

Student politics and the fight for democracy in the 80s in the Southern Cone. How the transition mode affected party identities and the organization of the university student movement

La política estudiantil y la lucha por la democracia
en los años 80 en el Cono Sur. Cómo el modo
de transición afectó las identidades partidarias
y la organización del movimiento estudiantil
universitario

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Resumen: This article examines an understudied topic: how the mode of democratic transition affects the presence of party identities and organics within social movements. It does so through a qualitative comparative analysis of university student movements in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay du-

Resumen: Este artículo examina un tema sub-estudiado: como el modo de transición democrática afecta la presencia de identidades y orgánicas partidarias al interior de movimientos sociales. Para ello usa un análisis cualitativo comparativo de movimiento estudiantiles universitarios en Argentina, Chile y

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ring the 1980s' transitions from military rule to democracy. Based on an in-depth analysis of secondary literature, the article argues that while the transition reinvigorated student political organization across the three countries, differences in the mode of transition produced cross-national variation in movement partisan dynamics. More specifically, in Chile, where the transition occurred through an elite transaction pact, student movement party identities and organizations weakened. The opposite was true in Argentina and Uruguay, where democratic transitions resulted from regime defeat and extrication, respectively.

Keywords: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Student Movements, Democratic Transitions, Latin America, Southern Cone, Political Parties, Social Movements, 1980s.

Uruguay durante las transiciones democráticas de los 1980s. En base a un análisis en profundidad de literatura secundaria, el artículo argumenta que en los tres casos la transición revitalizó la organización política estudiantil, pero que diferencias en el modo de transición configuraron diferentes dinámicas partidarias al interior de cada movimiento. En Chile, donde la transición ocurrió gracias a un pacto de elites, las identidades y orgánicas partidarias se debilitaron. Esta situación no ocurrió en Argentina and Uruguay, donde la transición democrática ocurrió por derrota o extricación del régimen, respectivamente.

Palabras clave: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Movimientos Estudiantiles, Transiciones Democráticas, Latinoamérica, Cono Sur, movimientos sociales, partidos políticos, 1980s.

Introduction

Studies show that the mode of democratic transition affects political dynamics during and after democratization.¹ Unfortunately, in the Latin American context, most of these studies focus on the impact on parties and institutions. As a result, we still have a poor understanding of how different modes of democratic transition have shaped social movements' identities, organizations, and links to the political arena across the region.

This article helps to fill this gap by comparing university student movements in Latin America's so-called Southern Cone (i.e., Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay) during the 1980s transitions from military rule to democracy. The focus on student movements reflects the relevance of these actors in the democratic transitions of the 1980s. The focus on Latin America's Southern Cone reflects, in turn, the fact that during the 1980s, the three countries experienced harsh military rule and, early in the decade, severe economic

¹ Terry L. Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 23, no. 1 (1990): 1-21; Gerardo Munck and Carol Skalnik Leff, "Modes of Transition and Democratization: South America and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 29, no 3 (1997): 343-362; María Inclán, "Social Movements and Democratization Processes in Latin America," in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Federico Rossi (Oxford University Press, 2023).

crises. In addition, the three countries share a long (albeit interrupted) history of partisan student organization and leftist political militancy.² Furthermore, the three countries are middle-income countries with similarly high urbanization, industrialization, and education levels. At the same, the mode of transition was different in each country. In Argentina, the transition occurred through regime defeat, in Chile through elite transaction, and in Uruguay through military extrication. Thus, while controlling for potentially relevant alternative causal factors, the case study allows for variation in the transition mode.

The article's analysis relies on a rich trove of secondary literature on Southern Cone student movements and democratic transitions during the 1980s. This literature consists of historical, sociological, and political academic studies, as well as testimonies and interviews with student leaders of the period. Based on the qualitative analysis of these different sources, the article argues that while the transition reinvigorated student political organization in the three countries, differences in the mode of transition led to variation in the logic of partisan politics within each movement. In Chile, the strength of the military regime led to the sidelining of social movements (including the student movement) in transitional political talks between the military and opposition party leaders, resulting in the weakening of movement-party ties. The opposite was true in Argentina and Uruguay, where the relative weakness of the military made social movements (including student movements) crucial in transitional negotiations between opposition actors.

The article proceeds in three parts. The first part discusses the literature on modes of transition and situates the article's argument in that context, highlighting its contribution to that literature. The second part discusses each country's transition mode and how transition political dynamics impacted the insertion of party identities and organizations in the student movement. The conclusion summarizes the article's findings and briefly explores how the patterns set up during the transition period affected the movement during the post-transition.

² Van Aken, Mark. *Los Militantes. Una Historia del Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo* (Montevideo: FCU, 1990); Fabio Moraga, *Muchachos Casi Silvestres. La Federación de Estudiantes y el Movimiento Estudiantil Chileno, 1906-1936* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2007); Buchbinder, Pablo *¿Revolución en los Claustros? La Reforma Universitaria de 1918* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana. Kindle Edition, 2012); Valeria Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina Culture, Politics, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014); Vania Markarian, *Uruguay, 1968. Student Activism from Global Counterculture to Molotov Cocktails* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

The Article's Contribution to the Modes of Transition Literature

During the 1980s, various Latin American countries transitioned away from authoritarianism. This phenomenon prompted a lively debate about the causes, features, and consequences of democratic transitions in the region.³ An important part of this literature has focused on understanding how transitions develop and whether and how specific paths to democracy shape political life during and after the transition.

This article distinguishes between transitions through transactional pacts, regime defeat, and regime extrication.⁴ This typology focuses on the relative power between the government and the opposition. It differentiates between cases in which outgoing authoritarian regimes are strong and, thus, able to impose their rules (transaction), cases in which authoritarian governments are weak and, therefore, unable to impose conditions (defeat), and cases in which authoritarian officials are unable to set their rules but "retain sufficient power to negotiate their retreat from power" (extrication).⁵

There is scholarly consensus that modes of transition help explain cross-national variation in democratic outcomes.⁶ However, there is debate about the direction of such relationship. On the issue of violent revolutionary transitions, foreign intervention, and transitions by collapse, for example, scholars disagree on whether these are positive or negative for democracy.⁷ There is a similar disagreement on the issue of elite pacts.⁸

More directly relevant to the topic of this article are a handful of other studies that indicate that transition modes affect social movements' oppor-

³ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies" in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule Part 4*, ed. O'Donnell et. al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Postcommunist Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Terry L. Karl and Philip Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe" *International Social Science Journal* 128, (1991); Munck and Skalnik Leff, *Modes of Transition and Democratization*.

⁴ Munck and Skalnik Leff, *Modes of Transition*, 358-359

⁵ Munck and Skalnik Leff, *Modes of Transition*, 358-359.

⁶ Karl, *Dilemmas of Democratization*; O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusions*; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*; Munck and Skalnik Leff, *Modes of Transition*.

⁷ Sujian Guo and Gary Stradiotto, *Democratic Transitions. Modes and Outcomes* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁸ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusions*; Karl, *Dilemmas of Democratization*; Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Guo and Stradiotto, *Democratic Transitions*.

tunities to build political alliances, compromise, develop networks, and influence policy.⁹ This literature suggests that transitions where social movements are absent or sidelined leave social movements politically weak and less able to pursue their demands in the new democracy.¹⁰ The more protracted the negotiations, the more likely movements' input will be weakened.¹¹ The opposite is true when social movements can influence transitional pacts.¹² Similarly, revolutionary transitions allow for greater inclusion of social movement voices and demands in the country's reconstruction.¹³

These latter studies shed some light on the effects of transition modalities on social movements. However, there are comparatively few of them, and they tend to focus on individual countries. Moreover, they emphasize the study of civil society's relative power vis-à-vis elite actors. Hence, while touching upon an important topic, they don't give enough attention to how transition modes affect social movements' internal features, such as political identity and organization. This article seeks to contribute to this understudied aspect of transitional political effects on social movements.

The Transition to Democracy

The right-wing military regimes that took over Chile in 1973 and Argentina and Uruguay in 1976 sought to destroy left parties and militant organized labor, favored economic growth over redistribution, embraced technocratic

⁹ Inclán, *Social Movements and Democratization*.

¹⁰ Philip Oshorn, *Organizing Civil Society. The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile* (University Park, PA: Penn State University, 1995); Cathy Schneider, *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Manuel A. Garretón, "Popular Mobilization and the Military in Chile: The Complexities of the Invisible Transition", in *Power and Popular Protest*, ed. Susan Eckstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹¹ Salvador Martí I Puig and Alberto M. Alvarez, "Social Movements and Revolutions in Latin America: A Complex Relationship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Federico Rossi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

¹² Onur Bakiner, *Truth Commissions: Memory, Power, and Legitimacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Sebastian Pereyra, "Strategies and Mobilization Cycles of the Human Rights Movement in the Democratic Transition in Argentina", in *Movements in Times of Democratic Transition*, ed. Bert Klandermans and Cornelis van Stralen (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2015).

¹³ Elizabeth Wood, *Forging Democracy From Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

decision-making, and pursued an economic development model anchored in international capital flows.¹⁴

Military repression was unprecedentedly harsh, extensive, and often conducted without due process and little respect for human rights.¹⁵ Given their strong ties with the left, student activists were one of the main targets of this repression. In Argentina, for example, around twenty-two percent of all forcefully disappeared individuals were students. Two hundred and fifty of them were minors, some as young as 13 years old.¹⁶ In Chile, approximately twenty percent of torture victims and fourteen percent of the forcefully disappeared were students.¹⁷ In Uruguay, students accounted for roughly twenty-seven percent of all political prisoners and twenty-three percent of the victims of state killings. Thousands of student activists and party militants went into hiding or exile to avoid this fate and keep opposition political structures alive.¹⁸ In addition, the military intervened, suspended, or banned political parties and social organizations. At the university level, this meant prohibiting political activities on university grounds and terminating student government elections.

Initially, repression created a general climate of fear that practically eliminated political activism within and outside universities.¹⁹ However, past the height of repression, in the late 1970s, student opposition activism emerged in the three countries under the guise of university magazines, plays,

¹⁴ David Collier, "Bureaucratic Authoritarianism," in *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, ed. Joel Krieger et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Allison Brysk, *The Politics of Human Rights in Argentina: Protest, Change, and Democratization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Alexandra Barahona de Brito, *Human Rights and Democratization in Latin America: Uruguay and Chile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (Washington, DC: National Security Archive, 2013).

¹⁶ Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, *Nunca Más. Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1982).

¹⁷ Comisión Nacional Prisión Política y Tortura, *Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura* (Santiago: Ministerio del Interior, 2005); Joan Del Alcazar, Nuria Tabanera, José Miguel Santacreu, Antoni Marimon Ruitort, *Historia Contemporánea de América* (San Vicente del Raspeig: Universitat de Valencia, 2003), 350.

¹⁸ Ricardo Brodsky *Conversaciones con la FECH* (Santiago: CESOC, 1988); Guadalupe Seia, "La Dictadura contra La Reforma Universitaria. Orientación de la Política Universitaria en la Universidad de Buenos Aires (1976-1983)," *Revista de la Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 20 (2018): 193-216; Leonardo Haberkorn, *La Muy Fiel y Conquistadora: Memorias de una Generación que No Perdió la Democracia pero Luchó para Recuperarla* (Montevideo: Sudamericana, 2018).

¹⁹ Sonia Montecino, "El Atmoterrorismo Burocratico," in *Las Huellas de un Acecho, Anales de la Universidad de Chile* (2013).

poetry readings, film festivals, soccer matches, and concerts. These initiatives, sustained by small groups of friends, helped create the first alternative information spaces, provided forums of veiled opposition to the regime, and cloaked clandestine and semi-clandestine student opposition party organizations.²⁰ Thus, during this period, university party re-organization happened mostly underground and was relatively autonomous from adult referents.²¹

During the early 1980s, the painful economic effects of the region's debt crisis and growing discontent with military human rights violations activated labor unions, students, churches, women, and neighborhood groups, leading to the first large protests since the breakdown of democracy.²² These protests created openings for democratization.

The process of democratic transition developed, however, differently in each country. This situation reflected the relative strength of the military (stronger in Chile than in Argentina and Uruguay) and contingent events (such as the failed 1982 Argentinean military campaign in Las Malvinas).²³ As a result, the transition mode differed in each country (i.e., military defeat in Argentina, military and opposition elite transaction in Chile, and military

²⁰ Evangelina Margiolakis, "Revistas Culturales Underground durante la Última Dictadura Cívico-Militar Argentina," *Itinerarios de la Edición en la Cultura Contemporánea* (2013): 12-130; Víctor Tamayo Muñoz, *ACU. Rescatando el Asombro* (Santiago: Libros la Calabaza del Diablo, 2006); Gabriela González-Vaillant, "Entre los Intersticios de la Democracia. Las Revistas Estudiantiles, la Universidad Uruguaya y las Pujas Políticas por los Significados de la Democracia," *Revista Historia Social y de las Mentalidades* 22, no. 2 (2018).

²¹ Muñoz, *ACU*; Pedro Marchant Veloz, *Movimiento Estudiantil Universitario en Chile, 1982-1988: De la Organización a la Fragmentación. La Experiencia de Militantes de las Juventudes Comunistas de Chile* (Universidad de Chile, Santiago, 2006): 128-13; Vania Markarian, Isabel Wschebor and María Edugenia Jung, *1983: La Generación de la Primavera Democrática* (Montenideo: Universidad e la República, 2008), 80; González-Vaillant, "Estudiante, Sal Afuera: El Proceso de Reconstrucción del Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo en la Transición a la Democracia," *Encuentros Uruguayos* 14, no. 1 (2021): 13-14; Yann Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita: El Movimiento Estudiantil de la Universidad de Buenos Aires entre 1983 y 2001* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 2023), 29.

²² Manuel Antonio Garretón, *Popular Mobilization*, 265-268; David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987. From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 373-374; Peter Snow and Luigi Manzetti, *Political Forces in Argentina* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), 32-35; Paul Drake and Ivan Jaksić, "Transformation and Transition in Chile," in *The Struggle for Democracy in Chile*, ed. Paul Drake and Iván Kaksic (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 33; Daniel Corbo, "La Transición de la Dictadura a la Democracia en el Uruguay. Perspectiva Comparada sobre los Modelos de Salida Política en el Cono Sur de América Latina," *Humanidades* 6, no 1 (2007): 23-47.

²³ Yann Cristal, "El Movimiento Estudiantil de la UBA en los 80 de la Primavera del Desencanto (1982-1987)", in *Juventudes Universitarias de América Latina*, ed. Pablo Buchbinder (Rosario: Hya Ediciones, 2019).

extrication in Uruguay). This section explains how each transition mode affected student-party relations during the transition period.

Argentina

In Argentina, the democratic transition started in 1981. That year, driven by an economic crisis, the first massive protests against the regime broke out.²⁴ Growing and widespread unrest led regime soft-liners to propose informal talks to the opposition around tentative elections for 1982. The prospect of democratization reinvigorated political parties, which, except for small groups deemed terrorist by the military regime, had been suspended but not proscribed.²⁵ The result was the creation of the *Multipartidaria Nacional* (hereafter *Multipartidaria*), a coalition initially conformed by three major parties (the centrist *Union Civica Radical* or UCR, the leftist *Partido Intransigente* or PI, and the populist Partido Justicialista or PJ) and later joined by all legal parties, including the Communist Party.²⁶

At the university level, the 1981 introduction of tuition and admission caps in public universities led to the emergence of small demonstrations and local party commissions committed to the re-articulation of student unions and federations, as well as the National Student Confederation (*Federación Universitaria Argentina* or FUA).²⁷ This process led to the re-emergence of moderate political organizations that had been important actors in student government associations before 1976 and were not proscribed by the military. These included *Franja Morada* or *Franja* (the student arm of the UCR), the *Movimiento Nacional Reformista* or MNR, and the *Frente de Agrupaciones Universitarias de Izquierda* or FAUDI (the latter two associated with the Socialist and Communist parties, respectively).²⁸

The 1981 regime thawing did little to quell unrest. This situation contributed to the unraveling of transition negotiations. First, the *Multiparti-*

²⁴ Stephen Haggard and Robert Kauffman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²⁵ Peter Snow and Luigi Manzetti, *Political Forces in Argentina*, 35-36.

²⁶ Snow and Manzetti, *Political Forces in Argentina*, 35-36

²⁷ Guadalupe Seia, "La Educación es un Derecho, No un Privilegio": La Lucha Estudiantil Contra el Arancel Universitario Durante la Última Dictadura en Argentina (1980-1983)," *Páginas* 12, no. 30 (2020).

²⁸ Mónica Beltrán, *La Franja: De la Experiencia Unviersitaria al Desafío del Poder* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2013): 158-174; Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*.

itaria, challenging prohibitions on political activism, publicly rejected the pact offered by the military *junta*. Instead, calling for protests demanding immediate democratic elections. Large demonstrations broke out. In the case of universities, the first of these protests occurred in the more politically organized universities of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, La Plata, and Rosario, but later extended to other public universities.²⁹ Student slogans explicitly framed the struggle for free tuition and student co-government as a fight for university democracy.³⁰ In parallel, unions organized in the Comisión de los 25 (a group of combative sectoral unions). The Comisión supported the *Multipartidaria* by summoning national protests that garnered thirty to forty percent of national adherence.³¹

While unrest escalated, the *Multipartidaria* consulted social, labor, professional, student, and other social organizations to generate a post-military regime political program for all opposition parties.³² Entitled *Antes de Que Sea Tarde* (Before it is Too Late), the document was unveiled in December of 1981. It called for prosecuting human rights violations committed by the military, restoring democratic institutions, and advancing social justice and political and civic participation.³³ Direct involvement in the drafting of this program positioned student parties squarely in the middle of the transition's politics, contributing to linking student corporate struggles against the regime with the political fight for democracy.³⁴ In addition, to generate a united voice within the *Multipartidaria*, young leaders from different parties (many of whom were university student activists) created the *Movimiento de Juventudes Políticas* or MOJUPO.³⁵

In this convulsed context, military hardliners gained the upper hand. To face mounting protests, in 1982, the new *junta* launched an armed campaign

²⁹ Beltrán, *La Franja*, 182-183; Guadalupe Seia, "Militancia, Oposición y Resistencia Estudiantil durante la Etapa Final de la Última Dictadura (1981-1983)," *Historia, Voces, y Memoria* 10 (2016): 23-24; Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*; Seia, *La Educación es un Derecho*.

³⁰ Seia, *La Educación es un Derecho*.

³¹ Unlike the *Multipartidaria*, whose activities were tolerated by the military, labor unions activities faced severe repression (Snow and Manzetti, *Political Forces*, 35-36 and 130-132).

³² *Multipartidaria*, *La Propuesta de la Multipartidaria* (Buenos Aires: El Cid Editor/ Libros para la Democracia, 1982).

³³ *Multipartidaria*, *La Propuesta de la Multipartidaria*.

³⁴ Beltrán, *La Franja*, 177.

³⁵ Larrondo and Cozachow, "Un Llamado a la Unidad. La Experiencia del Movimiento de Juventudes políticas (MOJUPO) en la Transición a la Democracia," in *Militancias Juveniles en la Argentina Democrática: Trayectoria, Espacios y Figuras de Activismo*, ed. Melina Vásquez, Pablo Vommaro, Pedro Núñez and Rafael Blanco (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Imago Mundi, 2017), 51.

to recover the *Malvinas* (or Falkland) Islands from Great Britain. The Malvinas had been in British possession since 1833.³⁶ The Argentinean military miscalculated that the scarcely populated sheep-breeding island would make retaliation improbable and proceeded to invade with a military force made mostly of ill-prepared young draftees. The result was a humiliating defeat that triggered massive labor and student-led protests at home.³⁷ At the university level, for example, protests broke out in the cities of Rosario, La Plata, and Buenos Aires again. Particularly combative were student protests in Rosario, which included the presence of union, party, religious, and human rights leaders and combined hunger strikes with peaceful rallies featuring the national anthem.³⁸

The *Malvinas'* disaster was the final nail in the military regime's coffin. Unable to maintain military unity, squash the opposition, or draw on popular support, the military called for elections in October 1983. For that purpose, it designated a caretaker government in charge of restoring the pre-1976 democratic constitution, organizing the electoral process, and liberalizing the most repressive aspects of the regime.

However, large protest campaigns, several of which were protagonized by students, continued throughout 1983.³⁹ Student's mobilization capacity in 1983 reflected three interrelated phenomena. First, the military defeat in the *Malvinas* fatally wounded the regime, limiting its ability to control political activism within universities.⁴⁰ A second phenomenon was the re-emergence of *de facto* elections for student unions and university federations. In sync with a long historical tradition, such elections were primarily driven by party activists and consisted mainly of party competition for student votes.⁴¹ Thus, opposition parties (including the UCR) intensified their efforts

³⁶ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 378; Snow and Manzetti, *Political Forces*, 36-37.

³⁷ Juan C. Torre and Liliana de Riz, "Argentina Since 1946," in *Argentina Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 338; Cristal, *Publica y Gratuita*, 27; Seia, *Militancia, Oposición y Resistencia Estudiantil*, 25-26; Micaela González Váldez, *Unidad, Solidaridad y Estrategia. La Federación Universitaria de Córdoba entre la Reactivación Estudiantil y la Normalización Universitaria (1981-1996)*. "Revueltas: Revista Chilena de Historia Social Popular 3, no. 6 (2022), 126; Seia, *El Movimiento Estudiantil de Regreso a las Calles*; Seia, *La Educación es un Derecho*.

³⁸ Seia, *La Educación es un Derecho*.

³⁹ Seia, *Militancia, oposición y Resistencia Estudiantil*, 25-26; González Váldez, *Unidad, Solidaridad y Estrategia*, 126; Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 27; Seia, *El Movimiento Estudiantil de Regreso a las Calles*; Seia, *La Educación es un Derecho*.

⁴⁰ Beltrán, *La Franja*, 182; Millán and Seia, *El Movimiento Estudiantil de la UBA*, 71.

⁴¹ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 32-41; Yann Cristal and Guadalupe Seia, "La Izquierda Estudiantil de la UBA," *Archivos De Historia Del Movimiento Obrero Y La Izquierda* (12): 103-108.

to generate and capture formal student organizations (college-level student unions and university-wide federations) and the FUA.⁴² A third phenomenon had to do with the rise of the MOJUPO.

Having debuted publicly in 1982, the MOJUPO was officially launched in 1983 to help accelerate the return to democracy. Its calls for peaceful civil disobedience and demands for human rights and social democracy echoed the spirit of the *Multipartidaria*.⁴³ However, its success in organizing massive rallies made it a powerful political actor. Representing the voice of party youth, the MOJUPO had opinions on national issues (e.g., foreign debt, structural adjustment) that, while relating to adult parties, were separate from them.⁴⁴

The MOJUPO also contributed to shaping university student politics in significant ways. First, it contributed to reinvigorating student parties and giving a preeminent role to *Franja*.⁴⁵ This situation reflected two factors. One was the close association between *Franja* and Raúl Alfonsín, a prominent UCR and *Multipartidaria* figure. The roots of this situation harked back to 1981 when *Franja* criticized its party's central leadership support for the *Malvinas* War. Defeat in the war, plus the death of UCR's more conservative old-timers, led to the rise of Raúl Alfonsín, one of the few UCR leaders initially critical of the war.⁴⁶ This situation aligned the student movement with Alfonsín, who by 1983 had become one of the most important political forces in the political opposition and an icon among progressive youth.⁴⁷ Its closeness to Alfonsín also gave *Franja* a front-row seat in political events. For example, in the 1983 electoral contest in the City of Buenos Aires, *Franja* participated in several UCR campaign events.⁴⁸ Another factor was that during 1981 and 1982, the UCR had heavily invested in building high school cadre structures.⁴⁹ This situation endowed it in 1983 with a fresh generation of university militants organically tied to the UCR.

It is important to note that the re-articulation of *Franja* was not unique. During this period, the PI, PJ, and the Trotskyist Partido Obrero or PO also grew within universities.⁵⁰ In addition, new parties emerged. In 1983,

⁴² Beltrán, *La Franja*, 183, Seia, *Militancia, Oposición y Resistencia Estudiantil*, 22-23, Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 30, 32-41.

⁴³ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 49-63, Cristal, *Democracia, Liberación, Revolución*, 2022.

⁴⁴ Larrondo and Cozachow, *Un Llamado a la Unidad*, 55.

⁴⁵ Larrondo and Cozachow, *Un Llamado a la Unidad*, 58.

⁴⁶ Beltrán, *La Franja*, 180.

⁴⁷ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 48.

⁴⁸ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 48.

⁴⁹ Beltrán, *La Franja*, 182.

⁵⁰ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 2023.

for example, student militants of small pro-democratic rightist parties at the University of Buenos created the *Union para la Apertura Universitaria* or UPAU. This student organization participated in the 1983 opposition-led student elections and protests and experienced meteoric growth at the end of the military period and the early years of the new democracy.⁵¹ Finally, it is also worth mentioning the development of smallish independent student organizations to the right and left.⁵² That said, the *Multipartidaria* student parties, especially *Franja*, experienced the most growth within the movement.⁵³

While student party organizations had distinct and strong partisan identities (clearly in display in the electoral cycle 1983), the fact that many participated in the MOJUPO meant that they shared distinct generational identities and practices that captured the *zeitgeist* of the transition and, thus, broadly appealed to students and youth in general. In addition, the experience of collaboration outside the university contributed to uniting them within universities.

During 1984, the broader path to democracy continued. The different opposition parties decided to run their own candidates for the election, but all subscribed to the joint program that the *Multipartidaria* had sketched in 1981. In the meantime, the military failed to create a party (or join other parties) and continued facing massive opposition.⁵⁴ Furthermore, unable to make the opposition agree on including constitutional safeguards for the military, a month before the elections, the regime rushed a law that shielded military officials from future human rights prosecutions. This measure was widely rejected by the *Multipartidaria*, who vowed to annul it after the elections.⁵⁵

In the final ballot count, Alfonsín won the presidency with more than fifty-one percent of the vote, defeating a large but factionalized PJ. With forty-seven percent of the legislative vote, the UCR also took control of the executive and legislative branches, with the PJ becoming the second legislative majority. Following the *Multipartidaria's* program, the new government rapidly moved to bring the military to court for human rights violations, reduce the army's power, enact social reform, promote union democracy, and bring about economic recovery.⁵⁶ Alfonsín also put his political capital be-

⁵¹ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 2023.

⁵² Millán and Seia, *El Movimiento Estudiantil de la UBA*, 72; Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 38-39.

⁵³ Cristal, *Pública y Gratuita*, 48.

⁵⁴ Scott Mainwaring and Eduardo Viola, "Transitions to Democracy: Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s," *Journal of International Affairs* 38, no. 2 (1985): 208-209; Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 385-386.

⁵⁵ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 384-386.

⁵⁶ Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987*, 388-389.

hind the democratization of public universities, establishing close relations with university student federations and confederations.⁵⁷

In sum, the political dynamics of Argentina's transition revived parties and made the relationship between parties and movements critical for the return to democracy. At the university level, the growth in party militancy was pivotal in re-organizing formal university student representative bodies. Furthermore, the importance of student parties in the MOJUPO and the *Multipartidaria* and the close relations between *Franja* and the *Alfonsinismo* contributed to bringing parties into the student movement and the student movement into the broader partisan politics of the transition.

Chile

In Chile, the transition started tentatively in 1983, driven by massive popular protests against the dislocating effects of deep structural market reforms and the regime's human rights violations.⁵⁸ Intense repression of these protests led to an increasing escalation of protest and military violence.⁵⁹

During 1983 and 1986, the student movement developed in sync with this broader context. Resistance to university neoliberal reforms resulted in increasing protests within public universities.⁶⁰ The government responded to this resistance with neglect at best and indiscriminate military repression at worst.⁶¹ This unyielding state dynamic, which led to the gruesome assassination of student leftist political leaders and the imprisonment of moderate ones, contributed to the increasing radicalization of student resistance and the unification of centrist and leftist student parties around the goal of ending the military regime through a strategy of civil disobedience.⁶² Within

⁵⁷ Daniel Cano and Ana Aymá, *Voces, Luchas y Sueños: Historia Oral del Movimiento Estudiantil Argentino. Presidencias de FUA 1983-1995* (Buenos Aires: UNL-CEPRU, 1998).

⁵⁸ Luis Maira, "Notas sobre la Transición Chilena," *Revista de Estudios Políticos* 74 (1991): 328; Garretón *Popular Mobilization*, 268-269.

⁵⁹ Garretón *Popular Mobilization*, 268-269.

⁶⁰ Diego Monge, Jorge I. Madariaga, and Pablo Toro Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes: Historias de la FECH 1973-1988* (Santiago: Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2006), 116-121; Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*; Simón Fernández, "El Movimiento Estudiantil en la Universidad Católica y Los Inicios de la Democratización en Chile, 1983-1985," *Archivo Chile* (2005); Marchant Veloz, *De la Organización a la Fragmentación*, 2006.

⁶¹ Monge, Madariaga, and Toro Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 147-148; Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 1988.

⁶² Monge, Madariaga, and Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 147-148; Brodsky, *Conversa-*

universities, this meant efforts at displacing state-sponsored student organizations, democratizing university-wide student federations, toppling down military-appointed university authorities, and forming a national student-university confederation that could coordinate the activities of the different public university democratic student federations.⁶³ It is also important to mention the formation of student groups' seeking to reconstitute student party structures and develop the basis of new party practices and ideas that sought to replace traditional party politics.⁶⁴ Outside universities, toppling down the regime meant generating links to non-university social organizations and adult parties (which, until 1983, pretty much ignored the movement) and taking the front row in national campaigns of civil disobedience called by progressive social organizations.⁶⁵

These features generated a somewhat ambiguous movement relationship with the regime and opposition adult parties. Concerning the regime, starting in 1983, the military combined aggressive repression of student political leaders and organizations with the private formal recognition of their representativeness and the creation of narrow venues of negotiation with them.⁶⁶ Concerning opposition adult parties, the movement operated with significant independence, especially regarding internal university affairs. However, relations with adult labor leaders, several of whom were important figures in their parties, were more fluid. This situation reflected that student and labor-led protests resulted in many instances of student and labor leaders' shared imprisonment.⁶⁷

Despite the activation of the student and other social movements, the adult political opposition was internally divided between those who propo-

ciones con la FECH, 60, 95, & 100; Cecilia Brancher de Oliveira, *El Movimiento Estudiantil y Los Cambios en la Estructura Universitaria Durante la Dictadura Civico-Militar Chilena (1973-1990)* (Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2017): 37.

⁶³ Monge, Madariaga, and Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 147; Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 1988; Brancher de Oliveira, *El Movimiento Estudiantil y Los Cambios*, 39; Fernández, *El Movimiento Estudiantil en la Universidad Católica*; Marchant Veloz, *De la Organización a la Fragmentación*, 180-185.

⁶⁴ Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 54; Marchant Veloz, *De la Organización a la Fragmentación*, 132-137.

⁶⁵ Víctor Muñoz Tamayo, *Generaciones: Juventud Universitaria e Izquierdas políticas en Chile y México (Universidad de Chile - UNAM 1984-2006)* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2011): 100-109; Monge, Madariaga, and Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 179-183; Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*.

⁶⁶ Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 35.

⁶⁷ Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 36.

sed to use the regime's constitution (approved in 1980 in a referendum marred by fraud accusations) to rebuke Pinochet at the ballot box (i.e., Radicals, Christian Democrats, and some socialist factions) and those who favored a revolutionary transition (i.e., communists and revolutionary left groups).⁶⁸ Consequently, opposition initiatives for a negotiated transition in 1985 (*Acuerdo Nacional para la Transición a la Plena Democracia*) and a civil disobedience democratization path in 1986 (*Asamblea Cívica de la Civilidad*) were short-lived.⁶⁹ Similar divisions plagued the student movement. This phenomenon resulted in parallel logics of party unity and sectarianism, political concertation and street militancy, and the increasing weight of anti-party independent student groups disaffected with the opposition and the military.⁷⁰

However, facing continuous repression, student movement leaders carved a new path in 1987. Defying adult party lines, Christian Democratic, Socialist, and Communist student activists started working together by building bottom-up participatory practices and alliances with various university actors, including faculty and staff.⁷¹ Thanks to this shift, in 1987, the movement succeeded in forcing Pinochet to replace the hated rector Federici at the University of Chile. The demonstrations against Federici became, thus, a symbol of the ability of a united opposition to defeat Pinochet.⁷²

Up to that point, adult parties still could not come together. This situation, plus the regime's high degree of institutionalization, its willingness to combine extreme repression and minor economic concessions, its ability to shore up conservative civilian support and effectively manage the financial crisis, and the increasing centralization of power in the figure of General Augusto Pinochet's contributed to the regime's survival.⁷³

As a result, the path to democracy became increasingly tied to the schedule and mode of transition dictated by the military's 1980s constitution.⁷⁴ This constitution established that Pinochet would be president from

⁶⁸ Garretón *Popular Mobilization*, 268-269.

⁶⁹ Garretón *Popular Mobilization*, 268-269.

⁷⁰ Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 54-55, 58, 97-98; Monge, Madariaga, and Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 246-248; Muñoz, *Generaciones*, 109.

⁷¹ Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 185-188.

⁷² Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*, 80-81, 185-188

⁷³ Drake and Jaksic, *Transformation*, 6-8; Manuel A. Garretón, "La Redemocratización Política en Chile. Transición, Inauguración y Evolución," *Estudios Públicos* 42, (1991): 105; Garretón *Popular Mobilization*, 267; Maira, *Transición Chilena*, 328-329.

⁷⁴ Francisco Fernández Fredes, "La Constitución Chilena de 1980: Enclaves Autoritarios y Cerrojos Institucionales," in *Sistema Representativo y Democracia Semidirecta*, ed. Hugo Concha (Memoria del VII Congreso Iberoamericano de Derecho Constitucional, 2002).

March 1980 to March 1988, when citizens would vote in favor or against a temporary successor nominated by the military. If the vote was favorable to the military's nominee, said nominee would become president for a year, during which future elections would be organized. If citizens rejected the military's nominee, Pinochet's term would be extended for one year, and democratic elections would be held at the end of 1989.⁷⁵

Following the Constitution's timetable, early in 1988, the military scheduled a referendum for October of that year. In preparation, the government lifted bans on party and union organizations. This situation led to the re-emergence of right, center, and left parties and the recomposition of the country's national labor confederation (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* or CUT).⁷⁶ Sensing an opportunity, five opposition parties (the Christian Democracy, the Socialist Party, the Radical Party, the Social Democracy, and the Party for Democracy or PPD) created the *Concertación de Partidos por el No*, the goal of which was to defeat Pinochet in the referendum.⁷⁷ Many students supported the *Concertación de Partidos por el No* through massive protests and student non-partisan grassroots participation in *Concertación* committees in favor of the *No* option.⁷⁸

Following an iconic TV campaign organized by the *Concertación de Partidos por el No* and massive protests organized by students and labor, Pinochet lost the referendum. Frantic negotiations ensued between the regime and leaders of the opposition parties.⁷⁹ The result was a pact among the *Concertación de Partidos por el No* leaders and Pinochet, which provided for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in 1989 and tweaked the more authoritarian aspects of the constitution in exchange for the opposition's commitment to maintaining the 1980s constitution and Pinochet's control of the army.⁸⁰ To ensure further control over the future

⁷⁵ Fernández Fredes, *La Constitución Chilena de 1980*, 2002.

⁷⁶ Garretón *Popular Mobilization*, 269.

⁷⁷ Peter Siavelis, "From a Necessary to a Permanent Coalition", in *Democratic Chile: The Politics and Policies of a Historic Coalition 1990-2010*, ed. Kiersten Sehnbruch and Peter Siavelis (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2014), 17.

⁷⁸ Brancher de Oliveira, *El Movimiento Estudiantil y Los Cambios*, 47-48.

⁷⁹ Garretón, *La Redemocratización*, 110-111; Maira, *Transición Chilena*, 331-337.

⁸⁰ The original constitution established 8 year presidential terms with unlimited re-election, non-elected senators who served for life, an electoral system that overrepresented the second largest majority, and complex constitutional amendment procedures. In addition, it included military participation in two non-elected bodies: the *Consejo de Seguridad Nacional* (in charge of advising the president on all matters related to national security) and the *Tribunal Constitucional* (a parallel supreme court with judicial review and veto powers). The

democracy, during his last year in office, Pinochet also packed the courts, the military, and the civil service, privatized remaining government corporations, and put intelligence services under army control.⁸¹

To participate in the 1989 electoral campaign, the *Concertación de Partidos por el No* was renamed *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* (hereafter *Concertación*) and expanded to include seventeen parties (including all opposition parties minus the Communist Party, which remained committed to an insurrectional transition). The coalition developed a shared moderate electoral program, agreed on a consensus candidate (the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin), and developed a complex power-sharing system for a potential new government.⁸² By July 1989, even reluctant Communist Party leaders supported the *Concertación's* candidate. These events contributed to sidelining social movements, including students and labor, which had been at the forefront of the long and arduous process of civil disobedience that preceded 1988.⁸³

The crucial role of political party elites in the transition negotiations also affected the internal dynamics of the student movement. In particular, significant adult political intervention in student elections had the unintended effect of sowing discord between student leaders of different parties and bringing back cupular politics and sectarianism into the movement.⁸⁴ Thus, by the end of the year, the student movement was exhausted by ongoing military repression, rising internal partisan squabbles, and student base indifference to party leadership.⁸⁵ Communist students were also vexed by their party's last-minute, unconsulted support for the *Concertación*.⁸⁶ In addition, activists of all parties were disheartened by the military's last-minute passage of a constitutional reform that made reversing the 1981 university reforms difficult.⁸⁷ This situation weakened political parties' standing among

post 1988 negotiation simplified constitutional amendment procedures, reduced presidential terms to four years with one possibility for reelection, and limited the power of non-elected senators and the *Consejo de Seguridad Nacional*.

⁸¹ Garretón, *La Redemocratización*, 108; Maira, *Transición Chilena*, 331-337.

⁸² Siavelis, *From a Necessary to a Permanent Coalition*, 18; Garretón, *La Redemocratización*, 111.

⁸³ Garretón, *Popular Mobilization*, 2001.

⁸⁴ Monge, Madariaga, and Toro Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 342-345; Marchant Veloz, *De la Organización a la Fragmentación*.

⁸⁵ Monge, Madariaga, and Toro Blanco, *Los Muchachos de Antes*, 342-345.

⁸⁶ Marchant Veloz, *De la Organización a la Fragmentación*, 186 & 199-202.

⁸⁷ Javiera Errazuriz Tagle, "El Movimiento Estudiantil Chileno Durante la Transición a la Democracia: Resurgimiento y Movilización Contra Las Herencias de la Dictadura de Pinochet" *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 40 (2018): 354.

the student body.⁸⁸ Thus, by the end of the transition, the links between the student movement had again weakened significantly.

In December of 1989, the Concertación won fifty-five percent of the presidential vote, sixty-five percent of the House vote, and fifty-six percent of the Senate vote.⁸⁹ Thus, in March of 1990, the Concertación took office by a landslide but did so in the context of significant institutional constraints and weakened ties to social movements, most notably the more combative student movement.

Uruguay

In 1980, the military regime proposed a referendum to approve a constitution drafted by the government. Among other things, the proposed constitution allowed the participation of only some parties and forced them to run a unity presidential candidate, made many of the military emergency decrees permanent, and gave the military the power to remove elected officials. Opposition actors stealthily campaigned to defeat the proposal. The *Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios del Uruguay* or FEUU, since 1929 the sole national federation of university students, was part of these efforts. Despite operating clandestinely thanks to a small group of socialist and communist activists, in 1980 the FEUU took an active role in boycotting the referendum. Instead, it called for the return to democracy and the configuration of a shared opposition post-transition program.⁹⁰ As a result, that year, it suffered a wave of student disappearances and assassinations that further shrunk the organization.

During 1981, students belonging to socialist and center-left and center-right parties (i.e., *Colorado* and *Blanco* parties) tried to recreate formal student governance organizations. Unfortunately, these efforts failed due to the difficulties of bringing together clandestine and non-clandestine organics.⁹¹ Despite these difficulties, student and other civil organizations' efforts contributed to the population's rejection of the proposed constitution.

⁸⁸ Garretón, *Mobilization*.

⁸⁹ Drake and Jaksić, *Transformation*, 14.

⁹⁰ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, 81. Haberkorn, *La Muy Fiel y Conquistadora*.

⁹¹ González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 14; Jung, *La Reorganización*; Sabrina Ximena Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo, El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo en 1983: La Semana del Estudiantes* (Montevideo: ANEP, 2021).

The regime's 1980 political defeat coincided with the beginning of growing inflation, which peaked in 1982. This situation led to the first large protests against the government. Civil unrest led, in turn, regime soft-liners to call the more conservative factions of the center and center-right parties (*Colorados* and *Blancos*, respectively) to negotiate future democratic elections.⁹² The negotiations excluded the left and its imprisoned leader, Líber Sergni, and exiled *Blanco* leader Wilson Ferreira. However, they led to the re-legalization of the *Blanco* and *Colorado* and established a jungle primary election for the end of 1982. The latter aimed to identify representatives of the two parties for future democratization negotiations.⁹³ In parallel, the regime legalized civil and professional associations.⁹⁴

Seizing the opportunity opened by the legalization of civil and professional associations, diverse civil society groups became formal organizations in 1982. In the university, students created the *Asociación Social y Cultural de Estudiantes de la Enseñanza Pública* or ASCEEP.⁹⁵ The ASCEEP was the brainchild of *Blanco*, *Colorado*, Christian Democratic, and independent activists involved in student magazines. Since the late 1970s, these magazines had operated as independent student cooperatives and spaces for discussing student political issues and counter-cultural expression.⁹⁶ The activities of these organizations were guided by an ethos of deliberation, cultural activism, inclusive grassroots participation, and ideological rejection of non-democratic goals, violence, and party sectarianism.⁹⁷ Reflecting this legacy, one of the first actions of the newly formed ASCEEP was to create a magazine coordinating body (*Coordinadora de Revistas*).⁹⁸ The idea of the *Coordinadora de Revistas* was to affiliate grassroots members around the publication of fanzines dedicated to cultural and academic issues and, underhandedly,

⁹² Juan Rial, "Los Partidos Políticos Uruguayos en el Proceso de Transición a la Democracia" *Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies* (University of Notre Dame, 1990): 12, 15-17; Charles G. Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy. Politicians and Generals in Uruguay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 75-80; Eugenia Allier Montaño, *La Izquierda en las Transiciones a la Democracia. El Caso Uruguayo* (Mexico DF: Instituto Mora, 2001): 139-140.

⁹³ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*; Filgueira, *Movimientos Sociales*.

⁹⁴ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*;

⁹⁵ González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 2021; Inetti, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo*, 30.

⁹⁶ González-Vaillant, *Entre los Intersticios*; Jung, *La Reorganización*.

⁹⁷ González-Vaillant, *Entre los Intersticios*, 86-87 & 90.

⁹⁸ Jung, *La Reorganización*.

political criticism of the regime and university authorities.⁹⁹ Although not antagonistic to the FEUU, it worked in parallel to it.¹⁰⁰ This situation applied to cultural activities, protests to improve student conditions, and even public communiqués dedicated to outside audiences. In 1982, for instance, both organizations made separate calls to student participation in party primaries by casting blank votes or voting for their preferred *Colorado* and *Blanco* lists.¹⁰¹ Both organizations also made urgent but separate calls for student street mobilization.¹⁰²

The work of the ASCEEP, the FEUU, and other similar social movement organizations affected the 1982 primary results, which showed a strong political preference for the more progressive factions of the *Blanco* and *Colorado* parties. Moreover, the primaries indicated that Wilson Ferreira, anathema to the military, commanded sizable majorities, including left voters who defied Seregni's calls to boycott the election to cast a vote for Ferreira.¹⁰³ Given this adverse reality, in 1983, the military forged ahead with the idea of having the more right-wing *Blanco* and *Colorado* factions agree to a conservative democratic constitution and the exclusion of the left. However, following Ferreira's commands, the *Blancos* attended one meeting and exited the negotiations. Not wanting to be the sole opposition party negotiating, *Colorados* followed suit.

The collapse of the 1983 negotiations pushed opposition parties to support a transition anchored in social movement-led peaceful protests and broad political alliances that included the left.¹⁰⁴ This choice reflected the increasing centrality of social movements and the leftist *Frente Amplio* (a party deeply intertwined with popular organizations) in activating popular mobilization in 1981, 1982, and 1983.¹⁰⁵ Growing party unity around a strategy of mass mobilization and the growth of social movements resulted in two umbrella opposition organizations: the *Interpartidaria* and the *Intersocial*.¹⁰⁶ All opposition party forces, including the still-proscribed *Frente Amplio*, formed the *Interpar-*

⁹⁹ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 13-14; González-Vaillant, *Entre los Intersticios*, 82-84; Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo*.

¹⁰⁰ Jung, *La Reorganización*.

¹⁰¹ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, 81.

¹⁰² Carlos Filgueira, "Movimientos Sociales en la Restauración del Orden Democrático: Uruguay, 1985," in *Movimientos Sociales en el Uruguay de Hoy*, ed. Carlos Filgueira (Montevideo: CLACSO/CIESU/ Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1985); Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*; Jung, *La Reorganización*.

¹⁰³ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*.

¹⁰⁴ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*.

¹⁰⁵ Filgueira, *Movimientos Sociales*; Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*.

¹⁰⁶ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*.

tidaria. Its goal was to coordinate all party opposition activity. The *Intersocial* subsumed all social movements, and its goal was to incite popular mobilization.

During 1983, ASCEEP affiliation grew thanks to independent and leftist students. Many of these students had previously participated in the FEUU but had left after a wave of arrests of communist student leaders severely wounded the organization.¹⁰⁷ In ascendancy, the ASCEEP joined adult opposition parties and social organizations in massive protests against the regime. In September of 1983, in preparation for the 1984 International Year of Youth, the ASCEEP and *Coordinadora de Revistas* organized a week of activities around the commemoration of the 1968 killing of a communist student, Liber Arce, and the 100 years of the Constitutional amendment that enshrined faculty-student-staff shared university governance.¹⁰⁸ The United Nations and all opposition parties and social organizations supported the activities. Thus, students had a golden opportunity to frame student struggles in the context of broader demands for democratization and showcase student proposals for the new democracy.¹⁰⁹ Following a pattern initially established in 1982, the week included various artistic events and student-faculty roundtables about the problems of the university and the country, which convoked many students and attracted media attention.¹¹⁰ It ended with a massive march of 80,000 individuals and the reading of demands shared by the different parties that conformed to the ASCEEP.¹¹¹ Student mobilization was followed a few months later by massive demonstrations coordinated by the *Intersocial* and *Interpartidaria*.

During 1982 and 1983, students debated who was the legitimate representative of students: the FEUU (the more partisan but clandestine face of the movement) or the ASCEEP (its more public social movement *Janus*).¹¹² This debate reflected inter and intra-generational tensions.¹¹³ It also betrayed students' ambiguous feelings toward the FEUU, which was viewed by some students as a tool of the Communist Party while simultaneously embodying a long democratic tradition.¹¹⁴ Increasingly, though, the two spaces converged, leading in 1984 to the formal unification of the ASCEEP and

¹⁰⁷ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983; Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983; Jung, *La Reorganización*.

¹⁰⁹ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, 83; González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 9; Inetti, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo en 1983*, 9; Jung, *La Reorganización*, 2011.

¹¹¹ Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo en 1983*, 10 & 16.

¹¹² González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 13; Jung, *La Reorganización*.

¹¹³ González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*.

¹¹⁴ González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 16.

FEUU.¹¹⁵ This process mimicked the unification of the old *Convención Nacional de Trabajadores* (CNT) and the newer *Plenario Intersindical de Trabajadores* (PIT) in 1983.¹¹⁶

Thus, during 1984, the ASCEEP/FEUU went on to play a crucial role in the *Intersectorial* and the *Interpartidaria*, asserting students' presence in adult political organizations and establishing close ties to other social movements and the *Frente Amplio*.¹¹⁷ At the same time, the movement's consistent presence in the streets made students a continued target of military repression, a situation that pushed students to the left, nurtured informal and contingent forms of student organization, and legitimized the student movement as a militant stalwart of the democratic cause.¹¹⁸ The combination of political closeness to political adult political and mobilization autonomy generated a movement where traditional politics' top-down and partisan bargaining logics coexisted with organizational autonomism, horizontal decision, and disdain for accommodation.¹¹⁹ The movement's ambivalent relationship with conventional party politics notwithstanding, elites and the public recognized student parties' protagonism.

In 1984, the military released Liber Seregni from prison.¹²⁰ Unlike in 1982, when he had called to boycott elections, in 1984, Seregni was open to an electoral transition and working with *Blancos* and *Colorados*.¹²¹ His overtures found echoes in the more leftist factions of the *Colorados* and military soft-liners who welcomed the idea of a *Colorado-Frente Amplio* coalition to foil a potential win of Wilson Ferreira.¹²² In this context, the military re-legalized leftist parties, and Wilson Ferreira returned from exile only to be summarily arrested after failing to provoke massive mobilizations.¹²³ By mid-year, the military found itself negotiating fast extrication elections with a newly formed *Multipartidaria* (which included the former *Interpartidaria*

¹¹⁵ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, 85.

¹¹⁶ Haberkorn, *La Muy Fiel y Conquistadora*.

¹¹⁷ Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, 81-82; González-Vaillant, *Estudiante, Sal Afuera*, 26.

¹¹⁸ Filgueira, *Movimientos Sociales*; Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983, 82; Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo*.

¹¹⁹ Jung, *La Reorganización*; Leo Calicchio, *El Abandono del Activismo Universitario hacia Fines de la Década del Ochenta. Notas para una Historia de la ASCEEP FEUU* (M.A. Thesis Sociology. Universidad de la República, 2002).

¹²⁰ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*.

¹²¹ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*.

¹²² Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*; Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 144.

¹²³ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*, 26.

minus the *Blancos*, who refused to negotiate with their leader in prison).¹²⁴ Signed only by the military, the so-called *Pacto Naval* excluded negotiations about a new constitution. Instead, it restored the pre-1973 constitution and generated temporary and mostly symbolic concessions to the military.¹²⁵

Following the *Pacto Naval*, the opposition shifted its energies to the electoral arena.¹²⁶ *Interpartidaria* parties decided to run separate candidates but run on a shared policy program. To that end, in 1984 the opposition formed the Concertación Nacional Programática, hereafter CONAPRO. The CONAPRO brought together party, business, and social movement representatives to develop an electoral program that supported the re-establishment of civil liberties, committed future governments to the defense of human rights and progressive social policies, and protected the autonomy of universities and the judiciary.¹²⁷ Students were pivotal actors in the CONAPRO, and the *Multipartidaria*, as well as in university student-elected *Consejos*, which took over university government until the election.

Unable to unite behind a candidate of one of the existing parties or form a party, the military was soundly defeated in the election. The *Colorados* won the presidency with thirty-one percent of the votes and Congress with forty-one percent.¹²⁸ With thirty-five percent of the total votes, the more centrist faction of the *Blanco* Party became the second largest bloc in Congress, followed by the *Frente Amplio*, which gathered twenty-one percent of the total legislative votes.¹²⁹

In sum, the political dynamics behind military extrication empowered both parties and social movements, fostered movement-party bargaining, and ultimately inserted the student movement in both arenas. Thus, parties remained at the center of the movement but did not fully dominate it.

Conclusion

During the late 1970s, student protests had been small, consisting primarily of flash actions. However, by the early 1980s, they had become massive and

¹²⁴ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*, 27-28; Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 141-159 and 166.

¹²⁵ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*, 1990.

¹²⁶ Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy*, 74; Corbo, *La Transición de la Dictadura a la Democracia*.

¹²⁷ Alvaro Sosa, "Concertando la Democracia. La Experiencia de la CONAPRO en la Transición Uruguaya (1984-1985)," *Contemporánea Historia y Problemas del Siglo XX* 10, no. 1 (2019).

¹²⁸ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*, 34.

¹²⁹ Rial, *Los Partidos Políticos*, 47-48.

sustained.¹³⁰ This massification reflected the unification of the opposition around political partisan demands, identities, and language anchored in defense of democratic values, human rights, and civil resistance to the marketization of social goods.¹³¹ This imagery resonated strongly with the three countries' higher education and student movement histories before the 1970s. This history was characterized by significant and growing state involvement in public education, a massive expansion of secondary and tertiary enrollment, a strong student organization, and an increasing presence of students in national partisan politics.¹³² The memory of this history helped generate a conceptual link between political and socio-economic democracy and public education. As a result, in student minds, student politics became associated with the defense of a public tradition that saw education as an individual right and a springboard for personal and national betterment and greater social and political democratization.¹³³ It also motivated students to enthusiastically join the political fight for democracy.

Despite these similarities, each country's distinct mode of transition generated cross-national variation in student movement partisan dynamics. The analysis of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay's student movements during the 1980s indicates that although the transition to democracy equally activated student partisan politics, the transition mode affected the standing of parties within the student movement and the overall links between the movement and political parties. In Argentina, where the transition occurred due to military defeat and was driven by a party alliance and a combination of social mobilization and party politics, student parties, especially *Franja*, became dominant within the movement and a visible national political ac-

¹³⁰ Inetti Pino, *El Movimiento Estudiantil Uruguayo en 1983*, 2021; Bravo, *Piedras, Barricadas y Cacerolas. Las Jornadas Nacionales de Protesta Chile 1983-1986* (Santiago: Universidad Alberto Hurtado), 2017; Yann Cristal, *Publica y Gratuita*, 30; Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*; Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983: *La Generación*, 77-79 and 80-82; Jung, *La Reorganización*.

¹³¹ Larrondo and Cozachow, *Un Llamado a la Unidad*; Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*; Cano and Ayma, *Voces, Luchas y Sueños*; Cristal and Seia, *La Izquierda Estudiantil de la UBA en la Transición Democrática*; Haberkorn, *La Muy Fiel y Conquistadora*; González-Vaillant, *Entre los Intersticios*; Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983.

¹³² Sol Serrano, *Educación y Nación. Chile en el Siglo XIX* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1993); Juan Oddone and M. Blanca París de Oddone, *Historia de la Universidad de la República. Tomos I and II* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, 2010 [1971]); Buchbinder, Pablo ¿Revolución en los Claustros? *La Reforma Universitaria de 1918* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana. Kindle Edition, 2012); Moraga, *Muchachos Casi Silvestres*.

¹³³ Brodsky, *Conversaciones con la FECH*; Haberkorn, *La Muy Fiel y Conquistadora*; González-Vaillant, *Entre los Intersticios*; Markarian, Wschebor and Jung, 1983; Cano and Ayma, *Voces, Luchas y Sueños*; Cristal, *Democracia, Liberación, Revolución*.

tor. In Chile, where the transition was controlled by the military and driven by party elite negotiations, movement-party relations weakened. Within the student movement, this resulted in the grassroots weakening of party identities and organization. Uruguay is an intermediate case because the path to democracy included equally strong parties and movements but with significant autonomy of student parties from adult parties. Thus, the cases suggest student party ties weakened the most, whereas the regime was more robust. These findings are consistent with studies of human rights, squatter, labor, and women's movements and party relations in the three countries.¹³⁴

How much did the type of party-movement relations built during the transition affect the student movement after the return to democracy? The short answer is significantly. The longer answer is: in a complex way. On the one hand, the return to democracy brought back old patterns of student politics: sectarianism, top-down dynamics, and decreasing autonomy from adult politics. This situation generated a crisis of student representation in the three cases. This crisis was compounded by incumbents' incapacity or unwillingness to do more to punish human rights violations and reverse the new inequalities of the market economy, the crisis of the left following the fall of "Real Socialisms," and the distance between the new practices and ideas born during the struggle against the military and the realities of governing after the return to democracy. However, in Argentina and Uruguay, the strong standing of student parties delayed this crisis by half a decade. In contrast, in Chile, the weakness of student patterns resulted in an immediate student movement leadership crisis. Moreover, while student party identities and organizations recouped in Argentina and Uruguay in the mid-2000s, that was not the case in Chile. In fact, in the latter case, the gap between the student movement and parties widened after the mid-2000s.¹³⁵

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¹³⁴ Garretón, *Popular Mobilización*; Filgueira, *Social Movements*; Pablo Vommaro, "Militancias Juveniles en los 80: Acercamientos a las Formas de Participación Juveniles en la Transición Democrática Argentina," *Trabajo y Sociedad* No 30 (summer 2018).

¹³⁵ Indira Palacios-Valladares, "With or Without Them: Contemporary Student Movements and Parties in the Southern Cone." *The Latinamericanist* 60, no 2 (2016): 243-268.

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