

Clientelistic Stability and Institutional Fragility

The Political System in the Dominican Republic (1978-2010)

by

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Since 1978, with the disappearance of the historical caudillos (Joaquín Balaguer, Juan Bosch, and José Francisco Peña Gómez), institutional fragility and electoral power have been the keys to the survival of the political party system in the Dominican Republic. The current parties are more stable but not more institutionalized. The authoritarianism that characterized the Dominican political system from the 1960s until the end of the twentieth century relied for its stability not just on power and repression but on political control through clientelism and prebendalism. These mechanisms served not only as an instrument of social control but also as a strong basis for legitimacy.

Desde 1978, tras la desaparición de los caudillos históricos (Joaquín Balaguer, Juan Bosch y José Francisco Peña Gómez), la fragilidad institucional y la fuerza electoral han sido las claves de la supervivencia del sistema de partidos en República Dominicana. Los partidos son hoy más estables pero no más institucionalizados. El autoritarismo que ha caracterizado al sistema político dominicano desde los años sesenta hasta finales del siglo XX no se ha apoyado únicamente en la apelación a la fuerza y a la represión; la clave de la estabilidad ha sido el control político a través del clientelismo y la movilización prebendalista. Este mecanismo, no solo es un arma de control social, sino que asegura bases firmes de legitimidad.

Keywords: Transition, Political system, Clientelism, Dominican Republic

In the long period from the assassination of the dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in 1961 to 2010, the Dominican Republic has gone through a series of dramatic political changes. There have been two major political milestones in this evolution: the post-Trujillo transition (1961–1966) and the transition from an authoritarian Bonapartist regime to a more democratic one (1978–1982). In both cases the emerging political orders had some of the features of the authoritative systems that preceded them but assumed a different political function (Lozano, 2004). Between 1998 and 2002, the disappearance from the political scene of the three Dominican caudillos (José Francisco Peña Gómez of the

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Partido de la Revolución Dominicana [Party of the Dominican Revolution—PRD], Juan Bosch of the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana [Party of the Dominican Liberation—PLD], and Joaquín Balaguer of the Partido Reformista Social Cristiano [Christian Social Reformist Party—PRSC) opened the way for a new stage in Dominican public life. This stage presented the possibility of a change in modes of mass political mobilization and a chance to overcome the fragile institutionality of the gerontocratic, delegative semi-polyarchy (Jiménez, 1999) of the previous period. After nearly a decade, however, what we have is a continuum, and the elites have shown a chameleon-like ability to adapt to democracy while preserving old-style patronage, prebendalism, and state patrimonialist management. Currently, the Dominican Republic is the country with the highest degree of clientelism in the region (UNDP, 2004), a fact confirmed by a recent study on the relationship between citizens and politicians around the world (Kitschelt and Singer, 2009). The nature of Dominican political representation testifies to the difficulty of channeling public interest toward Dominican institutions.

In the current stage of democratic consolidation, the party system has undergone a gradual change from a three-party system to a “satellite bipartisanship” (Espinal, 2010) in which the ability to attract the small allied parties that gravitate around the two mainstream ones—the PLD and the PRD—is essential in tilting the balance one way or the other. The absence of ideological differentiation and limited polarization have fostered a centralized electoral strategy and a pragmatic division of power and state resources, as well as a tendency to switch sides and thus obtain the sympathies of the Dominican electorate. Switching sides is, in fact, the mechanism par excellence through which political actors and the party system rearrange themselves in the post-caudillo era (Benito, 2011).

Caudillist leadership, conservative populism (in the sense of Laclau [1987]), factionalism, and a kind of negotiating tradition (see Nuñez, 2009) are still manifest in old patterns of interparty competition now carried out by new actors. The most significant changes in the Dominican party system in the three decades since the second fall of authoritarianism in 1978 have been de-ideologization, constant shifting from one party to another (known as *transfuguismo*), and the virtual disappearance of the PRSC.

ONE DRAMA IN SIX ACTS: A CHRONOLOGY OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF DOMINICAN DEMOCRACY

As O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1988) point out, an analysis of the political landscape of the transition to democracy allows us to assess the possibilities of particular outcomes. A chronology of the long transition process illustrates the obstacles to the institutionalization of political democracy in the country.

1978: THE RISE TO POWER OF THE PRD AND THE CRISIS OF THE POPULIST TRADITION

The triumph of the PRD in 1978 marked a change in Dominican political dynamics: a rapid depoliticization of the army and a new focus on the relations

between the executive and Congress. This opened up a new space for democratic practice after 12 years of the Joaquín Balaguer government (1966–1978) and its conservative and authoritarian modernization project. The transition to democracy began with the decision of the Central Electoral Board to resolve the postelection conflict of 1978 by according to Balaguer's party half of the votes obtained by the PRD in four provinces (Jiménez, 1999: 126). The PRD governments of Antonio Guzmán (1978–1982) and Jorge Blanco (1982–1986) were characterized by infighting; the Senate (with a pro-Balaguer majority) blocked key projects during Guzmán's term, and financial crisis, uncontrolled inflation, and restrictive economic measures triggered a popular uprising in April 1984. The clientelism and paternalism of the PRD governments were incapable of counteracting the loss of popular support and discontent resulting from the absence of the promised social change.

1986: THE CONSERVATIVE CAUDILLO RETURNS TO POWER

Amidst this crisis, Joaquín Balaguer emerged as the providential figure responsible for restoring the state's lost legitimacy for the masses. To do so, he was forced to adopt a very different stance from that which had characterized his previous 12 years in government. The Balaguer who left power in 1978 was an authoritarian reformer; when he returned in 1986 he was forced to be a conservative leader (see Linz, 2000, and Collier, 1985, on these types of leadership). The new Balaguer began a moralistic campaign against government corruption that landed former president Jorge Blanco in court, fostered social corporatization (the privatization of public life), and abandoned the party system, setting himself up as a savior. He became a mediator between the new social movements and the government, between the traditional unions and management, and, generally speaking, between civil society and the state. Initially, the groups in power enthusiastically supported this strategy for controlling the popular movement, but the agreement did not last long. The policy of financing public investment with inorganic money fueled an inflationary spiral and exacerbated the crisis of legitimacy of the populist state, which was unable to meet its international commitments with regard to payment of the public debt or even to support basic services such as energy and water. In this context, Balaguer found it increasingly difficult to play his role as arbiter. The PRD was clearly falling apart: Blanco and his main collaborators were imprisoned, and there was an internal crisis (a leadership struggle between Jacobo Majluta and José Francisco Peña Gómez). The PLD emerged as an alternative party, and this provided the basis for a deep questioning of the traditional political system.

1990: THE CRISIS OF THE POPULIST SYSTEM

With the questioning of the credibility of the party system, new social movements gained ground, and so did corporate entrepreneurs such as the Consejo Nacional de Hombres de Empresa (National Council of Businessmen—CNHE) and the Asociación de Industriales de Herrera (Industrial Association of Herrera—AIH). The May 1990 elections took place in the midst of the reconstruction of the relationships among the state, civil society, and the party system. The results seriously called into question the forms of political representation espoused by the populist tradition and broke with the bipartisanship characteristic

of the electoral process since Trujillo's death in 1961. The PRD managed to reorganize only a few months before the elections and after Jacobo Majluta had left the party to establish the Partido Revolucionario Independiente (Independent Revolutionary Party—PRI) and José Francisco Peña Gómez had emerged as the undisputed PRD leader. There was also dissent within the PRSC, with the faction led by Fernando Alvarez Bogaert opposing Balaguer's presidential candidacy. Only the PLD seems to have reached election time in apparent unity with its unopposed candidate, Juan Bosch.

The electoral dynamics reflected the crisis of legitimacy of the party system. On the one hand, there was a de-ideologization of political discourse; the election campaign was focused and pragmatic and avoided major national problems. On the other hand, the Catholic Church strengthened its role as political mediator and the business sector its power of initiative, assuming the direction of the mass parties. This was made evident when Peña Gómez and Bosch acquiesced to the main issues espoused by neoliberal entrepreneurs during the famous lunches of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Thus the business sector ensured that, if the opposition won, the economic agenda would suit its interests and that populist policies that presented the state as a redistributive agent (both in its conservative expression under Balaguer's reformism and under the popular democracy of the PRD governments) would be abandoned. The 1990 elections confirmed major breaks with tradition with regard to (1) bipartisanship (the PLD and the PRSC controlled 36 percent and 34 percent of the Chamber of Representatives respectively and needed the support of the PRD to get the majority, and Balaguer won the presidency with a margin of only 1.6 percent), (2) turnout (the PRD's call not to vote increased abstentionism to an unprecedented more than 40 percent), and (3) the redistribution of the electorate (the PLD gained strength among the industrial proletariat, the marginalized masses, the peasantry, and the agricultural proletariat, while the PRSC lost its mobilization capacity among the peasantry but remained strong among the marginal classes in the city of Santo Domingo and in the poorest regions of the country).

During a tense election day, suspicions of fraud led Bosch (the favorite in the polls) to threaten marching into the offices of the Central Electoral Board to defend his victory. Balaguer's narrow margin of victory and discrediting sparked a political crisis, and for the 58 days it took the Board to proclaim an official winner, the government was in complete isolation. The opposition was unable to create a hegemonic resistance block and faced the situation divided: the PLD denounced the results as illegitimate while the PRD accepted them. To break out of his political isolation, Balaguer signed the so-called Economic Solidarity Pact, strategically shifting the crisis to the economic sphere. The business community signed the agreement, thus legitimizing the government and breaking its ties with the opposition. The liberalization of prices exacerbated inflation and diminished the quality of life, and this led to a general strike called by neighborhood organizations and the major trade unions (which had not signed the pact, although they were invited to) on August 13 and 14, two days before Balaguer was sworn in. Another general strike call in September forced Balaguer to begin a dialogue in which he presented himself as the mediator in charge of protecting the people from the profiteering of the business sector. Waiting for the outcome of the negotiations split the trade union movement between moderates who supported reconciliation and a radical wing. In

the end, the strike had little effect and Balaguer negotiated with the upper echelons of the financial and commercial sectors.

1994: ELECTORAL FRAUD AND THE END OF THE CAUDILLO'S POWER

From the death of Trujillo in 1961 until the end of the 1990s, Dominican politics were dominated by Balaguer and Bosch. The 1994 elections marked the end of their power. In the midst of a crisis precipitated by evidence of fraud, Bosch announced his retirement from politics, while Balaguer was barred from running for the presidency in 1996 as a result of a political agreement among the three parties. While both of these men were great populist leaders, Peña Gómez had been a great social democratic leader since 1973 and had emerged victorious from the struggle within the party of 1986–1990.

The preferences of the Dominican electorate changed significantly in these elections, polarizing around Balaguer and Peña Gómez. There was a split in the ranks of the PRSC when Fernando Alvarez Bogaert left and founded the Partido de Unidad Democrática (Party of Democratic Unity—PUD), joining forces with Peña Gómez. Peña Gómez brought a sector of reformist voters to the PRD, becoming a reliable bridge to the private sector and existing power groups. This split was especially significant in that it showed that Balaguer could be challenged from within his own ranks. Peña Gómez received the support of left-wing parties closer to the social democratic project, such as the Partido de los Trabajadores Dominicanos (Dominican Workers' Party—DWP), and others of the center-right, such as the Partido Nacional de Veteranos Civiles (National Civil Veterans' Party—PNVC) and the Partido Quisqueyano Demócrata (Quisqueyan Democratic Party—PQD). A total of 16 parties made up the so-called Santo Domingo Accord. During the election campaign, a nonagenarian Balaguer opted for a conservative and nationalistic strategy, appealing to order and welfare projects such as the housing program and emphasizing an anti-Haitian discourse. The center-left PLD decided to seek support from the Fuerza Nacional Progresista (National Progressive Force—FNP), adopting its conservative and anti-Haitian rhetoric.¹

The tradition of electoral fraud dating to the Trujillo era came to a climax in the 1994 elections, when double registration and an unreliable ballot deprived 150,000–200,000 voters of their right to vote. Suspicions of fraud led Peña Gómez to propose a covenant of civility between candidates under the arbitration of the Catholic Church, promising not to declare any winners until there was an official pronouncement by the Central Electoral Board. The first bulletins of the board gave the advantage to Balaguer, triggering a political crisis that drew international attention. The crisis had three phases (Díaz Santana, 1996; Lozano, 2004):

1. Definition of the field (May 17–June 8). Balaguer and his allies on the right pressured the board to declare a winner. The Catholic Church and the business sector supported his reelection and did not insist on the need to clarify irregularities. The PLD remained on the sidelines, saying that it would accept the board's ruling. The PRD and the Santo Domingo Accord required a solution that respected the will of the people.

2. The crisis of legitimacy of the process and repositioning of internal and international actors (June 8–July 14). Under international pressure and given the flagrant evidence of fraud, the Church and the business sector asked the board to name a verification commission.
3. The crisis of the legal framework and the political agreement (July 14–August 15). The Commission issued a report in which irregularities were confirmed, and the Electoral Board of the National District annulled the results in that constituency. The Central Electoral Board, however, rejected that board's decision, declaring Balaguer president and losing its legitimacy in the process. This move strengthened the PRD, which attracted international attention and pressure from the United States. With the government under siege, the Church and the business sector shifted position: they agreed that there were irregularities and demanded a political pact between Balaguer and Peña Gómez. Two weeks later, the Pact for Democracy was signed, putting an end to the crisis and constitutionally establishing the reduction of Balaguer's presidency to two years and the scheduling of new presidential elections for 1996, the banning of reelection to a second consecutive term, the establishment of the second round, and the creation of the Council of the Judiciary. The municipal and congressional electoral results were accepted, and Dominicans living abroad were granted dual citizenship.

This resolution of the crisis opened the way for a new political situation in which Peña Gómez emerged as the main popular leader and the old caudillo disappeared, leaving reformism and the right orphaned and seeking support in the PLD and leading to an alliance with Leonel Fernández as candidate.

1996: THE CONSERVATIVE OUTCOME

The 1996 experience put an end to the political process begun in 1994 with the electoral fraud committed against Peña Gómez and the Santo Domingo Accord. The strategic rapprochement between the PLD and the PRSC, ideologically opposed historically, was intended to defeat the PRD and its leader, Peña Gómez. Thus the PLD, which had linked the PRSC to the worst of the authoritarian and corrupt cronyist tradition, approached reformism in practice, and the two parties, as the Frente Patriótico (Patriotic Front), sought to defend the nation from the risks posed by the PRD and its humble black leader, who was accused of being Haitian. In spite of their differences, Balaguer and Bosch agreed on the role of the state in dealing with development: both were reformists, one from a conservative and authoritarian perspective and the other from a modernizing one. Both saw the United States as a danger to the country, and both were deeply nationalist. Political differences and strategic coincidences regarding social, ideological, and cultural issues resulted in the combination of public antagonism and tacit agreements that had defined the Dominican political system for more than 30 years. The end of the cold war and economic and social change, urbanization, the rearticulation of labor, the growth of the urban informal sector, and the emergence of a new business realm over which the state exercised no corporate pressure made the homogeneity of the electorate less controllable, undermining the historical sense of reform projects in both

their authoritarian and their democratic aspects. In this context, the social democratic discourse of Peña Gómez was the most suitable for the new Dominican society.

The PLD began a process of internal reorganization with a confrontation between pragmatic and moderate factions. The latter, led by Leonel Fernández, gradually pushed Bosch to the sidelines with regard to decision making. This gave the party a conservative bias, placing it in a central position very close to the traditional right and in keeping with its reformist discourse, authoritarian centralism, and nationalism. This race, in contrast to previous ones, took place in a climate of institutional confidence because of changes in computer systems and a revision of the electoral register. The PLD benefited from the racist campaign of the nationalist right while focusing its discourse on institutional modernization and approaching Balaguer's camp in its commitment to the patrimonial exercise of power. The PRSC candidate Jacinto Peynado, who did not have the support of Balaguer himself, attacked the PLD and the PRD, while fundamentalist Balaguer supporters joined the PLD in support of Fernández. In this context, the PRD's campaign was clearly defensive in nature.

After the first round, Peña Gómez had 45.9 percent of the vote, followed by Fernández with 38.9 percent and Peynado with 14.9 percent, but the alliance between the PRSC and the PLD under the name of Frente Patriótico gave the victory to Fernández in the second round with a margin of 2.4 percent over Peña Gómez. With the election of Fernández the nationalist right assumed hegemonic functions; its discourse brought together all the forces that supported the reformist strategy hitherto disputed by the authoritarian Balaguer and the paternalistic Bosch. The defeat of Peña Gómez not only prevented a social democratic government but made Balaguer a political figure essential to the stability of the Fernández administration (1996–2000) and a player who brought the PRD to power in 2000 with Hipólito Mejía. Thus Balaguer went from demiurge of repression, authoritarianism, and terror to essential arbiter of the contemporary Dominican political process. In 2003 Congress (with its PRD majority) declared him the "father of Dominican democracy."

1998: AFTER THE CAUDILLOS, MORE CAUDILLOS

The PRD's leading role in the turbulent events of 1996 strengthened its base, and the party also benefited from Peña Gómez's death on May 10, 1998, a few days before the elections. It won the majority in the House, the Senate, and the municipalities; the PLD was exhausted, and there was widespread social discontent. In the 2000 presidential elections, Hipólito Mejía got 49.87 percent of the vote against Balaguer and Danilo Medina, an unpopular PLD candidate. Despite his not having reached the required 50 percent + 1 mark, no second round was held because Balaguer, the arbitrator (and interested party), accepted the victory. Balaguer and Bosch died just seven months apart, the first in November 2001, at 92 years of age, and the latter in July 2002, at 94. This put an end to the political era marked by constant competition between these old caudillos, and their disciples now took the reins.

Under Mejía's direction, internal tensions were overcome and factions were given positions of power in the party and state institutions. Clientelism was, once more, the strategy of governance. However, it could not overcome the

currency crisis unleashed by the Baninter financial scandal or the turmoil caused by a new split in the PRD after the departure of its historic leader Hatuey de Camps. The fraudulent bankruptcy of the Baninter sparked inflation and brought down the Dominican economy, dramatically increasing poverty levels all over the country. Mejía sought reelection promoting constitutional reform that would eliminate the ban on consecutive reelection. This led to a relentless war within the party that ended with the departure of President de Camps in 2004 to form the Partido Revolucionario Social Demócrata (Social Democratic Revolutionary Party—PRSD). The presidential race between a wisecracking Mejía and a polite and formal Fernández unfolded in this climate, and Fernández won the 2004 and 2008 elections. The key to his success is his ability to present himself to voters as the heir of Balaguerist historical forces, on the one hand, and of Boschism and its democratic revolution, on the other, thus becoming the host and benefactor of PRD turncoats and smaller allied parties. This apparent ideological schizophrenia has managed to draw together political elites and outline a kind of pluralistic presidentialism based on patronage, cooperation between parties, and a pragmatic distribution of power among actors, all of it favored by the endemic factionalism of the PRD and the gradual breakdown of the PRSC (Benito, 2010: 60). The president's desire for reelection fueled the constitutional reform of 2010 (the thirty-eighth in the country's history): Fernández sought to restore the nonconsecutive reelection of the 1994 pact, which would allow him to run in 2016 for what would be his fourth term in office. However, after the triumph of the PLD in the legislative and municipal elections of 2010, the debate on the immediate reelection of Fernández came up again, and a referendum to maintain the newly established constitutional impediment was considered. Among the numerous support motions was that of PLD legislators, who handed the president a letter with more than 2 million signatures supporting his hypothetical candidacy in 2012,² as well as a subtle and providential advertising campaign that read "Leonel, the future." Fernández finally assured them that he would not run in 2012, although his wife and the current First Lady, Margarita Cedeño, eventually did; she will be vice president to Danilo Medina, the victorious candidate of the ruling party. During the May 2012 election, former President Mejía failed to capture the majority with the slogan "Here comes Papa!"

The presence of these well-known figures and their refusal to leave the public arena illustrate the importance of the cult of personality in Dominican political history and the caudillist obstacles to the emergence of alternative leadership.

THE CLIENTELISTIC LEGITIMACY OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Since 1978, the basis for the survival of the Dominican party system has been a combination of institutional fragility and electoral power. Dominican parties nowadays are more stable but not more institutionalized. The authoritarianism that characterized the Dominican political system from the 1960s until the end of the twentieth century did not depend entirely on force and repression; the key to stability was political control through clientelism and prebendalism. This mechanism served not only as a weapon of social control but also as a strong basis for legitimacy.

In the caudillist imaginary, the state, whether it was represented by the bureaucratic military elite (Balaguer), the party (Bosch), or the popular movement (Peña Gómez), had a modernizing, articulating role. The state currently assumes responsibility for welfare and is the mediator in the clientelistic/patronage policy of the party system. With the end of the populist/development-focused state of the 1990s, the country's rentier and clientelistic system has grown stronger. It feeds exclusively on sales taxes, which are not returned to society in the form of services but used to purchase and recruit followers, increase the wealth of the reigning political elite, and support targeted/focused social policies that ensure an electoral clientele (Lozano, 2010). This has turned the twenty-first-century Dominican state into the main political actor, legitimizing the party system beyond electoral contests. In the absence of its historical leaders, the party system has increased its delegation of power. Especially since the constitutional reform of 2010, presidential power over the selection of members of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the Electoral Tribunal has increased.

To understand the dynamics of the party system during the phase of democratic consolidation, we must first understand the state's role in the country's economy. With the shift toward exports (assembly plants and tourism) and the privatizations carried out in the early 1990s, regulation of the economic order decreased and the business sector became more autonomous. The state focused on the sales tax as a source of income and increased its revenue capacity, which allowed it to gain independence from the private financing of political actors who controlled institutions. This strained relationships between the faction that controlled the executive branch (and its resources) and its party, fostering clientelism and patronage as basis for the legitimacy of those who controlled central power. This was the case during both the PRD administrations of 1978–1986 and 2000–2004 and the 2004–2010 PLD administrations.

The interchange of favors has become the central vehicle for the legitimization of the Dominican regime. Authoritarianism and its variants allowed a vertical arrangement of the relationship; the presence of the historical caudillos in the past and charismatic leaders today has ensured the subjection of the clientele to the will of the patron. With the current decentralization, the opportunities for competition between patrons and aspiring patrons have multiplied. This scheme of relations and loyalties between politicians and citizens is dominated by individualism; clients compete among themselves to gain public favors, as do political leaders seeking votes. What matters is loyalty to the leader and not to the institutional apparatus. This is a breeding ground for a cult of personality, fierce competition among leaders and their followers, and the factionalism that is endemic to the Dominican party system.

Dominican political history evidences the flexibility of clientelism that coexists with political schemes of democratic competition and is supported by a restricted citizenship with precarious access to its rights and feeble powers of organization. The level of interpersonal trust in the Dominican Republic averages 57.7 (LAPOP, 2010). In contexts of focused trust (Roginer, 1990), relationships tend to become very particular: a "perverse" social capital in which clientelism emerges and is reproduced (Máiz, 2003). Groups begin competing among themselves, and cooperation among clients is blocked in a battle in

which the most powerful control and get what they want. The leading and sectarian role of trade unions and transport federations (popularly known as “the masters of the country”) illustrates this battle and its effects on public policy. The lack of confidence in trade unions (in 2004 only 20.8 percent said that they trusted them, while only 15.7 percent of interviewees reported trusting political parties) shows the obstacles posed to institutionalized collective action and programmatic representation. Limited confidence in the management of public services and government staff (in 2006 only 10.5 percent trusted them) strengthens the role of legislators as suppliers of goods and services in their constituencies, thus opening the way for more personal and customized links based on contributions and prebendalism during the nation’s constant election campaign (Benito, 2011). In 2004, 85 percent of respondents thought that the country was being governed for the benefit of a few powerful interests, and in 2008, 50.45 percent said that the biggest obstacle to the progress of the country was the Dominican oligarchy. The great variety of business organizations³ contrasts with the situation among citizens. Activism in the latter takes place primarily in the religious sphere. In 2004, 50.5 percent of Dominicans were not involved in any type of organization, and in 2006, of those who were, 12.4 percent belonged to civil society organizations, 17.8 percent to political organizations, and 56.0 percent to religious ones. Since the second transition, the Catholic Church has played the role of mediator, political interlocutor, and guarantor of democratic stability during two periods of conflict: that of the urban riots that followed the economic crisis of 1984 and that of the crisis caused by the fraudulent presidential elections of 1994. Today the Church’s views on labor, economic, and political affairs have the backing of Latin America’s most conservative electorate (Corral, 2008) in spite of the constitutional separation of church and state, and the Church is Dominicans’ most valued and trusted institution (69.7 percent of those interviewed; LAPOP, 2010).

THE OUTCOME OF THE TRANSITION AND CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

As we have argued, in spite of the demobilization of the military apparatus and the opening up of room for competition, the second transition took place within the institutional framework inherited from the previous authoritarian stage. The reforms imposed on that framework after the electoral fraud of 1994 brought this transition process to an end. After 1994, Balaguer, the key authoritarian player, left the stage, and with the establishment of the second round the PRSC turned into a third force with the ability to decide elections. This clearly competitive and unrestricted scenario was the background for the 1996 election, which began the phase of Dominican democratic consolidation. The exit of the great caudillos from the political scene that they had dominated for more than three decades provided opportunities for the modernization of the political system but also introduced problematic factors. It required parties to reorganize around something other than the cult of personality imposed by Balaguer, Bosch, and Peña Gómez. This opportunity for institutionalization brought a reordering of power that, in practice, is strengthening factionalized

party elites and groups that, rather than reinstating an ideological program, encourage patronage as a way of establishing relations with society. In the current phase of democratic consolidation, politics have become more instrumental and more corporate, introducing a (manageable) potential for ungovernability into the system. In this context, clientelism-based politics seems to be an effective mode of contemporary Dominican authoritarianism in the context of electoral competitiveness, low citizen participation, a weak rule of law, and strong presidentialism.

While the party system has become established as a set of political players willing to negotiate precarious compromises, the Balaguerist cultural and institutional legacy is hard to overcome: the power of a providential leader over partisan ideas and actors, the view of democracy as a space for prebendal agreements rather than citizen expression, the limited effect of popular pressure on the political system, and the acceptance of conservative mediators such as the Catholic Church by all political actors. In terms of the new institutionalism (Peters, 2003), this legacy could be called a "veto point" (Immergut, 1992), an area of institutional vulnerability that stifles political innovation. Balaguer became the central political figure of the conservative path followed for the past 50 years. He symbolized the bias of this process better than any other leader: an adopted authoritarian format, patronage-based pragmatism among elites, and a messianic attitude toward social mobilization underlie all of the economic and political changes experienced in the Dominican Republic. This is a legacy that, in a sort of "path dependency," has conditioned the preferences of political actors, the distribution of power among them, and the rules of the game.

The changes since the second transition to democracy in 1978 show a recurrent institutional fragility that is most clearly manifest as a lack of compliance with the law and the absence of sanctions. Informal arrangements for settling disputes proliferate. Old practices such as caudillism and the cult of personality continue to dominate the relationship between politicians and voters and are skillfully exploited by new actors. The absence of a collective project and de-ideologization are supplemented by individual promises and exchanges, turning parties into mere electoral machines at the service of candidates. Internal elections and changes in party leadership lead to constant battles that weaken parties but do not completely undermine them. The particular negotiating capacity of the elite, both in its side-switching aspect (*transfuguismo*) and in the allocation of power within its own organizations or government agencies, has played a key role in the stability of the party system and in the creation of majorities and democratic governance. The current party system is in the process of change: it has great electoral drawing power but is weakly institutionalized, based on a neopatrimonial state (Hartlyn, 2008) and delegative presidential power (Table 1).

With the adoption of the Constitution of 2010, the country joined the process of constitutional reform across Latin America that began over two decades ago and the more current reelectionist fever taking place in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela. President Fernández has described its enactment as a "democratic revolution," a promise to reinvent "Dominican institutional life to foster the conditions necessary for development." However, there are many aspects

TABLE 1
Changes and Continuities in the Dominican Political System, 1978–2010

	<i>Continuities</i>	<i>Changes</i>
Party system	Stability, informal institutionalization, caudillist leadership, personalism, factionalism, negotiation among elites	Bipartisanship, de-ideologization, party shifting, alliances with minority parties
Type of regime	Strong presidentialism, electoral and delegative democracy, conservative neopopulism, neopatrimonialism, corruption, politicization of public administration	Pragmatic distribution of power, formal framework of institutions of accountability and control among powers, new sources of resources, rentier and clientelist state, reorganization of the state-business relationship
Civil society	Poverty and social inequality, low level of interpersonal trust, demobilization, limited collective action, high level of party identification, paternalism, conservatism, mediation by the Catholic Church, pressure from interest groups	Fragmentation, higher level of organizational development

of its wording that evidence its ultraconservative turn and the influence of traditional interest groups: the looming role of the executive in the appointment of the members of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Electoral Tribunal, the president’s power to fill every bureaucratic post by decree (which has consolidated the customary patronage practices), and ongoing restrictions regarding the *ius soli* as a path to citizenship that leave Dominicans of Haitian descent in a gray area.

This process of institutional reengineering and the establishment of the rule of law faces two great challenges in guaranteeing the quality of Dominican democracy:

1. The distributive challenge: economic modernization and poverty. The Dominican formula for economic development (free-trade zones, tourism, and an informal urban economy) has not solved the problems of social inequality and poverty. On the contrary, it has dismantled the power held by workers through unions, limiting collective action and their role as social interlocutors and turning them into guilds that compete for public favors.
2. The democratic challenge: political modernization and citizen participation. The consolidation of the rule of law and Dominican democracy will require democratic leadership that promotes the political participation of civil society and not just that of organized business. The balance of power, more inclusive and plural institutions, and the Haitian question are priorities that need to be addressed.

NOTES

1. According to the deputies own ideological description (PELA, 1994–2012), in 1994 the PLD members were located at position 4.54 (center-left) of Downs’s (1957) traditional left-right axis. Despite the weakness (if not absence) of Dominican parties at the time of the founding of the PLD, Marxism was part of its imaginary, even if only in a testimonial, utopian, and formal way.

2. More than 80 members of Congress and 22 of the 32 senators expressed their support for Fernández's candidacy in 2012.

3. The Employer's Confederation of the Dominican Republic, the National Council of Businessmen, the National Council of Private Companies, the Industrial Association of the Dominican Republic, the Association of Young Entrepreneurs, the Dominican Travel Agents' Association, the Organization of Business Enterprises, the Dominican Corporation of the Tourism Industry, the Federation of Businesspeople, the Association for the Development of Santiago, the Association of Producers of Furniture, Mattresses, and the Like, the Association of Micro-, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises, the Dominican Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, the Dominican Association of Builders and Home Promoters, the Dominican Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Hotels and Restaurants, the Dominican Association of Exporters, etc.

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