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Capturing the banner of *batllismo*:
The Frente Amplio and the end of the Uruguayan two-party system

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Introduction

Any traveler to Montevideo will see the word “Tabaré!” painted in big letters on the sides of buildings and displayed on countless posters. It is left over from the campaigns for the 2004 presidential elections, which earned Dr. Tabaré Vázquez the presidency of Uruguay. Living in Montevideo for a semester in 2008, I saw Vázquez’s name everywhere, but the slogan never mentioned his party. The members of the family I stayed with only talked about their preferred political party, the Colorados. In history classes, I learned about the Colorado party as well as the Blanco party, dating back to 1836, and their rivalry throughout Uruguay’s history as an independent country. I never learned anything about Vázquez’s party, however.

Research into Uruguayan politics revealed that Vázquez did not belong to either traditional party, but rather to the Frente Amplio, a leftist coalition made up of socialists, communists, Christian Democrats, and former militant guerrillas. Uruguay had been a strictly two-party system consisting of the Blanco party and Colorado party only until the creation of the Frente Amplio in 1971. Until then, no leftist party had ever been able to exceed 10% of the vote, too little to exercise any influence in the government. Not only was the Frente Amplio able to win seats in the legislative body, but they gathered enough popular support to break the two-party system and win the presidential election with 50% of the vote. All of this growth took place in only 33 years, during 11 of which the party’s leaders were in exile and the movement forced underground. To me, it seemed that the Frente Amplio’s victory was even less probable than a third party presidential victory in the United States. I understood the significance of the Frente Amplio’s victory, but I wondered what had prepared the ground for this historic event. Conversations with

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Uruguayans living in the United States revealed another interesting suggestion -- that the traditional parties had begun to converge ideologically and were increasingly seen as two sides of the same coin.

In such a strong two-party system, how did the Frente Amplio grow so quickly? This question becomes even more interesting in that the Frente Amplio has managed to grow popular despite guerrilla beginnings. The party also survived its period of being outlawed under the dictatorship with its voter support largely intact. What about the party's ideology gives the Frente Amplio such popularity and power? How did the traditional parties -- unaccustomed to strong leftist opposition -- respond to this challenge? Is this ideological convergence of the two traditional parties taking place in reaction to the Frente Amplio victory, or simply as a result of natural political evolution?

A case study of Uruguay can contribute to the study of other Latin American countries that are part of the so-called "pink wave," or the trend of rising leftist and socialist governments across Latin America. The Frente Amplio government is an example of the "new left," a brand of leftist ideals involving the balance of market economics with social democratic and socialist ideals of wealth distribution and welfare. The Uruguayan case offers valuable lessons on the trajectory and future of the moderate left in South America. The Frente Amplio experience will show whether market economics and values of social equality can be balanced within a government without losing voter support from either side. It will also show whether a moderate left government can actually achieve its goals. Uruguay can also be compared with more radical and populist leftist governments, such as those of Venezuela, Ecuador, and

Bolivia, to demonstrate that moderate leftist countries of the pink wave enjoy higher levels of economic success and political stability and loyalty.

Looking at other countries in this “new left” group, Brazil and Chile, and their differences and similarities with Uruguay offers insight to why the Uruguayan government has been successful and what the “new left” can change to become even more successful. Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile have all enjoyed success with social welfare programs. Uruguay and Chile had the most universal and redistributive social systems on the continent until 1973, when an economic recession made the mounting cost of social programs difficult to maintain and dictatorships came into power.¹ When Brazil’s Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, Workers’ Party) began to win positions in the national government, they made social democratic programs and ideals a part of the government.² All currently have social democratic governments with the aim of reform of the capitalist system “through social policies that limit and correct the inequalities of the market.”³ To achieve this aim, the governments have enacted similar social and economic programs. The parties behind these governments share many characteristics, both in their beginnings and development as well as in their current ideology and structure. The Concertación in Chile, the PT in Brazil, and the Frente Amplio in Uruguay are all parties that sprang from radical movements but have since moved to adhere to center-left ideologies.

However, the Frente Amplio government differs from the PT and the Concertación in its adherence to a traditional political ideology: *batllismo*. The Frente

¹ Castiglioni, Rossana. *The Politics of Social Policy Change in Chile and Uruguay*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 3.

² Baiocchi, Gianpaolo and Sofia Checa. “The New and the Old in Brazil’s PT.” *Leftovers: Tales of the Latin American Left*. Eds. Castañeda, Jorge G. and Marco A. Morales. New York: Routledge, 2008. 105.

³ Panizza, Francisco E. “The Social Democratisation of the Latin American Left.” *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*. Vol. 79. Oct 2005. 95.

Amplio built up its support slowly, and its voters show remarkable solidarity with the coalition. The party's goals and programs are rooted in the early 20th century Uruguayan school of thought that has dominated the country's development since its inception. *Batllismo*, which first established the Uruguayan paternal state in the early 1900s, is responsible for not only the ideological and programmatic differences between Uruguay, Brazil and Chile but also for the Frente Amplio's success in the polls – Uruguayan voters follow *batllismo*.

Finding sources on Uruguay offers a challenge. Few scholars study the country, possibly due to its small size and relative political stability. Very little has been written about Uruguay in English, making research on the country a more challenging task. Academic articles are available in Spanish, but there are few book-length studies in either language. Primary sources prove hard to find in the United States, and periodicals and magazines often do not have extensive online archives. A weekly political science magazine, *Brecha*, served as my main primary source. Other primary sources included statistics and figures from the Uruguayan government, accessible online, as well as documents published by the parties themselves. Party documents used include campaign platforms from the 2004 elections and documents written throughout the history of the parties. Secondary sources consisted of numerous academic articles in Spanish, as well as chapters from comparative studies on Latin America in English.

To fully understand the transformation of the party landscape, some historical context is needed. The first chapter discusses the history of the bipartisan system from its birth in 1836 to the early 1970s. It looks at the origins of the two traditional parties, the Blancos and the Colorados, and the conflict between the two that dominated early

Uruguayan politics. The chapter highlights the influence of Colorado leader José Batlle y Ordóñez, who in the early 20th century created Uruguay's social welfare system and nationalized industries. *Batllismo*, as the political philosophy is called, shaped party ideologies and still characterizes the Uruguayan state today. The party that voters regard as the guardian or defender of *batllismo* has a political advantage, and this political advantage helps to explain the major changes in party loyalty seen in Uruguay in the last 25 years. Information for the historical context was gleaned from multiple books and academic journals, including the *Gran Enciclopedia del Uruguay*.

I will analyze the Frente Amplio's history during the 1971 to 2004 period, showing how a center-left coalition from militant roots became a dominant party. Tracing the party's history in dealing with these events will reveal the gradual move toward the center-left position the coalition occupies now, as well as show how the Frente Amplio was able to draw voters to their party and away from the traditional parties. A series of events presented the Frente Amplio with an opportunity to become a more moderate style of opposition: the transition from military dictatorship to democracy, the 2001 economic crises, and Tabaré Vázquez' stint as mayor of Montevideo from 1990 to 1995. Montevideo's experience of a Frente Amplio executive during Vázquez's mayorship allowed them to witness the party's direct democracy projects in action, as well as its ability to handle social programs as promised. This is especially significant given that the majority of Uruguayans lives in Montevideo, and was able to experience firsthand the ideas the Frente Amplio wished to implement on a national scale. Along with academic journals and books, the sources used for this chapter include multiple party documents from the Frente Amplio to show changes in their program and ideas over time.

The third chapter focuses on party politics from 1980 to 2004, and how it reveals gradual shifts in Colorado and Blanco party ideology in response to the Frente Amplio's success. The chapter breaks the 1980 to 2004 period up by the separate presidencies of the period, to show how the relationship between the parties changed with the election of each new official. This reveals the overall trajectory of ideological change within the traditional parties. The history of both the Blanco and the Colorado parties shows that the parties rearrange themselves on the left to right spectrum, moving to the right in response to the Frente Amplio, confirming that the left's rise did in fact cause change to other political parties and even convergence of the two traditional parties. A run through party history also reveals that the Colorado party is no longer implementing *batllismo*, while the Frente Amplio has gradually adopted that ideology for itself. To look in depth at the parties' activities and programs, I will use a Uruguayan political science magazine called *Brecha*, as well as electoral data from the Uruguayan government, among academic sources and books.

Finally, the fourth chapter will examine the three main parties' ideologies as manifested in the election campaign of 2004. The discussion of the platforms shows the programmatic convergence of the two traditional parties by showing the similarities in their plans. It also confirms the Frente Amplio's position as the defender of *batllismo* and the welfare state by outlining how maintenance of the *batllista* welfare state and political ideology is central to the entire plan. The discussion of the platforms also shows how the traditional parties couch their proposals in the ideological rhetoric used since the parties were founded. This is to lead voters to believe they have not changed their focus so that the original voting bloc for the party is not alienated.

Chapter 1: Fundamentals of the political party system

Uruguay was established as a multi-party system almost at the same time as the country was established. With the country's independence won in 1830, the constitution written that year set up a democracy with a bicameral legislature and a president, and two political parties rapidly sprang up out of the factions in the civil conflict that followed. The system continues to be a multiparty democracy today, and boasts over 60 years as a democracy in the 20th century alone, outstripping many other countries. One scholar refers to Uruguay as "the Latin American country that has lived the longest under democratic regimes."⁴ The tenacity of the political parties and their constituents' loyalty contribute the most to this democratic stability.⁵

In practice, however, the actual democratic nature of the government, and authorization and activity of the political parties of the system varied. From 1834 to 1875, civil wars between the political parties rendered the elected government ineffective; from 1875 to 1890, there were three military dictators; the period between 1897 and 1904 saw another civil war between the political parties; in 1933 a formerly popularly elected president became dictator through a coup, although the parties maintained a relatively high level of activity during this period; and from 1973 to 1984 Uruguay was again ruled by military dictators.⁶ Despite these breaks in party activity, the political parties are some of the healthiest parties in Latin America, claiming very high levels of member loyalty.

⁴ Sondrol, Paul C. "Paraguay and Uruguay: modernity, tradition, and transition." *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 18, No. 1. Mar 1997; Cason, Jeffrey. "Electoral Reform and Stability in Uruguay." *Journal for Democracy*. Vol 11, No. 2. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. 86.

⁵ Cason, Jeffrey. "Electoral Reform, Institutional Change, and Party Adaptation in Uruguay." *Latin American Politics & Society*. 2002. Vol. 44, No. 3. pp 89-109. 92.

⁶ Lindahl, Goran G. *Uruguay's New Path*. Stockholm: Library and Institute of Ibero-American Studies, 1962. 9-22.

Traditionally, Uruguay is a two-party system, with smaller independent parties involved but not garnering significant portions of the vote. The National Party, more commonly referred to as Blancos, and the Colorado Party are the traditional and dominant parties. These parties were established close to the same time as the country itself was, and Uruguay's political history is characterized by continual action and reaction situations between the two parties. This may be due in part to the fact that the parties were formed as a result of the civil war, known as the *Guerra Grande*, that took place from 1834 to 1875, setting up a system of opposition and tension between the two major parties.

The Colorados officially came together in 1836 under Fructuoso Rivera, taking their name from the red (*colorado* in Spanish) uniforms they employed to distinguish themselves during their rebellion against the government during the *Guerra Grande*.⁷ The cause that brought them together was their support of the form of government that had been in place prior to the establishment of the Banda Oriental as an independent country named Uruguay.⁸ Later, as the party coalesced, the Colorados became known as "liberal modernizing reformers." Rivera's triumph in the *Guerra Grande* established the Colorados as the leaders in urban areas. This urban dominance allowed the party to quickly become the most powerful of the two parties, since Uruguay's population is heavily concentrated in its largest city, Montevideo.⁹ The Colorado Party continues to be

⁷ Lindahl, 12.

⁸ Peirano, Ricardo. *Gran Enciclopedia del Uruguay*. Vol. 4. 1214.

⁹ López-Alves, Fernando. "State Formation and Democracy in Latin America, 1810-1900." Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. 56, 71.

the dominant party, as the most elected party in Uruguayan history and the only party to have presidents who have served more than once.¹⁰

Traditionally, the Colorados have supported a strong welfare state, with import substitution industrialization to finance the programs. Later, when import substitution no longer functioned in the small Uruguayan market, their economic policy began to focus on nationalized industries to underpin the welfare state. The party also tends to oppose clerical influence on the country more than the Blancos.¹¹

The Blanco Party was established in 1836 as well, in response to the Colorado uprising, under the leadership of Manuel Oribe. Antonio Lavalleja, a hero of the *Guerra Grande*, is often also named as an early leader. They were dubbed Blancos because of their white badges worn during the *Guerra Grande*. Initially the party's focus was to maintain Argentine influence over Uruguay, allying with Buenos Aires to push for the Banda Oriental's reintegration into the Argentine Federation. In 1872, the party attempted to reorganize and re-identify itself as a party of the nation by renaming the party. The new name, Partido Nacional, was voted to replace Partido Blanco at the 1887 convention, although the party remained the same and continues to be referred to as the Partido Blanco even today.¹²

Blancos have long been the party of the rural areas of Uruguay, using it as their base of power during the *Guerra Grande* and maintaining dominance in the rural areas even after the conflict's resolution. They are identified as "traditional, rural-based conservatives," traditionally supporting a more centralized government with a strong

¹⁰ Peirano, Vol. 4, 1215.

¹¹ Cason 2000, 86.

¹² Peirano, Vol. 4, 1212, 1220; López-Alves, 69-70.

bureaucracy in opposition to the Colorados' early love of liberty and liberalization.¹³ The party changed this traditional ideology during the 1973-84 dictatorship, adopting a more radical strategy and openly rebellious tactics against the dictatorship under Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, an exile. However, in ideology the Blancos continue to be the champion of the rural areas, which vote Blanco even today, with Blanco *intendentes* consistently picking up a majority of the rural departments during elections.¹⁴

Batlle and *batllismo*

To properly describe the system as it stands today requires a description of its development. Although the country became independent in 1830, the contemporary political structure did not begin to coalesce until the early 1900s.¹⁵ Elites controlled the early political structure, which involved little popular participation and a great deal of political maneuvering and fraud. As a result, many important figures from both parties stand out in this time period as architects and leaders of contemporary ideology. However, a Colorado leader named José Batlle y Ordóñez, president from 1903 to 1907 and 1911 to 1915 and described as the “most powerful political figure in the country’s history,” stands above the rest, and as such continues to dominate the Uruguayan political consciousness.¹⁶ A picture of Batlle can be found on the Colorado Party website and all their literature, on bumper stickers and canteens around Montevideo, and in many candidates’ campaign posters and tools. An allusion to his political ideology can – and does – change voting patterns.

¹³ López-Alves, 56, 68-71.

¹⁴ Corte Electoral, Government of Uruguay. Montevideo, Uruguay.

¹⁵ Lindahl, 10, 16-18.

¹⁶ Peirano, Vol. 4, 1216.

Elected as president in 1903, Batlle consolidated his power decisively and began to develop his political strategy – *batllismo*. He defeated Blanco caudillo Aparicio Saravia, who had been leading a series of rebellions in the rural areas against the Colorado leadership, and was able to officially reestablish the constitutional president’s power over the entire country and turn his attention to his plans for reform, a key part of *batllismo*. Between 1907 and 1911, Batlle was not in the presidency, and spent the entire period traveling through Europe. Upon returning to Uruguay in 1911, Batlle was re-elected to the presidency and took office until 1915. He did not recede into the background of politics after his last stint in the presidency, however, but instead remained a dominant figure in Colorado politics until his death in 1929.¹⁷

Batllismo, Batlle’s political legacy, is a political doctrine with four main bases: adherence to capitalism balanced with protectionist policies and economic intervention by the state, total separation from the Catholic Church, a liberal approach to social policies, and reform of the electoral system to allow greater participation and eliminate corruption.¹⁸ Above all, *batllismo* tried to create social solidarity and stronger allegiances to the country in the hearts of citizens. Many of the policies following the principles of *batllismo* were believed to be too progressive or forward-looking for such a small and young country. However, Batlle believed that these attributes of the country only made the need for progressive policies that much greater, in that there were no established “old ways” to supplant and vices to correct. He believed the future of the country would be

¹⁷ Peirano, Vol. 1, 173-176.

¹⁸ Peirano, Vol. 1, 177.

that much easier for never having to confront the problems faced by the larger and older nations.¹⁹

Batlle's economic plan mixed social and political policies from a social democratic background with a professed commitment to capitalism. Socialism is not an appropriate word for Batlle's beliefs and program, although the opposition to *batllismo* especially liked to bring up the apparent socialist nature of the program in order to expose it as radical and replace it with their own programs. While Batlle believed that inequality was rampant in a capitalist society, he did not believe that this inequality was the result of a class struggle. Instead, he believed it was the result of poorly-planned government practices for distribution of resources, and intended to fix it with his political program.²⁰

Batlle's government created state-owned industrial, public utility, and public services corporations that played a key role for the Uruguayan economy. These corporations were called *entes autónomos*, and attempted to ensure just treatment of all members of the society as well as prevent foreign intervention and the accumulation of debt from foreign loans. The *ente* was to contribute to social justice by countering capitalism's distribution problems through an emphasis on cheap services and higher wages without the emphasis on profit. Batlle dodged the problem of inefficiency inherent in state-owned corporations by setting each *ente* up as an individual unit to allow the company to have "an enthusiasm for the economic struggle, and the mentality of the individual trader."²¹ After the end of Batlle's second presidency, the state held a

¹⁹ Weinstein, Martin. "Uruguay: the Politics of Failure." Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975. 21, 26-28.

²⁰ Weinstein, 22, 23.

²¹ Weinstein, 24, 25.

monopoly on insurance and electricity, among other holdings, and had nationalized two major banks, which funded public and athletic construction projects.²²

The economic plan to remove Uruguay from foreign debt hinged on control of public utilities through *entes*. Before the *batllista* program, the majority of utilities, save electricity, were controlled by British monopolies, meaning that the Uruguayan state could only collect profits through taxes on these companies and the companies were free to take advantage of the Uruguayan people as they wished. Initially, the British interest had helped Uruguay become one of the first nations to modernize, with electricity and telephones. The national control of these utilities became important to keep Uruguay from becoming another nation indebted to foreign companies or sunk into foreign loans.²³

The formal separation of church and state bears mentioning in that Uruguay is an outlier among Latin American nations in the secular nature of its society. Although Catholicism is the dominant religion, Uruguay never had an official religion, never harbored very many Catholic missionaries in the colonial period, and had an anti-clerical movement that started immediately after independence. The *batllista* program simply codified the separation between church and state to ensure the church would no longer have any opportunity to influence the state.²⁴ Batlle's personal anti-clericalism became a focal point of the opposition to *batllismo*, which attempted to play on the religious sentiments of the population to turn them against the program entirely and used religious organizations to help organize opposition.²⁵

²² Peirano, Vol. 1, 133, 177.

²³ Rosenthal, Anton. "Dangerous Streets: Trolley, Labor Conflict, and the Reorganization of Public Space in Montevideo, Uruguay." *Cities of Hope*. Eds. Ronn Pineo and James A. Baer. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998. 43; Weinstein, 24.

²⁴ Hudson, Rex A. and Sandra W. Meditz, eds. *Uruguay: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1990. <<http://countrystudies.us/uruguay/>>. "Religion."

²⁵ Weinstein, 37.

Batlle's social policies focused on the protection of Uruguay's workers, which was key due to the large share of the national population living in Montevideo and working in urban conditions. Many of the social welfare programs were considered extremely progressive, and as a result, Uruguay is described as a "pioneer in this sphere."²⁶ His program saw the establishment of an eight-hour workday with an obligatory weekend off work, retirement pensions, unemployment programs, the right to strike, and protections for women laborers and against child labor. Women's rights were advanced with the passage of laws allowing unilateral divorce on the part of the woman, and the establishment of a women's university. Education was also important, and legislation was passed to create a system of free secular education, secondary schools, a newly-minted Minister of Education in the Uruguayan federal government, new departments and majors added to the public university, and night schools opened for workers. Other reforms included social security and the abolition of the death penalty.²⁷

Batlle's visit to Europe during the interim period between his two presidencies shaped the social part of the *batllista* program, as he borrowed elements from the many political and social systems there for implementation in his own nascent country. Batlle had a penchant for following the European example as closely as possible; for instance, the social welfare net was in part underpinned by a new organization, created in 1910 and called the Asistencia Pública Nacional, which was created from the nationalization of independent charity organizations. The idea for this organization came directly from Europe, specifically France.²⁸ Many of the laws enacted in Uruguay were the first of their kind outside of Europe. Some laws, like the legalization of unilateral divorce on the part

²⁶ Lindahl, 23-24.

²⁷ Peirano, Vol. 1, 174, 179-180.

²⁸ Peirano, Vol. 1, 174.

of women passed in 1913, were quite literally the first of their kind at all – even Europe was not as progressive as Batlle’s Uruguay in some aspects.²⁹

Some parts of the social program were not realized due to opposition, such as profit-sharing for employees and workers in state-owned enterprises or inexpensive medical service offered by an appointed public service doctor. The opposition became especially heated on the subject of his proposed tax policies. Batlle’s proposed party program published in 1919 called for the reduction of labor taxes in favor of higher land, inheritance, gift, foreign investment, and import taxes. The program also allowed the state to expropriate land by paying 40 percent more than the appraised value of a piece of land. To summarize Batlle’s idea of property rights, all land belonged to the state and the taxes on it were rent paid by the people holding the land to the state for its use as opposed to tax on property owned by those holding it – a highly socialist conception of property rights. These programs failed, but the threat of more extreme policies allowed the Colorados to pass other parts of the *batllista* agenda and place the burden of the cost of the social programs on the shoulders of the landed elite through absentee land taxes, among other taxes.³⁰

Finally, *batllismo* called for reform of the electoral system to allow greater public participation. Some of the main reasons Batlle believed in the extensive social network he had attempted to implement pertained to the idea of a “participant, aware citizenry” and social solidarity: a commitment on the part of the state to the wellbeing of its citizens

²⁹ Birn, Anne-Emanuelle. “Uruguay on the World Stage: How Child Health Became an International Priority.” *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 95, No. 9. Sept 2005.

³⁰ Weinstein, 28-31.

meant that the citizens were more likely to uphold their responsibility to be an active part of the political process and stay informed.³¹

The idea of a collegial executive formed the most radical part of the *batllista* political agenda. In 1913 he proposed to change the Uruguayan system to mirror that of Switzerland in that the president would be replaced by a junta of nine members, each elected for nine years with annual elections to replace one of the nine. The opposition to this plan came not only from the Blancos but also from within Batlle's own party, who split into factions of *colegialistas* and *anticolegialistas*.³² While the main objective of a collegial government appears to be the reinforcement of direct democracy according to Batlle's vision of participatory democracy, the collegial executive would also serve to block the Blancos from gaining any further political power, since to gain a majority in the executive they would need to win at least six consecutive elections.³³

Batlle's presidency ended in 1915 before the controversy over the collegial government was determined, but based on his influence within his own party the idea of an executive council continued to be a central point of debate. The parties eventually came to a compromise, and the 1919 constitution set up a president *and* a council to share power in the executive.³⁴ This experiment lasted only until 1933, although the collegial executive enjoyed a resurgence from 1952 to 1966.³⁵

³¹ Weinstein, 26-27.

³² Lindahl, 22-25.

³³ Altman, David. "Collegiate Executives and Direct Democracy in Switzerland and Uruguay: Similar Institutions, Opposite Political Goals, Distinct Results." *Swiss Political Science Review*. Vol 14, No. 3. 2008. 484.

³⁴ Peirano, Vol. 1, 174; Lindahl, 22-31.

³⁵ Altman 2008, 484.

***Batllismo* through the years**

After Batlle's second presidency ended in 1915, the implementation of the *batllista* program suffered a setback with the election of Feliciano Viera. Although Viera was Colorado, he was a member of the *anticolegialista* faction of the party, some of whom not only opposed the collegial executive but also the entire *batllista* program. In Viera's opinion, *batllismo* had moved too quickly and was alienating the support from capital sectors in favor of labor. His proclaimed halt of *batllista* progress is known as the *Alto de Viera*.³⁶ Despite the *Alto* and a continual and growing dissention with Batlle over the political structure of both the country and the Colorado Party, Viera nonetheless passed several laws to continue the social reform portion of the program.³⁷ His conflict with Batlle and disagreement with the *batllista* program proved that Batlle's ideology would encounter opposition not only from outside groups, but also from within his own party.

The *batllista* Colorados experienced further problems when in October 1929 Batlle died. The U.S. stock market crash, which occurred the same month, also brought Uruguay into an economic crisis that *batllismo* could not fix. Terra, the Colorado elected in 1930, dissolved the collegial government and abandoned the *batllista* program to carry out a coup in 1933 with the help of the *antibatllista* Blancos. Although Terra acted as a dictator, dissolving both the collegial council and the legislature, the parties remained active during this period and the *batllista* laws already passed remained in effect.

Terra's removal in 1942 opened the door for Luis Batlle Berres, nephew of the original Batlle, to take the lead in politics and bring in the *neobatllismo* movement,

³⁶ Weinstein, 39.

³⁷ Lindahl, 25-29, 43.

reviving the old program and its aims. Batlle Berres built support among the urban and working classes, protected industry, subsidized agriculture, and nationalized the remaining foreign-owned utilities. He described his understanding of the state as a “defense against ‘*grandes consorcios internacionales*’ (large international firms).”³⁸

The *neobatllista* program found new opponents: orthodox *batllistas* within the Colorado Party led by José Batlle y Ordóñez’s own sons, Lorenzo and César. They took up the fight for a wholly collegial government and were supported by the orthodox *batllistas*. This brought them into confrontation with Batlle Berres’ plan for the country. The opposition to *neobatllismo* within both the Blanco and Colorado parties resulted in a 1952 constitutional reform recreating the collegial executive. The cooperation between the parties was evident in the construction of the council: six of the nine members were to be from the party garnering a majority of votes, with the other three seats reserved for the minority party.³⁹ Although both Batlle Berres and Batlle y Ordóñez’s sons were defending original components of the *batllista* program, the division of the Colorado party between the two caused the program itself to become divided into parts.

Luis Alberto de Herrera, a Blanco leader, led his party in passionate opposition to *batllismo*, and is sometimes referred to as Batlle’s only political equal. His opposition centered on his support for foreign capital and his stance against social legislation. Herrera seemed to believe that the lower classes needed to work in menial labor to keep the Uruguayan economy running rather than be afforded rights to education or other policies attempting to bring them up into the middle class. He almost never spoke on

³⁸ Weinstein, 68-81.

³⁹ Weinstein, 81-83.

social policy except to speak against *batllismo* and very rarely authored any social policy of his own.⁴⁰

His status as a central figure in the Blanco party allowed him to make many alliances with powerful groups to help bring the Blancos to office and keep *batllismo* out. One important alliance was with the Liga Federal de Acción Ruralista (LFAR), the heart of the rural political movement. Its leader became a friend of Herrera's and united with the *Herrerista* Blancos, bringing rural support for Blancos and opposition to *batllismo* and its urban focus to their zenith. Both leaders used the media to attack *batllismo*, the LFAR leader attacking it as a Communist and atheistic program and Herrera attacking it as immoral and an exaggerated social commitment.⁴¹

The alliance of *ruralismo* and the Blancos worked: in the 1958 elections the Blancos won 6 of the 9 seats on the Executive Council, 17 of the 31 Senate seats, and 51 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Representatives.⁴² However, the Blancos were not able to change much, due to the power-sharing agreements in the collegial executive and state corporations. Herrera died in 1959, and the *antibatllista* movement lost its vigor.

At the same time, the bickering among parties and within parties and the emergence of economic problems meant that the *batllista* program was largely halted in its progress.⁴³ The political stagnation of the 1950s and 1960s, soon to be coupled with economic crisis, would lead to the 1973 repressive dictatorship. During the dictatorship period, *batllismo* fell by the wayside, as the parties had to be occupied with their survival and pushing for a return to democracy rather than reform.

⁴⁰ Weinstein, 40-41.

⁴¹ Weinstein, 40-46.

⁴² Corte Electoral, 1958 election data.

⁴³ Weinstein, 84.

Chapter 2: Rise of the Frente Amplio

The Frente Amplio's victory in the presidential elections of 2004 represented a milestone that was a long time coming. Since its inception in 1971 as a party of the radical left, the Frente Amplio has continuously adapted to the political realities in Uruguay and grew stronger in every election. Their victory in the 1990 Montevideo municipal elections allowed voters to experience a Frente Amplio government for the first time. The success of direct democracy and participatory mechanisms in Montevideo benefited the Frente Amplio nationally at the expense of the Colorados and Blancos: in 1994, the three major parties each won approximately 30% of the vote. The Frente Amplio grew with the incorporation of other opposition parties, in 1994 and again in 2002, resulting in today's incarnation of the party, the Encuentro Progresista-Frente Amplio-Nueva Mayoría. Internal divisions temporarily weakened the party from 1984 to 1989 and again in 1996, but Tabaré Vázquez, current president of Uruguay, reunited the party into a cohesive movement. Under Vázquez's leadership, the party not only won the 2004 presidential election but also gained majorities in both legislative chambers.

Beginnings

General Líber Seregni founded the Frente Amplio in 1971. It was a coalition of the marginalized parties, including communists, socialists, Christian Democrats, members of the traditional parties and the militant Tupamaro guerrillas.⁴⁴ The member parties had previously captured small shares of the national vote, often less than 1%, and with almost no voters outside of the urban center of Montevideo. The 1964 foundation of

⁴⁴ Luna, Juan Pablo. "Frente Amplio and the Crafting of a Social Democratic Alternative in Uruguay." *Latin American Politics and Society*. Vol. 49, No. 4. 5. [What is the page number?]

a national workers' union as well as the 1968 foundation of the Movement for Defense of Freedom and Sovereignty were precursors to the coalition, helping to spread the idea for a united movement and garnering support for the left.⁴⁵

The party defined itself ideologically with the "First 30 Measures" in 1971. *Batllismo* figured centrally in the program – extensive social plans to bolster education, youth, health, and various other components of the traditional Uruguayan social welfare state built on the original social welfare state of the early 1900s. A *batllista* tendency to blame foreign involvement and greedy private interests within the country for the economic crisis of the 1970s led the party to focus on agrarian reform and nationalization of banking and major industries. Redistribution of income, decentralization, and a deep distrust of foreign economic actors marked the party's ideology from the beginning. The party also promised to strive for greater transparency in government and fewer privileges for public servants, another key component of *batllismo*.⁴⁶

The Frente Amplio's party structure was different from that of the Colorados and Blancos, exhibiting the characteristics of a organizationally unified party rather than of a weak coalition. The traditional parties had competing fractions loosely bound by a central executive and a common political goal, while the Frente Amplio's central executive used a streamlined decision-making process, giving each fraction a veto in order to promote unanimity. More importantly, the party has always presented only one presidential candidate.⁴⁷ Grassroots participation played a greater role in the formulation of the Frente

⁴⁵ Nahum, 161.

⁴⁶ Frente Amplio. "Primeras 30 Medidas de Gobierno." 25 Aug 1971. 1-2, 8.

⁴⁷ Altman, David, Rossana Castiglioni, and Juan Pablo Luna. "Uruguay: a Successful Role Model." *Leftovers: Tales of the Latin American Left*. Eds. Jorge G. Castañeda and Marco A. Morales. New York: Routledge, 2008. pp 151-173. 154-155.

Amplio's goals and party activity.⁴⁸ Party documents laying out the *frenteamplista* platform call for greater use of plebiscites and referenda to place control of the government in citizens' hands, as well as a legislative body that does not impede civil input.⁴⁹

Role during the dictatorship

The Frente Amplio did not gain a place in official Uruguayan politics in the early 1970s because of the activities of the Tupamaro guerrillas. The Tupamaros, whose movement was officially called the National Liberation Movement (MLN), wanted to institute socialism and fight imperialism, turning to violence and upheaval to achieve their goals. After several people linked to the government were murdered, the acts were attributed to the Tupamaros and the government declared a "state of internal war," giving the armed forces freedom of action within the country against the subversives.⁵⁰ Politically part of the Frente Amplio, the Tupamaros continued guerrilla strikes against an increasingly repressive government, which ultimately led to the military coup of 1973. When the military denied a *frenteamplista* senator his rights, the majority of legislative members refused to support the move, which led to the dissolution of the legislative bodies.⁵¹

The dictatorship immediately classified the Frente Amplio as an "enemy" and made the party illegal. It imprisoned Seregni; the party nevertheless continued to serve as

⁴⁸ Nahum, 162.

⁴⁹ Frente Amplio 1971; Frente Amplio. "Bases programáticas de la unidad." 9 Aug 1984.

⁵⁰ Nahum, 159-164.

⁵¹ Kaufman, Edy. "The Role of the Political Parties in the Redemocratization of Uruguay." *Repression, Exile, and Democracy: Uruguayan Culture*. Eds. Saúl Sosnowski and Louise B. Popkin. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993. pp 17-58. 20-21.

vocal opposition to the military government. In 1975, members of the Communist Party, part of the Frente Amplio, were jailed by the hundreds.⁵² The repression had so escalated that “by 1976 Uruguay had the highest per capita level of political prisoners in the world,” most of whom were members of the Frente Amplio. Many leftists left the country, but that did not necessarily guarantee safety. Operation Condor, a coordinated campaign by Southern Cone militaries to eliminate “internal enemies,” targeted prominent members of the Uruguayan opposition in Argentina. In 1976, its commandos assassinated a high-profile *frenteamplicista* senator and a popular Blanco senator.⁵³ A Frente Amplio senator in exile internationally denounced the events in Uruguay in multiple countries, while within the country the party maintained an underground organization dedicated to justice and truth.⁵⁴ The Frente Amplio initially remained illegal when the government began to re-open the political system in 1980. In 1979, there were still 3,000 political prisoners being held by the regime.⁵⁵ Seregni was still in jail and other leaders remained in exile abroad. However, the Blancos and Colorados recognized the Frente Amplio’s broad base of support and began forging ties with the left to speed the transition to democracy through broader social mobilization. The Frente Amplio joined with traditional parties to organize a demonstration in which 10% of the entire country participated, as well as a general strike and other demonstrations.⁵⁶

Colorado ambitions to keep the Blancos out of power led to the full inclusion of the Frente Amplio in the political system. The Blancos were the more liberal and left than the Colorados, who feared that leftist voters might unite behind the Blancos. Colorado

⁵² Nahum, 171-172.

⁵³ Kaufman, 29.

⁵⁴ De Brito, 70.

⁵⁵ Kaufman, 32.

⁵⁶ De Brito, 70.

leader Julio María Sanguinetti pushed for the legalization of moderate sectors of the Frente Amplio. The Blancos had also begun to reach out to the Frente Amplio to form a leftist alliance, but the Frente Amplio worried about becoming just another Blanco fraction. It was willing to accept moderation in exchange for its own space in the system. The military considered the Frente Amplio more moderate than the Blancos and allowed the coalition into the system and negotiations. In 1984, it released Seregni, along with other prisoners, and legalized the Socialist and Christian Democrat fractions of the Frente Amplio.⁵⁷ This broadened the potential voter base in the political center, but led to internal tension. Some leaders felt that the participation in negotiation with the military betrayed the original principles – within the coalition, negotiations only had the support of 14 of 31 leaders, with six abstentions.⁵⁸

The election results from 1984 suggest that the Frente Amplio's role as opposition to the military and its new definition as an acceptable member of the political sphere had not been forgotten: it won 21.3% of the vote compared to 18.3% in 1971.⁵⁹ The gain of three percent was significant given that the party had been illegal for 11 years, with its leaders scattered in exile or jail. This vote, however, was split nearly evenly between moderate and radical members of the coalition: 51% of the vote went to moderates such as the Christian Democrats and the former Colorados of Lista 99, while 49% went to the more radical Communist and Socialist parties.⁶⁰

Ideologically, the Frente Amplio remained true to the 1971 "First 30 Measures." The party focused on guarantees of basic freedoms and rights as well as citizen

⁵⁷ De Brito, 70-74.

⁵⁸ De Brito, 79.

⁵⁹ Corte Electoral, "Elecciones Nacionales 1971," "Elecciones Nacionales 1984."

⁶⁰ De Brito, 96.

participation through plebiscites, referenda, and popular initiatives, which it saw as a check on executive power. The Frente Amplio's platform emphasized the constitutional elements of direct democracy and decentralization of authority to maintain a profile as strong opposition without becoming more radical. It encouraged center-left voters to support the coalition as opposed to remaining loyal to the traditional parties. The dictatorship period had led the party to set a goal of attaining deeper procedural democracy.⁶¹

Batllismo dominated the new economic plans, which involved maintaining the paternal state presence in the economy in nationalized companies. The Frente Amplio acknowledged the labor movement that had helped birth the party by asserting the necessity for labor organization and worker access to resources. The party also called for agrarian reform to take resources from large capitalist companies for use by small farmers. Social programs included a reaffirmation of the *batllista* welfare state.⁶²

The Frente Amplio, instead of forming coalitions with the traditional parties to reach compromises in policy, developed alliances with non-governmental actors and center-left members of both the traditional parties and other parties to block policy. This was instrumental in areas of social policy, like pension reform, as well as practice of government.⁶³ The internal problems signaled by the split vote in 1984, however, plagued the party, keeping it from increasing its voting base. The radical sectors, represented by the Communist and Socialist parties, and moderate sectors, represented by the Christian Democrats along with lists of former traditional party members, proved difficult to

⁶¹ Goldfrank, Benjamin. "The Fragile Flower of Local Democracy: A Case Study of Decentralization/Participation in Montevideo." *Politics & Society*. Mar 2002. Vol. 30, No. 1. pp 51-83. 55.

⁶² Frente Amplio 1984.

⁶³ Altman, Castiglioni, & Luna, 158-159.

balance, and compromises were difficult, keeping the party from being as active as it could have been – “[The party’s] internal problems almost paralyzed it during this entire period [1984-1989]. That loss of vigor and initiative as the opposition...put it in danger, even its very existence.”⁶⁴

Experience in government

The 1989 elections heralded a new opportunity for the Frente Amplio to prove the worth of its ideas and programs: Tabaré Vázquez was elected mayor of Montevideo. Montevideo’s population constituted 44.4% of the total population of the country, according to the 1985 census.⁶⁵ The Frente Amplio’s victory in Montevideo not only symbolized its growing popularity in the country, but also a chance for the party to put its plans into action and, if successful, directly impact nearly half of the country – as Seregni said, “...on Tabaré Vázquez’s government, we stake our future.”⁶⁶ Other writers discussed Vázquez’s stint as mayor as a test of the Frente Amplio: “It’s the Frente Amplio’s time to demonstrate now that we can continue accepting it as a good leader.”⁶⁷ The party also won 21 seats in the Chamber of Representatives and 7 seats in the Senate.⁶⁸ In the legislative branch, the party maintained its staunch opposition to the

⁶⁴ Portillo, Alvaro and Enrique Gallicchio. “Los uruguayos votaron con la cabeza.” *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 23 Feb 1990. pp 18-20. 18.

⁶⁵ Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo. “Población.” *Presentación Estadística de la Ciudad de Montevideo*. <<http://www.montevideo.gub.uy/estadisticas/pre.html>>.

⁶⁶ Seregni, Líber. 22 Nov 1989. Quoted by Cherro, Luis Martínez. “El artiguismo se mudó a Montevideo.” *Brecha*. 12 Jan 90. 15.

⁶⁷ Bermejo, Ernesto González. “Un boleto para el Uruguay.” *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 16 Feb 1990. 2.

⁶⁸ Corte Electoral, “Elecciones Nacionales 1989.”

traditional parties, offering alternative plans for education, reduction of the deficit, and other plans.⁶⁹

From the beginning of 1990, the Frente Amplio stated their intentions to put direct democracy and decentralization into practice in the municipal government of Montevideo. Seregni, as the party's president, issued these statements: "The Frente Amplio will govern Montevideo with pluralism, participation, and with the support of elected professionals to attain the most efficient and transparent management in the city's history."⁷⁰ The party hoped that greater citizen participation would result in a more effective social welfare system due to expanded information on actual problems in the society and how they should be prioritized. Participation was also to result in more citizen civic awareness and participation, and the party wished to allow citizen input not just in information gathering but in actual decision-making.⁷¹ Two major projects dominated Vázquez's term as intendente and set him apart from any previous intendente: a 40% decrease in cost of public transportation, and the creation of Zonal Community Centers (CCZs). Questions of how to pay for these two programs without increasing the budget, as Vázquez promised, arose even before they were instituted.⁷²

The 40% decrease in ticket price for public transportation proposed to take 20% from the municipal budget and 20% from the national budget. However, in planning the party had assumed the government would cooperate without actually assessing its likelihood. Since Lacalle, the Blanco president at the time, was focusing on financial

⁶⁹ Elissalde, Roberto. "La oposición tiene proyectos." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 9 Mar 90. 8; Blixen, Samuel. "El sablazo está en el aire." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 9 Mar 1990. 2.

⁷⁰ Seregni, Líber. Quoted by Bruschera, Oscar. "Los 19 años del Frente Amplio." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 9 Feb 1990. 5.

⁷¹ Goldfrank, 52, 56.

⁷² Urruzola, María. "Cómo rebajar sin aumentar." *Brecha*. 2 Feb 1990. 10.

adjustment and paying off debts, cooperation was unlikely.⁷³ Vázquez stated that the money for the ticket cost would come from a reorganization of the municipal budget, in which the party would reprioritize programs and allocate funds accordingly. He also stated his intention to tax higher classes in order to solve long-standing social and economic problems in the city, viewing it as their commitment to the solidarity of their city.⁷⁴

The Frente Amplio experimented with its first decentralization/participation program in Montevideo from 1990 until 1993. Vázquez divided the city into 18 zones with a CCZ for administrative purposes in each zone. Each CCZ had a team to respond to any needs that arose in their zone (decentralization), as well as to organize general and thematic meetings for residents and social organization members to attend (participation). Vázquez and his cabinet would attend a different center each week. Participation was immediate and vast – 25,000 citizens and 60% of local associations began attending the CCZs to voice concerns and demands. The CCZs also allowed citizens to get administrative tasks addressed more efficiently, since going to the main municipal building was no longer necessary.⁷⁵

While the decentralization measures had accomplished their goal of efficiency, success of participation had created a need for greater organization to address the extensive list of demands from Montevideans. The system also lacked institutionalization to make the committees and meetings a legitimate part of the government as opposed to a forum for the airing of grievances.

⁷³ Urruzola 02/02/90, 10.

⁷⁴ Vázquez, Tabaré. Interview with Carlos Amorín. "Las ideas en acción." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 16 Feb 1990. 4.

⁷⁵ Goldfrank, 57-59.

In 1993, the Frente Amplio revised its program to include the opposition in its scheme as well as to stabilize and institutionalize the process. Each zone was given a five member junta (board), two opposition and three ruling party members elected or appointed as the parties chose, and a local council of elected “neighbors.” The “neighbors’ council” replaced the constantly-changing general and thematic meetings, while the junta managed decentralized authority in the zone. These changes, although maintaining social programs’ and services’ efficiency and speed through decentralization, limited participation by adding a layer, albeit it an elected one, between Vázquez as mayor and the people.⁷⁶

Rising opposition from the traditional parties

Despite the decreased participation resulting from the post-1993 system demonstrated in decreased CCZ and meeting attendance, the Frente Amplio’s popularity continued to rise with their success in Montevideo. In the 1994 elections, the party won the intendencia of Montevideo again, although Vázquez left the post.⁷⁷ Despite the emergence of the Nuevo Espacio, another leftist coalition that had snatched 5% of the leftist vote away, the Frente Amplio took 29.2% of the total vote. The tripartite system in Uruguay had almost reached parity, with each party’s vote only fractions of percentage points away from 30%. The Frente Amplio gained 9 Senate seats and 31 of the 99 representatives in the Chamber.⁷⁸ By now, the Frente Amplio had gained the name Encuentro Progresista – Frente Amplio. The EP was originally a separate leftist coalition

⁷⁶ Goldfrank, 59-62.

⁷⁷ Goldfrank, 61.

⁷⁸ Corte Electoral, “Elecciones Nacionales 1994.”

made up of former Blancos, Colorados, and *frenteamplistas*, and joined the Frente Amplio to make the opposition to the traditional parties even stronger.

The left's growing power forced the traditional parties to push an electoral reform through a plebiscite in 1996. The reform eliminated the original voting system, which consolidated all elections into one day and allowed multiple candidates to run per party. The new system only allowed one presidential candidate per party and established four separate elections, one providing for a presidential run-off after the initial election. Although the reform was entirely designed to keep the left from winning by forcing a runoff so that the traditional parties could share voters in the runoff, the concession of single presidential candidates appealed to some members of the left. While Vázquez, then-president of the Frente Amplio, opposed the reforms, Danilo Astori, an influential party leader, supported it. Other party leaders also supported the reform, and instead of not participating in the Frente Amplio's campaign against the reform they launched their own campaign in favor.⁷⁹ Líber Seregni, despite statements to support Vázquez's decision as leader of the party, also supported the reform.⁸⁰ The reform did eventually pass the plebiscite, although barely so.

The close vote on the constitutional reform revealed that the left had come to have significant impact on public opinion and voting since the end of the dictatorship. *Brecha*, a Uruguayan political science magazine, interpreted two trends in the vote: voters no longer felt the need to stick to their party regardless of their satisfaction with it, but would switch if they felt their party was no longer following policy lines with which they

⁷⁹ Scovi, Manuela and Marcelo Pereira. "La campaña del 'vale todo'." *Brecha*. 22 Nov 1996. 4.

⁸⁰ Pereira, Marcelo. "La era del vazquismo." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 13 Dec 1996. 3.

agreed; and voters no longer distrusted the left, which had proven itself moderate and successful in its time holding the mayor position in Montevideo.⁸¹

The impact of Tabaré Vázquez's personal popularity also became quite clear in the midst of the internal contention over support or opposition to the reform. Vázquez's popularity began to transform him into the primary director of party ideology, and also began to create divisions within the Frente Amplio. Traditionally, socialist or leftist parties were viewed as reactionary, not pro-active – they did better as a defender of liberties than an enactor of policies.⁸² Vázquez had made the party over to be a pro-active opposition, proposing alternate plans, enacting brand-new policies in Montevideo. Instead of being a coalition, the party was “transform[ing] towards a trend of a single political movement: Vazquismo.”⁸³ Never before had anyone been able to unite the party behind one agenda.

The one exception Asamblea Uruguay led by Danilo Astori, supported Vázquez's politics.⁸⁴ However, this unanimity carried with it the temptation to create an “us versus them” mindset, Vázquez against Asamblea Uruguay and its sympathizers. If Vázquez began to speak out against Asamblea Uruguay and Astori, the definition of the “left” as a cohesive party would lose consistency and threaten its electoral success.⁸⁵ Seregni bemoaned the politics of confrontation emerging within the party, calling for a return to the “intelligent opposition” policy that had led the Frente Amplio to such success.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Pereira 13/12/96, 3.

⁸² Debray, Régis. “El future de la izquierda.” *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 6 Apr 1990. 16.

⁸³ Pereira 13/12/96, 5.

⁸⁴ Pereira 13/12/96, 5.

⁸⁵ Pereira 13/12/96, 3-6.

⁸⁶ Cesín, Nelson. “Un error histórico que el FA va a pagar.” *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 13 Dec 1996. 6.

Vázquez managed to negotiate compromises without splitting the coalition, and Astori's sector of the party remained within the Frente Amplio coalition. In the 1999 elections, Vázquez as the Frente Amplio presidential candidate took the most votes, 39.1%, but in the run-off lost to the Colorado candidate, as was planned with the electoral reform of 1996. The party did, however, gain majorities in both legislative chambers.⁸⁷ This success led the Nuevo Espacio party, another leftist coalition, to join the Frente Amplio coalition in 2002, and the party was renamed Encuentro Progresista – Frente Amplio – Nueva Mayoría, or EP-FA-NM.⁸⁸

Leading to victory

The 2001 economic crisis gave the Frente Amplio to distinguish themselves from the failures of the traditional parties. Uruguay's economic crisis, set off by the 1999 devaluation of the Brazilian real and the 2001 Argentine crisis, caused unemployment to skyrocket, and Uruguayans of all classes suffered. The alternative economic policies of the Frente Amplio, still not associated with the traditional parties managing the crisis and still advocating the *batllista* welfare state, provided an opportunity to acquire more voter support. Instead of attacking the traditional parties, Vázquez began to campaign on his merits and moderation, as advised by Seregni in 1996. He announced his intention to appoint Astori, a critic and moderate who espoused market-based economics, as his minister of economics. This choice communicated that the party was not out of touch – the Frente Amplio knew market-based economics was the reality of the times, but

⁸⁷ Corte Electoral, "Elecciones Nacionales 1999."

⁸⁸ Partido Nuevo Espacio. "Nuestro Partido." 2009. <<http://www.nuevoespacio.org.uy/partido.php>>.

intended to fold that into a revised and reorganized paternal and welfare state structure with which Uruguay was familiar.⁸⁹

The 2004 elections showed the extent to which Uruguayans believed in the change proposed by the Frente Amplio. Vázquez took a majority of votes, with 50.5% of the total vote and making a runoff unnecessary. The party also claimed more than half of the seats in both legislative chambers. The Colorados, who had been in the presidency during the crisis, had the worst electoral showings in their history, with only 10.4% of the vote.⁹⁰ Not only was the Frente Amplio victorious, it was decisively so.

⁸⁹ Altman, Castiglioni, & Luna, 155, 159-160.

⁹⁰ Corte Electoral, "Elecciones Nacionales 2004."

Chapter 3: Party politics and shifts in ideology

The Frente Amplio's emergence as a significant party after the end of the dictatorship in 1984 created a situation in which the Blanco and Colorado parties' constituencies threatened to switch parties to this new major party. The threat of losing voters caused both traditional parties to respond with ideological shifts to capture a greater portion of the electorate in response to the left's appeal to a broad base of Uruguayans. The Blanco and Colorado parties also began to work together more and more over time, significant for two parties with a history of constant conflict. Their cooperation was imperative for a Blanco or Colorado government to be effective or to be able to pass legislation, as the Frente Amplio's growing representation gave them more and more control over the legislative chambers as well as possibilities to block presidential action.

1980-1984: The end of the dictatorship

In 1980, the military's lack of legitimacy among the people was exposed, forcing them to begin the process of reinstating the political parties. That year, military leaders had attempted to institutionalize the power they had been exercising since the coup in 1973 by writing a new constitution to ensure continued military control and restriction of rights, but the measure was voted down by popular vote, with only 42% of votes in favor.⁹¹ The defeat forced the military to allow the political parties to have legal primaries to select new leaders in hopes that pro-military fractions and ideologies would win and allow the military to use political parties to mediate the process of

⁹¹ De Brito, Alexandra Barahona. "Human Rights and Democratization in Latin America." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 69; Altman 2008, 503.

institutionalizing power. The dictatorship did not allow the Frente Amplio to take part in these primaries and the coalition's leaders remained in exile.⁹²

Unfortunately for the military, the primaries resulted in victories for the party fractions that held true to pre-dictatorship ideologies rather than for the fractions that supported a continued dictatorship. 70% of Colorados and 78% of Blancos voted for anti-military fractions within their respective parties. The Blancos experienced the most fervent return to anti-military ideologies, with 49% of the vote going to the most radical fractions of the party.⁹³ Some of this support came from voters who normally would have supported the still-proscribed Frente Amplio but instead were forced to bolster the fractions of the traditional parties who showed the most opposition to the military.⁹⁴

The struggle to put an end to the military dictatorship and bring democracy back to Uruguay initially caused an alignment of the Blanco and Colorado parties to create a more powerful opposition to the military as they slowly regained their rights. After the dictatorship rehabilitated the parties for the primaries, ideological differences were put aside in favor of a joint effort for a return to democracy. Blancos and Colorados came together in negotiations with the military in 1983 to reject any authoritarian plans. This rejection led the military to shift from finding ways to maintain power to finding the “best exit” from authoritarianism. The two parties also joined with the left to refuse to participate in any elections until civil rights had been re-established, leaders had been

⁹² Caetano and Rilla, 94; De Brito, 69, 70.

⁹³ De Brito, 70.

⁹⁴ Gillespie, Charles Guy. “Democratic Consolidation in Uruguay.” *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*. Eds. John Higley and Richard Gunther. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp 178-207. 185.

taken out of exile, and parties had been reinstated. The *Multipartidaria* was created to coordinate party activity against the dictatorship.⁹⁵

Fundamental ideological differences still existed and differences in strategy for the negotiation of a return to democracy and the actual governing of the transition process ended the cooperation. The question of strategy for Uruguay's transition to democracy began to form divisions both between parties as well as internally. The Colorados withdrew from the *Multipartidaria* in 1984 in protest of the social mobilization and strikes, ending the period of overt cooperation between all parties.⁹⁶

Colorados believed in elite-led transition and compromise to reach a reinstatement of democracy. Despite their involvement with the left and social movements during protests in 1983, the Colorados wanted a transition led by negotiation between military leaders and party leaders, not broad mobilization, and a solution tempered with moderation and compromise, not revenge against the dictatorship.⁹⁷ The Colorados wanted to negotiate with the military even before the regime fully reinstated rights. Party leader Julio María Sanguinetti believed that if the military was willing to give guarantees of democracy and freedom, then the party only could or should ask for negotiations and nothing more.⁹⁸

The Blancos split internally over the transition strategy, with some supporting the Colorado plan and others following an ideology and strategy centered on social mobilization and defense of rural ranching interests against commercial and urban

⁹⁵ De Brito, 70-71; Caetano and Rilla, 110.

⁹⁶ De Brito, 72; Caetano and Rilla, 112.

⁹⁷ Caetano and Rilla, 112.

⁹⁸ De Brito, 72; Caetano and Rilla, 112.

interests.⁹⁹The part of the party against the Colorado plan tended to follow the radical ideas of Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, an exiled Blanco leader. Ferreirista Blancos held that negotiation with the military was necessary but only from a position of strength. Ultimately, Ferreira wanted “outright capitulation of the military regime, and the transformation of the Blanco party from a conservative antistate intervention, rather rural party of notable into a mass movement of loyal followers with populist, libertarian, nationalist, and even democratic socialist strands.”¹⁰⁰ Ferreira’s plan was to reach out to the still-banned left, especially the Frente Amplio, to strengthen social mobilization. The party moved away from the fractions in line with the Colorados and depended increasingly on Ferreira for guidance and strategy. This became a problem when, in 1983, the military did not allow Ferreira to return from exile due to his radical ideology.¹⁰¹

Negotiations with the military concerning the return to democracy and struggles between the traditional parties created an opportunity for the Frente Amplio to become a legitimate party. The traditional parties’ struggle for dominance began to center on forcing the Frente Amplio to align with one of the traditional parties to tip the popular vote in that party’s favor. The Blancos were cultivating links to counteract the Colorados’ dominance in the popular vote. The Colorados searched for a way to break the alliance and seized on the Frente Amplio’s desire for independence from the traditional parties and for recognition as a legitimate party. Knowing that the party was already taking steps away from its guerrilla beginnings and towards political action as the only course of

⁹⁹ Gillespie, Charles Guy. “Democratic Consolidation in Uruguay.” *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*. Eds. John Higley and Richard Gunther. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp 178-207. 180.

¹⁰⁰ Gillespie, 185.

¹⁰¹ De Brito, 72.

action, the Colorados wanted to encourage the Frente Amplio to become moderate in exchange for inclusion in the system.¹⁰²

The military's reluctance to work with the Blanco party created an opportunity for the Frente Amplio to strengthen its position, and the dictatorship took steps to make the Frente Amplio a legal party again. They released its leader Líber Seregni from jail in March 1984. Later, threatened by Ferreira's possible return to Uruguay, the military recognized the Frente Amplio as a legitimate political party in June 1984. When negotiations between the military and political parties began in July 1984, the Colorados and the Frente Amplio, not the Blancos, entered the discussions.¹⁰³

During the negotiations, the fractions who had won the primaries and built support within each party were the fractions whose plans were put into action. The Colorados still espoused an elite-led transition and government and eventually secured it with a compromise with the military to end the dictatorship period. The Blancos spent the negotiation period attempting to mobilize the population, demonstrating their belief in a more broadly based idea of government. The Frente Amplio's ideology was more complicated, but most of the *frenteampelistas* were in favor of any transition negotiated with the military so that they could become a part of the new system.¹⁰⁴ A 1984 poll showed that 80% of Frente Amplio political leaders believed that social mobilization should continue but that elite negotiations were the key to a successful transition.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² De Brito 72-73, Caetano and Rilla 113-116.

¹⁰³ Caetano and Rilla, 116-123.

¹⁰⁴ Caetano and Rilla, 125-128.

¹⁰⁵ Gillespie, 192.

1985-1990: Transition presidency

During the presidential campaigns for the 1984 election, the parties emphasized their differences, ending Blanco and Colorado cooperation for the time being. The traditional parties' solidarity with their beliefs evidenced itself when the same constituencies voted for each party they had voted for prior to the dictatorship. The actual transition process during the 1985 to 1990 period, however, motivated a re-establishment of the cooperation between the Blancos and Colorados, causing an ideological shift in those two parties. 52.2% of Blanco political leaders polled in 1985 believed that a successful transition would be led by party elites, while only 30% still believed in Ferreira's popular transition.¹⁰⁶

Uruguay's first presidential elections since 1971 took place in November 1984, and the demographics of the election results indicated that public perception of each party had not changed. The Colorados' 40% of the vote to the Blancos' 34% won Julio María Sanguinetti the presidency and gave them a majority in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁰⁷ The demographics of party support had changed little since the last elections, in 1971.¹⁰⁸ The Colorado Party maintained a varied voter base, faring a little better among urban voters and more-educated voters than others. The Blancos had campaigned largely on the fact that they had not been part of the agreement with the military, presenting themselves as an alternative to the Colorados.¹⁰⁹ The party, historically the champions of the rural areas and with their emphasis on social

¹⁰⁶ Gillespie, 187.

¹⁰⁷ Corte Electoral, "Elecciones Nacionales 1984."

¹⁰⁸ Dutrénit Bielous, Silvia. "Del consenso transpartidario al acuerdo blanquicolorado." *Secuencia: Revista de Historia y Ciencias Sociales*. Vol. 44, pp. 73-96. 1999. 75.

¹⁰⁹ Dutrénit, 84.

mobilization over elite-led movements, maintained a solid base in less industrialized regions, but did lose support across all regions.¹¹⁰

Sanguinetti used the transition period to consolidate executive power and strengthen the Colorado Party's position. First, he settled issues that had not been resolved in the negotiations: he liberated all political prisoners, removed all restrictions on parties, and abolish nearly all of the military government's decrees.¹¹¹ He handled every crisis as if it could lead to another dictatorship, which, he hoped, would strengthen democracy, enhance executive power, and establish the Colorado Party as the party of civilian rule.¹¹² Sanguinetti also revived the "blanquicolorado" cooperation over key issues such as amnesty for members of the dictatorship and the functioning of the party system.¹¹³

The issue of amnesty for the military was the best example of Blanco and Colorado cooperation in the 1985 to 1990 period. For the Blancos, support for amnesty was the biggest ideological shift they could have undertaken. To support amnesty for the military was a huge change from Ferreira's original hard line toward the dictatorship, shown by Blanco refusal to participate in negotiations. In agreeing with the Colorado party, Ferreira stated "We all know...that this country cannot build a future on a foundation of revenge," denying that prosecuting human rights violations would be healthy for the new democracy.¹¹⁴ When the Frente Amplio began to oppose amnesty, it

¹¹⁰ Mieres, Pablo. "Partidos Políticos y cuerpo electoral: Las elecciones de 1984." *Cuadernos del CLAEH*. Vol. 12, No. 4, pp 19-36. 1987. 27.

¹¹¹ Gillespie, 195.

¹¹² Dutrénit, 84-87.

¹¹³ Gillespie, 199.

¹¹⁴ Ferreira Aldunate, Wilson. Quote from Gutiérrez et al, *Uruguay*. 1989. 27-28.

served to cement the accord between the traditional parties by giving them common opposition.

The process of securing amnesty showed the level of cooperation present between the Blancos and Colorados. The elite style of government endorsed by the Colorados became a part of the Blanco plan as well – punishment for violations was only discussed with a small group of politicians and the cooperation between the two parties kept the Frente Amplio from opening the discussions up to all. When the law was finally presented to the legislative chambers, fractions of both traditional parties united with the Frente Amplio in an attempt to defeat it, surprisingly including the fraction of the National Party most closely associated with Ferreira. Opposition was too scarce to overcome the blanquicolorado agreement and the law was passed.¹¹⁵

The blanquicolorado agreement became a central part of managing the party system to allow stabilization of the new democracy. Ferreira stated that the Blanco party would step back opposition to Colorado plans and facilitate legislative passage of Sanguinetti's policies. The Frente Amplio shifted into the space of opposition to Colorado conservatism, while the Blancos began to align more with the Colorados, occasionally oscillating between the two.¹¹⁶

1990-1995: Blanco victory

The Blancos won the 1989 presidential elections but maintained the coalition with the Colorados. The new president Luis Alberto Lacalle, grandson of Luis Alberto de Herrera, had campaigned on a platform of stability and combating inflation. Scholars,

¹¹⁵ Dutrénit, 75-82.

¹¹⁶ Gillespie, 203.

however, contribute his victory above all to the fact that parties charged with restoring democracy, regardless of how they perform, are generally rewarded with electoral defeat in the next election.¹¹⁷ Economic issues also played a central role during the Sanguinetti administration, as the military dictatorship had left behind a laundry list of economic complications. Unresolved economic complications were also blamed for the Colorado loss in the 1989 elections.¹¹⁸

Lacalle entered a coalition with the Colorados in order to govern. He had only garnered 22% of the popular vote and only 57% support in his own party, which would put up some of the staunchest opposition to his economic plans.¹¹⁹ Lacalle and his fraction did not have much support in the parliament either – his parliamentary support is described as “scraggly” and requiring a miracle to expand.¹²⁰ Lacalle pursued *blanquicolorado* cooperation in a government that *Brecha* -- a weekly Uruguayan political magazine -- consistently described as a “coalition.”

Lacalle’s difficulties in keeping the Colorados in the coalition showed that the Blancos were becoming the extreme right in politics, not the Colorados. Often, neither the Frente Amplio nor the Colorados would join with his government, stating that they wanted to remain on the left and center, respectively. The Blancos had clearly undergone a major shift in ideology, moving from a center-left ideology to become so conservative

¹¹⁷ Riz, Liliana de and Catalina Smulovitz. “Instauración democrática y reforma política en Argentina y Uruguay.” *Iberoamericana América Latina-España-Portugal*. Vol. 18, Nos. 1-2. 1992. 199.

¹¹⁸ Vacs, Aldo C. “Between Restructuring and Impasse: Liberal Democracy, Exclusionary Policy Making, and Neoliberal Policies in Argentina and Uruguay.” *Deepening Democracy in Latin America*. Eds. Kurt von Mettenheim and James Malloy. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998. pp. 137-172. 144.

¹¹⁹ Riz and Smulovitz, 200.

¹²⁰ Nahoum, Benjamín. “Las viviendas bajo el gobierno de Lacalle.” *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 5 Jan 1990. 8.

that the original conservative party, the Colorados, would not even agree with their plans.¹²¹

In January 1990, Lacalle's government was being hailed as a grand change, although writers hesitated to label the change positive or negative. An article published in *Brecha* in January stated that the people had voted in a Blanco president in order to change their situations, whether it be income, unemployment, or inflation, but reserved judgment on whether or not Lacalle would be capable of bringing about change.¹²² *Brecha* also stated that regardless of the number of parties participating in the elections, "only two parties exist, on one side the party for advancement and progress, on the other the party for immobilization and reaction."¹²³ However, the author did not mean the Blancos were the party for progress; instead, the author of the article believed that the Blanco victory opened up an opportunity for the left to enter.

The Blancos continued to move to align with the Colorados so that the Frente Amplio stood in opposition to the traditional parties that were linked together in program and idea. Lacalle's economic plans continued the Colorado plans from 1985 to 1990 and took them even farther, so much so that they were too neoliberal for the Colorado Party.¹²⁴ Lacalle promised "economic adjustment" to rid Uruguay of its inflation and deficit. The adjustment was created with the help of the World Bank and was in line with policies previously pursued by Sanguinetti, who had also worked with international institutions. The adjustment would consist of reduction of expenditure and increase of

¹²¹ Castiglioni, Rossana. *The Politics of Social Policy Change in Chile and Uruguay: Retrenchment Versus Maintenance, 1973-1998*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 75.

¹²² Rodríguez, Hector. "Algo más sobre un gobierno de coalición." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 5 Jan 1990. 6.

¹²³ Bruschera, Oscar H. "El espacio de cambio." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 5 Jan 1990. 4.

¹²⁴ Gillespie, 182.

income, all through a drastic increase of sales taxes, an increase in retirement investment resulting in an indirect decrease in salaries, and a decrease in jobs available in the government.¹²⁵

Lacalle's approach to adoption of the adjustment showed a shift from traditional Blanco ideology to that of the Colorados' elite-led ideas. The World Bank would be contributing US\$105 million to the management of several banks, along with their role in directing the entire adjustment.¹²⁶ Despite the massive scope of the project and his own certainty that it would negatively affect many Uruguayans, Lacalle did not believe that an agreement with the World Bank needed to be brought before the parliament. His only nod to the lower classes supposedly championed by the Blancos was to state that the policies of adjustment would be balanced with social aid programs to ensure that "it would not be the smallest salary or the most vulnerable citizen who would carry the heaviest weight of the new economic policy."¹²⁷

The adjustment proved to be one of the worst and most heavily criticized decisions of the Lacalle administration and gave leftist parties a chance to oppose the traditional parties' disastrous ideas. Danilo Astori, a high profile member of the left, used his critique of the adjustment to lump the two traditional parties together in failure. He implied that the Blancos were making the same mistakes made by the Colorados and foreign institutions, assuming that all Uruguayans were equal and taking no steps to shield the lower economic classes from the force of an adjustment.¹²⁸ Other critics agreed

¹²⁵ Blixen, Samuel. "El precio de la paz neoliberal." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 9 Feb 1990. 7.

¹²⁶ Blixen, Samuel. "El único acuerdo de Lacalle es con el Banco Mundial." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 16 Feb 1990. 11.

¹²⁷ Lacalle, Luis Alberto. Interview with Guillermo Waksman. "A mediados del 91 estaremos del otro lado de la cuchilla." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 2 Feb 1990. 4.

¹²⁸ Astori, Danilo. "La falsa inocencia del 'ajuste' anunciado." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 26 Jan 1990. 5.

that an economic adjustment needed to be made, but disagreed with Lacalle's plan. Hugo Batalla, senator from the Gobierno del Pueblo party, believed that the mechanisms of adjustment chosen were those that were most likely to cause conflict by taking money out of salaries and raising prices of consumer items.¹²⁹ The adjustment was largely responsible for the Colorado withdrawal from the coalition, more problems with labor, and the Frente Amplio's abandonment of any cooperation with the Blancos.¹³⁰

Lacalle began to allow foreign private investment when the banks became a problem, stepping even further away from Blanco ideology. The state banks, newly nationalized with US\$400 million, had to be re-privatized. Leaders of the banks, chosen by the World Bank in the first place, sought foreign investors to buy them, a swerve away from the Blanco ideological goal of a Uruguay for Uruguayans. The \$400 million was lost to the Uruguayan government, only \$50 million of which had come from the World Bank.¹³¹ It became evident that Lacalle did not intend to change anything about the elite style or the economic plans of the Colorado government under Sanguinetti.

Lacalle's approach to the armed forces, police, and national defense caused criticism as well and evidenced that he was moving the party toward Colorado ideology and programs in more than just the economic sector. A debate over whether former members of the dictatorship should be completely pardoned and allowed to serve in leadership began – Lacalle stated that he was in favor of a pardon along with the Colorados under Sanguinetti, despite the fact that most Blanco senators were against it.¹³²

¹²⁹ Batalla, Hugo. Interview with Roger Rodríguez. "Se preparó para ganar, no para gobernar." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 2 Mar 1990. 6.

¹³⁰ Vacs, 164.

¹³¹ Blixen, Samuel. "Cuando la eficiencia es peligrosa." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 16 Mar 1990. 10-11.

¹³² Lacalle, 5; Blixen, 9 Feb 90, 7.

Lacalle's candidate for leadership of the Air Force would need a pardon both for participation in the dictatorship and economic crimes committed during the dictatorship.¹³³ In a decidedly elite-centered view of government, the president did not think that the public needed to have his support of the pardons explained. Critics believed that the public indeed had a right to know what criteria their president would use to decide who would lead the armed forces after only five years of restored democracy.¹³⁴

Lacalle's plans for maintaining the social peace within the country displayed a Colorado-style focus on security over social welfare, as well as a startling disregard for the tenuousness of the new democracy. Lacalle saw a need for plans to preserve social peace, expecting disturbances to arise from the difficulties inherent in the economic adjustment. His plans included outfitting the armed forces with equipment to handle "unconventional conflicts" within the country and increasing the defense budget for the police. However, there existed almost no separation between the police and armed forces; in the event that the police were overwhelmed by an internal conflict, the armed forces could step in, using any budget money allotted for themselves or the police.¹³⁵ Obviously, these plans seemed to bolster the armed forces, recently the perpetrators of 11 years of repression, and made the Uruguayan people extremely nervous. Critics also pointed out that Lacalle, in his February 2 interview in *Brecha*, had stated his goal was to dedicate 52% of the budget to social projects, something nearly impossible given that the defense budget he inherited was already 40% of the total budget and would not allow augmentation of police funding *and* social funding.¹³⁶

¹³³ Blixen, 9 Feb 90, 7.

¹³⁴ Bruschera, Oscar. "¿A quien defiende la defensa?" *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 9 Feb 1990. 5.

¹³⁵ Blixen, 9 Feb 90, 7.

¹³⁶ Bruschera, 9 Feb 90, 5.

Lacalle's social projects and budget were failures. On some problems, such as housing, Lacalle's program was a confused mixture of Blanco and Colorado ideals. During his campaign, Lacalle had promised to establish a Ministry of Housing to alleviate the housing problem, in keeping with the Blanco focus on less-fortunate groups in society. However, he developed no plan of who would serve in this position, what their duties would be, and how much money would be invested for use in housing. Blancos appeared to be turning more toward the elite and middle class focus of the Colorados: Lacalle had been one of those warring against any laws for state help to tenants, and also promised to make rental real estate entirely free market. Uruguayans accustomed to the *batllista* style of government and high levels of state intervention did not want the reaction to a housing crisis to be *less* intervention – the Blanco party's plan surprised them.¹³⁷

Social security and education were other social problems in which Lacalle attempted to implement Colorado-style policies. The social security problem required balancing demands from workers with the budget deficit. Lacalle's answer was to limit payouts and raise retirement age, the exact same approach used by Sanguinetti, but the approach failed without any support from Blanco fractions, the left, and some Colorado fractions. In the education sector, Lacalle's administration simply built off of previous Colorado reforms of the system, changing little about Sanguinetti's original efforts.¹³⁸

A final blow to the lower economic classes and the old populist Blanco ideology was Lacalle's decision to regulate strikes. Previously, Sanguinetti had intervened in labor disputes on the side of employers, and workers hoped that the Blancos with their broader

¹³⁷ Nahoum, 8.

¹³⁸ Castiglioni, 64-65, 70.

social base would help them, especially given Lacalle's planned economic adjustment. However, Lacalle had decided to exercise the state's constitutional right to determine what action was legal without state consent and to regulate strikes. He also signaled his intent to regulate action taken by employers, all in an effort to limit any panic or exaggerated responses to the adjustment.¹³⁹

In short, Lacalle's presidency was a more disastrous version of Sanguinetti's 1985-1990 presidency. The Blancos had been forced to link their program, ideological goals, and style of government to that of the Colorados, cementing the blanquicolorado cooperation and keeping the left firmly in its position as opposition to both traditional parties. The complete exclusion of the left in all agreements and negotiations led Líber Seregni to dub the government not a national government but a blanquicolorado government that did not properly represent the people. Seregni went on to state that the system was "the famous bipartisan system...in a new form."¹⁴⁰

1995-2000: Solidification of the blanquicolorado agreement

During Sanguinetti's second presidency from 1995-2000, the Blancos and Colorados ideologically converged even more, eliminating many separations between the parties. The system began to look more like a bipartisan system, with the Blancos and Colorados on one side, and the Frente Amplio on the other. Both social reform and electoral reform passed during this period required the blanquicolorado cooperation. Sanguinetti was able to successfully address many of the social problems from his first

¹³⁹ Lacalle, 5.

¹⁴⁰ Seregni, Líber. Interview with María Urruzola. "No es un gobierno nacional." *Brecha*. Montevideo, Uruguay. 2 Mar 1990. 7.

administration and Lacalle's presidency, but only with the help of the Blancos.¹⁴¹ Three of Sanguinetti's ministers were Blancos, and the two parties voted together in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies to pass these various reforms. With cooperation and ideological alignment, they were able to resolve social security, education, and the reduction of state employment.¹⁴² The electoral reform, however, most clearly showed the solidarity between the two traditional parties fomented by the threat of a victorious left.

The presence of the Frente Amplio as a threat to the traditional parties' success caused more cooperation in an effort to limit the Frente Amplio's actions and success. The left's electoral power had grown to a formidable size, and the elections of 1994 showed that they were close to toppling the electoral advantage of the other two parties. The Colorado Party garnered 32.5% of the vote, the Blancos 31.4%, and the Frente Amplio 30.8%.¹⁴³ It was clear that something needed to be done to prevent a leftist victory in 1999.

The reform would change the existing system from the double-simultaneous vote system to a run-off system. In the absence of an absolute majority, the two candidates with the most votes would enter into a run-off election for the presidency. Fractions within parties would also no longer be allowed to combine together and share votes to win representation in the Chamber of Deputies. Finally, elections were split up – instead of taking place all on the same day, there were four separate days of elections: primaries,

¹⁴¹ Castiglioni, 65-68, 72.

¹⁴² Nahum, Benjamín. *Breve historia del Uruguay independiente*. Montevideo, Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1999. 194-195.

¹⁴³ Corte Electoral. "Elecciones Nacionales de 1994."

legislative and first-round presidential elections, a run-off if necessary, and municipal elections.¹⁴⁴

One of the changes in the reform, the banning of multiple candidates per party, benefitted the left. To acquire enough support to pass the reform, the traditional parties had to make a compromise with the left and eliminate the multi-fraction voting lists from the executive elections. Instead of choosing the winning candidate within the winning party, each party would only be allowed to run one candidate, decided during the primaries. For the traditional parties, this would be a huge change, but the left had always run only one candidate for the presidency.¹⁴⁵

Despite Blanco and Colorado cooperation and concessions made to the left, the reform barely passed. As a major constitutional change, the reform had to be approved directly by the people through a plebiscite, held in December 1996.¹⁴⁶ Only 52.2% of those voting approved the changes, and the reform barely scraped its way into the constitution.¹⁴⁷

The run-off elections were put in place to ensure that in the event that the Frente Amplio candidate made it to the run-offs, the traditional party voters would come together and vote for whichever party was in the run-off, effectively blocking the Frente Amplio from the presidency. The run-offs also made the blanquicolorado agreement even more necessary and inevitable, since the parties would need to share voters and keep coalition governments. Keeping ideology stable and in line with past programs was no

¹⁴⁴ Cason 2002, 97.

¹⁴⁵ Cason 2002, 97.

¹⁴⁶ Cason 2002, 97.

¹⁴⁷ Altman 2008, 504.

longer the focus of Blanco and Colorado action, but rather keeping themselves in power with any coalitions or compromises necessary had become more important.¹⁴⁸

2000-2005: Challenges to the traditional parties

The period from 2000 to 2005 saw the decline of the two traditional parties, beginning with the difficulty in winning the 1999 election. The Blancos and Colorados united their vote to win the presidency, via the electoral changes made with the 1996 reform. The first round of presidential elections in 1999 resulted in a victory for the Frente Amplio, which was hindered from taking office by the new run-off elections instituted by the 1996 electoral reform. The Frente Amplio came away from the elections with 39% of the vote to the Colorados' 32% and the Blancos' 21.7%. While some Blanco voters did support the Frente Amplio in the run-off, the majority supported the Colorado party, as planned, and Jorge Batlle was elected president with 52.5% of the vote.¹⁴⁹

Their cooperation began to crack as a result of Batlle's responses to the economic crisis that began in 1999 and intensified in 2002. Confronted with an economic crisis instigated by Brazilian and Argentine instability and failures, Batlle responded with neoliberal economic measures very similar to those of Blanco president Lacalle. His plan for financial and economic recovery included deregulation, privatization, structural adjustments, and aid from the IMF and World Bank.¹⁵⁰ Gerardo Caetano, a Uruguayan political science analyst, describes Batlle's economic policies as a negative movement away from *batllismo*, which had created "equality of opportunities" and a "hyper-

¹⁴⁸ Nahum, 196.

¹⁴⁹ Corte Electoral, "Elecciones Nacionales 1999."

¹⁵⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Uruguay."

integrated society.” Caetano also asserted that Batlle’s pursuit of market-based politics had effectively destroyed the *batllista* system.¹⁵¹

The *batllista* program, initially created by a Colorado, was almost entirely neglected by the party in favor of more conservative social programs and neoliberal economic plans. Social programs under Batlle were nothing like those of his predecessor, Batlle y Ordóñez. The percentage of children in poverty skyrocketed, as did the dropout rate and teenage pregnancy rate. Existing programs targeted the elderly rather than the youth and did nothing to address these growing problems. Batlle’s administration was able to adequately address health issues, but did nothing to offset the inequality created by the rolling back of the old social welfare system. The problems mounted to the point that the Blancos, against the *blanquicolorado* agreement, began to occasionally dissent with the Colorado party.¹⁵²

The Blancos’ tentative withdrawal from the *blanquicolorado* cooperation signaled that the party was considering a move back to an opposition position. While their ideological goals did not change, their new willingness to oppose the Colorados in the legislative body revealed that the party was considering a shift back to the center-left ideology originally espoused before the *blanquicolorado* agreement. No definite action was taken in this period, however, and the Blancos’ position with regards to the Colorados would not be apparent until the campaigns for the 2004 election.¹⁵³

The Frente Amplio’s emergence as the guardians of *batllismo* further damaged Batlle’s standings in public opinion and subsequently the Colorados’ chances for an

¹⁵¹ Caetano, Gerardo. “Uruguay 2003. Agobios y desafíos del ‘nuevo país’.” *Nueva Sociedad*. 2003. No. 184. pp 14-24. 15-16.

¹⁵² Caetano 2003, 15-19.

¹⁵³ Caetano 2003, 20.

electoral victory in 2004. The Frente Amplio still defended the paternal state and extensive social programs set up in the early 1900s by Batlle y Ordóñez, and intended to prioritize social efforts to respond to current problems. Conversely, Jorge Batlle's statements and plans seemed "far from reality."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Caetano 2003, 20, 22

Chapter 4: 2004 party platforms

In 2005, Colorado president Jorge Batlle's term came to end, and Dr. Tabaré Vázquez became the first Frente Amplio president in Uruguay. The blanquicolorado agreement had failed to limit leftist power, although both parties knew they were in danger from the left's rising popularity. The campaigns leading up to the 2004 election saw the Blanco and Colorado ideologies continue to converge on certain points, but more tellingly the programs began to center on responding to the left rather than one another. The Frente Amplio program, on the other hand, focuses on the incorporation of *batllismo*, updating it to respond to new challenges to the country. Economic plans, social programs, government reform, and national security plans from each party's program show ideological alignment most clearly.

Response to the Frente Amplio

The Colorado party program directly attacks the Frente Amplio's plans and popularity in the beginning of their program. Batlle's legacy and continued popularity becomes the Colorados' weapon against the left's popularity from the first paragraph of the party program. The Uruguayan people are asked, "What paths should we follow to preserve the historic social net created by *batllismo*...?" and the answer they are clearly implying is that it should be the paths of the party that created *batllismo* in the first place.¹⁵⁵ The program takes care to point out Uruguay's high levels of social expenditure and its characterization as a benefactor state or welfare state. The credit for the exit from the 2002 economic crisis is given to *batllismo*. Finally, the Colorados claim that the very

¹⁵⁵ Partido Colorado. 2.

“spirit of solidarity that permeates the Uruguayan state is a result of *batllismo* and not of socialist conceptions.”¹⁵⁶

The Colorado Party attempts to make the idea of right and left in politics sound antiquated and against academic progress. The giant steps in science and technology made in the late 20th and early 21st century yield right versus left “a false dichotomy.” In an effort to downplay the *blanquicolorado* agreement, the program states that the left is not fighting a “monolithic right” and to imply the existence of such a group is an error.¹⁵⁷ The document points out that the Uruguayan general budget, still structured on *batllista* lines, already includes a 68% expenditure on social programs and is considered a liberal or social-democratic structure by European and United States standards. Finally, the party claims to not identify itself using “electoral profiles or publicity positions.”¹⁵⁸

Strangely enough, after rejecting right and left labels, the Colorados turn to attack the Frente Amplio as the left, on par with Eastern Europe and Cuba. The Frente Amplio is characterized as a leftist party that is only efficient as opposition, not capable of governing or handling actual crises. When presented with problems, the Colorados argue, the left has no answers, and can only win when they do not win electorally. History and the reality of governing a country leaves the “old’ left drained of content.”¹⁵⁹

The Blanco Party does not name the Frente Amplio or the left in its program, but it does insinuate its ownership of some of the principles espoused by the Frente Amplio. The Declaration of Principles states that the party developed the concept of a coalition. The Blancos also claim liberty, justice, and democracy as their “supreme” values,

¹⁵⁶ Partido Colorado, 3.

¹⁵⁷ Partido Colorado, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Partido Colorado, 5.

¹⁵⁹ Partido Colorado, 3.

vaguely insinuating they hold them higher than any other party historically or presently.¹⁶⁰

Economic plans

For the 2005 election, Uruguay's precarious economic situation made any party's economic plans central to its success in the election. Uruguay had suffered an economic crisis in 2002, along with other countries in the region, leaving the country with massive foreign debt and uncertainty on how to pay it off. All three parties address debt servicing and economic growth – however, the Colorados and Blancos employ neoliberal strategies and greater reliance on external investment and foreign aid, while the Frente Amplio promotes competition through reform of the *batllista* welfare state without a complete change and a moving away from reliance on other countries.

According to the Colorado party program, the Uruguayan economy in 2004 was ready to grow at 4% or more a year. To achieve this aim, the Colorados' program adopts a neoliberal approach to the economy and drops the old *batllista* goals, stating that a welfare state is no longer a viable strategy but promising to avoid total dependence on the market. The party tries to explain this approach as a reform of *batllismo*, not a new plan or a dismantling of the old, and maintains that its priority is protecting the weakest sectors of society through a continued *batllista* welfare model.¹⁶¹

Several plans are central to the achievement of 4% growth. Uruguay's growth is to be couched in a strengthening of the original agro-industrial economy but largely spurred by growth in the technological and information sector. To address the existing

¹⁶⁰ Partido Nacional. "Declaración de Principios." 2001. Edited 2002, 2006. 6.

¹⁶¹ Partido Colorado, 4-5, 9.

budget deficit, a GDP surplus is to be maintained every year. The party promises to increase employment to bring the unemployment rate to its lowest point in history. The tax system is to be simplified to become a greater tax on “unproductive capital” without heavily taxing the means of production key to growth and to encourage external investment in the country. MERCOSUR is to be the focal point of the economy, but other commercial agreements were to be worked out. Industry is to be opened to increase competitiveness, with especially care to privatize energy. Exports are to increase through opening markets, allowing the exchange rate to float, and keeping state intervention to a minimum.¹⁶²

The Blanco party also signals its new neoliberal leanings. The Declaration of Principles describes how the economy in the last few decades has been naturally changing, moving away from state responsibilities of the old system to a market-based system of creation and distribution of goods and services. They indicate the need “to find a new equilibrium among individual, community, and state responsibilities.” However, neoliberal plans are carefully couched in language about protecting “the most vulnerable sectors of the society,” in keeping with the historic Blanco focus on the rural poor.¹⁶³

Economic policy is geared toward scaling back the state’s role in the economy through various plans. The plan calls for avoiding monopolies, public or private, and the establishment of the state as simply the guide to the private sector. The state is also to protect property rights, open the economy to greater competition, and increase foreign investment. The state bank, as well as another state bank set up for aid with housing, is to be put on equal footing as its private competitors to increase efficiency and competition.

¹⁶² Partido Colorado, 4-5, 12-14, 26-29, 83-84.

¹⁶³ Partido Nacional, 6-8.

Greater economic integration through regional and sub-regional economic agreements, MERCOSUR obviously included, is also mentioned.¹⁶⁴

The Frente Amplio, in its program written by current president Tabaré Vázquez, also acknowledges the growing power of market mechanisms, but has no intention of turning its back on *batllismo*. Its general plan is to “reorganize [Uruguay’s] economy, improve its state, [and] establish clear rules for the roles played by the state and the market.” It also proposes economic growth through promotion of the technological economy, especially in MERCOSUR.¹⁶⁵

The focus of the Frente Amplio’s economic plans is to put the economy to work for Uruguayans instead of putting Uruguayans to work for the economy – as Vázquez says, “macroeconomic stability should be at the service of growth and equality, and not vice versa.” Standards of competition should be set that best serve both businessmen *and* the society at large. New jobs should be generated but the party plans to take care that these are high quality jobs, not just any jobs. Monetary policies and exchange rate policies should be consistent, beneficial for growth, and help to increase equality of income distribution. The party is firmly in favor of “de-dollarization” of the economy, turning away from a reliance on foreign economies, although it does recognize the role international financial organizations could play in social expenditures.

The deficit is to be cut by a more efficient and equitable tax system, social spending better targeted to priority areas and investment in the public, and increased exports as well as internal demand for products. However, the Frente Amplio does not

¹⁶⁴ Partido Nacional, 7-8; “Programa de Gobierno del Partido Nacional.” <www.uruguaytotal.com/elecciones/partido_nacional.htm>. 6-8.

¹⁶⁵ Vázquez, Dr. Tabaré. “El gobierno del cambio: La transición responsable.” Encuentro Progresista-Frente Amplio-Nueva Mayoría. July/Oct 2004. 7.

see the deficit as a reason to decrease the state's role, but calls for an "authentic reform" geared toward solving problems concerning resources and high costs of public services and capable of creating new opportunities for employment. The economy will no longer be solely agricultural but should expand in technological sectors and tourism. Finally, regional integration is important, leaving behind Uruguay's economic isolationism and embracing MERCOSUR along with other agreements.¹⁶⁶

Although clear similarities show up in all three parties' economic plans, the Blanco and Colorado plans differ from the *frenteamplista* plan. MERCOSUR is a central figure for all three, as is further regional integration beyond MERCOSUR. Expansion of technological services and production also figures into all three plans, as does expansion of exports. However, the Colorados and Blancos are decidedly more neoliberal than the Frente Amplio, although they try to cover this tendency with old rhetoric about Batlle or social justice. Both call for a diminished state role, taking the form of privatization, greater competition, a larger role for the private sector, and decreased state spending. Both traditional parties also call for more foreign investment and intervention in the economy.

The Frente Amplio, meanwhile, turns inward for solutions to the deficit, rather than to the dollar and foreign investment in companies. While it does not reject the need for competition, it *does* reject the need for an overhaul of the current economic system. Social spending, income distribution equality, and a state economic presence are still a part of the new "productive Uruguay" for the Frente Amplio. Privatization is not even addressed.

¹⁶⁶ Vázquez, 8-11.

Social programs

Changes in economic plans due to budget deficit issues meant that Uruguay's massive social welfare state would need to change. In 2004, 68% of the total budget was social spending, and 30% of all economic activity was public expenditure. To service a debt, the expenditures associated with the existing welfare state would have to decrease or change in some way. The Colorados propose an administrative reform as well as a redefined role for the state. The Blancos suggest a new tax system to pay for the social programs, along with a similarly redefined role for the state. The Frente Amplio focuses on social spending as the backbone of the success of all other projects, and promotes its Social Emergency Plan.

For the Colorados, the new social programs focus on greater efficiency in the welfare system and a lesser role for the state: rather than the paternal welfare state envisioned by Batlle, civil society is expected to care for those left behind by the market. Early on in the document, despite the stated need to reform the existing *batllista* welfare state, they promise to strengthen the social welfare net against "the new challenges of the social reality," but strengthening appears to be synonymous with paring down the existing system. Direct state investment in social programs diminishes and is diverted to other state programs. The Colorados seek to eliminate unnecessary jobs and late welfare aid, and develop a new information system to analyze necessity and fulfillment of services. They also call for new calculations of public expenditure on social programs.

Civil society should fill the void left by a rolling back of state duties, both financially and in planning. Plans to bolster education involve making preschool for 3-year-olds universal, increasing foreign language education, and expanding technological

education and training. Housing problems are resolved by putting people back into unoccupied houses, making sure houses have basic utilities and transportation available, and building new houses without a substantial augmentation of cost. The family becomes the focal point of social spending, attempting to educate children, lower young pregnancies, educate parents on their role in the family, and create more work opportunities for women.¹⁶⁷

The Blancos' social plans require the cost to be distributed away from the state, and diminish the state's role, much as the Colorados' plan does. A progressive tax system distributes social expenditures throughout the society. Social organizations, departmental governments, and local governments play more important roles in the new social system. The party promises to focus its efforts on developing policies to increase opportunities for youth and improving education. Educational reforms include better quality of teaching, better training for teachers, greater access to schools for the poor, more financial aid to make schools free, and obligatory attendance in many levels of education, including industrial and agricultural training. The family is noted as the most important unit of society. The Blancos also wish to eradicate gender inequality and generate greater opportunities for women.¹⁶⁸

The Frente Amplio proposes a Social Emergency Plan. The emergency, according to the party, is that 30% of the population lives in poverty and 60% of Uruguayans under 18 live in poverty. The plan includes food distribution for people in the highest levels of poverty as well as pregnant women, children, and other vulnerable groups. This calls not for a new institution altogether but a reinforcement of an existing welfare structure.

¹⁶⁷ Partido Colorado, 49-56, 72.

¹⁶⁸ Partido Nacional, 9-11.

Youth under 18 whose parents already collect unemployment benefits should also receive benefits, in an effort to redistribute the national income more equitably and to keep poor children in schools. Families with a total income under the official poverty line receive direct subsidies to bring their income up to the minimum, which will work in conjunction with food and education programs to provide more opportunities. The plan also proposes to offer support to every child under 4 living in poverty and every pregnant mother living in poverty. It envisions greater equality for women in every aspect of society.

Education programs are central to the plan as well. The Frente Amplio proposes to universalize primary education as well as access to secondary education from the primary cycle; increase social protections like transportation, food, and health care for schoolchildren to avoid desertion; and improve professional and technological instruction to improve that sector of the economy. The party also guarantees greater rights for teachers, including more effective authorities whose decisions are subject to teacher approval and better training. The Social Emergency Plan will be paid for by the elimination of unnecessary expenditures, some of which the Frente Amplio characterizes as “insulting” in their superfluous nature. The party also promises to increase transparency and efficiency so that money spent on social programs does not remain “trapped in bureaucracy.”¹⁶⁹

Education and equality for women appear in all three parties’ social plans, with relative similarity in the approach to improve the two issues. However, the Colorados and the Blancos both signal a scaling back of the state’s role in social spending and welfare programs while the Frente Amplio intends to simply shift spending to more effective areas and maintain the *batllista* state. Colorados and Blancos also both focus on the

¹⁶⁹ Vázquez, 17-25.

family as the focus of social planning – the Frente Amplio does not address the family directly, but speaks more about benefits for children and households living in extreme poverty. The Frente Amplio and the Colorados both discuss the need for administrative reforms of the welfare state and the elimination of superfluous spending, although the Colorados' reform intends to replace parts of the state bureaucracies with civil society organizations while the Frente Amplio does not.

Government reform

For 15 years leading up to the 2005 election, the mayor of Montevideo has been a *frenteamplista*, beginning with Vázquez in 1990. During his time in office, Dr. Vázquez instituted a much more participatory and decentralized style of democracy, and since a majority of Uruguayan citizens live in Montevideo, many people had been exposed and become accustomed to this new style. The Colorados and Blancos would have to respond to this change in their plans for government reform for the 2005 elections.

Colorado plans for government reform promote *batllismo* on the one side while completely dismantling it on the other. To support it, the party tries to promote decentralization and more attention to labor. However, the state-owned companies are to be opened up to competition, part of the steps to take the economy away from state monopolies and toward a more neoliberal economic plan. Workers' rights are to be maintained while corporatism is eliminated to benefit consumers. Expansion of the use of technology to maintain better control of expenditures and more transparency to the public is also mentioned. In answer to the Frente Amplio's decentralized government strategy, the Colorados' program includes the decentralization of municipal governments to

decrease bureaucracy and allow funds to be more quickly distributed and utilized properly. The “Fund for Interior Development” approved by the executive would allow the municipal governments to use funds allocated to them through the fund to directly develop their region without executive oversight. The process, however, is to be under strict legal guidelines to be enumerated by the Colorado party but not included in the program itself. The Colorados also respond to the Frente Amplio’s hold on a broad social base by supporting greater civil society participation in the government.¹⁷⁰

The Blanco party also proposes a more decentralized and transparent form of government. Responsibilities and resources transfer from the central government to the departmental and local governments, which are now expected to mete out resources to the people. By putting authority in local governments’ hands, the party hopes to bridge the gap between community needs and government response. Decentralization also includes encouraging greater citizen participation and transparency of the government to yield accountability, especially in decreasing corruption. The party also guarantees the rights to organize and strike to the labor movement.¹⁷¹

The Frente Amplio intends to continue developing the decentralized and participatory structures it began with in Montevideo, stating that it is “necessary to plan, execute, and evaluate with the population what the principal problems are and the best policies to prevent and solve them.” The plan calls for development of forums for citizens to participate in decision-making that will affect the society. Decentralization is necessary for state action to be effective, to open the system to citizen participation, to include the rest of the country outside of Montevideo in state action, to govern by local needs rather

¹⁷⁰ Partido Colorado, 71-73, 76.

¹⁷¹ Partido Nacional, 9-11; “Programa de Gobierno,” 2-3.

than party lines, and to properly distribute resources. Existing institutions for decentralization can carry out this process. The plan also calls for the fulfillment of rights for Uruguayans living abroad, including their right to vote in Uruguayan elections.¹⁷²

While all three parties call for decentralization, the motive behind the decentralization is different. The Frente Amplio details structures to fulfill the *batllista* ideal: to promote citizen participation, less party influence on state action, and greater fulfillment of rights through decentralization. The Colorado and Blanco motivation for decentralization appears to be to decrease state spending and to respond to the left's success in Montevideo. The two traditional parties also intend to maintain party control over actions taken by the decentralized system.

National security

For a country like Uruguay, national security faces a dual threat: the threat of another internal takeover like the one seen in 1973 resulting in a military dictatorship, and the threat of terrorist attacks from abroad, like the ones seen in Madrid and New York City. The Colorados' security plans focus on cutting expenditure associated with prisons and police, while maintaining armed forces prepared for any internal or external threat. The Blancos intend to strengthen police against internal threats and prepare the armed forces to defend sovereignty and independence. The Frente Amplio places police action under citizen scrutiny.

For the Colorados, addressing internal national security continues their policies of cutting state expenditures in response to the deficit. The Colorado program addresses lowering expenditures on prisoners by expanding the Ministry of the Interior's duties to

¹⁷² Vázquez, 42-45.

include prevention of social instability and proposing work programs for prisoners. Work programs would both aid prisoners' return to society upon release as well as allow profit to subsidize some of the costs associated with prisons. The program also promises to explore alternate penalties to reduce prison overpopulation. Interestingly, the Colorados reject amnesty as an alternative, stating that amnesty is "decidedly understood as inconvenient." For external security issues, the party wishes to restore confidence in and respect for the armed forces, commending them for their role in the peaceful transition to democracy following the dictatorship. The primary external threat, that of terrorism, requires the armed forces to be ready to analyze any possible threat, prepare the country, and ideally prevent such a threat. The forces are to be equipped with the best technology for "these new realities."¹⁷³

The Blancos address internal security with reforms of the police and prison system. The party calls for special attention and training to be given to police on due process and not infringing the rights of the people, while still protecting the people. Preventive programs, involving multiple branches of the government, would try to lower crime rates. Prison system reforms improve conditions for prisoners, while the government searches for alternative punishments to lower prison costs. Concerning external threats, the party reiterates that the defense of national sovereignty *and* the avoidance of using force in terrorism are central issues. The party intends to defend Uruguay's rights to its land, sea, and air zones. They also plan to equip the armed forces for better response to conflicts including scenarios involving terrorism.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Partido Colorado, 77-81.

¹⁷⁴ Partido Nacional, 7; "Programa de Gobierno," 4-5.

The Frente Amplio views police as an instrument of the people and an instrument of democracy. Without a properly functioning police force, democracy and social harmony are endangered. Their focus, however, is the prevention of crime through better social programs to eradicate social exclusion and poverty. Police are to be regulated and reminded of their role in justice. Democracy, according to the party, cannot be properly executed without an “agile, responsible judicial system that responds to the demand of...a society conscious of its rights.”¹⁷⁵

Once again, the Colorados and Blancos show a similar desire to cut expenditures, this time through alternative punishments and reform of the prison system. However, the differences between each party’s national security plan are clear. The Blancos are concerned with maintaining national sovereignty over Uruguayan territory, while terrorism does not play a huge role in their policies. Their internal policy seems more preoccupied with citizens’ rights than police might. The Colorados, on the other hand, show an alarming tendency to give power to the armed forces. The threat of terrorism moves them to improve the armed forces’ equipment while they give them basically free rein within the country in the name of prevention of terrorist acts. They also commend the armed forces for their role in transitioning back to democracy without mentioning the armed forces’ role in the initial removal of democracy and basic rights. The Frente Amplio program is not concerned with external national security, and views internal security problems as offshoots of social failures and poverty, a completely different approach from the traditional parties.

¹⁷⁵ Vázquez, 43.

Conclusion

The Frente Amplio has become an established part of Uruguayan politics. The 2004 election was not merely a one-time protest vote: the Frente Amplio has a base of supporters that puts the party in a position to gain majorities in upcoming elections. Since 1971, the party has continually grown in its electoral support from 18% to 50% with no dips or faltering, and there is no reason to believe that support would suddenly collapse. Most people who voted for the Frente Amplio intend to stay with that party. The Frente Amplio's rise broke the chain of Colorado dominance, resulting in dramatically lower voting support for the Colorados. In the 2004 elections, received the smallest share of votes in the history of the party – 10.4%.¹⁷⁶ This suggests the Colorados will depend on cooperation with the Blancos to regain political power.

The success of the Frente Amplio has caused both traditional parties to change their ideologies. The Blancos, originally center-left champions of the rural poor, are now better classified as center-right or right, especially if one considers their economic plans. No longer does guarding the welfare of the less-fortunate and those forgotten in the rural areas guide Blanco policy. The Colorado party was originally the creator of *batllismo*, Uruguayan social welfare, and an economy for Uruguayans rather than foreign companies. Now the Colorado party adopts policy to support foreign loans, trade, and investment. They have dropped the social focus in favor of an economic one, wishing to balance the budget instead of income and opportunities.

In the process, Colorado and Blanco ideologies grew more and more similar, which led to close political cooperation unimaginable before the rise of the Frente

¹⁷⁶ Corte Electoral, "Elecciones Nacionales 2004."

Amplio. The clearest sign of realignment was the blanquicolorado agreement, established immediately after the end of the dictatorship. The agreement has been the only way many laws opposed by the left have been passed – neither traditional party has the strength to pass laws by itself. Their cooperation results in the passage of compromises rather than laws in line with the hard line of the party, such as the law giving amnesty to former members of the dictatorship, passed during Sanguinetti's first administration. It also results in voter-sharing, a signal that the Blanco and Colorado parties are at least basically ideologically aligned. Should only one of the two traditional parties make it to the presidential run-off elections, most traditional party voters will switch from Blanco to Colorado or Colorado to Blanco rather than support the Frente Amplio, as seen in the 1999 election of Jorge Batlle.

Batllismo, created by Batlle y Ordóñez in the early 1900s and still a very strong force in Uruguayan politics today, stands as a Frente Amplio ideology now. Present-day *batllismo* no longer involves changing the political structure as Batlle y Ordóñez attempted to do with the collegial executive, but Batlle y Ordóñez' original focus on an extensive state-backed social welfare net girded by nationalized industries continues to be the definition of *batllismo*. *Batllismo* was in part responsible for the Frente Amplio's victory – although Uruguayans show high levels of party loyalty, they are more loyal to the ideology of the early Colorado party than the party itself, and have moved to follow it as it shifted to the Frente Amplio. As the Colorados and Blancos moved further and further away from the paternal welfare state ideas and towards an elite-led, market-based system, the voters turned increasingly to the party still representing the ideas Uruguayans had been supporting for decades: the Frente Amplio. This pattern was reinforced by the

failures of the Blanco and Colorado parties in handling the transition to democracy in 1985 and the economic crises in 1990 and 2001 – voters saw that the ideas espoused by the traditional parties did not work and wanted to return to the old *batllista* system.

Both traditional parties claim to have a social focus in their 2004 programs, but neither still adheres to *batllismo*. Both Colorados and Blancos talk more about the expenditures associated with social programs and the need to cut back than they do about the equality of opportunity and living standards associated with *batllismo*. Certain indicators from Jorge Batlle's presidency imply that the Colorados were no longer preoccupied with social programs – poverty among children rose, along with the dropout rate. The Blancos under Lacalle, from 1990 to 1995, also proved that their focus was economic recuperation through neoliberal economic policies, rather than social equality. Lacalle's economic adjustment, although necessary given the dire economic straits the country found itself in, made no allowance for protecting the lower classes from the negative impact of the adjustment.

In the post-dictatorial period, the party advocating citizen rights and social welfare has been the Frente Amplio. Their 2004 party program does not include any reduction of the state's role in the society. They intend to expand nationalization of industries, as Batlle y Ordóñez advocated in the early 1900s. They also advocate a more efficient state role in social spending and welfare, not a decreased one. In the program, Vázquez enumerates each of the social problems that need to be targeted, and wants to take money from inefficient or unnecessary sectors of government social spending and move it to eliminate those problems. The party believes that a “productive Uruguay” can be synonymous with a *batllista* Uruguay.

Vázquez's administration has been able to implement the policies promised, although not without problems that resulted in a dip in public opinion. His economic policies have not been in line with what Uruguayans expected from the Frente Amplio, since he has focused on foreign investment and trade for economic recuperation, but social policies and rights formed the foundation of the Frente Amplio's plans for government and Vázquez's social plans have been true to his original intentions.¹⁷⁷ The National Attention to Social Emergency Plan (PANES), drawn up to focus aid to those in extreme poverty, has been especially well-recognized publicly and successful. A tenth of the country was left in poverty after the 2001 economic crisis, and PANES gave them monthly transfers to live on, as well as new health and education programs to help them change their circumstance. This plan, along with other social plans, brought poverty down to 21% from 32%, from 2005 to 2009. Vázquez has also re-established collective bargaining for wages and begun investigations into the human rights violations of the dictatorship period, still a sensitive subject for many Uruguayans.¹⁷⁸

A brief comparison with the experiences of the Concertación in Chile and the Partido dos Trabalhadores in Brazil illustrates that the Frente Amplio's success is part of a broader Latin American wave with important particularities. All three groups moved from the radical left to the center-left in order to secure votes and to increase the size of the coalition, although the Chilean coalition's move to moderate policies occurred rapidly in response to repression under Pinochet while the Brazilian and Uruguayan parties became more moderate through a long process. Economic crises and budget deficits have

¹⁷⁷ Beagle, Matthew. "Uruguay's Tabaré Vázquez: Pink Tide or Political Voice of the Center?" COHA Memorandum to the Press. 4 Mar 2006.

¹⁷⁸ Altman, Castiglioni, and Luna, 164-5.

led all three parties to seek market-friendly social policies to avoid alienating business interests.¹⁷⁹

The approach to these market-friendly social policies varies with each party. The Chilean party's approach can be described as "neo-liberalism with a human face," or market-driven economics paired with social policies to take care of those left behind by the markets.¹⁸⁰ Groups advocating the rights of the poor were greatly weakened and unable to have much of a voice in the new social system dominated by private interests.¹⁸¹ The Brazilian PT and Uruguayan Frente Amplio both emphasize social inclusion over economic strength, and have only recently adopted market-friendly policies (2002 in Brazil, 2004 in Uruguay). With the new economic approach, the two parties also changed their social programs to target more effectively those who would be most affected.¹⁸² An emphasis on participatory politics has strengthened interest groups in both countries, and the government continues to play the most active role in social welfare.¹⁸³ Although the Chilean party has lost some leftist voters because of neoliberal policies, on the whole the parties' economic plans have been more successful than those of countries governed by radical leftist parties.¹⁸⁴

The Uruguayan case is unique because of *batllismo*'s resilience. The extensive social programs in place in Uruguay prior to 1973 were largely left in place by the dictatorship, rather than dismantled as in Chile. The historical nature of the social welfare programs also made it difficult to dismantle – the paternalistic system had been

¹⁷⁹ Panizza, 96-97.

¹⁸⁰ Navia, Patricio. "The successful Chilean left: neo-liberal and socialist." *Leftovers: Tales of the Latin American Left*. Eds. Castañeda, Jorge G. and Marco A. Morales. New York: Routledge, 2008.

¹⁸¹ Castiglioni, 3, 93.

¹⁸² Panizza, 98-100.

¹⁸³ Baiocchi and Checa, 105-7.

¹⁸⁴ Panizza, 98, 100.

developing since the early 1900s under the guidance of José Batlle y Ordóñez, the most celebrated Uruguayan politician and a national symbol. *Batllismo* is very much a part of the Uruguayan political culture, so much so that even a dictatorship cannot ignore it due to its widespread popular support. Efforts to roll back the government's role in social welfare did not occur until the re-democratization period, and were largely unsuccessful.¹⁸⁵ The Frente Amplio built its support on the promise of restoring the *batllista* system, with high government involvement and redistribution of wealth, while reforming it to fit with the economic realities of budget deficit and the market-driven global market. This commitment to continuity of the original system contributed to Frente Amplio success in the polls.

The Uruguayan government and Frente Amplio do not have the same political problems that the Brazilian government and PT have experienced. Party loyalty is stronger in Uruguay, making the Frente Amplio's gains more permanent than that of the PT. Both parties govern with participatory democracy, allowing unorganized citizens and movements alike the chance to be heard. However, with the corruption crisis in Brazil in 2005 along with other political crises in the 2000s, the PT has tarnished its image as the "people's party" by proving its lack of transparency as well as its similarities to other parties with more authoritarian ideas about the popular role in government. The Frente Amplio has not experienced a loss of faith in its goals. That could change over time and the party could fall prey to the same problems that caused the PT to stumble -- or the Frente Amplio could successfully maintain its standings as the people's party and a defender of participatory democracy and transparency.

¹⁸⁵ Castiglioni, 3, 41-2.

An urgent question is whether the Frente Amplio can win the presidency again in the elections of October 2009. Based on public reception of the Frente Amplio performance in the executive, the party will most likely retain a majority of their voters be able to win the election once again. Public opinion polls currently show the Frente Amplio leading with 43%, but indicate the elections might enter a run-off with the Blancos, polling at 38%. Should a run-off take place, the 7% of the vote currently held by Colorados could combine with the Blanco vote to elect a Blanco president. 11% of the country, however, is undecided.¹⁸⁶ Despite the possibility of a run-off, public opinion polls make it clear that the Frente Amplio's success in being elected will be a long-standing success. The Uruguayan political landscape has been permanently changed with the addition of a third major player, and the two traditional parties will likely need to cooperate at least in the immediate future to carry out any programs.

¹⁸⁶ MercoPress. "Polls Show Opposition Ahead of Uruguay's Ruling Coalition." 12 Mar 2009. <<http://en.mercopress.com/2009/03/12/polls-show-opposition-ahead-of-uruguays-ruling-coalition>>.

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