



**Working Papers in International Studies
Centre for International Studies
Dublin City University**

Chile's new politics: the difficult arrival of the outsider

Roberto Espíndola
University of Bradford

Working paper 3 of 2007

	<p>Centre for International Studies School of Law and Government Dublin City University Ireland Tel. +353 1 7007720 Fax + 353 1 7007374 Email cis@dcu.ie Web: www.dcu.ie/~cis</p>
---	--

At the first round of Chile's presidential election in December 2005, the candidate of the ruling coalition *Concertación*, Michelle Bachelet, had an easy lead with 46 per cent of the preferences, well ahead of the second highest plurality, Sebastián Piñera, one of the two candidates fielded by the right-wing *Alianza*. That was not surprising since the centre-left *Concertación* – a coalition of christian democrats, social democrats and socialists - has governed since Chile's return to democracy in 1989, winning the subsequent presidential elections in 1993 and 1999, and President Ricardo Lagos was leaving office with a 70 per cent approval in opinion polls.

Bachelet, though, was an unusual candidate to do well in a conservative, Catholic society such as the Chilean one. A medical doctor as well as an expert on defence matters, she is divorced, an agnostic, and a single mother. Her father was an air force general who supported the government of President Allende (1970-3) and died after the 1973 military coup, imprisoned and tortured by his own colleagues. Bachelet herself, then a medical student, underwent the same treatment but was subsequently released and allowed to go into exile, first to Australia and then to East Germany where she continued her studies. A member of the Socialist Party (PS) since her teens, and clearly identified with its left wing, she was first appointed minister of health by President Lagos, and then in 2002 minister of defence, the first woman to hold that post in a Latin American country.

At the December 2005 election, the opposition *Alianza* fielded two candidates, Piñera and the more conservative Joaquín Lavín, seeking to benefit from their combined vote to deny Bachelet an outright victory, using the poll as a primary to decide who will face Bachelet at the second round on 15 January 2006. Piñera, who won that right, had considerable advantages. The leader of the centre-right *Renovación Nacional* (RN), Piñera is a successful entrepreneur and a billionaire, with close family contacts with the christian democrats and a candidate likely to attract Catholic, centre voters who would normally vote for *Concertación*.

However, Bachelet won the second round comfortably with 53.5 per cent of the preferences, becoming Chile's first female President¹. Her victory fuelled academic and journalistic speculation about a shift to the left in Chilean politics, but the Bachelet administration had provided no evidence of any such shift. Bachelet succeeded fellow Socialist Lagos, and although in terms of background and views she is to the left of him, her government has continued the moderate policies applied by her predecessor.

The shift is not in the policies, but in the politics. The election of President Bachelet and that of several new parliamentarians, as well as the public opinion support for the gender parity applied in the appointment of the cabinet and of regional authorities, show the emergence of a new type of politics. These are characterised by the arrival of outsiders such a Bachelet, of those coming from outside the traditional political elite, with a new emphasis on the representation of women and ethnic minorities. That has been coupled with a greater tendency by political leaders to appeal directly to the electorate, bypassing political parties and traditional structures. That was shown by Bachelet's insistence in

¹ There have been female Presidents in Argentina (Isabel Perón), Guyana (Janet Jagan), Nicaragua (Violeta Chamorro) and Panama (Mireya Moscoso de Arias), but Bachelet is the only Latin American woman to become head of state without being the wife or widow of a former president or political leader.

conducting a 'citizens' campaign' in relative isolation from the political parties of the centre-left coalition supporting her.

This is a tendency already identified in Europe (Panebianco, 1998; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2002; Webb *et al*, 2002; Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2005), as well as present in Latin America. Recent elections in Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela show political leaders directly appealing to the citizenry, and relying on the media rather than on political parties.

However, the experience of President Bachelet shows that there is a 'dark side' to this reliance on the citizenry², and that whilst elections offer women and ethnic minorities room for participation, that does not affect the patriarchal and sexist attitudes deeply-entrenched in the political elite. Her administration has been plagued by criticisms, both from the right-wing opposition and from her own government coalition, couched in coded language; criticisms from male politicians, widely supported by the media and alleging "lack of leadership", "indecision", "lack of authority", have been echoed in opinion polls showing a substantial drop in Bachelet's popularity.

Background

Since the return to democracy with the December 1989 presidential and parliamentary, Chilean politics have revolved around two large coalitions. The centre-left *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* (Coalition of Parties for Democracy, normally referred to as *Concertación*) gathers the PS, Christian Democratic Party (PDC), plus two social democratic parties, Party for Democracy (PPD) and Radical Social Democratic Party (PRSD), and has been in government since March 1990. Despite their political victories and the success of their economic policies, there are considerable tensions within *Concertación*. Some of them derive from differences over social policies related to family or education, where the PDC's positions are very close to those of the Catholic church and often at odds with those of its secular partners. On other matters, differences cut across party lines, as in the case of economic policies where neo-liberal sectors from all four parties advocate reliance on markets whilst *estatistas*, also from across the coalition, seek for the state to play a redistributive role.

The main opposition force is the *Alianza por Chile* (Alliance for Chile, *Alianza* for short), a coalition between the right-wing populist *Unión Demócrata Independiente* (UDI), still closely associated with former supporters of the Pinochet dictatorship, and the more moderate, centre-right RN, which also contains politicians associated with the military regime, but has a more liberal image. These two parties constantly fight for hegemony, but they do not show the same policy differences to be found amongst centre-left rivals. Pinochet's death, after a virtual disappearance from the political scene in recent years, has benefited *Alianza*, allowing most of their leaders to cleanse themselves of their association with the military dictatorship and to emerge as a 'new' right; the *Alianza* has even managed to stay clear of the financial scandals that have embroiled the Pinochet family, after the discovery of the late dictator's massive appropriation of state funds.

The only other political parties, at the national level, are those of the left, not represented in Parliament. These are the *Partido Comunista de Chile* (PCCH), a rather unreconstructed Communist party with a strong presence amongst trade unionists and

² Just as Robert Putnam has identified a 'dark side' of social capital. See R Putnam (2000).

students, and the *Partido Humanista* (PH), a combination of environmentalists, humanists and disciples of a spiritual leader, Mario Rodríguez, also known as Silo. In 2005, these two parties, plus some smaller groups, formed the *Juntos Podemos Más* (Together We Can Do More) coalition, running a slate of presidential and parliamentary candidates. There are also some regional parties in the extreme north and extreme south of this long country, but those are rather ephemeral and only the northern *Partido de Acción Regional* manages to get a parliamentary seat.

These coalitions are largely a result of the binomial electoral system, a legacy of the Pinochet regime intended to benefit his supporters, as these were expected to be the second largest plurality. Basically, the country is divided into 19 senatorial constituencies and 60 constituencies for the Chamber of Deputies or lower house, each constituency electing two parliamentarians. Parties or coalitions of parties can present lists of up to two candidates; the list with the highest number of votes elects one seat and the other seat goes to the list with the second highest plurality, unless the first one has more than twice the number of votes of the second in which case the former gets both seats. For instance, if list A gets 55 per cent of the preferences, list B 30 per cent and list C 15 per cent, the list A candidate with the highest number of votes wins a seat, B gets the other and C gets none; however, if A reaches 60 per cent and B and C 29 and 11 respectively, then A gets both seats and the other lists get none.

This system was designed assuming that if the centre-left opposing the Pinochet dictatorship united – as they did - they would reach a majority, but they would not double the votes of Pinochet's supporters since the right in Chile has historically received about a third of the votes. Added to that was another legacy from the authoritarian period, that of appointed and life senators. Nine senators were added to the 38 elected ones, appointed for an eight-year period first by the Pinochet administration and then by a national security committee - controlled by the heads of the military - from amongst former heads of the armed forces, former Supreme Court ministers, former government ministers, former Comptroller Generals or former university rectors. To those appointed senators were added former Presidents who had served at least six years in office and became life senators. After the first elections to take place in 1989, that system immediately gave the right-wing ten non-elected senatorial seats and a majority in Senate, effectively blocking any possibility of reforming the electoral system or any other part of Pinochet's Constitution of 1980.

But this electoral system has further consequences for political representation. Just as it magnifies the share of seats to go to the second largest force, it also leaves without representation any force that gets the third largest share of votes; thus the PCCH and its allies are prevented from having any representation. It is a system that easily leads to a cartelisation of the government and opposition blocks.

Another further consequence is that whilst the binomial system suits well a coalition of two partners, it has perverse consequences for more plural alliances. In the case of *Concertación*, that means that in each constituency two of its member parties must stand aside and not present a candidate of their own, leading to erosion in local party members' morale and in voters' loyalty. That has been a problem mainly for PS, PPD and PRD, since the PDC has in practice been able to nominate a candidate at least in each of the lower house constituencies. It also makes electoral data rather unreliable, since the strength of parties that have not been able to present candidates in every constituency cannot be ascertained.

Presidential elections are run along the lines of a two-round system, with a second round if none of the candidates reaches a majority of the preferences, that is a majority of all the votes validly cast, excluding those either null or blank. That leaves open the possibility for coalitions to use the first round as a primary particularly if they are unlikely to achieve a majority, presenting more than one candidate and then rallying around the one going into the second round.

At the December 2005 polls, *Alianza* made use of that possibility, after being unable to agree on a single nominee. RN insisted in their right to put forward Sebastián Piñera and UDI in theirs to present Joaquín Lavín, the former mayor of Santiago and conservative member of Opus Dei, but also a populist with considerable popularity amongst low income groups, who had already unsuccessfully run for the Presidency in 1999. Piñera challenged his UDI rival to go to an open primary to decide the nomination in the certainty of his own support outside *Alianza*, and Lavín for the same reason pressed for an internal one limited to UDI and RN party members; since they could not agree they both stood.

Concertación had already a less than positive experience with primaries that had left deep wounds in 1993 and particularly in 1999, when the defeat of a christian democratic pre-candidate left a PDC so resentful that they were unwilling to join the Lagos campaign for three months (Espíndola, 2002). Despite that, an open primary election was called with the PDC's nominee, former foreign minister Soledad Alvear, standing against the socialist pre-candidate Michelle Bachelet. After weeks of embittered campaigning and a couple of less than friendly debates, by May 2005 opinion polls had Bachelet well ahead of Alvear and of any *Alianza* candidate, whilst Alvear appeared at risk of defeat if she was the one to confront Piñera in December. As a result, Alvear withdrew from the presidential primary and accepted to stand for Senate instead.

The nomination of parliamentary candidates was equally troubled. After primaries for the selection of parliamentary candidates caused serious problems within PDC in 1999³, no party was willing to risk that. The selection was made by the national council of each party, making extensive use of surveys and opinion polls, which in the case of *Concertación* led to popular outsiders replacing several well-established members of the political elite. In the case of the centre-left coalition, each party's national leadership had then to negotiate the *Concertación* slate with their partners.

Meanwhile, within *Alianza* the assumption normally is that UDI and RN will nominate a candidate each in every parliamentary constituency. In reality, the process is not so simple as the two parties compete for hegemony, hence each one seeks to place their top names in constituencies where they are likely to get elected, seeking for them running mates that will not overshadow them, but who are popular enough to bring the votes required for the list to elect a seat.

The selection is even more complex for *Concertación*, since they have to negotiate first which two of its four component parties will stand in each constituency, a process that has to do with the relative power each party has within the coalition, as well as with the

³ Primaries caused internal disputes that negatively affected the PDC's electoral performance. For example, in districts 24 and 56 those disputes led to appeals to party authorities to revert the result of the primary, and to defections, and in both cases the PDC lost the seat.

possibility that in some constituencies two good candidates could get both seats. In practice, that is done by dividing *Concertación* into two sub-pacts, which at present consist of, on the one hand the PDC, and on the other, the 'progressive bloc' formed by PS, PPD and PRSD. In 2005, the PDC was given a place in every constituency, although they chose to decline the senatorial one in the VI Region, just South of Santiago, partly because the nomination was causing them internal frictions, partly to secure advantages elsewhere.

Christian democrats were given a relatively easy ride at the *Concertación's* internal negotiations because of fears that they may leave the coalition, adopting the *camino propio* (own path) strategy often proposed by their more conservative factions. Whilst that may appear suicidal in the binomial system for a party that doesn't attract much more than 20 per cent of the vote, the strategy's proponents assume that they would be able to attract RN, or at least a large fraction of that party, to form a centre-right coalition. The idea is to some extent unrealistic since the PDC would probably lose as much of its centre-left wing as it would win from centre-right allies, but the risk is always there, giving christian democrats a powerful bargaining tool.

Problems are far more immediate for the 'progressive bloc' formed by PS, PPD and PRSD since they are constrained to choose just one candidate in each constituency. In other words, whilst the PDC received 60 of the 120 slots available for the Chamber of Deputies⁴, one for each constituency, the PS, PPD and PRSD had to fight over the other 60 places. After much argument, they ended up with 28 PPD candidates, 20 PS, nine PRSD and three independents; the dispute is not only one of numbers, but also of the 'weight' of each slot, whether it is one offering a likely parliamentary seat or just an opportunity to escort a christian democratic winner.

This has a negative effect not only in inter-party relations, but also on the party organisation of PS, PPD and PRSD at the constituency level, since most of them would not have a candidate of their own to support. Whilst voters will choose from amongst the options presented to them in the ballot paper, activists without a candidate to campaign for would in many cases drift away from party membership.⁵

The 2005 presidential candidates

A constitutional reform in 2005 reduced the presidential period in office from six to four years, making presidential elections concurrent with parliamentary ones. This has fundamentally affected the latter, re-invigorating campaigning, whilst at the same time personalising it by and making the presidential candidates the focus of the campaign. Presidential candidates have become *de facto* the heads of their respective parliamentary slates.

The emergence of Bachelet as a presidential candidate had taken by surprise even the leadership of her own party, the PS, where others such as the then interior minister José Miguel Insulza were seen as the obvious choice a year before the presidential polls. Insulza was an emblematic member of the political elite, having been foreign minister

⁴ In fact, 57 went to candidates standing as PDC, and three to independents close to that party.

⁵ Some would campaign at neighbouring constituencies, a few would campaign for the 'progressive bloc' candidate standing in their constituencies, but in the cases of PS branches I have observed, they practically disappeared when they had no Socialist candidate to campaign for at the parliamentary polls.

and then minister of the presidency in 1994-99 under President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, and then becoming interior minister and the most powerful government figure (nicknamed 'Panzer') under President Lagos. As a former christian democrat in his youth, Insulza had widespread acceptance across *Concertación*. But in any case, the PDC argued that after Lagos, a socialist, it was their turn to occupy the presidency.

In that context, Bachelet emerged as an outsider, without a political apparatus behind her, purely as a consequence of opinion polls that systematically showed her having the highest number of preference amongst all sectors of the electorate. As a candidate, Bachelet was a product of opinion polls and of the socialising effect the publication of polls results has on public opinion, in this case wrong-footing political consultants and party operators alike.

Her weaknesses were obvious. An agnostic in a society where the Catholic church plays a central role. Divorced, unmarried to the father of her youngest child, and a leftist, she faced a hard task to retain the support of christian democrats. But others weaknesses were turned into sources of strength. Bachelet was unusual in Chilean (and Latin American) politics as a woman seeking the highest elected office without being married to - or being the widow of - a leading male politician. She is not a natural orator, and her performance in television debates was hesitant, often relying on a colloquial and chatty style, that contrasted with her opponents' well-constructed and more precise interventions. But those characteristics had a positive effect in bringing her closer to large sectors of the electorate, who found it easier to identify with her than with more traditional politicians. To those unexpected assets, she added doses of sympathy and an engaging personality; her practice as a medical doctor in working class neighbourhoods had given her both legitimacy and a relaxed approach to voters.

The other three presidential candidates were Lavín (UDI) and Piñera (RN) representing *Alianza*, and Tomás Hirsch on behalf of *Juntos Podemos Más*. Lavín's name was well recognised after his effective 1999 presidential campaign forced Lagos into a second round and symbolised a re-birth of the right. Above everything Lavín had substantial support amongst low income groups, as a result of the persistent work done by UDI activists as well as the networks he had created in 1999 amongst lower middle class voters dissatisfied with the *Concertación* governments. In a society with growing problems of violent crime, Lavín was the 'law and order' candidate, just as his background of as former major gave him the image of someone who could get things done. All that explained why his position as the *Alianza* candidate appeared unchallenged until June 2005.

This time, however, the wind was not in his favour; most of his assets rapidly turned into sources of weakness once it became clear that he would face Bachelet. His achievements as major of Santiago looked less than positive when subjected to the harsh scrutiny of an electoral campaign: crime had increased during his period as major, and some of his more striking measures either had been financially unwise as in the case of selling city assets, or could easily be presented as gimmicky, as in the creation of rather ephemeral artificial beaches or ski slopes in the middle of Santiago. That added to existing minuses such as his ultra-conservative Catholicism.

By May 2005 opinion polls showed Lavín losing to Bachelet by a substantial margin, and Piñera took advantage of that opportunity to stand as an alternative *Alianza* candidate. One of Chile's richest businessmen, he has a fortune estimated at US\$1.2 billion,

owning the *Chilevisión* television channel as well as a controlling interest in the national airline Lan Chile and in several other companies. Whilst Lavín started his political life as a civilian functionary in the Pinochet dictatorship, Piñera was a businessman who benefited from the military regime, but who also supported the return to democracy at the 1988 plebiscite.

By September 2005 Piñera and Lavín were tied at 17 per cent of popular support according to local pollsters⁶, but from that moment onwards the former took the lead over his UDI rival. Piñera's assets were considerable, starting from media access and a fortune estimated at US\$ 2.1 billion that allowed him to campaign without constraints, as well as conveying an image of economic success. The son of a leading PDC figure, he retained personal and family connections with several top christian democrats. That, added to RN's centre-right image, gave Piñera a moderate image.

His main weakness was precisely that his fortune and lifestyle made him appear as detached from the people, from the ordinary voter. The efforts to relate to the poor that seemed almost natural in a proselytising populist like Lavín, appeared as forced and artificial in the case of Piñera.

The fourth candidate was Hirsch, a left-wing politician given to spectacular gestures. Since neither he nor the parliamentary slate of *Juntos Podemos Más* had any real possibilities of election, Hirsch was able to take *Concertación* to task, challenging them on unfulfilled promises or claiming that Lagos and his predecessors had not been firm enough in taking those responsible for human rights violations to court. His main weakness was the unrealistic nature of his candidacy, and that of his parliamentary slate under the present electoral system.

The 2005 campaign

Concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections meant that the campaign took place simultaneously at the local and national level. This had the unexpected effect of somewhat freeing presidential candidates from party control, since parliamentary candidates were most of the time campaigning in their constituencies; even senators whose seats were not up for election had to spend considerable time and resources in their districts, supporting their candidates to the chamber of deputies.

This had a significant effect on the Bachelet campaign. Rather than having her campaign conducted by party cadres as it had been the case with Lagos in 1999 (Espíndola, 2002: 78-9), Bachelet could project the image of a 'citizens' campaign' by appointing a few political figures, but largely relying on a staff of young professionals and personal associates unrelated to the political establishment. Although a similar approach had already been used by Lavín in 1999 to detach the campaign from UDI and RN, this time the two *Alianza* candidates could not try that approach, since they needed the territorial networks provided by the parties and their parliamentary candidates to compete for hegemony.

The campaigns and the messages of the three main candidates were largely determined by their target audiences. Bachelet focused on the prosperity that had characterised almost 16 years of *Concertación* governments, promising an emphasis on redistribution

⁶ August-September opinion poll of *Centro de Estudios Públicos* (CEP).

and social expenditure. With a successful economy buoyed by record high world prices for copper, Chile's main export commodity, Bachelet was confident to offer specific commitments on social expenditure, particularly on pensions and health. That message appealed to the middle and lower strata where the bulk of *Concertación* support comes from, whilst avoiding the 'value-related' issues that would alienate Catholic voters, such as abortion, anti-conception and gay marriages. The approach was successful to the extent that by November 2005 Bachelet was ahead of her rivals on three out of the four concerns ranked as 'most important' by voters - job creation (with Piñera a close second), access to health services, and education – as well as on eight of the other nine concerns registered, including family policies, equal opportunities and workers' protection⁷. Lavín was marginally ahead of Bachelet on law and order (33 per cent to 31 per cent), and Piñera well in front on economic growth, a concern ranked seventh in importance by respondents.

Lavín, on the other hand, faced an uphill struggle. The 48.7 per cent of the preferences he reached at the 1999 presidential election seemed to indicate a ceiling for the right and centre-right vote, one which was quite distant from the 17 to 22 per cent that opinion polls allocated to Lavín in the months preceding the December 2005 election. Whilst he was ahead of the other two candidates on law and order issues, he had the highest rejection rate amongst them, with 33 per cent of those surveyed by CEP saying that they would not vote for Lavín under any circumstances⁸. Opinion polls showed that the upper strata preferred Piñera to him, just as the middle strata preferred Bachelet: Lavín only option was to target the lower income groups. But that was not an easy task, the dissatisfied former *Concertación* supporters Lavín easily found in 1999 were no longer there, as a consequence of a successful economic performance of the Lagos administration with low rates of unemployment and the President's personal popularity at 70 per cent. A negative campaign emphasising Bachelet's agnosticism would have backfired, particularly in the presence of the Piñera's moderate Catholicism, by pointing to Lavín's own ultra-conservative views, just as any reference to Bachelet's left wing past would play in her hands by allowing her to show the close rapport she had built with the new heads of the Chilean armed forces.

Hence Lavín took the option of avoiding attacks on Bachelet, whilst relying on the UDI's territorial network to campaign incessantly at the local level, seeking to re-build the support he had in 1999, competing with Piñera for the *Alianza* vote, whilst pointing to unfulfilled promises left by the Lagos administration. Probably one of the few options he had left, but quite a different one from his 1999 campaign, particularly because it gave younger UDI leaders, such as Pablo Longueira, a good opportunity to highlight their own future presidential ambitions.

The other *Alianza* candidate, Sebastián Piñera, faced a different task. Polls indicated that out of the three main presidential contenders, he was the one less liked by voters from lower income groups, who saw him as a rich man out of touch with their problems. Rather than competing for the support of low income sectors, where Bachelet and Lavín had a well established presence, Piñera targeted the middle class, Catholic voters, those who would normally vote for the PDC but this time had doubts or didn't feel represented by Bachelet. His campaign aimed to identify him with christian humanism, the ideological

⁷ Centro de Estudios Públicos (2005) *Encuesta Nacional de Opinión Pública*, October-November

⁸ Ibid.

roots of christian democratic parties, by emphasising his family connections with the PDC and seeking – with little success - to attract PDC defectors.

At the same time, Piñera's campaign emphasised his image as a competent economist and a successful businessman, using every opportunity to contrast that with an image of Bachelet portrayed as clumsy with figures and uncomfortable with policy debates. Whilst negative campaigning and attempts to patronise Bachelet backfired with female voters, opinion polls showed a remarkable rise in support for Piñera amongst the male electorate. Six weeks before the election, opinion polls showed Piñera seen by respondents as more reliable and better prepared to govern than Lavín and better able to ensure economic growth than Bachelet, although the latter was not a judgement shared by most women from middle and lower strata.

Piñera's short and effective campaign constituted an impressive marketing performance, allowing him to overtake his *Alianza* rival and to emerge as the main alternative to Bachelet, whose efforts were hindered by the emphasis on keeping the *Concertación* parties at a distance. By seeking to retain the image of a 'citizens' campaign', Bachelet stayed away not only from the political elite, but also from the professional campaigners – the pollsters, strategists, consultants – who are now a key component of the *Concertación* parties. Just as Bachelet's emergence showed the importance of public opinion, Piñera's quick rise demonstrated the influence of effective marketing.

The two rounds of presidential elections

The presidential election of 11 December 2005 showed the accuracy of pollsters' forecasts⁹, with Bachelet well ahead, but short of a majority with 45.96 per cent of the preferences (compared with 48 per cent reached by Lagos in 1999) and forced into a second round against Piñera (Table 1). Although the joint vote of Piñera and Lavín exceeded that of the centre-left candidate, there were clear indications that adding them was unrealistic. Piñera could not count on Lavín's support amongst working class voters being transferred to him at the second round, just as he could not count on UDI hardliners who preferred another four years of *Concertación* government rather than to hand over the leadership of *Alianza* to Piñera. Equally, Bachelet could not count on Hirsch's leftist voters moving to her at the second round.

In an experience similar to that of December 1999, when Lagos had to go into a second round in January 2000 after falling just short of a majority with 48 per cent of the preferences, the two main coalitions launched into a brief and frantic campaign to compete again on 15 January 2006. That required considerable skills on the part of both Bachelet and Piñera as they fought for the centre voters, whilst seeking to appease their more doctrinaire supporters, or potential supporters in the case of the former.

Piñera had to build bridges with UDI leaders with whom he had developed an intense and reciprocal hostility over the years, seeking to appeal both to the hard core UDI vote and to the lower income groups where those UDI leaders had a strong base. Right-wing leaders such as Longueira had publicly announced that if the UDI candidate did not get to the second round, then he "would go home" or "take a long holiday", clearly indicating that he was not available to campaign – and perhaps not even to vote – for Piñera.

⁹ Four days prior to the election, the *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Contemporánea* (CERC) had predicted 46 per cent for Bachelet, 25 for Piñera, 21 for Lavín and 7 for Hirsch.

Similar, albeit less intense, views had been expressed by other members of the UDI leadership. Several of them, and particularly Longueira, had plans to stand at the 2009 presidential election and did not want to give their main RN rival a head start. It took a huge effort of persuasion and pressure to get those hardliners to the point where Piñera could be photographed embracing Longueira the week before the second round.

At the same time, Piñera had to appeal to the centre, to the Catholic and mainly middle class voters, some of whom had supported him in the first round. However, his protestations of having taken an early stand against Pinochet in the 1980s, and of sharing the PDC's christian humanist philosophy, clashed against Piñera's newly-found UDI allies. It was a difficult act of political acrobatics and one where the acrobat was less than fully successful, largely because his neo-liberal programme and his image as a rich businessman clashed with the well-established state-centred preferences of a substantial majority of the PDC and its followers. Many christian democrats share with their socialist allies a preference for the state playing a redistributive role¹⁰, which clashed with Piñera's market-centred policies and image.

Bachelet's campaign for the second round also implied some political acrobatics, but perhaps they were less demanding or she was a better acrobat than her opponent. She had to retain the christian democratic vote and regain those who had drifted towards Piñera, whilst at the same time seeking the 5.4 per cent of the preferences that had gone to the left in the first round. It was not an easy task, though, since the christian democrats were unhappy with their parliamentary results, and particularly with the loss of some of their more emblematic senators, who had either been defeated (former Senate president Andrés Zaldívar) or had not stood for re-election (such as present Foreign Secretary Alejandro Foxley, or ambassador to the UK Rafael Moreno). Bachelet faced that task by changing her campaign staff and campaign strategy; instead of a 'citizens' campaign', detached from the parties, her second round campaign turned towards the parties and relied on them to bring out the vote. In a master stroke, she placed the campaign in the hands of Andrés Zaldívar, the defeated senator and a figure universally liked within the PDC, and put Alejandro Foxley at the head of the team working on her government programme.

The left was a more difficult problem for Bachelet. Although in terms of her past and well-know leftist stand the voters of *Juntos Podemos Más* would be expected to have sympathies for her, the PCCH leaders were not going to lend their support without a substantial reward, whilst the PH and its leader, Tomás Hirsch, were just not willing to support a candidate they saw as representing the establishment. In fact, the demands made by the PCCH in exchange for their support, such as social policies and a reform of binomial electoral system that kept the left out of parliament, were already part of Bachelet's programme. But any formal agreement signed with the communists, as they wanted, would have alienated centre voters. In the end, the PCCH had to do with public assurances given to them by Zaldívar, not Bachelet, before they committed their support.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

¹⁰ That is certainly the case for the left-wing of the PDC, a group known as *chascones* in a reference to their messy, long-haired appearance in younger days.

The second round results (Table 1) showed that Bachelet managed to capture the left vote, as well as some of Lavín's working class support, reaching 53.5 per cent, a better outcome than the 51.3 per cent obtained by Lagos at the January 2000 second round. Piñera, meanwhile, managed to hold *Alianza* together and placed himself in a good position for the 2009 polls, but with 46.5 per cent was below Lavín's 48.7 per cent in 2000, having failed either to retain the latter's working class support or to replace that with votes from the Catholic centre.

The 2005 parliamentary elections

The results of the parliamentary elections were far more decisive, with *Concertación* getting a majority of the preferences in the elections for the lower house¹¹ - an increment of almost six percentage points on the 2001 polls - whilst *Alianza* saw their share of the vote go down by 3.2 percentage point (Table 2). Since the left also improved their performance, the higher vote for them and for *Concertación* could relate the substantial reduction in the protest vote expressed by spoilt ballot papers. A turnout¹² of 87.7 per cent compared with 86.6 per cent at the 2001 parliamentary election would also point in that direction, showing that holding concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections acts as an incentive for participation.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The *Alianza* parliamentary results were far lower than those achieved by their presidential candidates. RN was unable to get anywhere near Piñera's performance, coming second to an UDI that remained the party with the highest share of the vote but was also below the result scored by its presidential candidate. Since RN and UDI candidates stood on practically every constituency, those results are a good indicator of those parties' strength at the national level.

The same is not the case for the parties of *Concertación*, or at least for PS, PPD and PRSD, since their presence or absence in each constituency is the result of negotiations as already indicated. In the Chilean case, the electoral system's lack of proportionality does not aim to ensure governability, but rather to achieve a specific political balance that benefits the second largest force and excludes anyone coming third. In doing that, it also distorts the results of a plural coalition such as *Concertación*, with the larger party paying a far higher 'price' in votes for a parliamentary seat than it is the case for its smallest partner (Table 3).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The election produced a more comfortable control of the lower house for *Concertación* than the narrower five-seat majority reached in 2001 (Table 4), but also a seat distribution in which the PDC lost to PPD its position as the main parliamentary bloc within the centre-left coalition. This confirms a tendency towards a gradual erosion of the PDC's power: despite a marked improvement in their share of the vote – 19 per cent as

¹¹ Since the Senate election only related to the half of the senatorial districts to be renewed on this occasion, those results are less representative of the national electorate.

¹² Voting is compulsory in Chile, but no sanctions are applied to those who do not vote. This had been a *de facto* situation since the return to democracy in 1989, until recent years when the Lagos government made it an official policy.

compared with 16.5 in 2001 – the christian democrats now control only 17.5 per cent of the seats as opposed to 20 per cent in 2001 and 32 per cent in 1997.

But the fundamental change in parliamentary politics is the one shown by the results in the Senate election, added to the implementation of the constitutional reform that eliminated appointed and life senators (Table 5). Until the 2005 election those categories boosted the power of the right-wing, giving *Alianza* a majority in the upper house that allowed it to block government initiatives and constitutional reforms, such as the one changing the binomial electoral system for one based upon proportional representation. The 2005 constitutional reform that eliminated appointed and life senators was passed, because the *Alianza* parliamentarians became aware that the longer *Concertación* remains in office, the more it would have began to benefit from that arrangement: President Lagos would have become a life senator and the appointed senators would have began to tilt towards the centre-left coalition.

TABLES 4 AND 5 ABOUT HERE

The change in Chilean politics, though, goes beyond greater consistency between the government and parliamentary majorities, and points to new politicians and new politics. Just as the 1999 presidential and 2001 parliamentary elections showed the emergence of a new right in Chilean politics, the 2005 polls signalled the emergence of new political leaders representing larger sectors of society than those identifying with the traditional political elite. A major change relates to gender. Not only was a woman elected President for the first time and with majority support amongst female voters of all strata, but also the three largest pluralities at the parliamentary elections were reached by women, including Soledad Alvear, the former PDC presidential pre-candidate who went on to win a senatorial seat for Santiago, then to be elected PDC president and is at present the most popular option amongst *Concertación* politicians for the 2009 presidential polls.

Some significant changes have also taken place in the social composition of Senate, with emblematic figures of the political elite, such as former senator José Antonio Viera-Gallo losing the PS nomination to a popular left-wing maverick, and christian democrats Zaldívar and Moreno being replaced by populists. The main cause of this change is the combination of the effective control exercised by parties over recruitment to elected office, and the intensive use made of surveys and opinion polls to arrive at nominations. The latter, hence, privileges the role of women - who are the majority of the Chilean electorate – and lower income sectors in candidate selection. This recognition of the importance of gender in political representation was acknowledged by Bachelet's first decision in office, the appointment of a cabinet with equal number of men and women, with similar parity to be reflected at all levels of government appointments.

Bachelet's political costs

The election of President Bachelet, reinforced by a parliamentary majority in both houses, gave rise to expectations both at home and abroad. The left wing governments of Bolivia and Venezuela welcomed the election of a woman they see as being ideologically close to them; Bolivia's President Morales expected from her a fresh approach to his land-locked country's claim for an exit to the Pacific, Venezuela's President Chávez saw Bachelet as a key friend in a Latin American moderate left hostile to him. Argentina's President Kirchner celebrated Bachelet's victory as his own, and his

wife and most likely successor, Cristina Fernández, has built a close rapport with the Chilean leader. Bachelet has also secured a warm welcome from moderate left-wing leaders such as Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez, and Peru's President-elect Alan García.

Even the Bush administration has worked hard at developing friendly links with Bachelet, seen in Washington as representing an alternative to the pro-Cuban and anti-US positions of Chávez and Morales. Initially that placed the Chilean government at the best state of relations with its neighbours and the US that Santiago has had since the 1960s. That was too good to last, though. Chávez did not find in Bachelet the ideological follower he expected, and Morales found that whilst she was willing to go a long way to improve Chile's relations with Bolivia, that has not led to a quick acceptance of Bolivian demands for sovereign access to the sea; meanwhile, Cristina Fernández, in her campaign for the presidency of Argentina, has sought to insulate herself from Bachelet's decline in popularity. Nevertheless, the Bachelet administration has done far better abroad than at home.

Despite a buoyant economy, fuelled by record high prices for copper, domestic politics have become increasingly difficult for a Bachelet administration under attack by a right-wing already preparing their 2009 campaign and weakened by criticism and lack of support from within the government coalition. Initially, problems emerged from the expectations raised by Bachelet on her road to the Presidency. The citizens' campaign, the appeals to women voters and to the left resulted in growing demands for enhanced participation, which the existing political structures could not satisfy. Within the first year of the Bachelet administration a wide range of groups, high school students, state employees, Amerindian groups, copper miners, teachers, housing debtors, etc., took to the streets to press their demands, placing the government in the dilemma of either repressing them, or run the risk of being accused of weakness and an inability to maintain law and order by the right-wing opposition and the all-powerful media groups.

Bachelet started her period in office by giving priority to a package of measures to deal with immediate socio-economic problems, such as pensions and health provisions, soon to discover that the slow parliamentary process, despite the *Concertación* majority, was too slow to meet the rising demands voiced in the streets by students and trade unionists. She tried then to ensure that those voices are represented in parliament, by focusing on the reform of the binomial electoral system, which has kept the left, as well as minority groups, out of parliament. But getting such change from those who benefit from that system is similar to getting turkeys to vote for Christmas.

A constitutional reform approved during the Lagos administration took the electoral system out of the Constitution, thus theoretically facilitating its reform, but that still requires the approval of four sevenths of all members of Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Those special quora, 22 senators and 69 deputies, exceed the seats held by *Concertación*, and the right-wing opposition has been unwilling to negotiate.

On the contrary, the opposition has launched a systematic campaign to attack Bachelet, not with charges related to her policies, but by focusing on her image and style, claiming that she lacks authority, cannot provide leadership, is indecisive, emotional, the traditional charges that shape a sexist stereotyping of women. Her supporters claim that this is an orchestrated campaign of media assassination, that sets for Bachelet different standards than those used for her predecessors. For instance, when one of her male

predecessors took a hard-line approach, the press and most politicians (even some opponents) praised him as being tough; even the opposition's accusations of being 'bad tempered' contained an element of implicit approval. Meanwhile, if President Bachelet shows empathy for a demand she is accused of being 'weak', but if she takes a tough line, the press and her political opponents claim that she is being 'emotional', 'hysterical'. This is not just a reaction of a patriarchal elite to Bachelet herself, but is also clearly an attempt to undermine the chances of another woman becoming President. Some on the left, and President Bachelet herself, have argued that it is a case of *femicidio* (the homicide of a female)¹³, which may be an exaggeration but points to the use of image assassination as a means to prevent outsiders from having access to politics.

To some extent, it works. According to opinion polls, Bachelet clearly has lost popularity over the last few months whilst this campaign has taken place. That, however, may point to the socialising and self-reinforcing nature of opinion polls; once the press reports that Bachelet has lost popularity *because* she has shown a lack of leadership skills, that information is likely to affect subsequent polls. Nevertheless, and even according to the most hostile pollsters, Bachelet retains a support in the region of 40 per cent of those surveyed, showing that the attacks against her image do not seem to affect a sector of the electorate. In any case, the debate about whether or not the first female President of Chile has faced a gender-related campaign of image assassination points to the impact that her election has had on the political elite, as well as to the uphill struggle outsiders have to face in Latin American politics.

References

Dalton, Russell J and Martin Wattenberg (2002) eds. *Parties without Partisans: political change in advanced industrial societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Espíndola, Roberto (2002) 'Professionalised campaigning and political parties in Latin America', *Journal of Political Marketing*, 1: 65-81.

Luther, Kurt Richard and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (2005) eds. *Political Parties in the New Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Putnam, Robert (2000) *Bowling Alone*, New York: Simon and Shuster

Webb, Paul, David Farrell and Ian Holliday (2002) eds. *Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

¹³ Cavieses Donoso, Manuel 'Femicidio político', *Punto Final*, No. 645, 10 August 2007.

Tables

Table 1. Presidential election – results (in percentages of valid preferences)

	First round – 11.12.05	Second round-15.01.06
Michelle Bachelet (<i>Concertación</i>)	45.96	53.50
Sebastián Piñera (<i>Alianza – RN</i>)	25.41	46.50
Joaquín Lavín (<i>Alianza – UDI</i>)	23.23	
Tomás Hirsch (<i>Juntos Podemos Más</i>)	5.40	
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Servicio Electoral, Chile, 2006

Table 2. Parliamentary electoral results – 2001 and 2005 (in percentage of votes)

	Chamber of Deputies		Senate**	
	2001	2005	2001	2005
<i>Concertación (Centre-left)</i>	41.84	47.41	45.01	51.31
PDC	16.52	19.02	20.04	27.36
PPD	11.12	14.12	11.11	9.89
PS	8.73	9.21	12.91	11.12
PRSD	3.54	3.24	0.96	2.21
Independents	1.92	1.83	-	0.73
<i>Alianza (Right)</i>	38.67	35.47	38.62	34.29
RN	12.02	12.94	17.32	9.94
UDI	22.00	20.48	13.32	19.85
Independents	4.65	2.05	7.98	4.50
Left *	5.55	6.78	2.65	5.52
PCCH	4.56	4.71	2.32	2.02
PH	0.99	1.73	0.33	1.35
Independents	-	0.64	-	2.15
Small parties & independents	1.29	1.94	1.44	0.94
Null	9.27	5.33	8.63	4.98
Blank	3.38	3.07	3.66	2.96
Total	100.00	100.00	100.01	100.00

* In 2001 those parties went under separate lists, but in 2005 they united under the list *Juntos Podemos Más* (Together We Can Do More)

**Renewed by halves. At the 2001 election Regions I, III, V, VII, IX and XI renewed the senators representing each one of them; in 2005 it was the turn of Regions II, IV, VI, VIII, X, XII and the Metropolitan Region of Santiago
Source: Servicio Electoral, Chile, 2001 and 2006

Table 3. Chamber of Deputies – 2005

	Votes	Seats	Votes/seat
Concertación (Centre-left)*	3,417,207	65	52,572
PDC	1,370,051	21	65,240
PPD	1,017,956	22	46,271
PS	663,561	15	44,237
PRSD	233,564	7	33,366
Alianza (Right)*	2,556,386	54	47,340
RN	932,422	21	44,401
UDI	1,475,901	33	44,724

* Includes votes for independent candidates presented as part of that list
Source: Servicio Electoral, Chile, 2006, plus own calculations.

Table 4. Chamber of Deputies – seats elected 1997-2005

	1997	2001	2005
Concertación (Centre-left)	70	62	65
PDC	38	24	21
PPD	16	21	22
PS	11	11	15
PRSD	5	6	7
Alianza (Right)	44	57	54
RN	22	35	21
UDI	22	22	33
Left *	0	0	0
PCCH	0	0	0
PH	0	0	0
Small parties &	6	1	1

independents			
Total	120	120	120

* In 2001 those parties went under separate lists, but in 2005 they united under the list *Juntos Podemos Más* (Together We Can Do More)

Source: Servicio Electoral, Chile, 2001 and 2006

Table 5. Composition of Senate 2001-9

	2001-5*	2006-9
Concertación	20	20
PDC	11	6
PPD	2	3
PS	5	8
PRSD	2	3
Alianza	18	17
RN	7	8
UDI	11	9
Independent	-	1
Appointed and life senators	11**	NA
Total	49	38

* Includes nine senators appointed, plus two life senators, categories eliminated by the 2005 constitutional reform.

** 7 pro-Alianza, 4 pro-Concertación