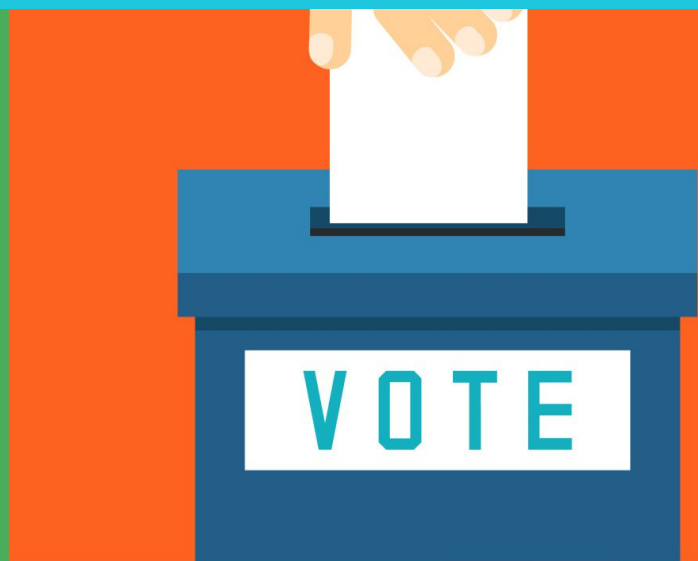
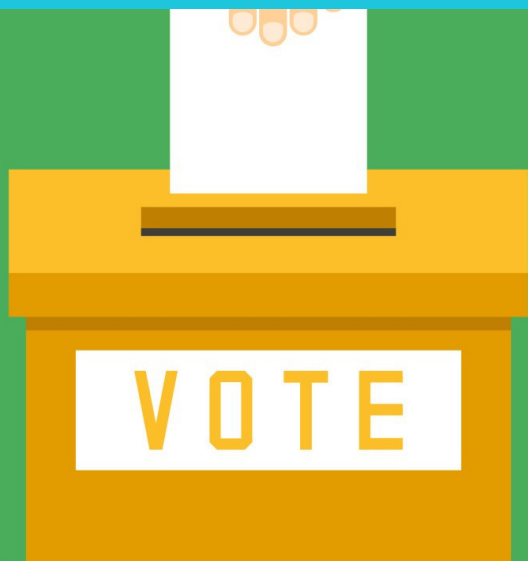

POLITICAL PARTIES CRISES IN LATIN AMERICA



PROYECTO
BASE



FEBRUARY 2021

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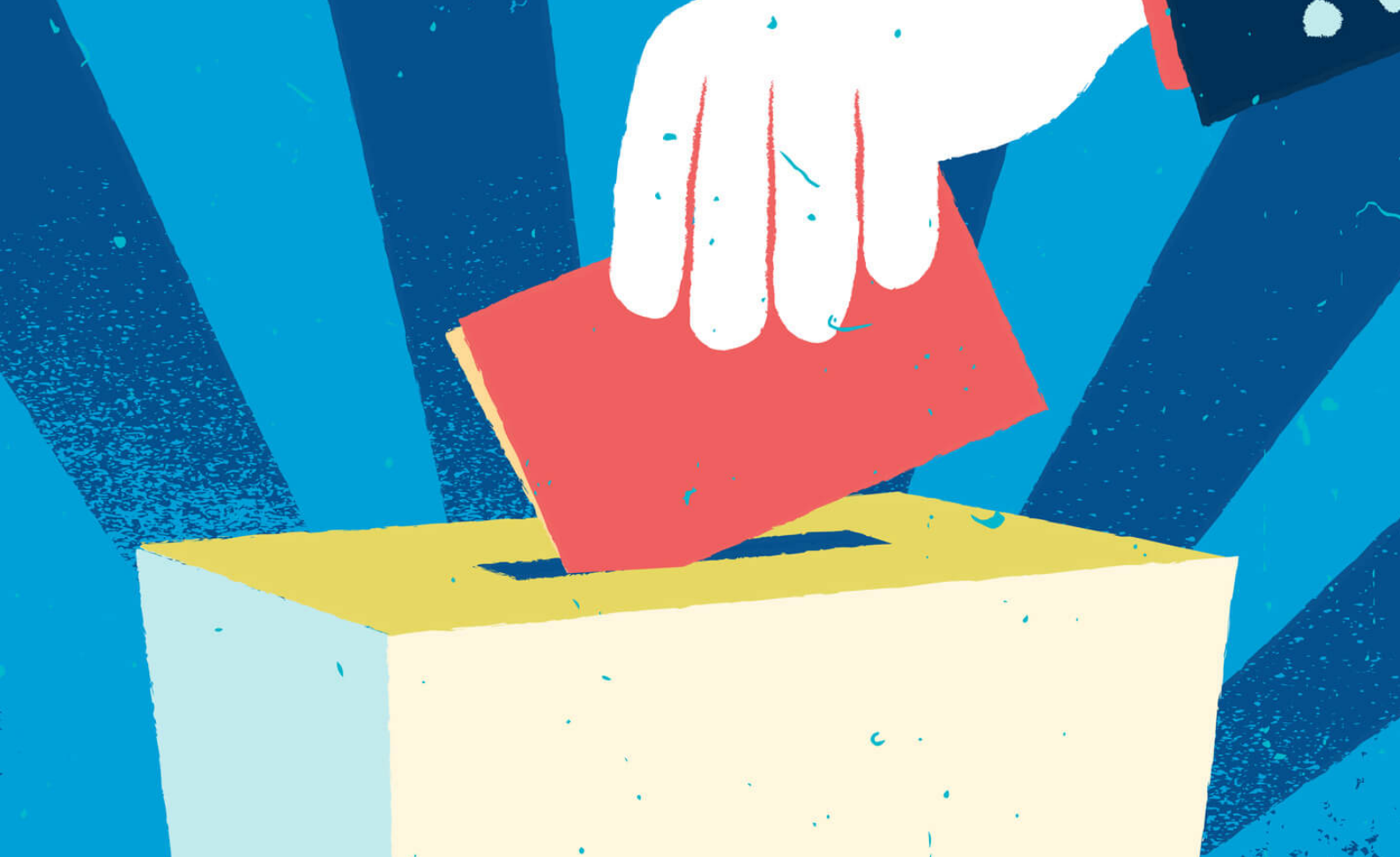
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Political parties are fundamental organizations for the functioning of a political system, since they articulate people's interests, have a major influence on citizen participation and are the platforms through which candidates for public office in the main powers are presented.

However, a party is still a social organization made up of members who develop affective and programmatic bonds, who identify with it. In this sense, party identity emerges as another part of the identity of each individual and citizen.

In Latin America it has become evident that party identities have become fragile and unstable. Situations such as the inefficient articulation of interests, the execution of ineffective economic policies and the constant corruption of some governments have been determining factors for the arrival of the "party crisis". Some traditional parties have completely lost their power, while new parties have emerged, and with them extra-system leaders, in whom citizens have placed their support.

The lack of confidence in political parties has led to an increase in "anti-politics" in the region. Due to the absence of alternatives that are considered effective, citizens no longer see parties as crucial entities for the articulation of their interests. This is detrimental to democracy because, in the end, parties are the medium between the voter and the government, as well as an important part of what makes up the latter.



IDENTIFICATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN LATIN AMERICA

According to Ludolfo Paramio (2000):

“ In the Latin American, partisan support has been built to a large extent under the logic of particularized exchange. Citizens do not vote for a party or identify with it on the basis of class or ideological criteria, but rather on the basis of the benefits they expect to obtain for their restricted group -their union, their city, their family networks- if the candidate of that party wins. In an extreme case, this can be considered as clientelism in the strict sense. ”

The bonds of partisan identification are fragile, there is no explicit loyalty to a political party, and identification is believed to be created on the basis of economic exchange or social opportunities.

But is this the only reason for Latin Americans' distrust of traditional political parties?

PARTISAN IDENTITY

According to Mercado (1997) partisan identity is defined as "an affective orientation towards a political party" (p.292). This can occur for different reasons:



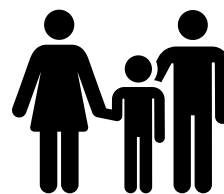
Social divisions, ideologies, religions and regionalisms that generate the separation of the citizenry into specific parties.



The country's macroeconomic conditions.



The government's performance.



Beliefs instilled in the family.

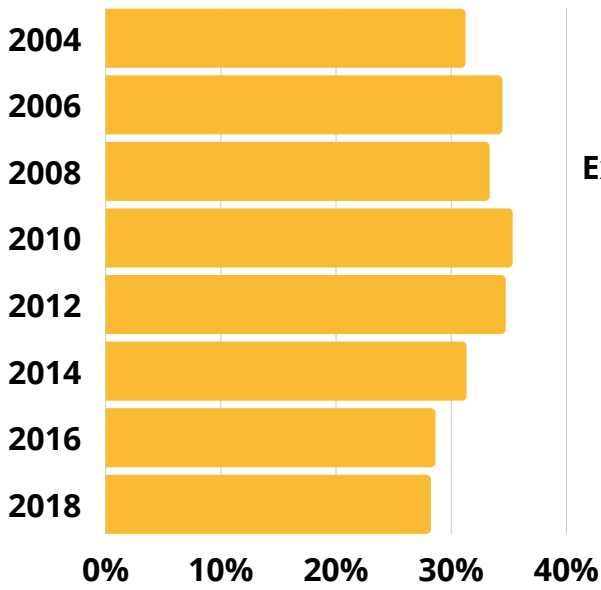
HOW DO POLITICAL PARTIES' CRISES ARISE?

Considering what happened in Venezuela and Argentina, several authors have pointed out that economic crises are the cause of political parties' crises and the eventual fall in identification.

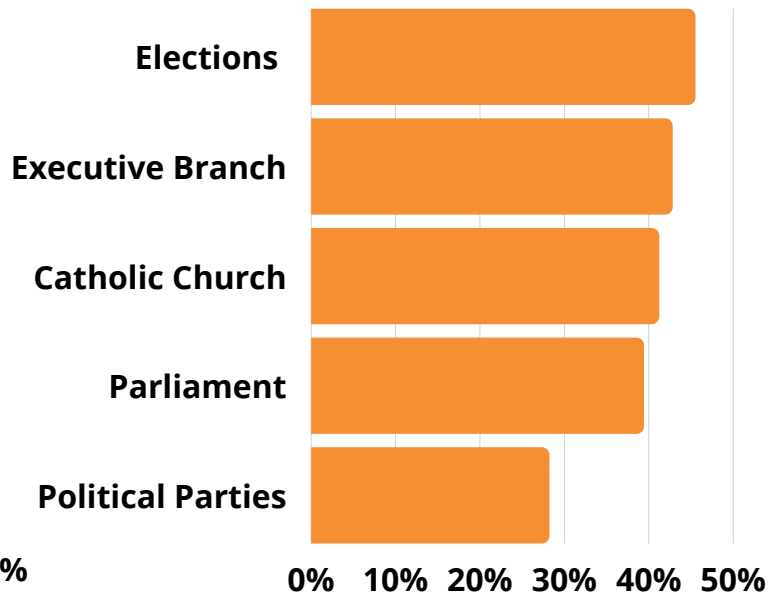
However, Lupu (2010) shows that this is not always the case, as the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) party in Peru did not lose a significant amount of its support after Alan Garcia's government (1985-1990) triggered a significant increase in inflation, as it managed to obtain 22.5% of total support in the 1990 presidential elections.

In addition, other authors argue that, as long as party identity remains strong, voters will take less account of its performance in government. On the contrary, if the identity weakens, voters will give greater importance to the parties' performance in government.

This shows that identification depends on different factors and that these are related to the priorities of each citizenry and what each government projects to its voters.



Confidence in Political Parties Latinobarómetro (2018).



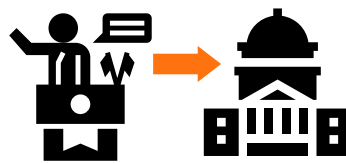
Confidence in Institutions LAPOP (2018).

CONFIDENCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Latin America has suffered for years from an increase in distrust in political parties, during the last decade it has been noted as the least trusted national institution.

Other entities, such as the Catholic Church, duplicate the trust of one of the main political structures necessary for the functioning of democracy.

Why are Political Parties so important?



They connect citizens with the centers of power



Socialize citizens about democracy



Identify the needs of the population

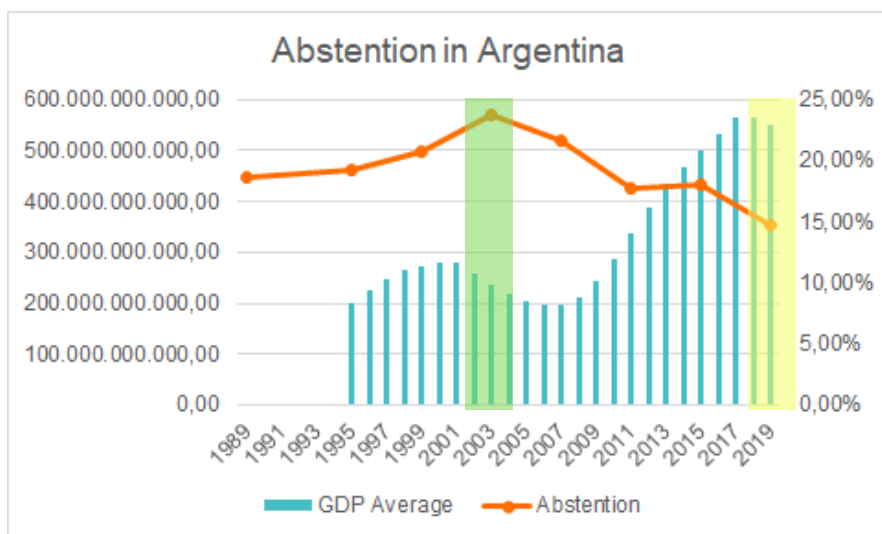


Legitimize the political system

ARGENTINA

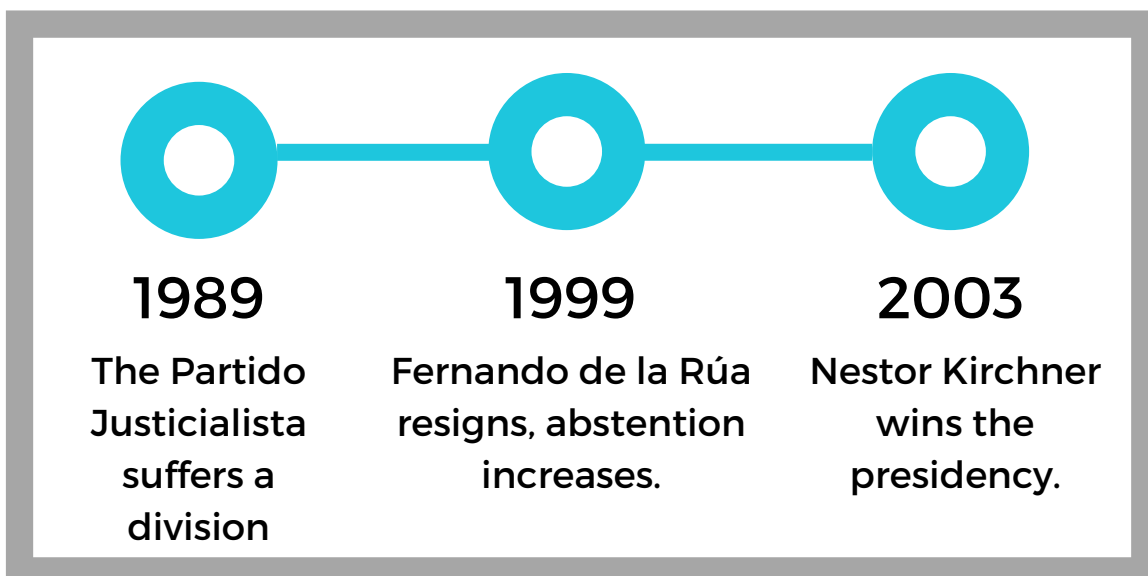
Resurgence of assistentialism, recalling past welfare

With the arrival of Kirchnerism, the abstention that had been accumulating for the past years, decreases. Likewise, these governments were accompanied by an increase in GDP.



Source: own elaboration.

Prior events



THE PARTIDO JUSTICIALISTA SUFFERS A DIVISION

The government of Carlos Menem initiated policies contrary to the traditional proposals of the Partido Justicialista that led to a budget deficit that eroded confidence in the party.

The FRENPASO party arose from an alliance between dissidents of the Partido Justicialista who did not support Menem and former voters of the Unión Civil Radical the other traditional political party of the Argentine party system.

FERNANDO DE LA RÚA RESIGNS, ABSTENTION INCREASES.

Fernando de la Rúa was elected through an alliance between the Unión Cívico Radical and the FRENPASO. However, several governance problems and the lack of efficient responses to the economic crisis led to De la Rúa's resignation in 2001. The loss of confidence in the parties was evidenced by the 28% abstention in the legislative elections of that year, being the first phenomenon of this type in the country. In the 2003 elections, only 5% of Argentinians identified themselves with the Unión Cívico Radical, while the Partido Justicialista presented three different candidates due to the impossibility of formulating a single option.

KIRCHNERISM ARRIVES

Néstor Kirschener won the 2003 elections along with the Partido Justicialista, which maintained its same electoral base. Kirchnerism would continue to gather power until 2015, when Argentinians, tired of economic problems and rumors of corruption, decided to vote for Mauricio Macri, belonging to the Cambiemos party. This would be the first president elected outside the traditional parties since 1946.

However, Macri did not implement sufficiently efficient economic policies to reduce the economic crisis and inflation. In response, in 2019, Argentinians voted once more for a candidate of the Partido Justicialista and Kirchnerism.



23%

*was the abstention rate in the
2003 elections, the highest in
the last 30 years.*

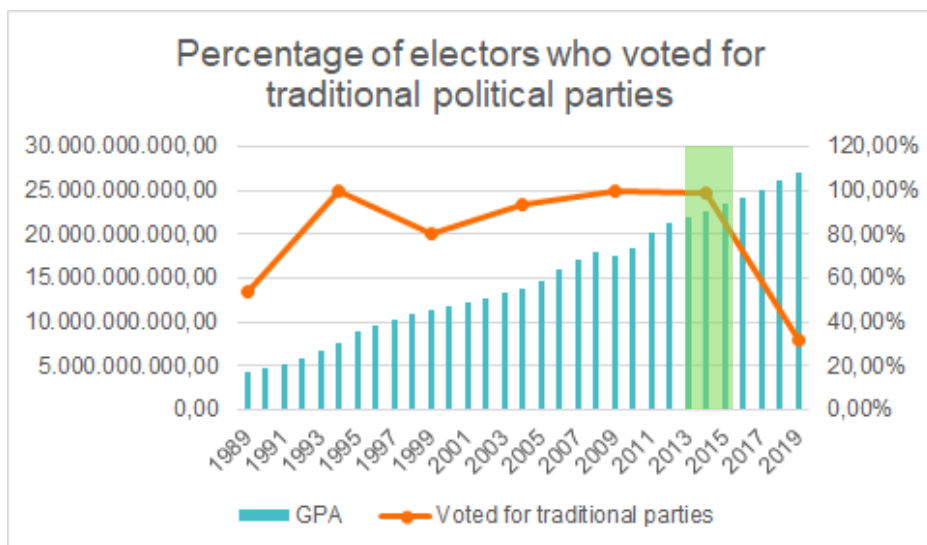
12

*years of kirchnerista
government.*

EL SALVADOR

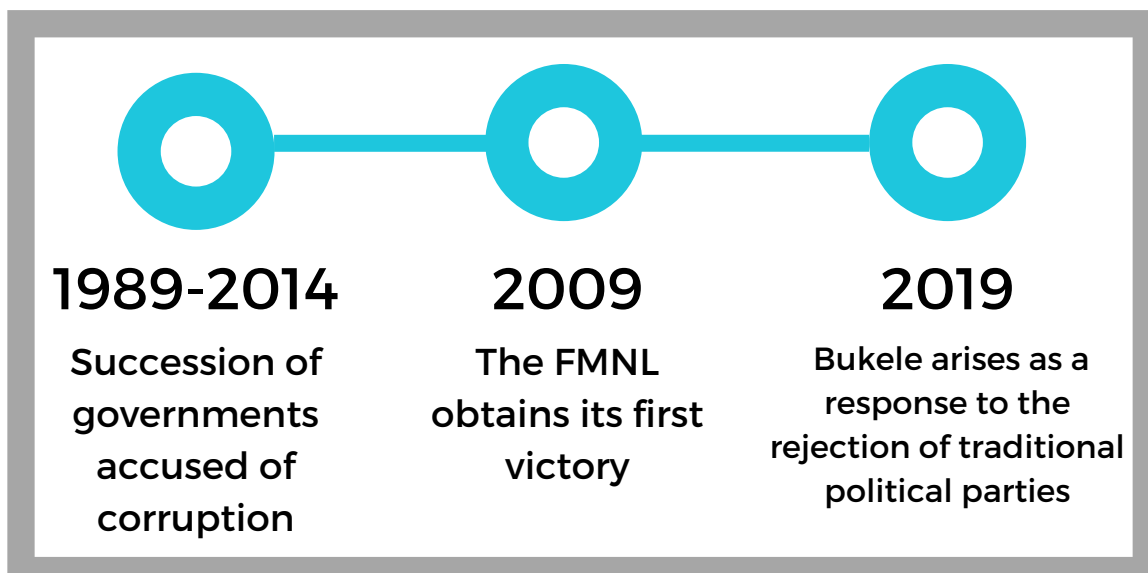
A young outsider sweeps away traditional political parties

The traditional parties (ARENA and FMLN) had managed to hold on to power until Bukele's arrival in 2019.



Source: own elaboration.

Prior events



1 9 8 9

RETURN TO DEMOCRACY?

After a period of military authoritarianism that lasted from 1931 to 1979, the first presidential elections were held in 1989, after negotiations for a transition of power in which the citizens chose their president.

After five ARENA and two FMLN governments, whose leaders were accused of embezzlement and prosecuted for it (only the last government of Salvador Sánchez Seren was exempt), the population's discontent with these cases and the lack of progress in terms of social progress generated rejection towards these parties.

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THE FMNL IS NOT THE SOLUTION EITHER

After five ARENA party governments and several processes of restructuring and reorientation of the FMLN party, it managed to obtain electoral victory in the 2009 presidential elections, with Mauricio Funes as its candidate.

Considering the corruption cases of the ARENA party, the FMLN presented itself as a renovating option, however, it was also involved in embezzlement scandals and its governments were not characterized for providing the country with the progress it longed for.

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THE END OF BIPARTISANSHIP, LED BY BUKELE

Nayib Bukele, a young politician with executive experience at the municipal level, runs for the presidential elections in 2019. With the GANA party (a last minute alliance to participate) he manages to obtain the majority of votes surpassing both ARENA and the FMLN in popular support.

However, the emergence of this leader means the end of bipartisanship for El Salvador, and brings with it the election of a candidate that is not linked to a concrete plan or doctrine, demonstrated by his out of the ordinary registration for the presidential elections. Bukele shows itself as an option opposed to the traditional, which has gained traction based off the population's weariness towards traditional options, but without a properly defined content.



53%

*of the total votes where
obtained by Bukele in 2019,
more than ARENA (31.7%) and
the FMLN (14.4%) combined.*

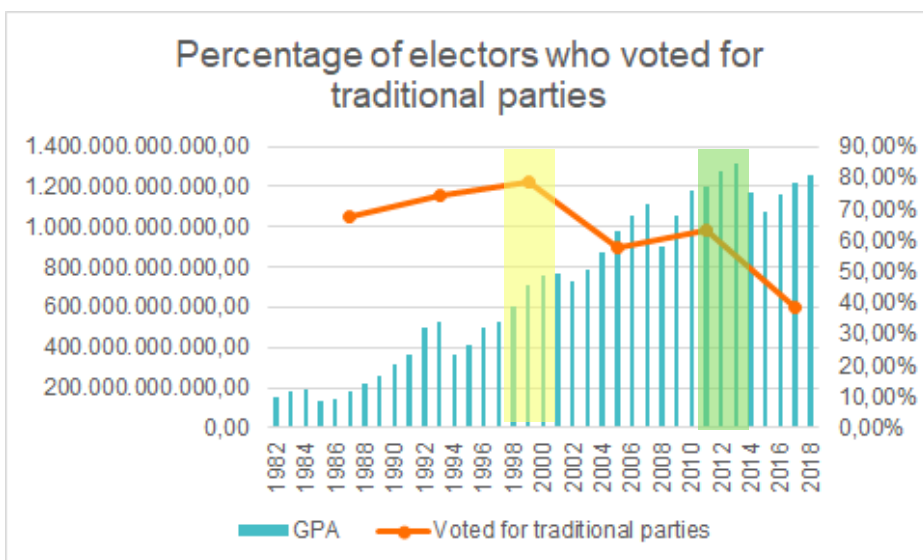
27

*years of bipartisanship
finalized*

MÉXICO

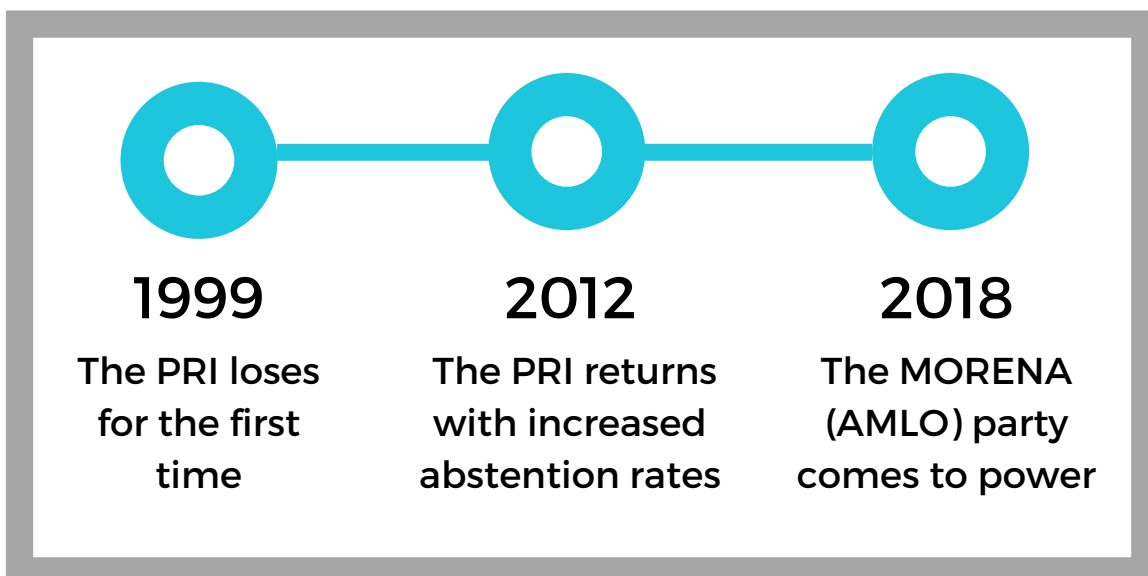
A system change in response to party inefficiency

Support for the traditional parties had remained stable and even increased, until the arrival of AMLO in 2018.



Source: own elaboration.

Prior events



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THE PERFECT DICTATORSHIP IS OVER

On July 2, 2000, for the first time, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) loses the presidential elections after 71 years of victories.

The last PRI government, under Carlos Zedillo, implemented economic policies that led to a significant devaluation of the Mexican peso, which generated great discontent among the population and therefore the rejection of the PRI party, in addition to it being worn down by public opinion due to its increasingly evident authoritarianism and monopoly over the political arena. In the six years of Zedillo's government, he did not manage to fully recover Mexico from the economic crisis of 1994, which had directly affected the population, especially the middle class.

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THE PRI MAKES A COMEBACK, BUT WITH REJECTION

After a reorganization of the party, a telegenic candidate who promised a "democracy with results" managed to be elected in the presidential elections. After 12 years of PAN executives who failed to meet voters' expectations, as well as the memory of the order and authority of a protective State represented by the PRI, the PRI won the majority, despite its authoritarian record.

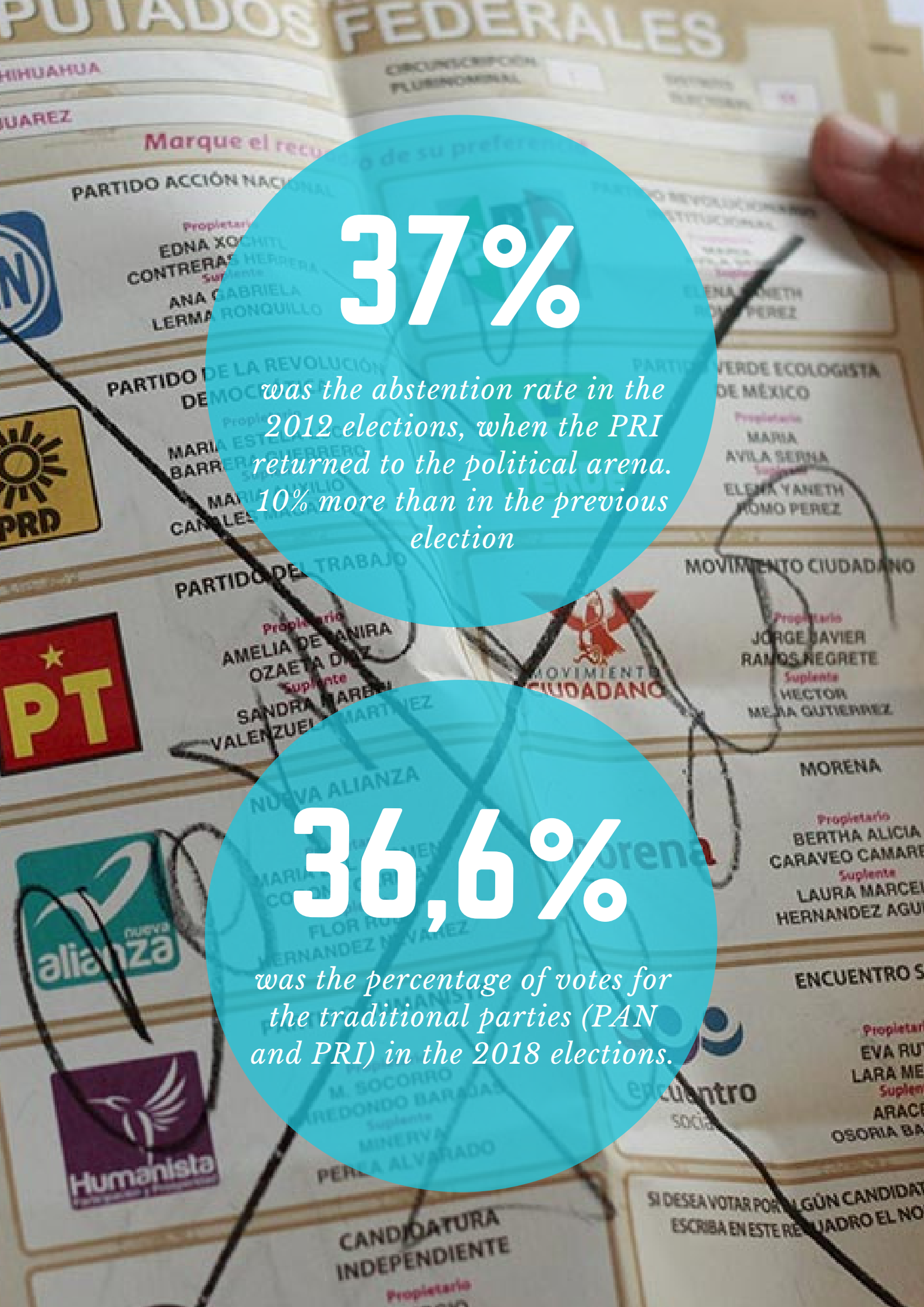
However, the government of Enrique Peña Nieto was marked by corruption scandals, protests and unfulfilled promises, which made him one of the most unpopular governments in recent Mexican history, with an 80% popular rejection rate.

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AMLO BECOMES THE OPTION FOR CHANGE

Both traditional parties (PRI and PAN) have a long history of corruption and unfulfilled proposals, AMLO -this being his third election- has always presented himself as an alternative opposed to this and as a change to the system that seemed to suffer from deep flaws in its functioning.

Lopez Obrador was an option outside the traditional parties and appealed to the unresolved needs of Mexicans to gain popularity. His policies of austerity, help for the poor and promises to fight corruption have been the main arguments that have managed to resonate with the population most dissatisfied with the traditional model.



37%

was the abstention rate in the 2012 elections, when the PRI returned to the political arena. 10% more than in the previous election

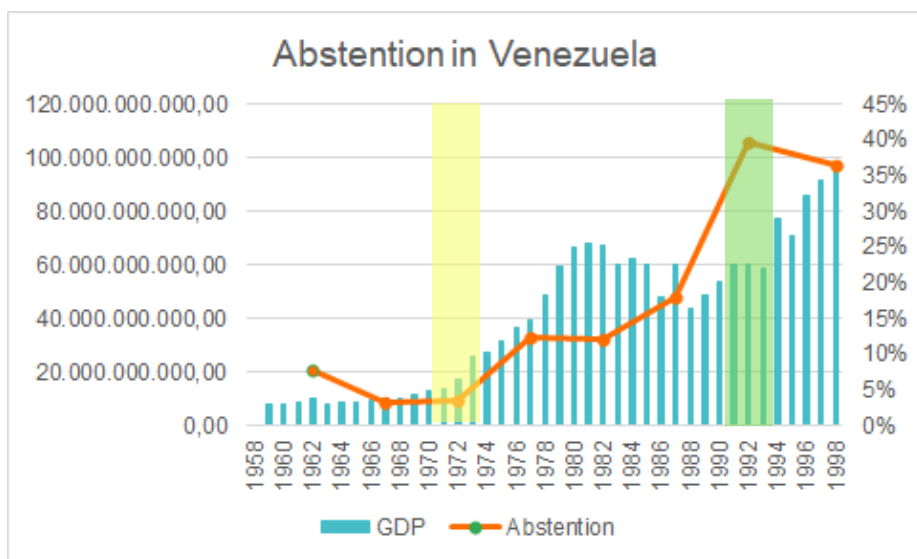
36,6%

was the percentage of votes for the traditional parties (PAN and PRI) in the 2018 elections.

VENEZUELA

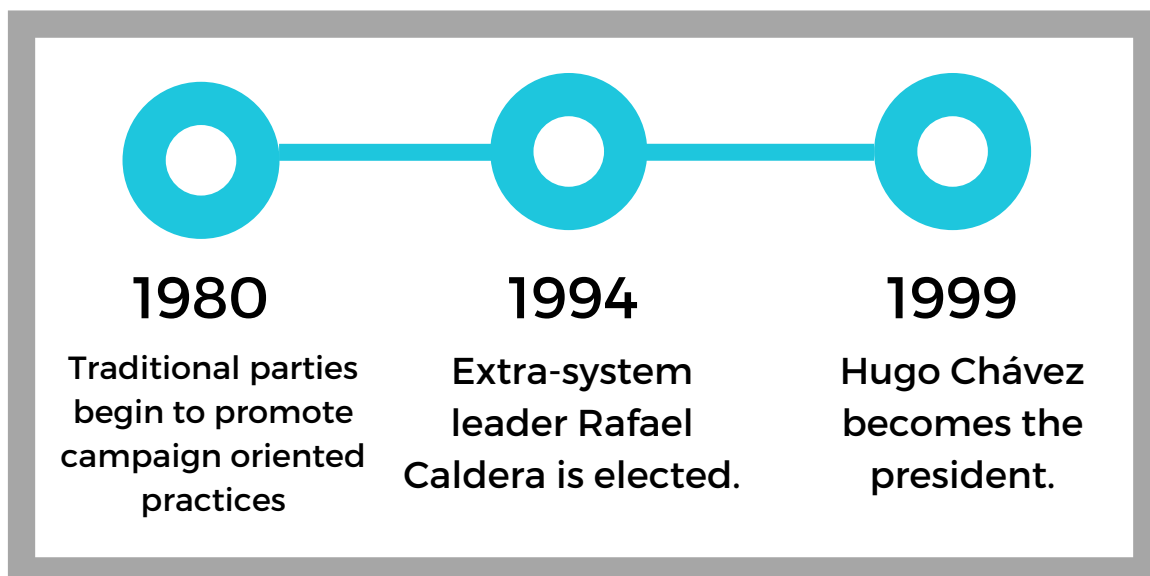
The country descends into an authoritarianism

Abstention in Venezuela increased after 1972. The traditional parties were unable to respond satisfactorily to the interests of the voters and as a result an outsider swept the political scene in 1999.



Source: own elaboration.

Prior events



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TRADITIONAL PARTIES CHANGE THEIR STRATEGY

During the 1980s, the traditional parties of the Venezuelan two-party system became "catch-all" parties, offering policies aimed at solely winning upcoming elections and strengthen client-voter networks. Moreover, the party system was extremely rigid. They no longer channeled citizens' demands and power was in the hands of party elites who always sought to gain and maintain power.

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OPTIONS ARISE OUTSIDE THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM

The government characterized by neoliberal reforms of Carlos Andres Perez, eroded the confidence of the voters of the traditional party Accion Democratica, since the president belonging to this party, initiated economic austerity measures, different from those traditionally proposed by the party and different from the ones to which Venezuelans were accustomed. The election of Caldera through a new coalition of parties, legitimized the option of an extra system leader, who was also forced to carry out policies similar to those of Carlos Andres Perez, after having criticized them and having proposed something different in his campaign.

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CHÁVEZ BECOMES PRESIDENT

Hugo Chávez wins the elections with a new party (Movimiento V República), formalizing the loss of confidence in the traditional parties that had been crucial to the political system since the consolidation of democracy in 1958.

Chávez's government, which would end in 2013 with his death, was characterized by the promotion of welfare policies to maintain electoral support from popular sectors, an increase in authoritarianism and the loss of independence of democratic institutions.

His successor, Nicolás Maduro, would continue with the intensification of control policies, increasing the persecution of the main opposition leaders and closing the ways to participate competitively in the electoral elections, which currently leaves the opposition political parties without the capacity to influence political decisions, and Venezuelans with no real ability to choose their leaders.



21%

*was the increase of abstention
until Chávez came to power.*

US\$960.589
MILLIONS

*entered the Venezuelan
economy during the Chávez
administration (1999-2013).
However, the country is
currently going through an
economic crisis.*

CONCLUSIONS

- Trust in political parties decreases as they cease to be the only ones that allow the expression of society's problems. In turn, the structure of party institutions has not yet been able to channel and articulate the demands expressed by citizens through non-traditional channels (such as social networks), losing power and presence among citizens.
- But the weakening of the parties is not social media's fault, on the contrary, it come to fill a space that the political parties have left unattended.
- The loss of trust in political parties has reached worrying levels in Latin America, these groups are losing their capacity to be the institutions dedicated to evaluate and transmit the demands of citizens to the State. In response to this, citizens are opting for more direct or "less flawed" means of expression such as street protest.
- Political parties are necessary entities for the functioning of democracies, but it is worrying to see how in the region they are losing their spot of importance, a fact that could mean a possible threat to the democratic stability of the countries.
- One possible theory that would explain the origin of the various crises of party systems in the region would be the inability of the political system to respond adequately to the needs of the population. Political parties, being one of the most important and visible entities of the political system, are involved in this perception and are seen as responsible for the problems experienced, thus, trust in these groups suffers due to the inefficiency of the whole system.

CONCLUSIONS

- In the region, partisan identification responds to a series of personal beliefs and customs, as well as to environmental factors. Therefore, the lack of trust experienced corresponds to multiple causes, among which, according to the findings of this report, the corruption of those in charge of the national government, the very evident failures in the fulfillment of promises, and the lack of institutions that allow for effective oversight activities stand out. It seems that the economic situation is only partially related to the popularity of political parties, but it is not the only cause of the crisis of party systems in the region.
- In Latin America, political parties tend to be ideologically fluid, their beliefs and the values they practice and support may vary based on the context of the country and the perceived needs of the population. This fact is also reflected in voters, who show a partisan loyalty that is not as strong as in other contexts (e.g. Europe or North America), which also influences the real support that traditional parties have in the region.

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