel threatened by the impossibility of getting on the phone and solve people's problems, but they don't realize that they need to relate to people on new grounds. I came from a small town and when I was a child, you rarely saw a congress-member in the field. Today, everyone is there doing different things". (Jorge Duque, Colorado congress-member, interviewed by Luna, 2003).*

Additionally, partially deriving from the reduction of the available stock of goods for establishing non-programmatic linkages with constituents (but also resulting from the institutional incentives introduced in the 1996 Constitution), both traditional parties have witnessed a process of bi-fractionalization, which reinforces the reduction of the historically high levels of internal competition observed in both parties (Piñeiro 2004).

*"Even though I am herrerista, I know that the hegemony of Herrerismo has hurted the party. We have always been a party of many candidates, three, four, or even more. And last time, we came to the national election with only one candidate and after a primary that had left many injuries open. The Blancos do not like to vote like that. They like many candidates, the Blanco Independiente and the Herrerista are different. They like different candidates and those differences benefit the party's electoral performance". (Juan Creceri, Blanco local activist, interviewed by Luna, 2003).*

Therefore, the constraining rules introduced in 1996 have restricted traditional parties' capacity to present a widely diversified electoral menu. This has seemingly translated into a greater incapacity to compete in the long-run.

*Two additional externalities: "Saving" FA from governing during the economic crisis and further enabling the consolidation of Tabaré Vázquez political leadership.*

The reform process and its aftermath yielded two additional negative externalities for traditional parties. On the one hand, if the reform were not approved in 1996, Frente Amplio would have probably arrived into presidential office in 1999. Accordingly, this party would have been in charge of governing the country during the most severe economic and social crisis that Uruguay had faced in history. Presumably, traditional parties would have eventually benefited from voter discontent with the left, strengthening their chance of resuming their historical leadership in 2004. Conversely, in 2004, they obtained their worst electoral result ever.

On the other hand, within Frente Amplio, Vázquez's confrontation with Seregni and Astori over the constitutional reform of 1996 triggered important degrees of internal turmoil. However, in the long-run, the internal conflict surrounding the constitutional reform debate was crucial in fostering Vázquez hegemony and moderation. While Vázquez opposed the reform, Seregni (still the President of FA) had personally negotiated the deal with Blanco and Colorado leaders and therefore supported the measure. Astori joined Seregni and both claimed that beyond short-term hindrances to the electoral chances of FA in 1999, the partial elimination of the DSV and the instauration of unique presidential candidacies coincided with the historical positions of FA. Seregni's resignation to FA's presidency during the celebration of the party's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in February 1996 and Vázquez' ascent to that post further consolidated the internal power of the second within the party. Although the reform was popularly ratified in a plebiscite, Vázquez' stance against the reform was supported by 49% (almost 20% above FA's vote in the 1994 election) of the electorate.

Additionally, in the context of the constitutional reform debate, Vázquez' refusal to adhere to an arrangement with the traditional parties consolidated his image as a harsh opposition leader. Internally, this granted Vázquez the support of radical groups that had since 1990 aligned with Seregni and Astori, producing a crucial switch in the internal and external positioning of FA's leaderships as Astori began to be seen as a moderate, willing to pact with the traditional-family (Yaffé 2005). Thereafter, Vázquez received further compensations for his consistent opposition to neoliberal parties with the integration of the MPP to his internal coalition in 1999 and the results he obtained in the presidential primary defeating Astori by an uncontested margin (82% vs. 18%). Later that year, Astori's faction (AU) suffered defeat at the polls, obtaining almost 50% fewer votes than the largest internal plurality obtained in the

1994 election (39% vs. 20%). Vázquez hegemony within FA turned out crucial in explaining the party's successful electoral show up in 2004 (Lanzaro 2004; Buquet 2005).

#### **4. Conclusion: The paradox of the reforms of 1996**

In 1996 Uruguayan citizens approve a new constitution that changed several of the classic institutional features of the country since 1942. Interesting, these changes were processed in a certainly democratic environment and far away from any political, social or economic stressful situation, as seen in many other Latin American countries. The constitutional reform of 1996 is consistent with the long-term trajectory of the country.

The reform introduced a crucial split in the general pattern of cooperation and competition between coalitional partners (the Blanco and Colorado party) yielding two distinct scenarios (from 1984 to 1995 and since 1996) that potentially introduce important discontinuities for the analysis of political competition in the country. In the 1994 election the leftist party (Frente Amplio) almost won the presidency. This fact marked a fundamental watershed on the country's recent history, increasing the perceived costs of losing office for both traditional parties. While before 1994, losing office meant that the other traditional party would win but without a majority, now the implications were far more drastic as both traditional parties would be left out of office.

Which factors explain constitutional reformers' myopia in Uruguay? Following Pierson (2004) we will claim that this case illustrates a clear instance in which the instrumental and short-term orientation of reformers contradicted their long-term interests. Therefore, in Uruguay, reformers were short-sighted and unable to anticipate the long-term effects of some measures that were introduced jointly with the runoff system to successfully achieve their short-term objective (prevent FA to win the election of 1999). However, this case also illustrates the limitations that instrumental reformers face when they need to negotiate an incoherent reform package to accommodate the interest of a wide set of partisan actors and to make that package attractive to the citizenry. Finally, we also need to stress that the long-term outcomes of the reform (i.e. the result of the 2004 election) were not only a by-product of its long-term effects. Indeed, that outcome was also a consequence of a long-run electoral swing and facilitated by the occurrence of a very significant external shock: the financial collapse of the country in 2002. Although some of the external phenomena affecting the long-term

effectiveness of the reform should have been predicted (i.e. the long-term pattern of electoral growth of the left), the depth of the economic crisis and its effects on partisan alignments when interacting with the externalities created by the Constitutional reform were not foreseeable.

Given that any reform of the constitution must be approved by a majority of the electorate in Uruguay, the reform should not only be functional to the *interest* of both traditional parties, but should also seek to accommodate broader *interest* in order to generate a critical mass of partisan support for the reform. Moreover, facing the challenge of making the reform legitimate and worthy in the eyes of the citizenry, *interest* should be dressed with *reasons*. The *reasons* on which citizen support for the reform was requested derived from some of the anticipated consequences of the four amendments address above.

Whereas our evidence shows that the first *reason* on which reform was advocated was unfunded (coalitional politics was further complicated after the reform was introduced), we claim that the second series of *reasons* used to “sell” the reform to the public was more accurately predicted and promised. Precisely, the effects of the additional reforms introduced to accommodate the *interests* of a broad partisan coalition and to lower the prominence of the runoff system within the reform package, ended up producing more harm than good to traditional parties in the long-run. Especially the single presidential candidacies and the elimination of ‘electoral cooperatives’ based on the DSV eroded the electoral bases of traditional parties and their capacity to offer a wide “electoral menu.” Moreover, due to the institutionalization of a bi-polar pattern of political competition between the left and traditional parties which further complicated coalitional politics and made the latter increasingly unable to differentiate and renew their electoral offer.

Uruguay excels in Latin America for having tried with an enormity of political institutions, most of them processed within a democratic context. The key actors for *all* these experiences have being political parties and one of their most outstanding features is the existence of strongly organized fractions that operate with great political autonomy inside them. The new rules of the game approved in 1996, while fostering more fragmented political configurations than those Uruguayan used to witness, did not give the government effective instruments which would serve to neutralize this fragmentation. The only arena in which the new rules could have some impact is in the legislative discipline of fractions and parties, a

phenomenon which, in any case, was present before the reform (Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes 1998).

**ENCUENTRO PROGRESISTA - FRENTE AMPLIO - NUEVA MAYORIA**



**ASAMBLEA URUGUAY**  
MOVIMIENTO POPULAR FRENTEAMPLISTA  
CARPINTERIA

**2121**

**MONTEVIDEO**

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**VOTO por el partido ENCUENTRO PROGRESISTA-FRENTE AMPLIO-NUEVA MAYORIA, y por los siguientes candidatos:**  
(Período 2005 2010) Presidente **TABARE VAZQUEZ** Vicepresidente: **RODOLFO NIN NOVOA**

**CAMARA DE SENADORES** (Período 2005-2010) (Sistema de suplentes respectivos)

VOTO por el PARTIDO ENCUENTRO PROGRESISTA-FRENTE AMPLIO-NUEVA MAYORIA por el Sub Lema **TODOS POR EL CAMBIO** y por los siguientes candidatos:

TITULAR	1ER. SUPLENTE	2DO. SUPLENTE	3ER. SUPLENTE
1. <b>DANILO ASTORI</b>	CARLOS BARAIBAR	ENRIQUE PINTADO	CESAR SEGOVIA
2. <b>ALBERTO CID</b>	SUSANA DALMAS	MILTON ANTOGNAZZA	ARTURO ARRUABARRENA
3. <b>SUSANA DALMAS</b>	CESAR SEGOVIA	RUBEN OBISPO	JOSE CARLOS MAHIA
4. <b>CESAR SEGOVIA</b>	RUBEN OBISPO	LUIS BOLLA	LUIS FONTES
5. <b>EDUARDO PINTOS CURBELO</b>	RICARDO VEGA	MABEL PROTTO	ULISES SUAREZ
6. <b>MANUEL NEGRO</b>	GERARDO REY	MARTHA MUÑIZ	TANIA MAURI
7. <b>NELLY GOITÍNO</b>	ELIDA GENCARELLI	MABEL ALTIERI	RICARDO COUTO
8. <b>JUAN JOSE RAMOS</b>	CARLOS FONTANA	JOSE HARGUINDEGUY	EDUARDO MARQUEZ
9. <b>CRISTINA GOMEZ</b>	LILIANA CELLA	EMMA BARAIBAR	HERMINIA PUCCI
10. <b>BETHEL SEREGNI</b>	GONZALO GRAÑA	PABLO LEIVA	JUAN CARLOS ALFARO
11. <b>ALBERTO ESTEVES</b>	RUBEN OSORIO	JOSE VIETTRO	ELMER CESAR
12. <b>EDUARDO ARBULO</b>	RUBEN MARTINEZ	NYDIA NUÑEZ	JUAN RIPOLL
13. <b>PERLA MORANDI</b>	FERNANDO ACEVEDO	DANIEL BIDART	ERNESTO MORALES
14. <b>ALEJANDRO ECHEVERRIA</b>	ALVARO LUZARDO	ARTIGAS REYNA	WASHINGTON MIRANDA
15. <b>JUAN DELGADO</b>	DANTE DA ROSA	DANIEL AVONDET	JUAN CARLOS PERIN
16. <b>INOCENCIO BERTONI</b>	EDUARDO SORRIBAS	NORMA RIVERO	JOSE MONTERO TRAIABEL
17. <b>RODOLFO BARCELO</b>	ATILIO ESQUIVEL	CARLOS TABOAS	SUSANA MAURIN
18. <b>DONALD MARTINS</b>	MARIA INES GIL	JOSE MARIA DA COSTA	DINO GIANNACCINI
19. <b>JORGE FERRARI</b>	PERLA VILA	MIGUEL VALBUENA	VIRGINIA COSTA
20. <b>GERARDO GASANIGA</b>	HUMBERTO COLINA	NELDO BRUM	SANDRA CASAS
21. <b>ALBERTO ROSSELLI</b>	WALTER OLAZABAL	OSVALDO FERREYRA	EDUARDO MAGGIOLI

**CAMARA DE REPRESENTANTES** (Período 2005-2010) (Sistema de suplentes respectivos)

VOTO por el PARTIDO ENCUENTRO PROGRESISTA-FRENTE AMPLIO-NUEVA MAYORIA por el Sub Lema **ASAMBLEA URUGUAY** y por los siguientes candidatos:

TITULAR	1ER SUPLENTE	2DO SUPLENTE	3ER SUPLENTE
1. <b>CARLOS BARAIBAR</b>	DANIELA PAYSSE	JORGE PATRONE	MIGUEL VASALLO
2. <b>ENRIQUE PINTADO</b>	ELOISA MOREIRA	JUAN CARLOS BENGOA	GUSTAVO SILVA
3. <b>BRUM CANET</b>	ALFREDO ASTI	ELENA PONTE	JAIME IGORRA
4. <b>JORGE ORRICO</b>	JORGE ZAS	JOSE PEDRO RODRIGUEZ	GUSTAVO SCARON
5. <b>CARLOS VARELA NESTIER</b>	JOSE CARRASCO	JUAN JOSE PINEYRUA	BETTINA HANA
6. <b>DANIELA PAYSSE</b>	CARLOS VARELA UBAL	DANIEL MESA	TERESITA GOYENI
7. <b>JOSE CARRASCO</b>	PORTHOS D'ALESSIO	MARIO QUINTANA	GABRIEL SALSAMENDI
8. <b>JORGE ZAS</b>	AQUILES DE CESARE	ARMEN SARKISIAN	RAUL VERGARA
9. <b>ELENA PONTE</b>	GLORIA AMIDO	ANA LLOBET	MERCEDES DE TORO
10. <b>RAMON FIRME</b>	JORGE IRIBARNEGARAY	ANTONIO PEREZ GARCIA	NESTOR LOUISE
11. <b>MAURICIO GUARINONI</b>	CHRISTIAN DI CANDIA	ESTEFANIA SCHIAVONE	RODRIGO MARENALES
12. <b>SERGIO YAMGOTCHIAN</b>	WALTER LANDESMAN	MARCOS COSTA	GUILLERMO SAEZ
13. <b>MARIO GUERRERO</b>	MAXIMO MESA	MAGELA BERRO	CRISTINA LIENDO
14. <b>Mª DEL CARMEN GONZALEZ</b>	MILAGROS BURGHI	NATALIO BLANKLEIDER	NANCY ETCHEVERRY
15. <b>PABLO ALVAREZ</b>	ELSA RODRIGUEZ	MARISA TETTAMANTI	LUIS SIERRA
16. <b>FAVIO TRINIDAD</b>	CARLOS PRIEGUE	ALVARO BORGES	WALTER KRUNK
17. <b>ALICIA DIAZ</b>	WILLIAMS CALDES	EVELYN CARRASCO	ALEJANDRO ROSSI
18. <b>JOSE FERNANDEZ</b>	TERESITA CARRASCO	JORGE MUSSI	JULIO GARCIA MILLER
19. <b>BEATRIZ NUÑEZ</b>	MIGUEL GOMEZ	JORGE GONZALEZ	GONZALO MACHADO
20. <b>SANTIAGO AZNAREZ</b>	LUIS TORRES	PEDRO RAPPALINI	MAURICIO ITZCOVICH
21. <b>RICARDO MAGNONE</b>	JORGE GALZERANO	LUIS BENVENUTO	DANIEL FELDMAN

**JUNTA ELECTORAL** (Período 2005-2010) (Sistema de suplentes respectivos)

VOTO por el PARTIDO ENCUENTRO PROGRESISTA-FRENTE AMPLIO-NUEVA MAYORIA por el Sub Lema **TODOS POR EL CAMBIO** y por los siguientes candidatos:

TITULAR	1ER SUPLENTE	2DO SUPLENTE
1. <b>JOSE PEDRO MONTERO</b>	NAIR ZEBALLOS	FABIO ESCALANTE
2. <b>NORA D'ALESSANDRO</b>	GISELE NOGUES	LAURA SERE
3. <b>ROBERTO VARELA</b>	GUSTAVO CRESPO	FABIO SAAVEDRA
4. <b>NESTOR FERNANDEZ</b>	HERMINIA PUCCI	ROSSANA FAVERIO

**31 DE OCTUBRE DE 2004**

Figure 5. Ballot paper for the 2004 national elections

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