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**POLITICIANS AGAINST PARTIES: ELECTORALISM
AND THE NEW ECONOMIC FATALISM IN ECUADOR**

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PREFACE

Catherine M. Conaghan received her Ph.D. in political science from Yale University. An assistant professor in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada, she recently completed a major study of industrialists and political reform in Ecuador. Sections of this paper were presented at a seminar at Florida International University in April 1988.

Richard Tardanico

Editor

Occasional Papers Series Dialogues

POLITICIANS AGAINST PARTIES:

ELECTORALISM AND THE NEW ECONOMIC FATALISM IN ECUADOR

INTRODUCTION

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

Leo Tolstoy
Anna Karenina

Like an unhappy family, every party system has its own peculiar dramas. They are the products of unique developmental sequences, idiosyncratic electoral arrangements, and the choices made by politicians in the unfolding of the system. Since its transition from military rule, Ecuador has spent an agonized decade defining and developing a modern party system for the first time in its history. With the adoption of a new constitution in 1978, restrictions on the franchise were finally dismantled and parties faced an expanded electorate of over two million voters.

Political parties have been subject to numerous electoral tests since the transition. First- and second-round presidential elections were held in 1978, 1979, 1984, and 1988. Municipal elections were initiated in 1980 and congressional elections took place in 1979, 1984, 1986, and 1988. In addition, a government-promoted plebiscite on the electoral law mobilized parties and voters in June 1986. With nearly a decade of party activity and elections, it is now possible to draw some tentative conclusions about the character of the emerging Ecuadoran party system and reflect on its implications for future democratic development.

The central argument of this paper is that electoralism (broadly defined to include office-seeking behavior by party organizations and individuals) and the management of a crisis-ridden economy have created centrifugal and counter-organizational tendencies in the party system in the period from 1978-88. These tendencies were superimposed on already unsteady party structures permeated by personalism and shifting clientelism. The mentalité of party elites over the last decade has been deeply affected by this combination of electoralism and economic fatalism, creating powerful disincentives to improved party organization.

There are at least three developments in the party system in the period from 1978-88 that deserve close attention. First, party fragmentation has proceeded over the last decade and produced an extreme multi-party system. The fragmentation yielded nineteen legally recognized parties and a variety of political movements aspiring to acquire legal status. As seen in Table No. 1, the legal parties span the ideological spectrum and include Marxist, social democratic, Christian democratic, conservative, and populist currents. Second, while this party fragmentation undercuts the electoral pull of every party, it creates special problems for forces on the right of the political spectrum. The overall electoral performance of parties on the right has been poor and they face an uncertain electoral future. This creates a dilemma for those social groups supporting the right since their representation and access to policy-making hinges, to an important extent, on the ability of rightist parties to win elections. Third, voters have demonstrated a capacity to "punish" (el voto castigo) governing parties in subsequent elections for their mistakes. With the deepening of Ecuador's economic crisis in 1982, stabilization policies and doses of neoliberalism have been the touchstones of economic policy. Popular dissatisfaction with those

policies accounts at least partially for the poor electoral performance of those parties nominally associated with the economic downturn.

One of the remarkable aspects of the last ten years has been the extent to which the experience of governing has left parties in disarray. The management of economic crisis has not proved compatible with party building. Economic crisis saps the resources and energies of politicians, leaving little time or capacity to devote to party development. In fact, economic crisis has induced a near "bunker" mentality among presidents and their economic technocrats; they seek to insulate themselves from the pressures exerted by their fellow partisans who know that the party will pay the electoral price for policies of economic austerity. The remainder of this paper examines the logic created by electoral imperatives and the economic crisis and how it contributes to continued party fragmentation and weak party organization.

"HUASIPUNGO POLITICO": THE DYNAMICS OF PARTY FRAGMENTATION

Much of the pre- and post-1978 party fragmentation in Ecuador has its roots in personalism and intra-elite rivalries inside parties over issues of control, candidates, and patronage distribution. Fragmentation on the right was part of the politics of the fifties and sixties; it involved splits away from the traditional Liberal, Conservative, and Velasquista forces led by ambitious personalities of the day. In 1951 the Movimiento Social Cristiano (later renamed Partido Social Cristiano) was formed under the leadership of Camilo Ponce Enriquez, a member of a leading serrano landholding family. Subsequently Ponce joined forces in 1956 with Conservatives and Velasquistas

TABLE NO. 1. PARTIES IN ECUADOR, 1979-84*

Left	Center-Left	Centrist/Populist	Right
Frente Amplio de Izquierda (FADI)	Izquierda Democrática (ID)	Partido Democrata (PD)	Partido Social Cristiano (PSC)
Movimiento Democrático Popular (MPD)	Democracia Popular (DP)	Frente Radical Alfarista (FRA)	Partido Liberal Radical (PLR)
Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano (PSE)		Pueblo, Cambio, Democracia (PCD)	Partido Conservador Ecuatoriano (PCE)
		Partido Roldocista Ecuatoriano (PRE)	Partido Nacionalista Revolucionario (PNR)
		Concentración de Fuerzas Populares (CFP)	Coalición Institucionalista Democrata (CID)
		Partido Velasquista (PV)	

* Parties holding seats in the National Congress

to win the presidency. The political fragmentation of the guayaquileño right occurred during the sixties with the founding of the Coalición Institucionalista Democrática under Otto Arosemena Gómez and Carlos Julio Arosemena's Partido Nacionalista Revolucionario. Both new parties regrouped ex-Liberals and ex-Velasquistas around the political ambitions of those influential and well-known personalities.

Splits on the right were matched by initiative of a younger generation of middle-class political leaders. In 1964 Osvaldo Hurtado joined with other university students schooled in Catholic social-action doctrines to create the Partido Democrática Cristiana. A dissident faction of the Conservative party under the leadership of Julio César Trujillo joined the Christian Democrats in 1978 to create Democracia Popular-Unión Democrática Cristiana. The search for a reformist alternative produced the social democratic Izquierda Democrática in 1970, a split from the Liberal party. Leadership struggles split the Liberal party again in 1972 (producing the Frente Radical Alfarista) and in 1978 (producing the Partido Democrática).

The most important party division of post-1978 occurred within the ranks of the populist party, the Concentración de Fuerzas Populares (CFP). The split originated in the military's decision to proscribe the presidential candidacy of the CFP's leader, Assad Bucaram, in the transition election of 1978-79. In Bucaram's place, the CFP was forced to field a relative unknown, Jaime Roldós, as its presidential candidate. The forced by-passing of Bucaram and the subsequent victory of Roldós in 1979 created enormous tensions inside the CFP. From his position as president of Congress, Bucaram bitterly denounced Roldós's passing over of CFP militants in his assignment of ministerial posts. The struggle over leadership and patronage within the CFP exploded into a continual conflict between the executive and

legislative branches. The conflict became the basis for a Roldós-led split from the CFP. Shortly before his untimely death in a plane crash in 1981, Roldós announced the formation of his own party, Pueblo, Cambio, y Democracia. After his death, however, the party withered under the direction of his brother and vice president of the republic, León Roldós. Meanwhile, other members of the Roldós family attempted to regroup his supporters in a new party, the Partido Roldocista Ecuatoriano (PRE), under the leadership of brother-in-law Abdalá Bucaram.

The dynamics of much of this party fragmentation involved conflicts over leadership and patronage. Intra-elite struggles have been difficult to contain inside parties because of the weak-incentive structure binding elites and masses to specific party organizations. There are at least three types of incentives that tie individuals to party organizations: (1) utilitarian incentives (office-holding, patronage--i.e., direct material benefits); (2) solidary incentives (enjoyment of socializing, congeniality, group identification--i.e., affective rewards); (3) purposive incentives (pursuit of specific goals or policies--i.e., a combination of the moral and material rewards emanating from public policy).¹ Among most Ecuadoran parties, purposive and solidary incentives are still not well developed among elites or the rank-in-file. While a complete analysis of the causes of this poorly elaborated incentive structure is beyond the scope of this paper, one can look to the historical circumstances under which parties developed for an explanation of the phenomenon.²

Well into the sixties, most parties functioned largely as oligarchic electoral vehicles, displaying little in the way of coherent ideological or programmatic differences.³ Ecuador's most successful populist politician, José María Velasco Ibarra, collaborated closely with the traditional

parties. Thus, Ecuadoran populism was much more limited than its classic counterparts (such as Peronism in Argentina), which offered real material and political advances to lower-class supporters. Moreover, by the time that some significant ideological differentiations came into play (with the appearance of the Christian and Social Democratic parties), party development was halted by the 1972 military coup that suspended their activities until 1977. Under military rule, interest groups and segments of the state bureaucracy began to assume the representation functions of parties.

Ecuadoran parties crystallized in an environment unfavorable to the organization of strong mass-based parties. Restrictions on the franchise, oligarchic domination, and military intervention arrested party development until 1979. A disdain for parties permeated Ecuadoran political culture, promulgated by leaders like Velasco Ibarra. The marginalization of parties from society and politics did not breed high levels of élan within parties. Because of their weak and non-threatening character, parties and their leaders were never subject to systematic repression like Peru's APRA or Venezuela's Acción Democrática. As such, Ecuadoran parties did not acquire a heroic image as the protagonists of democratization nor did membership require a high degree of psychological commitment by partisans.⁴ Taken together, these developmental circumstances were not conducive to the emergence of strong purposive or solidary incentive structures inside parties.

Under these conditions, material incentives assume an even greater centrality to organizational maintenance. But, by their very nature, direct benefits in form of party leadership positions (carrying with them the probability of candidacy to national political office) are scarce resources. And without solidary and purposive bonds to cushion conflict, elite power struggles over leadership positions easily produced ruptures inside party

organizations. In interviews conducted by the author, Ecuadoran politicians readily admit that the leadership struggles drive the process of party fragmentation. One congressman from the populist PRE conceded that the problem of Ecuadoran democracy is that of "too many parties--and each party prefers to maintain its own piece, its own particular space and leaders and not participate with others. We could even talk about huasipungo político here."⁵

These centrifugal tendencies in the party system have been reinforced by the legal framework governing parties and elections since 1978. The statutes regulating party competition are found in the Ley de Partidos formulated in 1978 by a civilian commission appointed by the military government. The law charged the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) with the responsibility for licensing parties to compete in elections. The underlying goal of the law was to use the licensing powers of the TSE to curb the centrifugal tendencies in the party system. In addition to requiring that parties be officially recognized by the TSE to compete in elections, individual candidates for office were required to affiliate with one of the legally recognized parties. This eliminated "independent" candidates from seeking office. In theory, this licensing procedure would eventually remove small parties from the electoral arena and act to check further proliferation.

In practice, the Ley de Partidos proved unsuccessful at condensing and rationalizing the party system through juridical means. Instead, the law had unintended side effects on individual and collective behavior that nurtured continued fragmentation and weak organization. The provision requiring candidates for public office to affiliate with a legally inscribed party essentially forced many of the politically ambitious into artificial affiliations with parties. Convenience rather than conviction was the basis of some of the new ties to parties, further undermining solidary and purposive

attachments. The weakness of these ties was reflected in the phenomenon known as the cambio de camisetas--the patronage-induced desertions of congressmen from their respective parties. This behavior affected the operation of the Congress; it led to shifting alliances and a constant struggle to maintain a legislative majority.

A second effect of the law was that it created disincentives for parties to coalesce into broad electoral alliances that could form the basis for a reduction in the number of parties. According to the Ley de Partidos, candidates have to be listed on the ballot under the insignia of only one officially inscribed party; they cannot list an electoral front as their sponsor. Because only one party is credited on the ballot, the remaining parties in any electoral front are disadvantaged. Since first-round presidential elections are run simultaneously with congressional elections, parties are hesitant not to present their own presidential candidate for fear of hurting their congressional ticket. Even when a party is disposed to allying with others on a presidential ticket, they are reluctant to do so because it involves sending a very confusing message to voters ("Vote for a competing party on the presidential race, but for us in the congressional race!"). As a result, it is electorally rational for parties to field separate tickets, even if the ideological or programmatic differences among candidates are barely discernible to the electorate. Thus, presidential candidates proliferate in the first round. There were six candidates in 1978, nine in 1984, and ten in 1988.

An important exception to the non-cooperative behavior among parties came in the presidential election of 1984. In the summer of 1983, the Frente de Reconstrucción Nacional (FRN) was formed to back the presidential candidacy of León Febres-Cordero. The FRN included all the traditional parties

on the right: the Partido Conservador, Partido Social Cristiano, Partido Liberal, Partido Nacionalista Revolucionario, and the Coalición Institucionalista Democrática. At the time, the formation of the FRN seemed to run counter to the centrifugal tendencies in the system and some of its backers hoped it would form the skeleton of a single unified party of the right.⁶ The promise of the FRN, however, was short-lived. Febres-Cordero won the election, but the conjuncture that produced the FRN quickly disappeared. Conflicts over patronage proved divisive as did Febres-Cordero's lack of interest in maintaining the FRN. Even his own Partido Social Cristiano was largely ignored during his administration.

The demise of the FRN may point to darker dilemmas in the future of Ecuadoran democracy. One of the most problematic features of Ecuadoran politics in the 1978-88 period is the continuing inability of forces on the right to construct political organizations capable of turning in consistent electoral performances. Such performances would assure them some stable measure of access and influence in policy making and give them a greater stake in the "democratic game."

DEMOCRACY AND THE RIGHT

In their recent examination of the politics of transition, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter point to the electoral survival of the right as a key element in the consolidation of democratic regimes.⁷ They argue that if parties of the right are unable to garner support and suffer chronic electoral defeats, they are likely to turn to antidemocratic behavior to defend the propertied interests they represent.

With that observation in mind, the electoral performance of the right since 1978 deserves special consideration. Since 1978 parties of the right have performed unevenly and have experienced an overall deterioration of support. Evidence of this deterioration can be seen in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The electoral strength of right-wing parties has been significantly reduced since the "founding" elections of 1978-79. While these parties polled between 46 and 59 percent in those first elections, their pull of the total national vote hovered around 25 percent in the congressional elections of 1984 and 1986. The right has never won a congressional majority; sporadic alliances with the populist parties have accounted for the right's periodic predominance in Congress. A similar pattern can be detected in the results of the first-round presidential races. In 1978 two center-right candidates (Sixto Durán Ballén and Clemente Huerta) won a combined vote of a little over 46 percent of the vote; in the first round of 1984, Febres-Cordero (the single candidate backed by all right parties) only took 23 percent of the vote. By 1988 parties on the right polled 17.4 percent in the first round.

In addition to this deterioration in electoral appeal, alterations in the political landscape of the right have also taken place. The personalist parties of the right have practically disappeared while the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties have eroded to the point where their future is also in doubt. The only party able to improve on its overall performance in the period was the Partido Social Cristiano, whose leaders (Durán Ballén and Febres-Cordero) were major contenders in the 1979 and 1984 presidential races.

TABLE NO. 2. PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL VOTE BY PARTY (PROVINCIAL/CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS)

	1978 Provincial Councilors	1979 Congress	1980 Provincial Councilors	1984 Congress	1986 Mid-term Congress
<u>Right</u>					
PSC	3.6	8.6	2.4	11.5	12.6
PLR	18.1	8.0	7.6	6.0	8.4
PCE	12.0	7.9	5.6	3.5	1.5
PNR	3.4	7.5	3.3	2.2	1.8
CID	3.1	6.3	0.5	1.4	0.6
VELAS	6.6	2.6	3.0	0.9	-
Total	46.8	40.9	22.4	25.5	24.9
<u>Populist</u>					
CFP	21.1	30.9	7.8	9.0	9.3
FRA	2.5	-	23.8	8.8	5.6
PD	-	-	-	8.0	4.8
PRE	-	-	-	5.1	5.1
PCD	-	-	-	2.7	2.7
Total	23.6	30.9	31.6	33.6	27.5
<u>Center-Left</u>					
ID	11.0	18.4	16.9	20.0	14.5
DP	-	-	19.9	7.3	9.5
Total	11.0	18.4	36.8	27.3	24.0
<u>Left</u>					
FADI	6.0	3.1	4.1	5.1	6.1
MPD	-	4.8	5.1	6.5	7.4
PSE	4.5	1.9	-	1.8	4.5
Total	10.5	9.8	9.2	13.4	18.0

SOURCES: The 1978, 1979, and 1980 figures are taken from FLACSO, Elecciones en Ecuador (Quito: Editorial Oveja Negra, n.d.). The 1984 and 1986 figures are from Weekly Analysis, No. 22, 9 June 1986.

TABLE NO. 3. CONGRESSIONAL SEATS WON BY PARTIES IN ELECTIONS

	1978	1984	1986*	1988
<u>Right</u>				
PSC	3	9	12	8
PLR	4	4	3	1
PCE	10	2	1	1
PNR	2	1	0	-
CID	3	-	0	-
VELAS	1	-	0	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Populist</u>				
CFP	29	7	6	6
FRA	-	6	3	2
PD	-	5	1	-
PRE	-	3	3	8
PCD	-	-	1	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Center-Left</u>				
ID	15	24	14	29
DP	-	4	4	7
<u>Total</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>Left</u>				
FADI	1	2	2	2
MPD	1	3	3	3
PSE	-	1	6	4
<u>Total</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>71</u>

* Mid-term elections for 59 provincial deputies only. The 12 national deputies retained their seats.

SOURCES: 1978 figures from El Comercio, 10 August 1982; 1984 figures from Revista Mensual de Noticias, No. 28, April 1984, p. 22; 1986 figures from Política y Sociedad, Año 3, No. 4, July-August 1986, p. 27; 1988 figures from Oscar Ayerve, ¿Quién gana la segunda vuelta? (Quito: Taski Editora, 1988), 69, 74.

TABLE NO. 4. PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL VOTE BY PARTY NOMINEE (FIRST-ROUND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS)

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1988</u>
<u>Right</u>			
PSC	23.9	23.2	14.7
PLR	22.7	-	1.6
PCE	-	-	-
PNR	-	-	-
CID	-	-	1.1
VELAS	-	-	-
Total	<u>46.6</u>	<u>23.2</u>	<u>17.4</u>
<u>Populist</u>			
CFP	27.7	11.6	7.8
FRA	9.0	5.7	3.3
PD	-	5.6	-
PRE	-	-	17.5
PCD	-	-	-
Total	<u>36.7</u>	<u>22.9</u>	<u>28.6</u>
<u>Center-Left</u>			
ID	12.0	24.0	24.8
DP	-	3.7	11.6
Total	<u>12.0</u>	<u>27.7</u>	<u>36.4</u>
<u>Left</u>			
FADI	4.7	3.7	5.0
MPD	-	6.2	-
PSE	-	0.7	12.6
APRE	-	-	-
Total	<u>4.7</u>	<u>10.6</u>	<u>17.6</u>

SOURCES: 1979 figures are taken from FLACSO, Elecciones en Ecuador (Quito: Editorial Oveja Negra, n.d.); 1984 figures are from Revista Mensual de Noticias, No. 25, January 1984, p. 16; 1988 figures are from Oscar Ayerve, ¿Quién gana la segunda vuelta? (Quito: Taski Editora, 1988), 105.

Concern about the right's faltering electoral performance and the prospects of a permanent marginalization from executive and legislative power led to the FRN's formation in 1983. The FRN, however, never developed as an organization capable of solving the right's crisis. Even at its inception, the divisions in the FRN were visible. The parties involved decided to field their own separate congressional lists; they conceived of the FRN only as a temporary electoral alliance formed as a desperate attempt to keep the social democrats (Izquierda Democrática) from what looked like a sure victory.⁸ Febres-Cordero led the FRN to a narrow victory in 1984, winning by less than 3 percent over Rodrigo Borja. The margin of victory came not from the FRN itself, but from the support provided by the populist CFP and FRA (with whom Borja had refused to negotiate with over patronage questions prior to the election).

Febres-Cordero's heterogeneous coalition, his lack of a legislative majority, and his commitment to initiating neoliberal economic policies produced tensions in his government that rapidly eroded any organizational future for the FRN. Febres-Cordero's cabinet appointments, weighed heavily in favor of apolitical technocrats and businessmen from Guayaquil, drew bitter criticism from FRN leaders who had expected high-profile positions in the government for their parties. Moreover, Febres-Cordero had obligations to the CFP and FRA. Without a legislative majority, the administration needed to remain on friendly terms with both. With each party expecting rewards, job claimants outnumbered the available public posts; this created serious dissatisfactions in the lower echelons of the FRN.

Moreover, the patronage-seeking and influence-peddling aspects of party behavior were at odds with the original logic of the neoliberal program. According to his closest policy advisers, Febres-Cordero's first priority

was the implementation of neoliberal reforms encompassing measures to deregulate the economy and reduce the role of government. In short, his deepest commitment was to the economic right rather than the political right.⁹ He showed little interest in party building during his term in office. This was in keeping with his public persona. Febres-Cordero had long cultivated his image as an entrepreneur and was never hesitant in showing disdain for professional politicians.

The right's electoral and organizational problems had important ramifications for the conduct of politics and inter-governmental relations over the last decade. The drive of the right to assert their presence and to influence policy making gave birth to an aggressive political style. In the period from 1979-84, right-wing congressmen (among them Febres-Cordero) allied with populists and "independents" to attack the executive branch. These attacks on the presidency assumed crisis proportions during the presidency of Hurtado. Business organizations joined in the conflict, some courting a military intervention. When Febres-Cordero assumed the presidency in 1984, the direction of the attack reversed. With Congress firmly in control of a center-left/left majority, the administration sought to undermine congressional power through legal challenges as well as extra-legal maneuvers. The net effect of this behavior was to create a near permanent crisis of government and constitution that kept in place the spectre of military intervention.

A deep ambivalence permeates the relationships between politicians and the party system. And it is as visible across the rest of the spectrum as it is on the right. The disintegration of the Partido Demócrata, the split within the Izquierda Democrática over the 1988 Borja presidential candidacy, and the persistent cambio de camisetas reflect the weakness of the ties

between political activists and their organizations. The estrangement is deepened by the strains imposed by economic crisis.

POLITICIANS AND THE NEW ECONOMIC FATALISM

By 1982 falling oil prices combined with the burdens of international debt brought an end to a decade of petroleum-induced economic growth in Ecuador. Suddenly the administration of austerity replaced the distribution of oil-generated surplus as the stuff of politics. The change in the policy environment had an important effect on the mentalities of politicians in both the government and opposition. Political strategies became tinged with a new economic fatalism. In the minds of politicians, a rational management of the crisis necessarily includes a downgrading of the programmatic functions of parties as well as the capacity to disregard possible electoral retributions.

The economic downturn of the eighties made for a dramatic shift in the style and tone of economic policy making; "crisis management" replaced economic policy making, leaving little room for normal "pluralist" politics. Economic policy was defined, both by the Hurtado and Febres-Cordero administrations, as being outside of the realm of interest-group lobbying and party pressures. Both administrations sought to insulate its equipo económico from "outside" influences; economic decisions were highly centralized, controlled by three economic technocrats and the president. In neither administration did the team include a party technocrat nor were the government parties actively consulted in the formulation of policy. Hurtado described

the decision-making processes that resulted in his economic stabilization program of 1982-83:

We four (i.e., the heads of the Banco Central, Finance, Junta Monetaria and myself) exclusively ran economic policy. The cabinet ministries were consulted only on very specific problems. They were often informed only after we made decisions...you can imagine what would happen if I would have subjected economic policy to debates within the party! No political party would have ever approved of the kind of economic policy that I undertook. No party! ...I made my appointments to the economic team on the basis of the fact that they were not Democracia Cristiana. I did not want economic policy in the hands of people who would politicize it. Economic policy is so difficult, complex, and costly (in political terms) that I did not want an opposition to form to the policy because it was directed by party people...I always thought that the future of my government and party rested on success in the conduct of economic policy and the confrontation of economic crisis. That was my strategy. And within that strategy, I was prepared to pay all the costs in the short term.... (10)

Hurtado's comments reveal some of the ambiguities in the relationships that develop between governing politicians and parties within the context of an economic crisis. Hurtado sought to strip his party of programmatic functions both because he saw it as incompetent (likely to "politicize" a technical matter) and because he sought to shield it from electoral retributions. Yet, while Hurtado was ready to "pay the costs," the costs for him would not be directly electoral since Ecuador's presidents are constitutionally barred from succeeding themselves. Some Ecuadoran observers have speculated that the longstanding intra-party rivalry between Hurtado and Trujillo (the 1984 Democracia Popular presidential candidate) made Hurtado even less concerned about the electoral retribution that the party would suffer for stabilization. Trujillo polled an embarrassing 3.7 percent of the vote in the first-round presidential elections of 1984.

A deliberate marginalization of parties from programmatic functions was also evident in the Febres-Cordero administration. The marginalization in this case, however, was not simply part of a strategy to "protect" the party

from unpopularity or the policy from interference. The disinterest in parties in the Febres-Cordero government was even more profound. It was rooted in the belief that the neoliberal reforms (such as currency flotation, price decontrol, etc.,) would create a "natural" constituency for the right, thus reducing the need for a strong party organization to defend those reforms in subsequent elections. In interviews conducted by the author with members of the economic team, all expressed their belief in the popularity and immutability of the neoliberal measures. Carlos Julio Emanuel, general manager of the Banco Central, summarized the position:

...the measures that have been taken are going to be analyzed by the public on the basis of whether they help or hurt. You go to the coast in Ecuador and talk to agricultural producers and you'll see that their situation has improved. So how politically are you going to change that? If a government of a different tendency than ours decides to overrule the measures that is going to come out in the electoral campaign. And we'll see how the electorate reacts, the coffee pickers, shrimp-farm workers, etc.,...So my feeling is that the electorate is not going to go for a candidate who is going to abolish them, then they are going to have problems electorally. So that's why there is not much preoccupation in the government to set up a strong Social Christian party that can win another election to maintain policies, because the policies are going to be there. (11)

A certain arrogance underlies this thinking, but it is an attitude in character with the highly technocratic inclinations of the economic team and Febres-Cordero himself. They maintained that the solution to the economic crisis involved the application of technically "correct" policies. The "inevitable" success of those policies would create a reservoir of satisfied voters. Economic success, not political organization, was seen as the key to continued control over the state. This antiparty orientation fit neatly into neoliberal notions.¹²

Finally, the belief held by politicians of nearly every persuasion that any association with economic failure carries high electoral costs has affected campaign strategies. It creates incentives for all parties to oppose

current economic policy, regardless of its content. This further muddies the already murky ideological waters in a system where programmatic differences among parties are difficult to detect. The struggle to dominate the oppositional space in the political arena produces tensions in the system, creating disincentives for cooperation across parties who should be natural allies. This was evident in the conduct of the 1984 presidential campaign. The Febres-Cordero organization painted Borja of the Izquierda Democrática as a staunch supporter of the Hurtado government and thus partially responsible for economic policy. Borja struggled to distance himself from the charge and in doing so effectively alienated the Democracia Popular and Partido Democrática.

The economic crisis has succeeded in injecting a new disintegrative logic into the already weak Ecuadoran party system. The crisis has elevated the role of technocrats, leaving parties bereft of programmatic functions. Democratic accountability is undermined as politicians in power distance themselves from their parties and programs; the automatic lame-duck status of Ecuadoran presidents creates a natural predisposition for them to "pay the costs" (or perhaps impose the costs on their party) of the economic course they have decided to follow.

SYSTEMIC CRISIS AND THE "FLOATING" POLITICIAN?

A decade of civilian rule and electoral politics in Ecuador has failed to produce a professional political class with a firm commitment to the development of the party system. The causes are multidimensional; both structural and conjunctural factors have converged to create strong disincentives to party building.

The development of every party system depends, to a great extent, on the choices made by politicians themselves. So, in part, the weakness of Ecuador's party system cannot be explained without some reference to the mentality of its leaders. In the numerous interviews I have conducted with politicians since 1984, the "mentality" problem is one that is readily acknowledged. Politicians of every stripe concede that the system is too fragmented and that personal ambitions underlie a great deal of party fragmentation. Yet, at the same time, party leaders seem resigned to accepting the weakness of the party system as part of Ecuadoran political culture. Steeped in a long tradition of antiparty rhetoric and personalism, party leaders view the current state of affairs as a kind of irresistible legacy. One high-ranking member of the Febres-Cordero government and leader of the Partido Liberal explained the obstacles to forming a single party on the right in the following way:

Theoretically one could [create one single party on the right]. But in practice, no...every party is governed by a camarilla, a mafia, and they don't want to lose power. At the moment you create one large party, all the second-rung leaders in these parties would become fourth-rung....This ("divisionism") is very much part of the idiosyncracies of the Ecuadoran character. (13)

One of the dangerous side effects of this lack of party building is its potential for generating a crisis of representation for the right. Ecuadoran business groups have a long tradition of turning to extra-institutional

forms of political pressures (i.e., coup threats) when their interests are not adequately articulated and represented.¹⁴ A marginalization of parties of the right could easily create the conditions for business interest groups to revert to such behavior.

This resignation on the part of political elites is reinforced by the grinding logic of the economic crisis. The crisis severely constrains governments in the provision of patronage and the building of clientele networks. IMF stabilization packages and neoliberal economic programs do not create the conditions for robust clientelism. No party over the last decade has been able to use its control over the state to create a strong electoral constituency for itself. But this is not solely a function of the economic crisis--internal rivalries within the governing party(ies) made presidents relatively disinterested in using their tenures in office to the benefit of their party organizations.

Moreover, party leaders have been overshadowed by technocrats in the course of the economic crisis. Within the context of the crisis, decision making has become highly centralized in the president and his coterie of economic technocrats. These technocrats exert an important influence over the attitudes of politicians and the overall tenor of political discourse. They are not concerned with party politics per se and tend to see parties as groups that "politicize" (and therefore undermine) rational economic management. The antiparty mentality, already so prevalent in Ecuadoran political culture, is reinforced by the growing grip of technocrats over political discourse.

Trapped by their own electoral and economic calculations, politicians have become their own parties' worst enemies. The weakness of the party system has generated destabilizing executive-legislative confrontations,

accountability gaps, and extra-institutional forms of conflict resolution. All of these undermine the prospects of a consolidation of the democratic regime. The rise of "floating" politicians--leaders detached from party organizations and the electorate--stands as both a symptom and a cause of the turmoil in Ecuadoran democracy.

NOTES

1. For a general discussion of how these incentives shape the development of parties see Leon D. Epstein, Political Parties in Western Democracies (New York: Praeger, 1967): 105-129. For a similar discussion that emphasizes the interaction of material and affective ties see Alessandro Pizzorno, "Interests and Parties in Pluralism," in Organizing Interests in Western Europe, ed. Suzanne Berger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 250-255.
2. I have treated the historical development of parties in previous work. See, for example, "Parties and Democratization in Ecuador," in Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America, eds. James Malloy and Mitchell Seligson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 145-166.
3. Parties on the left did attempt to spell out more concrete positions and programs. The Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano was founded in 1926 and the Partido Comunista in 1931. The other major leftist party, the Movimiento Popular Democrático, grew out of a split in the Partido Comunista in 1963.
4. One exception may be the ID that has attempted to develop a "heroic party myth." The "purity" and the mission of the ID is one of the recurrent images used by party leaders, especially Borja. Interview with Rodrigo Borja, Quito, 6 December 1984. This imagery is also in evidence in the party history by Edmundo Vera, Así nació la Izquierda Democrática (Pamphlet, Quito, 1982). For a study showing how a party myth was created in Peru, see Steve Stein, Populism in Peru: The Emergence of the Masses and the Politics of Social Control (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).
5. In Ecuador's traditional hacienda system, a "huasipungo" was a peasant's subsistence plot. The quotation is from an interview with Congressman Roberto Dunn, Quito, 19 December 1984.
6. This was the idea of Sixto Durán Ballén, who lost the second-round presidential election in 1979. Interview, Quito, September 1983.
7. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986), 61-64.
8. Interview with Franklin Verduga, Quito, 22 January 1987.
9. Ultimately, Febres-Cordero's commitment to neoliberalism proved to be incomplete. The government was never able to reduce public expenditures and toward the end of its term in office turned to public-works spending to offset its flagging popularity. For the controversies surrounding such spending see the exposé on the government's sponsorship of a superhighway in Guayaquil by Alfredo Pinoagarte, El camino del poder: la vía perimetral de Guayaquil (Quito: Editorial El Cinejo, 1988). Nonetheless, what is interesting about Febres-Cordero's attempt to build a clientele network through expenditures was that he completely bypassed parties in his efforts.

10. Interview with Osvaldo Hurtado, Quito, 19 March 1986.
11. Interview with Carlos Julio Emanuel, Quito, 5 February 1987.
12. For a discussion of the convergence of economic orthodoxy and the anti-political perspective of the Pinochet regime in Chile, see Alejandro Foxley, Latin American Experiments in Neoconservative Economics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 94-103.
13. Interview with Blasco Penaherrera, Pittsburgh, 14 July 1987.
14. For further discussion of the political behavior of business, see my analysis in Restructuring Domination: Industrialists and the State in Ecuador (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).