THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION IN THE ANDES

Edited by
Scott Mainwaring,
Ana María Bejarano, and
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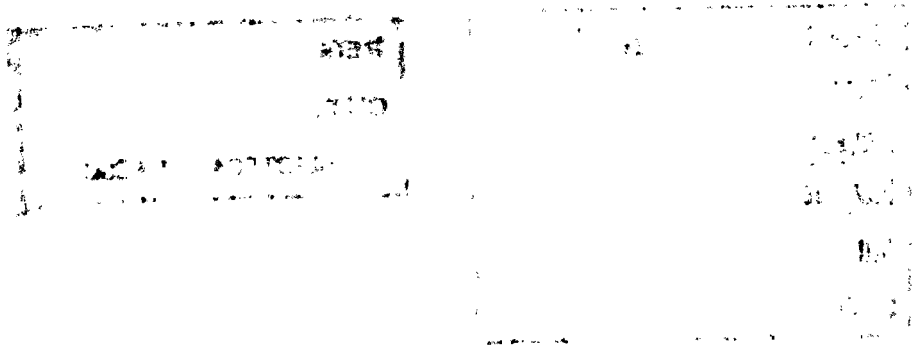

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CONTENTS

TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

4

Ecuador: The Provincialization of Representation

Simón Pachano

Among the many causes alluded to when explaining the problems of the Andean countries, and especially those of Ecuador, the crisis of representation has grown in importance in recent years. Scholarly analyses as well as politicians refer to a "crisis of representation" as an unquestionable fact that obstructs policy making and implementation (Barrera 2001; F. Bustamante 2000). Allegedly, deficiencies in representativeness result in problems of governability and conditions unfavorable to the consolidation of democracy. This perspective suggests that those deficiencies derive from the voters' dissatisfaction with the meager results of politicians' actions in their role as authorities of popular representation, and that, at the same time, this dissatisfaction leads to mistrust not only of the people involved but of the institutions and the system as a whole. As a result, following a period of exploration as voters experiment with different options, they finally reject representative democracy and focus on alternative options, ranging from seemingly innovative proposals to the election of anti-system leaders.

The validity of this analysis hinges on the relationship between the expectations and the results of political representation. How representation is evaluated depends on the returns derived from the representatives' actions, which also supposes that voters expect those actions to bring about specific results. This analysis is therefore based on voters' expectations on the one hand, and the results of authorities' actions on the other. The crux of the analysis of representation lies in the relationship between voters and their representatives, not in an isolated analysis of each. What needs to be addressed is the bond between voters and representatives, or, in other words, the mandate emerging from voter expectations. An investigation of this relationship has been one of the weak points in Ecuadorian studies of representation. Most such studies have focused on either voters or representatives but not on both at the same time, and even less so on the relationship between the two.

The role of the political parties as fundamental actors in this relationship has garnered much attention in recent years and provided important clues with which to ascertain the nature of representation in Ecuador. Most studies have emphasized the conditions under which representation is carried out (León 1994; F. Bustamante 2000), especially representatives' role in the clientelistic and corporatist practices that characterize politics in Ecuador. Recent studies have concentrated on parties' ideological orientation (Freidenberg 2000) and political culture (Burbano 1998), as well as internal organization (Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001).

Party dispersion, fragmentation, atomization, uncertainty, and volatility are highlighted in these studies. Most allude to negative or problematic aspects of parties that impede their capacity to carry out their responsibilities (Conaghan 1994; Arias 1995; Mejía 1998; F. Bustamante 2000). The limited capacity for representation—regardless of how one understands it—particularly stands out, generally with respect to the predominance of clientelistic and corporatist practices, as well as personalism. These analyses focus on the parties' problems or inability to carry out their responsibilities; few point to the parties' ability to survive in a hostile environment. This is a good starting point, but it is necessary to go further and explain this capacity to survive. There is no doubt that a crisis of representation exists, but it is important to know what that means.

Despite negative public opinion and even contradicting actions taken to undermine their weight and influence, the parties have secured a role as vehicles for political representation.[1] In the post-1979 period, four parties—Partido Social Cristiano (Social Christian Party, or PSC), Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (Ecuadorian Roldosist Party, or PRE), Izquierda Democrática (Democratic Left, or ID), and Democracia Popular (Popular Democracy, or DP)—have consolidated and together have won about three-fourths of the vote. This has occurred within the framework of a highly fragmented and atomized system. Just as important, however, is the increasing share of the vote that these parties have managed to accumulate over time. One of the prominent characteristics of the Ecuadorian party system is this apparently contradictory combination of fragmentation and concentration. The large number of parties that win seats in Congress and gain access to representational positions in provincial and local assemblies is offset by the predominance of a relatively small number of parties. Generally speaking, the parties have demonstrated a greater ability than independents to secure voters' support.

This chapter uses as a starting point this ability of the Ecuadorian parties to survive in a hostile environment in order to propose an alternative understanding of the problems concerning representation. I argue that there are other forms and mechanisms of representation and that all the political actors, especially the parties, can adapt to them. The survival of the parties is due to their ability to adapt to conditions that are not necessarily part of the institutional design of the

political system. This adaptation clears the way for complex situations affecting party consolidation since it requires renunciation of many of the classic functions allegedly performed by parties in a democratic regime. Because of the type of relationship parties have with their electorates, they are forced to produce results that do not satisfy the expectations of the population as a whole. The parties must be rooted in territorially and socially defined groups of voters in order to survive. This situation transforms parties into expressions of partiality and not of a public good, and leads them to develop a great ability to represent specific interests and local arenas, but also leaves them with an enormous deficiency in representing national interests. The main argument of this chapter is that the provincialization of parties—that is, their predominant focus on provincial issues—has facilitated their survival but has also caused their main deficiencies.

I do not deny that there is a crisis of representation, but I try to identify the nature of this crisis in Ecuador, where the term seems too broad and may cause confusion. As it has been applied to Ecuador, the expression "a crisis of representation" confuses several different levels, and it treats different kinds of problems indiscriminately. Most analyses of a crisis of representation focus on three central themes: the political system's outputs, the structure or formation of representative institutions, and the concept of political representation.

When analysts refer to the outputs yielded by the political system, they emphasize the poor social and economic performance throughout the post-1979 period.[2] From this perspective, problems of representation derive from the inability to satisfy the demands of society. However, it is not clear to what extent this failure to produce better results is a consequence of the system of representation rather than of non-political factors. The government's—and, in general, democratic institutions'—problems of efficiency cannot be attributed entirely to the forms, mechanisms, and procedures of political representation. Certainly, representation has an effect on government because it contributes to the formation of governments and establishes limits for governments and assemblies. In this sense, the forms of representation are one of the means of attaining the goals of formation of both decision-making instances and operative institutions, but the degree to which they are successful or the importance of their role in these instances is precisely what ought to constitute the focus of our analysis. This will be the object of the first part of this chapter, which analyzes the main characteristics of the electoral system and especially the structure and formation of the National Congress and its relationship to the executive.[3]

The representativeness of the popularly elected bodies and officials—the second theme in this chapter—focuses on one of the political system's main problems, not only in Ecuador, but also in conceptual terms. Institutional architecture, design, and procedures are fundamental factors in the study of representation. A lesser or greater capacity for inclusion of the different social actors, interests, and conflicts depends significantly on the design of representative institutions. The degree of satisfaction with representation itself—not

necessarily with the results of the political system, which is another matter—depends to a great extent on institutional design. With a few exceptions (Mejía 2002; Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001), this subject has received little attention in the Ecuadorian case. Few analyses have been concerned with institutional issues; most have been oriented more toward sociological or anthropological explanations of representation.

My analysis emphasizes the cleavages in national politics, focusing on the institutional structure's ability to reflect and process these cleavages. I argue that there is a divide between these two (national cleavages and institutional structure) that clearly causes problems in representation. On the other hand, the generalization of certain political practices has created alternative forms of representation and of satisfying the demands of particularistic actors (through clientelism and corporatism), which have allowed parties to survive as mechanisms of representation. By substituting the formally established channels and mechanisms of representation, these forms of particularism have eroded them; however, they have also, simultaneously, been able to respond—however partially—to demands and also to constitute an alternative arena for representation.

The problems arising from this situation are related to the temporal dimension of this coexistence. The main question for political science and for parties and politicians is: For how long and in what conditions can this balance between institutions and everyday practices be maintained if these practices erode the institutions? Particularistic practices such as clientelism and corporatism ensure immediate results, but they corrode the institutions by draining them of content. Therefore, a basic question in this chapter is the relationship between formal institutions and political practice. This is the primary focus of the second part of the chapter.

Finally, it is important to consider the conception of political representation underlying the claim that there is a crisis of representation. In most Ecuadorian studies on this subject, representation is seen as an expression of a binding mandate or at least as a direct channeling of interests. Most of these studies highlight the limited ability of institutions to process conflict, clearly one of the basic functions of representative mechanisms. Other observations focus on the limited capacity of the political system to adequately represent diverse social interests. Apparently, each social sector is expected to get a quota in representative bodies in order to ensure not only the processing of their respective demands but also participation in decision making. This contradicts three basic principles of a representative regime: majority rule, autonomy of the representatives, and, derived from this last one, the non-binding mandate. To a great extent in Ecuador, the argument that there is a crisis of representation is based on this erroneous perception of representation, leading to a demand for results that cannot be produced. I discuss this perception in an attempt to demonstrate that in order to tackle the problems of representativeness, we need an adequate concept of representation.

Endless Reform and a Contradictory Institutional Framework

The Ecuadorian normative and institutional framework has been continually altered by both Congress and the executive and by a Constitutional Assembly that issued a new constitution in 1998. In 1983, before the end of the first post-transition presidential and congressional terms, the first constitutional reforms were introduced. This was the beginning of a litany of institutional reforms that apparently will continue to be an integral part of Ecuadorian political practice. Political reform—legal, constitutional, procedural—has been used as a tool for solving political conflict. Even small problems, those constituting the customary practices of political actors that must be processed politically, lead to questions concerning the institutional and normative framework, leaving this framework constantly up for grabs. As a result, the possibilities of consolidating valid reference points for the actors involved are very limited.

Basic aspects of the electoral system have been constantly altered: the representational formula, the electoral calendar, district size, and the way in which votes are cast (see Table 4.1). This has been one of the greatest obstacles to the institutionalization of the party system.[4] Constant change has made it impossible for two consecutive elections to take place under the same set of rules, and neither the voters nor the political parties have enjoyed certainty concerning the rules of the game.

These problems are due not only to the frequency and number of reforms, but also to the contradictions from one reform to the next. Competing particularistic interests and pressure from diverse social groups that function with short-term logic has produced a complex institutional system rife with contradictions (Conaghan 1995; Mejía 2002). Many of the components of the electoral system contradict one another. For example, some aspects of the system were intended to strengthen parties. In contrast, the personal vote system introduced in 1998 worked against parties. Even if the 1978 Constitution and the party and electoral laws of 1979 had some birth defects, they have only become worse over time, mainly due to successive changes brought about by particularistic interests and the need to respond to specific situations.

Although the three main objectives in the return to democracy were to strengthen parties, attenuate the personalistic character of Ecuadorian politics, and prevent party system fragmentation, the new institutional rules had the opposite effect. Parties have had serious problems with consolidation, and in the 2002 elections the solid electoral performance displayed by the four largest parties was reversed.[5] The parties without exception have been electorally successful in limited geographic spaces. In national politics, personalism continues to be a salient characteristic. Finally, the dispersion of representation has increased noticeably in Congress; more parties win seats with a small number of votes.

TABLE 4.1
Ecuador: Main Political-Electoral Reforms, 1983–2003

Year	Main reforms
1983	Reduction of the presidential and legislative terms (from 5 to 4 years) Introduction of intermediate election (every 2 years) for provincial deputies General election for deputies coincides with the first runoff presidential election (instead of the second) Name of legislature is changed from Cámara Nacional de Representantes to Congreso Nacional Mechanism for budget approval is simplified Executive is given special powers to propose laws in situations of economic emergency
1985	Majority system replaces proportional representation system Elimination of the electoral threshold as a requisite for the permanent registration of parties
1986	Return to proportional representation (with Hare formula)
1994	Immediate reelection is approved for all elected offices, with the exception of the president Deputies are prohibited from managing or lobbying for budget appropriations
1996	The prohibition on alliances is eliminated
1997	Introduction of the system of personalized voting with open lists Seats are allocated according to individual votes by simple majority, regardless of list total votes; proportional formula is eliminated National deputies increase from 12 to 20
1998	National deputies are eliminated Number of provincial deputies is increased (with a base of two per province instead of one as was formerly the case) Presidential and legislative elections are separated from local and provincial elections (electoral calendar is diversified) Return to proportional representation (D'Hondt formula) Congress loses the ability to promote a vote of no-confidence against cabinet ministers Mechanisms for the appointment of legislative authorities introduced (president and two vice-presidents are appointed according to size of party benches but with a vote of the entire legislative body) Change in executive-legislative relations (powers of Congress are restricted in aspects such as budget approval, appointment of accountability authorities, among others) New conditions for the runoff presidential election: absolute majority or 40 percent threshold plus 10 percentage points above next candidate
2000	Return to the allocation of seats by lists (D'Hondt formula), keeping the personalized voting system
2003	Elimination of D'Hondt formula (January) Introduction of Imperiali formula (September)

This complex, contradictory, and constantly changing institutional design has operated in an environment that is socially, economically, and culturally hostile to the consolidation of parties and to representative institutions in general. The political practices and behaviors of the social and political actors have obstructed the achievement of the objectives proposed at the beginning of the transition. Because of its importance, this subject has been frequently discussed from many perspectives (Menéndez 1986; F. Bustamante 1997; Burbano 1998; De la Torre 1996; CORDES, n.d.). Most authors have concentrated on practices and behavior, without paying sufficient attention to the institutional aspects. Most analysts have posited a cause-effect relationship whereby institutions are determined by the social structure and political culture. Such analyses express the sociological and cultural bias of Ecuadorian political studies.

Diffuse Multipartism: Rules and Their Implications

One of the outstanding characteristics of Ecuadorian democracy has been the dispersion and fragmentation of the party system. Since the return to a democratic regime in 1979, at least ten parties have secured congressional representation. All of them—even the largest ones that have maintained the most stable share of votes—have experienced erratic electoral fortunes (see Table 4.2, which includes only the four largest parties). Many parties have failed to survive more than two elections and have been replaced by new parties that are generally as small as those that disappeared.[6]

Several components of the electoral system have fostered party proliferation: the use of the province as an electoral district, proportional representation, the prohibition of local or subnational parties, the "no immediate reelection" rule (in effect from 1979 until 1994), and the implementation of two-round presidential elections.

TABLE 4.2

Share of Congressional Vote Won by Four Major Parties, 1979–2002

(% of valid votes, provincial deputies)

Parties	1979	1984	1988	1992	1996	1998	2002
PSC	6.4	11.5	12.4	23.2	27.9	20.3	26.4
PRE	[a]	5.1	16.3	16.0	21.3	17.5	11.9
ID	14.8	20.0	22.6	9.5	7.1	11.9	11.9
DP	[b]	7.3	10.9	7.2	11.9	24.1	3.1
Others	78.8	56.1	37.8	44.1	31.8	26.2	46.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Supreme Electoral Court.

[a] Formed in 1982.

[b] Not officially recognized; participated under the auspices of the CFP.

The Province as an Electoral District

The use of provinces, the country's administrative-political divisions, as electoral districts causes five problems in representation. First, the effect of their size range is translated, at the electoral level, in the coexistence of districts of different magnitudes, with results characteristic of this situation (Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Snyder 2001). Parties can win seats with very few votes, especially if they are concentrated in small provinces. This has been the strategy followed by parties that obtain a very limited percentage of the vote on a national level but that win seats in the National Congress with votes obtained in provinces with small populations.[7]

The most common size for electoral districts is two seats, with seven provinces electing that number. In 2002, four provinces elected three deputies each, six provinces elected four, two provinces elected five, one province elected fourteen, and one district elected eighteen deputies (see Table 4.3). If small districts are defined as those that elect less than 4.0 percent of the members of Congress (the median is 3.5 percent), then half of the districts fit into this category.

TABLE 4.3

Share of National Electorate and Number of Deputies per Province, 2002

Province	Share of national electorate	Number of deputies	Percent of total deputies
Galápagos	0.1	2	2.0
Zamora	0.3	2	2.0
Orellana	0.4	2	2.0
Pastaza	0.4	2	2.0
Morona	0.6	2	2.0
Sucumbíos	0.6	2	2.0
Napo	0.9	2	2.0
Bolívar	1.5	3	3.0
Carchi	1.5	3	3.0
Cañar	1.6	3	3.0
Esmeraldas	2.6	4	4.0
Imbabura	3.0	3	3.0
Cotopaxi	3.1	4	4.0
Loja	3.3	4	4.0
Chimborazo	3.8	4	4.0
Tungurahua	4.5	4	4.0
El Oro	4.5	4	4.0
Azuay	4.8	5	5.0
Los Ríos	5.0	5	5.0
Manabí	10.1	8	8.0
Pichincha	20.5	14	14.0
Guayas	27.0	18	18.0
Total	100.0	100	100.0

SOURCE: Supreme Electoral Court.

Parties with little national presence can concentrate their efforts in one or several of these provinces and win seats in Congress. If we add to district size the effects of the use of proportional representation or the system of personalized, open-list voting (introduced in 1997), it is clear that the doors have been wide open to the dispersion of voting and the fragmentation of the party system.

Secondly, as it stands, the system creates imbalances and distortions among provinces in terms of the relationship between representatives and represented. The proportion of votes needed to elect a deputy varies significantly from district to district; voters from different districts do not have the same weight. As pointed out by Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 14) and Snyder (2001, 146ff.), this violates the "one person, one vote" rule since the weight of each individual vote is not the same in all districts.[8] The representativeness of the deputies is affected by malapportionment. Each deputy represents a very unequal proportion of the population, and the deputies' possibilities of establishing a relationship with voters varies substantially, depending on district size. In the smaller districts, the possibility of establishing direct, practically face-to-face relationships is greater, which may create a fertile ground for binding mandates (*mandatos vinculantes*), which in turn may form the basis for clientelistic and corporatist forms of representation.

The number of members each province has in Congress depends on one of two rules: a minimum of two seats per province, or one seat for every 300,000 inhabitants. These rules create some malapportionment. The smallest provinces benefit and the largest are adversely affected. The rule that a province gets one seat for every 300,000 citizens clashes with the idea of not increasing the number of deputies and restricting parliament to a reasonable size, and it meets the resistance of the small and mid-sized provinces that view any increase in the number of seats for the large provinces as a threat to their interests. Malapportionment also has regional effects.[9] As the country's most populated region, with 50.5 percent of the national population, the Coastal region, comprised of only five provinces, elects only 39 percent of the members of Congress. At the other end of the spectrum, the Amazon and Galápagos regions—with a total of seven provinces that benefit from the minimum of two seats per province, and with only 3 percent of the country's population—elect 14 percent of the seats. Comprised of ten provinces, the Sierra region is the only one to achieve representation that is proportional between its population (46.6 percent) and its share of seats (47 percent) in the Congress. This has been one of the few subjects related to the electoral system that has been on the political agenda and debated in terms of its repercussions on the representativeness of the various provinces and regions.

Third, with the use of the province as an electoral district the myth of territorial representation is created, whereby the deputy is the representative of provincial interests rather than of a political movement. This is an alien and even contradictory concept given the unitary character of the Ecuadorian state, yet it

is widely generalized in national politics and shapes the behavior of Ecuador's political parties. Parties have to favor representation of provincial interests, even if it means sacrificing their own positions and a vision for the country as a whole. The vindication of regional, provincial, and local interests has become almost an obligation since it is one of the ways to win electoral support. This logic in turn has fueled the configuration of captive voters and electoral bastions, as part of the logic of a narrower and more particularistic political arena.

Fourth, the use of the province as an electoral district has contributed to party indiscipline (Mejía 2002). Most deputies who have abandoned their parties allude to the parties' nonexistent or meager concern with their province of origin, which constitutes a tacit vindication of a binding mandate. Most deputies who switch parties have been rewarded by resources or payoffs for the province, either through negotiations with the government or by a relatively powerful party boss. These agreements between deputies and government—the presidential connection referred to by Amorin Neto and Santos (2001, 221)—are obvious from the time of the elections and not only in the deputies' performance. The deputy thus fulfills his/her commitment to his/her province.

Fifth, spurred by their quest to obtain the greatest possible number of seats, the parties (especially the largest ones, with electoral bastions in the most populated provinces) must seek votes in the small provinces, which leads them to seek out local candidates who can win votes. Generally, to do this they must sacrifice their own principles and become catch-all parties, adapting their discourse and proposals to particularistic local realities. Deputies who win election have enormous negotiating power and enjoy considerable autonomy with respect to the parties.

Making provinces the electoral districts has fostered the *provincialization* of politics. The electoral rules do not favor the national distribution of party voting (or *nationalization*, as referred to by Mainwaring and Jones 2003), but instead tend to force parties into subnational arenas. This also contributes to the overburdening of the national level by channeling demands to the upper levels (government and Congress), a trend that is also spurred by the country's administrative centralization, which leaves little space for decision making at the lower levels of municipalities and provincial councils. Lastly, the electoral system is an incentive for the corporatist and clientelistic practices that characterize Ecuadorian politics. The elimination of the national deputies in 1998[10] heightened the negative effects of the electoral system given that they were a push factor for the configuration of a national political arena.

Proportional Representation

The proportional representation (PR) electoral system fostered the fragmentation of the party system by allowing minor parties to win seats in Congress. The allocation of seats by means of a double quotient mechanism (using the Hare

formula), useful for maintaining proportionality between votes and seats, became an incentive for the proliferation of small parties that could gain representation with few votes. This was particularly evident in provinces with the greatest number of voters (Guayas and Pichincha, both electoral bastions of the large parties) and in intermediate ones (Manabí, Los Ríos, Azuay, and El Oro), where votes are more dispersed. Parties gained representation with an insignificant number of votes as a result of PR with the Hare formula.

Small parties have used two strategies to gain representation in Congress: first, as seen in the preceding section, they can concentrate their efforts on provinces with the fewest voters; or, they can compete in the large and intermediate provinces where the proportional formula favors them. Either way, parties can win seats with a minimal proportion of the national vote.

This system results in the consistent presence of legislative parties with only a few seats. The Ecuadorian Congress has consistently had a significant number of small parties, operationalized here as those with less than 5 percent of the members of the national assembly. (This 5 percent maximum was equal to three deputies in the legislature from 1979 to 1984, four from 1984 to 1996, and six from 1998 to 2000.)[11] The dispersion in the National Congress makes it difficult to assemble majorities in support of or in opposition to the government.

These small parties are important because no party has ever obtained the majority of deputies in the National Congress. Small parties have consistently been necessary to pass laws and form opposition blocks. The small provinces (especially the Amazonia provinces) have tended to bring together parliamentary coalitions outside party lines, especially in situations where their votes can be negotiated (Rowland 1998; Mejía 1998). They have acquired an importance disproportionate to the number of their legislators, giving them considerable negotiating power in important congressional votes and in electing congressional leaders. Also contributing to the power of the small provinces is the relatively small size of the Ecuadorian Congress; a few votes can make the difference in crucial decisions.[12]

The effects of the proportional system are heightened by the lack of an electoral threshold that prevents parties from obtaining seats in Congress with less than a certain percentage of the vote. The threshold established by law (which has fluctuated between 4 percent and 5 percent for elections of deputies, provincial councilors, and municipal councilors and has not been in effect during the entire period under discussion) is for registration purposes only. Parties that fail to meet the minimum share of votes in two consecutive elections lose the Supreme Electoral Court's official recognition. However, parties that fail to meet the 4–5 percent threshold may still win seats and function as parties during their term in office. Furthermore, because registration is forfeited only after the given percentage has not been achieved in two consecutive elections—they cannot run in the third election—those who win office with below-threshold percentages

may still keep their seats for up to two consecutive terms (which might mean as many as eight years).

In addition, proportional representation has been an incentive for personalism. Many analysts have argued that PR with closed and blocked lists should strengthen parties (Nohlen 1993). However, in conjunction with the use of provinces as electoral districts, the parties' obligation to participate nationally, and the prohibition of alliances in the proportional elections, as well as the establishment of PR within the context of reduced institutionalization and predominating *caudillismo*, it has produced the opposite effect. The parties have had to incorporate candidates who can bring in votes.

In 1997, in response to a referendum, the Ecuadorian electoral system, including PR, underwent the greatest reform in its history.[13] A majoritarian system based on personalized voting with open lists was introduced. However, the electoral system introduced in 1997 was soon replaced, and for all practical purposes has reverted to the proportional system.

National and Subnational Parties

One of the main objectives of the 1979 Constitution was to strengthen political parties. The history of instability during the preceding half century was associated with the absence of parties of national scope capable of aggregating interests and forming governments founded on popular legitimacy. For the first time in the country's history, and together with the new constitution, electoral and party laws were approved, both with considerable regulatory content. The new provisions were intended to promote the formation of strong parties, whose stability would be assured in time by ample organizational support and their presence throughout the entire nation. The goal was the elimination or at least reduction of the formation of electoral machines that might be capable of winning votes but that would have no real long-term life of their own, no roots in society, and would be limited to certain regions or provinces.

The electoral and party laws had meticulous provisions that forced parties to carry out a series of activities in order to obtain and maintain their registration with the Supreme Electoral Court. Parties were required to maintain organizational structures in at least ten of the twenty provinces that existed at the time. Once they obtained legal recognition, they were required to present candidates in at least ten provinces. Failure to comply with these two provisions resulted first in the cancellation of registration, and after a second election, in the loss of legal recognition. These provisions have acted as more effective barriers to the fragmentation of the party system than the electoral threshold.[14]

These regulations did not achieve their main objective of promoting the formation of national political parties. Parties have concentrated their votes in certain provinces or at most in one region. Except for a brief period in which ID

and PSC maintained a national presence—in terms of their votes—the predominance of provincial or regional parties has been the main characteristic of the Ecuadorian system. Electoral bastions, in which each party concentrates its efforts and to which other parties find it difficult to gain access, have grown steadily in strength. Even the dominant party finds it difficult to move beyond these boundaries and compete in other provinces.

In addition to structural determinations—Ecuador is characterized by very distinctive regional societies—some legal regulations, including the very ones designed to promote the formation of parties of national scope, have fostered the provincial focus of parties. The legal regulations force the parties to act on a national level and compete for seats in the National Congress. Otherwise, the aforementioned provisions would apply and parties would lose their registration and be unable to run candidates. In this way, minor local or provincial politicians and parties have been shifted to the national level, and the particularistic concerns of these politicians have found their way into the National Congress.

This has a double effect. On the one hand, it fills the national scene with small parties, generally with local orientations that represent the interests of very narrow sectors of society. Consequently, the overload of subnational concerns and demands that might under different circumstances be resolved at the local level becomes more pronounced on a national level. On the other hand, the larger parties—which in Ecuador tend to be more ideological and to have a more national orientation—are forced to compete in elections with locally or provincially rooted parties. They sacrifice principles in order to win votes in these localities. In this manner, they contribute to the overload of subnational topics in national politics, thus reinforcing the regional cleavages that characterize Ecuadorian politics. Both large and small parties, whether rooted in a certain sector or a certain ideology, must adapt to the provincial or local orientation of politics.

The inflexibility of the provisions aimed at helping parties achieve a more national scope has had a harmful effect on this same objective. Some degree of flexibility—allowing, for example, local or provincial parties to compete in municipal and provincial council elections—would have brought about positive results and helped to strengthen national parties. Better results would have been achieved if effective barriers to participation on a national level had accompanied this flexibility at the municipal and provincial level.

These problems have worsened since the 1998 Constitution eliminated the national deputies. Until 1998, a minority of deputies was elected in a single nationwide district that attenuated the provincialism of political life, whereas the majority was elected using provinces as the electoral district. The national deputies were seen—both by the voters and by themselves—as guardians of a national mandate that the provincial deputies lacked.[15] Their elimination strengthened the perception of Congress as a forum of territorial representation that focuses on local problems.

The provincialization of the parties is also fueled by the parties' selection of candidates. In the process of candidate selection, parties constantly negotiate with local leaders, who can usually impose their own conditions because they have captive voters. The local leaders are usually linked to local interest groups, so parties are forced to be responsive to those interests. For this reason, deputies tend to feel a greater connection and commitment to the local interests than to the parties, which further promotes the idea that the deputy is a territorial representative with a binding mandate. Despite the problems derived from these negotiations over candidate selection, the debate over the degree of democratization in selecting candidates is important. A more open candidate selection could open up the space for the participation of sectors that might not otherwise participate in the process;, however, it could also be deemed as a way of including local oligarchic groups that in turn fuel the corporatist tendencies of Ecuadorian politics. In any case, candidates selected in this manner are the least likely to become disciplined party members on their legislative benches (Mejía 1998).

Alliances and Their Limitations

The prohibition of interparty electoral alliances that existed until the reforms of 1996 created an obstacle to building coalitions in Congress (see Table 4.1). The electoral law established that for municipal council members, provincial councilors, and both national and provincial deputies, each party needed to present its own list. This provision sought to strengthen parties, assuming that participation at all these levels of elections would require stable organizations and solid structures. However, the regulations brought about unintended consequences.

The prohibition on electoral coalitions fostered party system fragmentation since each party had to compete on its own. Pressured by the obligation to secure a minimum number of votes and present candidates in at least a minimum number of provinces, parties were forced to participate at each and every level. The inevitable result was the fragmentation of the system due to the enormous number of parties, most of them small, which under different circumstances might have formed alliances and thereby contributed to the formation of large ideological and electoral trends. Instead, parties competed with one another in a battle for access to government resources, and there were more incentives for interparty confrontation than for reaching agreements. The confrontational tendencies of Ecuadorian politics are largely due to these provisions rather than to the political culture.

Many local or provincial parties found that the regulations supported their strategy wherein seats are obtained via the proportional formula and the awarding of seats by remainder. Forced to participate on their own on all electoral levels and in the greatest possible number of provinces, parties used this opportunity to their own advantage. Many local caudillos employed this provision to negotiate successfully with small parties that, forced to compete on their own,

needed a certain number of votes to guarantee their presence in Congress or, at the very least, to comply with the required minimum number of votes.

Although the ban on coalitions was revoked in 1996, some barriers to coalitions remain. Electoral alliances are now allowed, but the label of only one of the coalition partners is used to identify the coalition. The other party or parties are forced to give up their identity. Because of this, parties have incentives to form alliances only when their chances of obtaining seats on their own are limited or nonexistent. The formation of coalitions depends mainly on whether a party believes it would fare better by running on its own or as part of a coalition, and not on the political and programmatic orientation of the alliance or the ideological principles guiding it. Coalitions are created for instrumental electoral purposes and not for the formation of large fronts identified by their principles, objectives, or platforms.

Since 1997, national coalitions have been uncommon. Generally, coalitions have been formed in provinces and municipalities, for elections held for provincial and municipal councils and for provincial deputies.[16] The elimination of national deputies and the flexibility afforded by establishing coalitions in specific provinces without compromising the respective parties in the rest of the country have motivated this pragmatic behavior. They have also heightened dispersion, since a cost-benefit calculation by a party can lead to infinite combinations, most of them inexplicable in terms of the coalition partners' programmatic positions.

The prohibition of alliances from 1979 to 1996 and later their liberalization and increased flexibility have transformed parties into umbrellas that shelter a wide range of factions that enjoy great autonomy in selecting candidates. Although parties are formally national organizations, in electoral practice they operate like provincial organizations with relative autonomy in selecting candidates.[17] A game is set up, revolving around parties with more or less ability to represent local interests, which is what really matters to the groups with which the parties have to negotiate. An additional ingredient surfaces in the provincialization of the parties and their increased flexibility or loss of ideological-programmatic positions (in other words, in their transformation to catch-all parties).

Immediate Reelection

From 1979 until 1994, the immediate reelection of all authorities chosen in popular elections, including deputies, was prohibited. *Reelección cruzada*, or crossover reelection, was established, whereby a deputy could move from one type of post to another, either from national to provincial deputy or vice versa. However, since there were only twelve national deputies, the possibility of returning to Congress via this path was slim. At most, only twenty-four deputies (34.8 percent of the total members of Congress at that time) would be able to win reelection, and only if all the national deputies were reelected as provincial

deputies and, at the same time, their seats were taken by provincial deputies who were elected as national deputies. This outcome was practically impossible, and it never occurred.

In 1983, when the Constitution underwent initial reforms, terms for all provincial deputies were set at two years, while the term of a national deputy remained four years.[18] Consequently, more than four-fifths of Congress had to be replaced every two years, with no possibility of immediate reelection and minimal hope of crossover reelection. The ban on immediate reelection brought instability to parliamentary activity. This instability in Congress was reinforced by the annual election of congressional leaders and annual renewal of legislative committees. It became a substantial burden for parties to find candidates for all of these positions, given the ban on immediate reelection.

The negative effects of constant congressional turnover became apparent not only in the instability in Congress—which assumed a short-term logic that affected legislative outcomes as well as its relationship with the executive branch—but also because political parties were forced to improvise to keep up with the situation. None of the parties, not even those with the most solid structures, could respond to this challenge. Their reserves of leaders and militants capable of carrying out legislative functions were exhausted. Parties had to call on individuals outside the party, generally local caudillos with popular electoral appeal but with no guarantee of loyalty or discipline to the party. This is one of the explanations for the emergence of "floating politicians" (Conaghan 1994) with limited loyalty to their parties.

Once again, the legal provisions resulted in outcomes radically contrary to those desired. Instead of supporting the renewal of political leaders, encouraging greater participation in popular elections, and helping to reduce personalism, the prohibition of immediate reelection fostered improvisation, bred instability, and accelerated the deterioration of the parties. It was an additional incentive for the presence of local caudillos in national politics and for the growing tendency toward the representation of local and corporatist interests.

Runoff Elections

In an attempt to strengthen the presidential mandate, the Constitution of 1979 established runoff elections if no candidate wins more than 50 percent of the valid votes in the first round. The runoff system was intended to guarantee that a president's legitimacy would be greater than that of presidents elected in the 1950s and 1960s, who were elected with a low percentage of the vote and only a small margin over their competitors. Allegedly, this lack of a clear popular mandate was one of the reasons for governmental instability.[19]

The runoff system requires a number of conditions not present in the country at the time it was established. As well, other components of the institutional

arrangement stood in the way of achieving the necessary conditions. A basic requirement for the runoff system to operate adequately is the existence of strong parties, with stable electoral support and, above all, the ability to influence the way their constituencies vote so that the second round reflects organic political decisions and not just the isolated electoral inclinations of each voter. In the absence of parties that fulfill this requirement, the second round of presidential voting represents the joint aggregation of separate wills, which does not generate stable and organic support for the government. These disparate wills have been, for the most part, channeled into negative votes against one of the final candidates rather than into votes in favor of another (Seligson and Córdova 2002).

For several reasons, including their inability to influence the way their followers vote, Ecuadorian parties have consistently avoided publicly supporting presidential candidates (except of course their own) in the second round (Conaghan 1995). As a result of the failure to forge electoral coalitions for the presidency, governing coalitions have not formed and sustained collaboration between the executive and the legislature. The entire post-1979 period has been characterized by confrontation between these two branches of power. This so-called *pugna de poderes*—legislative/executive conflict—has on occasion placed regime stability at risk and has generally hampered governments (Sánchez-Parga 1998).

This destructive behavior by parties is due to several factors, among them formal institutional design, and in particular the lack of incentives for parties to develop collaborative practices. The cost of participating in governing coalitions, especially when parties hope to see governments rapidly erode, is much higher than the cost of avoiding any electoral commitment in the second round.

The use of the two-round voting format in a system characterized by high fragmentation and volatility serves as an incentive for many parties to participate in presidential elections.[20] Because of the dispersion of votes, small parties have an opportunity—unavailable under other circumstances—to reach the runoff round and even win presidential elections. Parties can go on to the second round with relatively few votes, as has occurred on several occasions (see Table 4.4).

Since 1984, congressional elections have taken place at the same time as the first round of the presidential election, creating an additional incentive for parties to present presidential candidates. With a presidential candidate, a party's deputies enjoy better prospects of getting elected. Without a presidential candidate, parties have no way to offer future governmental benefits, so they are deprived of one of the main attractions of congressional elections in an environment where clientelism dominates. Therefore, parties generally present their own presidential candidate even when their chances of winning might be greater as part of an interparty coalition.

The benefits obtained by parties in legislative elections come at the expense of presidential elections. Party strategy is shaped by this context of great fragmentation. Parties know they can obtain influence disproportionate to their

TABLE 4.4

Share of Presidential Vote in First Round, 1978–2002

(% of valid votes)

Candidates	1979	1984	1988	1992	1996	1998	2002
First place	27.7	28.7	24.7	31.9	27.2	34.9	20.6
Second place	23.9	27.2	17.7	25.0	26.3	26.6	17.4
Third place	22.7	13.5	14.7	21.9	20.6	16.1	15.4
Fourth place	12.0	7.3	12.5	8.5	13.5	14.7	13.9
Fifth place	8.0	6.8	11.5	3.2	4.9	5.1	12.1
Sixth place	4.7	6.6	7.8	2.6	3.0	2.6	11.9
Seventh place		4.7	5.0	1.9	2.4		3.7
Eighth place		4.3	3.3	1.9	1.2		1.7
Ninth place		0.8	1.6	1.4	0.9		1.2
Tenth place			1.2	0.9			1.1
Eleventh place				0.5			0.9
Twelfth place				0.3			

SOURCE: Supreme Electoral Court.

size, and the two-round system for electing the president creates this possibility. This strategy consists not only of gaining seats in Congress, but also of laying the foundation for future relationships with the executive, regardless of who wins. As pointed out in the case of Brazil—quite similar to Ecuador in some ways—this strategy is generally linked to the pursuit and procurement of participation in the distribution of the national budget (patronage) (Amorin Neto and Santos 2001).

This subject cannot, therefore, be considered merely a question of the electoral timetable, or in other words, the election of deputies during the first round of the presidential election. The main problem lies in the incentives generated by the runoff system. This system creates an incentive for most parties to participate in presidential elections and lays the foundation for clientelistic relationships between the president and the members of Congress. Congressional elections have been held concurrently with the second round of presidential voting only once, in 1979, and afforded insufficient experience with which to judge whether this might reduce the dispersion of presidential votes and the number of parties represented in Congress (see Table 4.5).[21]

Personalized Voting with Open Lists

In 1997, based on the results of a popular referendum, the Ecuadorian electoral system underwent a major reform that eliminated the system of proportional representation and replaced it with personalized voting with open lists. Under this system, the parties' lists of candidates become nothing more than a means of presentation since voters cast their ballots for as many individual candidates as there were seats to be filled, regardless of their party affiliation. The voter could

TABLE 4.5

Size of Legislative Delegations, 1979–2002

(percentages of parties with different-sized delegations)

No. of deputies elected	1979	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2002
1	30.0%	26.7%	28.6%	25.0%	9.1%	30.8%	28.6%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
2	20.0	13.3	0.0	25.0	18.2	15.4	28.6	36.4	22.2	16.6
3	10.0	20.0	21.4	0.0	27.3	7.7	0.0	9.1	11.1	25.0
4	10.0	6.7	14.3	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	11.1	8.3
5	0.0	6.7	7.1	0.0	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3
6	0.0	6.7	7.1	8.3	0.0	7.7	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
7 to 10	10.0	13.3	7.1	25.0	18.2	7.7	14.3	9.1	11.1	0.0
11 to 20	10.0	0.0	14.3	0.0	27.3	15.4	7.1	18.2	11.1	25.0
21 and over	10.0	6.7	0.0	8.3	0.0	7.7	7.1	9.1	33.3	16.8

SOURCE: Supreme Electoral Court; Andrés Mejía's database.

vote a straight party line, but this option did not eliminate the personalized character of voting because it was but one of the multiple ways of accruing votes.

Contrary to a proportional representation system with a personal vote (also called a preference vote) in which the voter chooses one candidate from a given party or coalition, in Ecuador's 1997 system, each voter could chose as many candidates as there were seats in each province, from various lists. Dispersion could occur in the very act of voting, since the voter had several votes or fractions of votes, something that does not happen under most systems. The vote itself carried the seeds of dispersion. Therefore, a single person's vote could produce the same effect that would take the votes of several persons to accomplish in other electoral systems. This system provided maximum flexibility in choosing parties or, if one prefers, ideologies. In a large district, voters could cast votes for candidates from all over the political spectrum, causing the spatial model for voting (Downs 1957) to lose its power and the relationship between voters and parties to be almost completely annihilated.

The system's most notorious effects were seen in the large districts where the possibilities of selecting from different parties were greatest. The largest parties—those that underwent a process of consolidation throughout the post-1978 period and that helped support the stability of the party system—were the most affected, mostly because their electoral strongholds are in the largest districts. Because it adversely affected the main parties, this electoral system dealt a blow to the institutionalization of the party system. The open-list system also produced a dispersion of votes in the smaller districts. In most small districts,[22] the majority of voters distributed their votes widely.

The open-list system weakened parties and furthered the extreme personalism of politics (Pachano 1998). It is difficult to find a system that does a better job of fostering personalism and fragmentation. This electoral system fostered the floating character of both voters and politicians (Conaghan 1994, 1995). The displacement of votes from one party to another—the very foundation of dispersion and fragmentation—need not be put off until a later election since it could be accomplished in a single act of voting. And with it also came reduced possibilities of interpreting electoral results as a sanction or reward for different parties since no unified party preference was expressed when a voter chose candidates from several parties. In this way, the role of elections as a mechanism for assessing party performance (accountability) was significantly reduced. Although at the national level general tendencies could be discerned, they did not necessarily reflect the voters' positions since multiple positions were expressed in a single act of voting.

In conjunction with the ample opening awarded independents—established in 1994 as a result of another referendum—this electoral system left the party system vulnerable to deepening problems. It contributed to personalism, already a clear tendency in previous elections and one of the main factors contributing

to the weakening of parties. It was introduced in a context of animosity toward parties, arising fundamentally from the poor performance of governments—invariably identified with certain parties—since the mid-1990s.

Diffuse Multipartism: Interests and Practices

The institutional framework described in the previous pages unfolds within a social context characterized by diversity. Ecuadorian society is plural in social, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and regional terms (Almeida 1999; T. Bustamante 1992; Ibarra 1992; Deler 1987; Handelsman, n.d.; Rivera 1998; Pachano 1985). Social scientists have identified the ethnic aspects of this diversity and regional differences as important political factors, cleavages that define behavior and identities. Considerable scholarly attention has centered on ethnicity, understandably, given the impact of the indigenous mobilizations beginning in 1990, as well as on the formation of Pachakutik, the first party of ethnic origin, and its participation in national politics. A constant and active presence has made the indigenous a visible actor on the national scene, although Pachakutik is a small party confined to a few provinces.[23] The presence of an ethnic party has generated widespread interest in ethnicity and politics in the social sciences (Van Cott 2003, 2004).

Ecuador's regional differences have been studied at length (Quintero 1991; Pachano 1985; León 1994; Deler 1987). Diversity is expressed in the form of regional societies differentiated along economic, social, cultural, and political lines. The sources of this differentiation are structural, by which I mean that it derives from those factors that constitute a society and therefore greatly impact its formation and behavior. Each of these regional societies takes the shape of relatively differentiated spaces in which specific social relationships are established and build their own power structures, giving rise to strong regional identities as well as unique behavior and habits. Social and political actors play the national political game more with their own regional demands than as actors on a national level. Political parties and national instances of representation are always heavily loaded with subnational demands and interests. This problem is aggravated by long-standing administrative centralization.

The existence of regional societies means that politics takes place on two levels. First, a political game in the regions—or in subnational arenas—revolves around controlling provincial and cantonal institutions. In this arena, local issues are salient, politicians proceed through an important stage in their careers, and collective actors are formed and battle for representation of regional interests. These political actors must also operate as expressions of national forces or at least establish a close relationship with them. The prohibition of the formation of subnational parties creates a mandatory relationship between local issues and the parties that, because of constitutional and legal provisions, must be national. Although this relationship has grown more flexible with the introduction of

independent political candidates—since independents are not required to maintain a national organization and can limit themselves to local levels—it is still a burdensome imposition for parties.

Subnational issues are very present in national politics. Regional demands and the social groups that represent them have an enormous effect on national issues. The power of subnational identities and regional issues in Ecuadorian politics is clearly visible in the constant presence of these regional problems, needs, and demands at the national level. National political actors are forced to take a stand on subnational issues, thus completing a circle that inhibits the identification, processing, and solution of national problems.

This interaction between the national and the subnational is at the heart of political representation in Ecuador. What is represented, who represents, and how they are represented are the fundamental questions. In this game, powerful subnational actors are forced to act as emissaries of a binding mandate issued from their regions in order to ensure their own survival, while weak national actors, attempting to ensure *their* own survival, are forced to embrace subnational demands. The subnational actors do not prioritize the interests of the country as a whole, even though they act in national fora such as the National Congress. To abandon this provincially oriented behavior would be political suicide for politicians from the provinces since they would be giving up their reason for existing, as well as for those coming out of the national arena since they would no longer have access to the subnational levels. If a political movement emerges at the subnational level, it must make the transition to the national level, not only because of legal determinations but also because that is where decisions are made and resources are distributed. Conversely, if a political movement emerges at the national level, it must penetrate the subnational levels because that is where the interests that motivate the voters lie.[24] The decisive factors in this two-sided game lie for the most part in the institutional/legal framework, especially in elements of the electoral system outlined above.

That is the problem that confronts the political parties. Their dilemma lies in the necessity of either consolidating into national parties capable of working for the general interest and structuring government proposals, or remaining subnational parties with loyal constituencies but continually dependent upon socially and spatially limited interests. In the light of the last twenty years, the latter is clearly the stronger tendency. To ensure their permanency, parties have strengthened their links to regional or provincial interests and secured positions in electoral strongholds, even at the risk of sacrificing proposals of national scope and giving up the possibility of producing positive results during their terms in government. A result of this dynamic has been the provincialization of parties and of politics in general. Provincialization can be understood in two ways. First, it refers to the electoral reclusion of parties in the strictly defined arenas in which they obtain their votes. Second, it also refers to the predominance of subnational

TABLE 4.6

Electoral Strongholds of the Main Political Parties, 1979–2002

(share of national party vote won in First and Second provinces, provincial deputy elections)

	Party							
	PSC		PRE[a]		ID		DP[a]	
Year	Province	%	Province	%	Province	%	Province	%
1979	Guayas	30.72			Pichincha	34.11		
	Pichincha	30.05			Guayas	16.23		
1984	Pichincha	30.55	Guayas	76.37	Pichincha	26.51	Manabí	16.39
	Guayas	27.60	Pichincha	10.92	Guayas	11.02	Pichincha	13.45
1988	Guayas	38.05	Guayas	65.82	Pichincha	27.03	Pichincha	33.22
	Pichincha	19.15	Pichincha	5.37	Guayas	14.59	Guayas	11.04
1992	Guayas	51.25	Guayas	38.97	Pichincha	26.06	Pichincha	30.37
	Pichincha	6.35	Manabí	9.24	Guayas	10.92	Azuay	12.77
1996	Guayas	44.78	Guayas	34.34	Pichincha	29.55	Pichincha	42.39
	Pichincha	13.53	Manabí	15.24	El Oro	15.74	Guayas	9.25
1998	Guayas	44.80	Guayas	40.03	Pichincha	47.38	Pichincha	27.86
	Pichincha	15.55	Manabí	14.47	Azuay	9.59	Guayas	26.34
2002	Guayas	78.51	Guayas	59.96	Pichincha	66.02	Pichincha	39.45
	Pichincha	6.98	Manabí	12.88	Guayas	14.14	Manabí	29.22

SOURCE: Supreme Electoral Court.

[a]Did not compete in 1979.

issues in national politics, which in turn has a negative effect on policies and governability. Provincialization is one of the main characteristics of the party system, and in Ecuador it contributes to others such as fragmentation and atomization.

To appreciate the magnitude of provincialization in Ecuadorian parties, consider the parties' electoral behavior in terms of territorial origin and respective number of votes. As Table 4.6 shows, the parties with the most seats in Congress (PSC, ID, PRE, and DP) have won a high percentage of their votes in only one province, clearly out of proportion with that province's importance within the national electorate. Guayas, Pichincha, Manabí, and Azuay are the provinces with the greatest population. But the figures that the parties win in their strongholds greatly exceed the proportion of voters that these provinces represent countrywide. While during the post-1978 period Guayas has fluctuated between 24.0 percent and 27.5 percent of the national electorate, and Pichincha between 18.0 percent and 20.0 percent, the parties with electoral strongholds in these provinces exceed these figures by amounts that have grown in recent years.[25]

Some parties fare well in the Coastal provinces (Guayas, Manabí) and others fare well in the Sierra provinces (Pichincha, Azuay). The pronounced regional electoral differences have been a constant in Ecuador's political and electoral history. Electoral strength in one region automatically equals weakness in another, which explains the formation of impenetrable electoral strongholds. The parties are severely limited in achieving a proportional distribution of votes throughout

the nation. Given the relatively balanced distribution of population between the Coast and the Sierra, and given the absence of a third region capable of offsetting this balance (due to the small population of the Amazon and Galápagos provinces), no party is likely to win a majority at the national level, something that in fact has not occurred during the entire post-1979 period. In this sense, the provincialization of the parties is one of the main reasons for party weakness and the fragmentation of the system as a whole.

Regional discord is one of the most visible characteristics of Ecuador's political system. Region tends to overshadow other political cleavages, so that the Ecuadorian political game is defined more by the conflict between territorially constructed identities than by economic or ideological cleavages. Its influence is obvious in the actors' behavior and in the content of the national political agenda, and it forces political parties to act accordingly. The parties must represent spatially defined interests. The possibility of obtaining an even distribution of the vote for the different parties across the whole of the national territory is minimal, as is the space in which to build a national agenda.

This regionalization is clearly seen in the work by Mainwaring and Jones (2003), who document that Ecuador had the least nationalized distribution of the vote among seventeen countries in the western hemisphere. The authors created an index of party system nationalization. Between 1979 and 1996, Ecuador attained an average coefficient of 0.57 on a scale of 0 to 1.[26] Only Brazil (0.58) approximated Ecuador's low level of nationalization. Bolivia scored 0.77, Chile and Uruguay 0.87, Costa Rica 0.90, and Honduras 0.92.

Another indicator of nationalization, the territorial distribution index (TDI) measures the distance between the number of votes a party wins in each province and the proportion of the national electorate in that province. A party is national in character if its votes are distributed by province in approximately the same proportion as the province's share of the national electorate. This indicator is constructed by adding together the differences between the proportion represented by each province in the national electorate and the proportion of votes each province has in the party's total number of party votes. It compares the weight of each province in the nationwide electorate with that of the provincial votes in the total number of party votes. Each party is assigned a figure for each election (Table 4.7).[27] A lower number indicates less distance from the nationwide distribution of the electorate and consequently a party's greater national presence.

Regardless of the indicator used, the distribution of each party's votes differs markedly across different provinces. Based on the TDI, national distribution has deteriorated throughout the post-1979 period. Smaller parties (below 10 percent of the vote) show the most uneven electoral performance across different provinces. This means there is a relationship between the fragmentation of the party system and the uneven distribution of party votes across provinces. This is an expression of the relationship between small parties and local interests, and

TABLE 4.7

Territorial Distribution Index (TDI) of Main Parties, 1979–2002

	1979	1984	1988	1990	1992	1996	1998	2002	Average
PSC	22.1	18.1	14.0	29.1	26.5	20.4	21.1	52.4	25.45
ID	22.8	20.1	18.5	19.2	25.6	33.9	23.9	48.1	26.50
MPD[a]	18.0	24.6	30.9	26.7	31.5	25.4	24.1	34.2	26.93
DP		24.1	26.1	36.9	32.2	28.6	21.2	50.0	31.30
FRA		23.7	27.9	39.0	29.1	27.1	44.4		31.86
UDP-FADI[a]	22.6	24.3	57.8	26.6	33.6		26.4		31.87
PRE		51.4	39.0	27.4	22.4	23.1	27.1	37.3	32.53
CFP[a]	17.9	32.3	22.9	36.6	35.8	37.8	46.3	35.9	33.20
PCE[a]	45.3	41.6	23.5	24.1	48.6	44.9	33.4		37.32
APRE[a]	46.3	43.6	22.9	31.9	30.7	36.4	60.8		38.93
PSE[a]	41.2	50.4	35.9	38.4	34.4	45.5	39.5	42.5	40.99
PLRE[a]	28.6	26.5	38.5	48.4	53.3	27.1	52.0	72.1	43.31
MUPP-NP[a]						54.2	87.7	80.8	74.22
Average	29.4	31.7	29.8	32.02	33.6	33.7	39.1	50.4	

SOURCE: Supreme Electoral Court.

NOTE: Empty cells indicate party did not compete that year.

[a]Parties with an average number of votes below 10 percent in that period.

of the fact that their presence in the national arena is due to legal imperatives and that the national arena is the only real space in which important decision making occurs. Remaining on the fringes of the national institutions, specifically Congress, would cost the local parties dearly.

The provincialization of the parties is directly expressed in parliamentary representation. As seen in Table 4.8, the configuration of largest parties from the Coastal and Sierra provinces is clearer at this level.[28]

In sum, the regulations designed to foster the formation of parties with national scope have turned out to be useless. Probably, the explanation is that these measures were not meant to regulate already existing behavior, but instead to generate new behavior designed to consolidate a modern political system. Therefore, instead of being measures aimed at channeling the demands and the representation of regional or local interests, they were a way of denying or hiding these interests. These regulations were intended to impose certain behaviors, and they ignored the concrete conditions of the provinces and of the regional arenas in general. For this reason, from the outset there was a risk that actors would use other channels to articulate their provincial or local demands. And when these other ways failed to materialize—which could have been prevented through a process of decentralization of and increased flexibility in party and electoral laws—regional and local demands quickly found their way into the mechanisms designed specifically to evade them.

Due to the legal impossibility of forming parties with strictly local or regional scope, the national parties—rather, those forced to be national—had to take on

TABLE 4.8
Regional Distribution of Origin of Deputies, by Party, 1979–2002

Party	Regional origin			
	Costal (Coastal)	Sierra	Amazonia-Galápagos	Total
PSC	66.7%	31.8%	1.6%	100%
PRE	75.3%	23.4%	1.4%	100%
ID	30.2%	65.5%	4.3%	100%
DP	28.3%	66.4%	5.3%	100%

SOURCES: Supreme Electoral Court; Freidenberg 2000.

the demands and the representation that would have been the province of the former. Conceivably, this might not have occurred within a flexible framework that allowed regional or local parties to coexist with national parties, provided that the functions and scope of action for each of these had previously been clearly defined. However, by applying general laws to diverse situations and, above all, by giving these laws the power to transform practices and to generate behavior that turned out to be artificial, the local parties were checked but their functions were transferred to parties expected to be national in character. Thus, national parties were forced to adapt to this distortion or run the risk of isolating themselves from voters and losing their ability to represent them. This forced them into a situation of dependency with regard to local or regional interests, and the effort to respond to local interests overshadowed ideological and programmatic considerations. Thus was completed a circle comprised of (a) the presence of regional identities; (b) inflexible laws that sought to deny or minimize them; (c) the absence of adequate mechanisms to express these local and provincial interests; and (d) parties forced to meet the interests of regional electorates. The main consequence was the shifting of local and regional issues to the national arena, especially Congress, where debate can no longer be separated from territorial determinations and the game described earlier between the national and the subnational must be played.

Forced to act as representatives of particularistic local interests, parties act as voices for narrow social and economic groups. The corporatist nature of politics in Ecuador can be explained to a great extent by this relationship between regionally defined interests and political representation since pressure groups achieve a dominant presence in local arenas and dominate representation. Political operations become tremendously complex, especially with regard to the pursuit of agreements and the fostering of national politics, which takes place in an arena where particularistic and directly represented interests battle one another.

The indigenous peoples' presence in Ecuadorian politics is emblematic of this link between localized interests and the provincialization of the parties. These

indigenous parties have stronger regional roots than other parties because the geographic location of the indigenous populations creates a regional bias. The indigenous population is located almost exclusively in the Sierra and Amazonia provinces. Therefore Pachakutik, the principle partisan voice of these groups, wins votes almost exclusively in these regions. It is an important player in the Sierra and Amazon, but faces enormous difficulties in winning votes in the Coastal provinces. Its electoral shortcomings in the Coastal provinces have prevented it from developing a broader base, not only in electoral terms, but also with regard to the possible structuring of proposals of national scope that go beyond the particularistic interests of the indigenous peoples. Pachakutik has adopted the same logic as the system as a whole, forced to take refuge in local bastions in order to build up its electoral strength at the cost of not having a presence in other regions.

One can extend what has been said about Pachakutik to all Ecuadorian political parties. Even the largest parties have adopted this strategy of representing group interests in order to win a large number of votes in some provinces. This is the dilemma facing the parties and giving rise to the problems of representation that, paradoxically, are not the ones most analysts emphasize when they refer to the crisis of representation.

Crisis of Representation or Crisis of Regulation?

The problems facing the party system originated basically in the rules that regulate them. Their inorganic character—the fact they do not all point in the same direction—the contradictions between their separate components, and the reforms constantly introduced in response to short-term interests prevent the system from attenuating the structural conditions surrounding it. These structural conditions give rise to actors, orientations, and behaviors that are ill suited to the construction and consolidation of a political forum of national scope or politics built around an arena wherein the general interest can take shape. These structural conditions would have had a less negative impact if another institutional design—specifically, a different electoral system—were in place. Structural heterogeneity is not necessarily an obstacle to the elaboration of national proposals and, consequently, to the consolidation of national parties. The experiences of countries as diverse or more diverse than Ecuador (Spain, United States, Germany, Switzerland) have proven the power of institutional design to forge national parties and interests.

When they speak of the Ecuadorian crisis of representation, most analysts allude to aspects other than institutional design and refer instead to social, economic, and cultural factors (Arias 1995; Burbano 1998; Dávalos 2001). These analyses emphasize the results produced by the system, and they question the capacity of parties and democratic institutions more generally to represent interests.

They usually claim that links between the represented and the representatives are weak. In turn, such weak linkages are considered a threat to the smooth operation of democratic institutions and even to the system's stability. In this manner these analysts finally arrive at problems of governability, through a forced identification with the problems of representation or representativeness.

A connection does exist between problems of representation and governability, but not the kind of connection that has usually been suggested in Ecuador. The political system fails to yield satisfactory results not because of a rupture between the represented and the representatives—such a rupture does not exist or does not exist as acutely as the analysts claim. Nor is the main problem a limited ability to represent interests—this ability is actually excessive given the particularistic nature of representation in Ecuador. Rather, the problems of governability that stem from the system of representation arise because of the game that emerges out of a defective institutional design. The impossibility of fostering policies with national scope, the short-term focus of political action, and the predominance of local and group interests impose a logic that leads to the immobilization of governments and Congress. The ongoing game between powerful local actors and weak national actors, driven and fostered by the institutional design, goes a long way in explaining the political system's low capacity. The provincialization of the parties, a result of the electoral system described above, largely explains problems that have not been treated frequently enough by Ecuadorian social scientists and, on the contrary, have remained hidden behind ideas such as the crisis of representation.

Notes

1. Until the 2002 elections, the four biggest parties of the post-1979 period (PSC, PRE, ID, and DP) displayed a tendency toward an increased share of the vote notwithstanding cyclical oscillations. Ecuador is halfway between the collapse of the political parties of Peru and Venezuela and the stability of Colombia and Bolivia.

2. Since the transition to democracy, a decline is visible in indicators such as the gross domestic product, poverty indexes, distribution of income, the proportion of the budget assigned to social expenditures, and the population's buying power. From 1980 to 2000, there was zero growth in the gross domestic product; per capita income fell by 0.3 percent between 1981 and 1991 and by 0.6 percent between 1991 and 2001; poverty increased from 34 percent of the population in 1990 to 56 percent in 2002.

3. An analysis of the substantive outputs of the Ecuadorian political system is beyond the scope of this chapter. I only make general references to this subject without ignoring its importance in any analysis of the problems of representation.

4. According to Mainwaring and Scully (1995, 4), one of the criteria for the institutionalization of party systems is the permanency of electoral rules, together with the

solidity of the organizations, reduced electoral volatility, the existence of roots in the society, and operations dependent upon bureaucratic routines more than on personalities or charismatic leadership.

5. The Social Cristiano, Roldosista Ecuatoriano, Izquierda Democrática, and Democracia Popular parties have won as much as 80 percent of the valid vote. In the 2002 elections this vote share dropped noticeably, although this is not an indication of a party collapse of the magnitude experienced in Peru and Venezuela.

6. Small parties have disappeared as a result of a legal provision that requires that they win a minimum share of the vote in two consecutive elections in order to maintain legal recognition. This legal barrier has fluctuated between 4 percent and 5 percent, and has not remained continuously in effect during this period. This is a barrier only to registration and not to representation since parties that do not meet the minimum maintain their seats in parliament and in other elective offices even after the second consecutive failure to meet the threshold.

7. The Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano, the Frente Radical Alfarista, the Partido Liberal Radical, and the Movimiento Pachakutik have repeatedly done just this. Supported by the absence of any true barrier to representation, they have survived several elections.

8. Snyder (2001, 149) considers the problems of malapportionment between voters and seats to be one of the causes of unjust elections, on a par with the buying of votes, the altering of outcomes, and electoral fraud.

9. Although regions do not constitute an official administrative-political division and are not a part of the electoral design, in the country's political and social life they carry considerable weight.

10. This was one of the reforms introduced by the National Constituent Assembly during the constitution-making episode of 1998.

11. The number of members of the National Congress has fluctuated constantly. The number of deputies increased from 69 in 1979 to 123 in 2000, with 71 between 1984 and 1988, 72 in 1990, 77 in 1992, 72 in 1994, 82 in 1996, 123 in 1998, and 100 since 2000.

12. The most notorious example of the influence of small parties was the Frente Radical Alfarista (Radical Alfarista Front, or FRA). Although it never had more than three deputies, it gained the presidency of the Congress on two occasions. When Congress unseated President Abdalá Bucaram in 1997 and appointed an interim president—in clear violation of the Constitution—it elected the supreme leader of the FRA, Fabián Alarcón.

13. The Ecuadorian political system has been constantly reformed since 1979. This has become a source of instability since the country lacks a stable normative framework to guide the behavior of political actors. A summary of the many reforms introduced since 1979 can be found in Table 4.1.

14. Other provisions regulate various aspects of internal party life and express the orientation of the new regulations and the parties' role. The obligation to participate in a minimum number of provinces refers to multimember elections: elections for municipal councils, provincial councils, and the National Congress.

15. There was always a differentiation between national and provincial deputies, with regard not only to their electoral districts but also to their functions. When in 1983 the provincial deputy's term was reduced to two years, the national deputy's term remained at four. The minimum age requirement for provincial deputies is 25, while it was 30 for national deputies. And although not in the end adopted, a proposal was made that would require candidates for the presidency of the Congress to be limited to national deputies.

16. Only twice, in 1996 and 2002, have national alliances been formed for presidential and legislative elections. But even so, in 2002, the parties that formed this national alliance entered into different coalitions in the provinces.

17. The newspaper *El Comercio* drew attention to the importance of the parties' provincial politics in a series of reports published between February and August 2003. Each party's selection of candidates responds to the specificities of a certain province.

18. The change in the electoral calendar was more profound. The presidential and legislative terms were cut from five to four years and the term of a provincial deputy to two years. The goal of increased stability and continuity through longer terms was therefore subordinated.

19. This perception was wrong. There is no correlation between presidents elected with a low percentage of the votes and instability of their governments.

20. The Ecuadorian party system is one of the most fragmented and volatile in Latin America (Conaghan 1995; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mejía 2002). There are few studies on this subject. For example, there has been little exploration of the relationship between party system fragmentation or electoral volatility and particularistic practices such as clientelism and corporatism, or between the provincialization of politics and parties.

21. The scheduling of parliamentary elections to coincide with the second round of the presidential election may affect the percentage of votes won by the party of the winning candidate; in 1979 this candidate's party achieved the highest percentage of votes for Congress during the entire period. But this too can be questioned, since it applied only to the winner and not to the other second-round presidential candidate, whose party did not fare well in the congressional election.

22. In the 1997 election, in seven of the nine districts that elected two deputies, candidates from two different parties won. In five of the seven districts that elected three deputies, three different parties elected one candidate each (Pachano 1998).

23. Pachakutik has taken part in elections since 1996. Its share of the vote (based on the average number of deputies and provincial and municipal councilors) peaked in 1998 at less than 5 percent of valid votes. In 2002, although it backed the winning presidential candidate, Pachakutik barely surpassed that percentage. The party has achieved significant results in local elections, especially mayoral elections in cantons with a large indigenous population, but it has been unable to penetrate several provinces, especially the Coastal ones. Certain actions, such as Pachakutik's support of the January 2000 coup that ousted President Mahuad, have led to greater renown but have at the same time limited the party's electoral growth.

24. Political parties have pushed this tendency to the limit by granting privileges to the municipalities and provincial councils, where they have strengthened themselves electorally and where at the same time they have been able to develop successful administrations. The cases of the Partido Social Cristiano (PSC) in the mayor's office in Guayaquil and the Izquierda Democrática (ID) in Quito are examples.

25. The only exceptions—the Partido Social Cristiano and the Izquierda Democrática between 1979 and 1986—illustrate the provincialization of parties that had a national scope during the first elections in the post-1979 period.

26. The indicator uses the Gini coefficient to measure inequality of distribution, in this case the votes obtained by each party in electoral districts or subnational units. In this application it has been inverted (1/Gini): a higher score equals a more nationalized distribution of votes (Mainwaring and Jones 2003, 142).

27. The indicator is the product of the sum total of absolute values taken from the difference between the weight of the province in the census (*padrón*) and the party's provincial votes, multiplied by the weight the province carries. The following formula can be used to express this: $TDI = (\Sigma|P_n - VP_n|P)/2$, where P_n is the weight carried by each province in the electoral census and VP_n is the weight of provincial votes over the

party's national voting. This is similar to the procedure used by Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 104ff.) to measure deviation from proportionality. Thanks to Andrés Mejía for help in arriving at this indicator.

28. The Coastal provinces are underrepresented as a result of using provinces as electoral districts and because only parties with the greatest number of votes during the period are included. The small parties are local or provincial groups and including them would mean working with a constant and not a variable.

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