

**When Paper Stones are Not Enough:  
Party System Institutionalization and Social Protest in Latin America**

Omar Coronel  
Maggie Shum  
University of Notre Dame  
[ocoronel@nd.edu](mailto:ocoronel@nd.edu)  
[mshum@nd.edu](mailto:mshum@nd.edu)

Political Parties and Social Movements

Paper prepared for the VIII Latin American Congress of Political Science, organized by the Latin American Association of Political Science (ALACIP). Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú ,  
Lima, July 22-24, 2015

## **Abstract**

This research shows the impact of low levels of party system institutionalization (PSI) on the high level of illegal protests in Latin America. Previous works have argued that a lower level of PSI leads to a higher level of social protest and vice versa (Rice 2003, Arce 2010). Having in mind researches that have directly questioned this relation (Su 2012) and others that have underlined the relevance of other institutions (Machado et al. 2011), we develop a theoretical specification and use a different measure of social protest. First, we argue that the PSI level's effect varies if we divide protest between legal and illegal. This study shows that low levels of PSI increment the level of illegal protests. However, there are no clear effects on the level of legal protests. Second, in contrast to previous studies, we use individual-level data to measure the protest level. We use the Latinobarómetro data base, the only one that allows us to differentiate between legal and illegal protest participation.

## **Introduction**

Representation is a central function of political parties in an institutionalized party system<sup>1</sup>. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) explained that social conflict in the context of European universal enfranchisement produced the first modern political parties. Step by step, electoral democracy pushed protests into a regularized traffic system by replacing stones with votes (Przeworski & Sprague 1986). In countries where citizens trust their parties to express and fight for their demands, these political organizations became the central actors of the representative system. This does not mean protests disappear but they certainly became structured by parties, following more institutionalized channels such as petitions, strikes and legal demonstrations. In contrast, countries where parties failed to express and channel, social conflict became more prone to illegal protests such as block roads or occupying public buildings. Thus, we expect to find that the lower the level of party system institutionalization (PSI), the higher the level of illegal protests, and vice versa. Likewise, the higher the level of PSI, the higher the level of legal protests, and vice versa.

Although PSI and contentious collective action theories are connected through the topics of representation and conflict, there is a scarcity in the literature addressing this bridge. The literature focusing on weak PSI has mostly explore on its consequences on electoral system, economic policies and party collapse. While the impact of weak PSI on the rise of outsiders, reduced time horizons in decision making, and greater policy instability is well documented, the literature has not explored how weak PSI can shape citizens' political participation outside electoral ballots box. Likewise, although the literature on causes of contentious collective action

---

<sup>1</sup> "To say that a party system becomes structured amounts to saying that it has reached a stage of consolidation at which it can, and actually does, perform a channeling function" (Sartori 1976, 41)

has pay attention to the structure of political opportunities, it has mostly focused on the types of regime, the state, and the government but not specifically on party system. At best, it pays attention to how left-wing parties can become a strategic ally of social movements, and how social movements may transform into political parties (Van Cott 2007).

However, there has been some research about the relation between PSI and protest in Latin America during the last decade. The variation of protests against market reforms led some researchers to pay attention to institutional incentives. Rice (2003) and Arce (2010) found quantitative and qualitative evidence showing that while strong PSI hinders social protest, inchoate PSI fosters it. Nevertheless, more recently, authors like Machado et al. (2011) and Su (2012) have found different results. Su argues that it is not PSI that explains the level of protest but the level of institutionalization of the opposition parties. Moreover, Machado et al. found that while trust in parties leads to less protests in countries where other institutions are strong, it also leads to more protest where other institutions are weak.

Therefore, our goal in this paper was to test the impact of PSI on social protests in Latin America. We acknowledge that PSI may not sufficiently explain the variation of protest in the region but we think this institutional dimension is one of the most important variables to understand the level and different types of protest. Taking into account that the established literature presents conflicting results, we argue that low PSI increments illegal protest while reducing legal ones.

### **Literature Review**

Mainwaring and Scully (1995) state that the concept of PSI includes four dimensions: stability in interparty competition, the existence of parties that have somewhat stable roots in society, acceptance of parties and elections as the legitimate institutions that determine who governs, and party organizations with reasonably stable rules and structures (1995, 1). The authors explain that PSI is characterized by “help[ing] groups express their interests while allowing governments to govern. Party systems select, aggregate, and help absorb social cleavages. They channel political demands and can dampen political conflicts. Because parties become the most important agents of expression, they become dominant actors in shaping and managing patterns of conflict” (1995, 23). Thus, an inchoate party system cannot efficiently channel conflict and participation and gets closer to what Huntington classified as a praetorian system: where social forces confront each other nakedly and multiple currencies of power

compete. Considering this, we should expect weak PSI to instigate social conflict, with citizens choosing to use non-institutional channels.

Although the connection between weak PSI and non-institutional channels to express demands was implied in Mainwaring and Scully's definitions, most of the research about the consequences of PSI focuses on its effects over electoral behavior and political elite's incentives to coordinate. While stable party systems make clear what the range of governing options is, the entry barriers to new parties in a weak PSI are lower and the likelihood that personalistic anti-system politicians –outsiders – can become the head of government is much higher. In a similar vein, Moser and Scheiner (2012) argue that due to the lack of information to guide voters, party systems with little democratic experience can change the expected outcomes for electoral rules. Other scholars, such as Florez-Macías (2012) and Levitsky (2014) focus on how PSI shapes politicians' interactions and decision-making process. The former claims that under a weak PSI, the centrifugal force tends to attract political outsiders with little incentive for negotiation with other political actors, and more likely to implement radical policy changes. Finally, Levitsky argues that in countries with weak PSI, politicians operate with a shorter time horizon, which weakens their capacity for collective action. Furthermore, there are little incentives for politicians to invest in democratic institutions but rather to engage in corruption.

On the other hand, the literature on contentious politics also overlooks the relation between protest and political parties. The one strand of social movement theory that incorporates political institution in their explanation of protest is political opportunity theory (McAdam 1982, Tarrow 1994, Rucht 1996). It posits that the liberalizing or repressive strategies of regimes, states and governments can either open or restrict opportunities for *different repertoires* of collective action (from legal to illegal). Although this theory does not directly link party system institutionalization to different forms of protest, authors like Rucht do argue that protestors' access to the party system would lead to more formal movements, tending toward interest groups or party models (1996, 192)<sup>2</sup>. Then, this theory provides us a useful argument to support the connection between PSI and social protest: a strong PSI should lead to more institutionalized

---

<sup>2</sup> When Kitchelt (2005) defines the transition from movements to parties, he includes this opportunity structure dimension as the *barriers to entry* (2006, 282). The literature on electoral laws and party systems acknowledge the more institutionalized constrains (Tagapera & Shugart 1989). Moreover, there is a new literature addressing the conversion of protest or movements into parties in Latin America and Africa (Deonnandan & Close 2007, Van Cott 2007, LeBas 2011). However, in this paper we want to focus on how the functioning of the party system, as an institution, has an effect on protests.

protest by incorporating new demands, due to its deep roots in society. A party system without these roots will not be able to adapt to social change and, therefore, protestors will be *pushed* to use alternative paths by this closed opportunity structure.

Nevertheless, as we mentioned, some authors explore the connection between PSI and protests in Latin America, arriving at different results. During the 1990s, the implementation of neoliberal reforms in Latin America led to a weakening of civil society organizations and thus witnesses the decline of social protest in most of the region (Roberts 2009). However, the economic recession of the late 1990s and the broken promises of the Washington Consensus fostered the spread of waves of protest. Strong mobilization against privatization and regulations favoring foreign investors has spread and remains in some countries. Rice (2003) argues that the degree of PSI within a country conditions the nature, scope, and intensity of resistance to market reform. Using quantitative and qualitative analysis<sup>3</sup>, Rice found that countries with low electoral volatility, low party fragmentation and low levels of polarization tend to experience a lesser degree of social protest as popular sector demands are effectively channeled into the political system. Conversely, weakly institutionalized party systems tend to experience higher degree of protests, which are likely to become radicalized. In the same vein, Arce (2010) argues that the quality of representation embodied in political parties structures the level of societal conflict.<sup>4</sup> He found that countries with high levels of electoral volatility and legislative fragmentation experience greater levels of protest activity; “weaker and smaller parties produce a political vacuum, which societal actors seize to achieve their goals” (2010, 682).

Yet, other authors find no significant relation between PSI and protest. Su (2012) questions Rice and Arce’s findings, arguing that stronger partisanship, proper of strong PSI, may lead to more protest activities under particular conditions (Finkel & Opp 1991; Rudig 2010). He claims that instead of PSI, it is the difference between government and opposition parties that explains protest variation. Su shows that a country would experience more antigovernment protests when the opposition parties are more institutionalized, *ceteris paribus*.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the

---

<sup>3</sup> Rice used the Information Services on Latin America (ISLA) periodical collection to cover protest data in 18 Latin American countries from 1978 to 1995. And for the qualitative analysis, she selects the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), i.e. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

<sup>4</sup> Arce used the BANK’s Cross-National Time Series Data Archive to cover 17 Latin American countries from 1978 to 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Su used two datasets: first, the King and Lowe’s 10 Million International Dyadic Events Dataset which covers anti-government protests in 18 Latin American countries from 1990 to 2004. Second, he uses the BANK’s dataset in the same countries and for the same period to provide a robustness check.

level of institutionalization of the governing party does not have significant effect in reducing the antigovernment protests in the country. Finally, from a different perspective, Machado et al. (2011) explore the impact of the quality of political institutions – congress capability, judicial independence and bureaucratic quality – on protest participation<sup>6</sup>. They argue that when institutions function well, citizens are more likely to participate through institutional arenas; whereas when they are weak, more direct channels of participation might be chosen. Moreover, they find that those who have more trust in political parties are less likely to participate in protest in countries where institutions are also relatively strong. Likewise, citizens who have more trust in political parties are also *more* likely to participate in protest in countries where institutions are relatively weak.

### **Arguments and Hypotheses**

In this paper, we will attempt to explore the consequences of party system institutionalization on social protest. Taking advantage of a dialogue between the PSI and contentious collective action literature, our goal is to test the differentiated consequences on legal and illegal protests.

In contrast with previous studies that looked at protests as one uniform activity, we consider that disaggregating social protests into legal and illegal ones reveals the nuances between different repertoires. While legal protests such as pacific demonstrations, signing petitions or contacting officials still requires citizens to trust the party system to process their demands, illegal protest such as occupying buildings and blocking traffic are high risk repertoires that imply a disregard of parties as meaningful interlocutors or representation channels.

We believe that under a weak party system, in which parties either lack a clear programmatic platform or fail to adhere to their party brand (Lupu 2014), we would witness a higher level of illegal protest activities. The mechanism that contributes to the rise of street protest would be citizens' perception whether the party system and democracy are functioning well, as well as the degree of confidence citizens have on political institutions such as the congress, political parties and judiciary. The role of negative emotions towards the system has been linked to a higher level of risk acceptance that drives citizens to choose political outsiders rather than candidates from established parties (Seawright 2012). Following this logic, we extend the argument that along with a heightened sense of risk acceptance and a weakly institutionalized

---

<sup>6</sup> Machado et al. used the LAPOP data set for 2008 to cover 17 Latin American countries.

party system, citizens have a higher incentive to seek out alternative paths, even if they are unauthorized, in order to have their demands heard. Citizens do not only express their dissatisfaction in the ballot box; the more they distrust the party system, the more they are likely to use illegal repertoires of protest. Likewise, the more citizens distrust the party system, the less they will use legal protests to voice their demands. Authorized demonstrations and mostly petition signatures and contacting officials are not very useful when parties are not meaningful.

Thus, our hypotheses are as such:

H1: The lower the level of party system institutionalization, the less likely citizens would engage in legal protests

H2: The lower the level of party system institutionalization, the more likely citizens would engage in unauthorized protest activities

## **Data and Methods**

To answer our research question of whether and how party system institutionalization affect different types of protest activities, we make use of the Latinobarómetro surveys. Latinobarómetro is an annual public opinion survey, offering a representative sample of the 18 countries in Latin America,<sup>7</sup> which allows us to examine the effect of PSI on social protest activities across different contexts. While previous researches on this topic (with the only exception of Machado et al.) have used protest datasets that registered events and were based on newspapers, the Latinobarómetro provides us individual-level information about protest participation. Merging the five years we have cover in seventeen countries, we have 102,428 observations.

Furthermore, the Latinobarómetro is the only survey that asks for participation in legal and illegal protests. However, there are only five years when the survey makes that distinction and uses the same questions (1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2005). Table 1 shows a sampling of the variation in protest activities (both legal and illegal protest activities) across the various countries and years in the survey.

---

<sup>7</sup> We only include 17 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) from the survey. The datasets on Dominican Republic are not consistent especially through the beginning years.

**Table 1. Percentage of respondents who participated in legal and illegal protests by country and year**

	1996		1998		2000		2002		2005	
	Legal	Illegal	Legal	Illegal	Legal	Illegal	Legal	Illegal	Legal	Illegal
<b>Argentina</b>	19	2	14	2	19	2	17	1	15	1
<b>Bolivia</b>	29	2	29	3	24	2	16	2	18	2
<b>Brazil</b>	30	2	23	2	24	2	25	1	12	0
<b>Chile</b>	20	3	18	1	21	1	13	2	14	1
<b>Colombia</b>	22	3	30	9	24	2	10	0	13	1
<b>Costa Rica</b>	36	2	28	6	33	2	15	0	12	1
<b>Ecuador</b>	34	4	29	6	23	3	11	3	13	2
<b>El Salvador</b>	21	4	25	10	8	2	4	1	4	1
<b>Guatemala</b>	32	8	9	2	13	10	7	0	7	2
<b>Honduras</b>	18	3	24	6	14	1	14	1	7	2
<b>Mexico</b>	15	3	20	8	12	4	19	3	23	2
<b>Nicaragua</b>	28	4	25	1	24	3	16	1	13	1
<b>Panama</b>	20	2	30	3	20	2	9	2	8	1
<b>Paraguay</b>	18	1	16	1	22	2	11	1	13	1
<b>Peru</b>	21	2	22	3	20	1	19	1	15	1
<b>Uruguay</b>	36	5	24	4	23	3	28	4	22	3
<b>Venezuela</b>	19	4	17	6	21	6	12	2	14	2

*Dependent Variable*

There are two dependent variables of interest – legal protest and illegal protest. As measures for protest activities, we take advantage of the questionnaire in Latinobarómetro and disaggregate all protests into two components: legal protest and illegal protest. We create the illegal protest variable by using principal component factor analysis and collapsing three activities listed in the survey: participating in unauthorized protest, occupying public buildings, lands or factories, and blocking traffic. Likewise, we collapse authorized demonstrations, contacting public officials and signing petitions to create the legal protest variable. Both variables, which questions about participation in legal or illegal protests, are ordinal and have three categories: never (0), could have done so (1) and yes (2).

We believe that distinguishing legal and illegal protests is important because sometimes it is assumed that in a functional democracy with a fairly institutionalized there should not be protests, understood as disruptive behavior. However, authorized demonstrations, even if they are massive, or citizens organized to change a law or to hold their congressional representative accountable are not contradictory with a healthy democracy; on the contrary, they are functional for a vibrant democracy. On the other side, illegal protests are generally not a cause but a symptom of the malfunction or even failure of representative institutions.



### *Independent Variable*

Our main independent variable is electoral volatility. In order to get at the question of how party system institutionalization (PSI) affects legal and illegal protest engagement, we examine two different variables: electoral volatility at the lower chamber level, and electoral volatility at the presidential level of which range from 0 (no volatility) to 100 (maximum volatility).<sup>8</sup> We choose to focus only on the electoral volatility because it is a more easily measured dimension of PSI, especially for a large N study.

### *Control Variables*

We also include several potentially confounding control variables to help isolate the impact of PSI. These include variables such as age, education (7-point scale),<sup>9</sup> whether respondents are satisfied with democracy (4-point scale),<sup>10</sup> GDP per capita and trust in political institutions. To compose the variable for trust, we again employ principal component factor analysis and bundle together trust in political parties, trust in congress and trust in judiciary system<sup>11</sup>. Including these in each model helps us ensure that any observed effect is actually driven by PSI rather than any omitted variable that may be correlated with both the independent and dependent variable. As mentioned above, negative perception of the state of democracy is closely linked to weakly institutionalized party systems.

## **Results**

We employ four tables with OLS regressions. To test our first hypothesis (the lower the level of party system institutionalization, the less likely citizens would engage in legal protests) we use the first two tables, with legal protests as the dependent variable. And to test our second hypothesis (the lower the level of party system institutionalization, the more likely citizens would engage in unauthorized protest activities) we use the last two tables, with illegal protests as the dependent variable. Each table has five models, one for each year we study (1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2005).

---

<sup>8</sup> We appreciate professor Mainwaring for sharing his data on electoral volatility at the lower chamber level and presidential level with us for this project.

<sup>9</sup> The education variable has seven levels: illiterate = 0, less than basic level = 1, basic level = 2, less than secondary level = 3, secondary level = 4, less than superior level = 5, and superior level = 7.

<sup>10</sup> The satisfaction toward democracy has four levels: very satisfied = 3, satisfied = 2, not very satisfied = 1 and not at all satisfied = 0.

<sup>11</sup> The trust in political parties, congress and judiciary has 4 levels: lots of trust = 3, some trust = 2, little trust = 1, and no trust = 0.

Tables 2 and 3 present the regressions in which the dependent variables are legal protest, holding other variables constant. For both models, an increase in electoral volatility at lower chamber and presidential level leads to a decrease in the participation of legal protest in the year 1996, 1998 and 2002. However, in contrast to our expectations, the electoral volatility for the years 2000 and 2005 seems to have the opposite impact.

**Table 2. OLS Models Predicting the Effect of Lower Chamber Electoral Volatility on Legal Protests**

	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Electoral Volatility (Lower Chamber)</b>	-0.002*** (0.0005)	-0.002*** (0.0005)	0.003*** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)
Trust	0.04*** (0.007)	0.63*** (0.007)	0.02*** (0.007)	0.07*** (0.007)	0.06*** (0.006)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.01 (0.009)	-0.03*** (0.008)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.03*** (0.007)	-0.03*** (0.007)
Age	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.0007 (0.0005)	-0.001** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.0002 (0.0004)
Education	0.07*** (0.004)	0.63*** (0.004)	0.06*** (0.004)	0.05*** (0.004)	0.07*** (0.003)
GDP per capita	-0.00001*** (0.0003)	-0.000*** (0.0003)	0.000008*** (3e-06)	0.00001** (4e-06)	0.000007** (3e-06)
Constant	0.64*** (0.03)	0.66*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)	0.54*** (0.03)	0.33*** (0.03)
Observations	14046	14168	14683	15032	16611

Robust standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.10

**Table 3. OLS Models Predicting the Effect of Presidential Electoral Volatility on Legal Protests**

	1996	1998	2000	2002	2005
<b>Electoral Volatility (president)</b>	-0.002*** (0.0003)	-0.002*** (0.0003)	0.0007** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0003)	0.002*** (0.0003)
Trust	0.03*** (0.007)	0.06*** (0.007)	0.02** (0.007)	0.07*** (0.007)	0.06*** (0.006)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.01 (0.009)	-0.03*** (0.008)	0.002 (0.008)	-0.04*** (0.007)	-0.03*** (0.007)
Age	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.0009* (0.0005)	-0.001** (0.0004)	-0.001** (0.0004)	-0.0003 (0.0004)
Education	0.07*** (0.004)	0.6*** (0.004)	0.06*** (0.004)	0.05*** (0.004)	0.07*** (0.004)
GDP per capita	-0.00001*** (3e-06)	-0.000*** (3e-06)	-4e-06 (3e-06)	8e-06** (4e-06)	9e-06*** (3e-06)
Constant	0.64*** (0.03)	0.66*** (0.03)	0.42*** (0.03)	0.56*** (0.03)	0.29*** (0.03)
Observations	14046	14168	14683	15032	16611

Robust standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.10

Tables 4 and Table 5 present the regressions with illegal protests as the dependent variable. For the model regressing on lower chamber electoral volatility (Table 4), except for the year 1996 and 1998 (not statistically significant), as the electoral system at the lower chamber level becomes more volatile, there is an increase in illegal protest activities. Meanwhile, the relationship between presidential electoral volatility and illegal protest activities yields positive and significant results consistently over the 5 years as seen in Table 5. This means that, in 8 out of the 10 models, our second hypothesis is confirmed: electoral volatility or low levels of PSI make illegal protests more likely.

**Table 4. OLS Models Predicting the Effect of Lower Chamber Electoral Volatility on Illegal Protests**

	1996	1998	2000	2002	2005
<b>Electoral Volatility (Lower Chamber)</b>	-0.003*** (0.0007)	-0.0008 (0.01)	0.004*** (0.0005)	0.003*** (0.0003)	0.002*** (0.0003)
Trust	0.02* (0.01)	0.9*** (0.01)	0.02** (0.009)	0.05*** (0.007)	0.04*** (0.007)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.004 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.007)	-0.02** (0.008)
Age	-0.007*** (0.0006)	-0.007*** (0.0007)	-0.005*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0004)	-0.004*** (0.0004)
Education	0.06*** (0.006)	0.02*** (0.007)	0.02*** (0.006)	0.001 (0.004)	0.02*** (0.004)
GDP per capita	-0.00002*** (4e-06)	-0.0001*** (5e-06)	0.00002*** (4e-06)	0.00003** (4e-06)	1e-06 (3e-06)
Constant	0.37*** (0.04)	0.66*** (0.03)	-0.02*** (0.05)	-0.31*** (0.03)	-0.1*** (0.03)
Observation	13726	13940	14281	14963	16533

Robust standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.10

**Table 5. OLS Models Predicting the Effect of Presidential Electoral Volatility on Illegal Protests**

	1996	1998	2000	2002	2005
<b>Electoral Volatility (Presidential)</b>	0.001*** (0.0004)	0.001*** (0.0004)	0.002*** (0.0005)	0.001*** (0.0003)	0.002*** (0.0004)
Trust	0.03*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.009)	0.05*** (0.007)	0.04*** (0.007)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.01* (0.007)	-0.01* (0.008)
Age	-0.006*** (0.0006)	-0.006*** (0.0007)	-0.005*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0004)	-0.004*** (0.0004)
Education	0.06*** (0.006)	0.02*** (0.007)	0.02*** (0.006)	0.004 (0.004)	0.02*** (0.004)
GDP per capita	-0.00001*** (4e-06)	-0.00001*** (4e-06)	4e-06 (4e-06)	0.00002*** (4e-06)	2e-07 (3e-06)
Constant	0.23*** (0.04)	0.41*** (0.05)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.22*** (0.03)	-0.08*** (0.03)
Observation	13726	13940	14281	14963	16533

Robust standard errors in parentheses \*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.10

For age and satisfaction towards democracy, the results in the four tables are consistent and within expectation. Younger people tend to engage more in protests. For both, legal and illegal repertoires of contentious collective action, young people are more likely to participate. Intuitively, we expected people who are happy with the way democracy functions in their countries to refrain from engaging in street politics, and our result confirms that.

Trust and GDP per capita behave different to our expectations. We initially theorize that trust in political institutions would have a positive effect on legal protests but a negative effect on unauthorized participation. However, in all of our regression models, more trust in institutions fosters both, legal and illegal protests. As for GDP per capita, our results show a lot of variation in its effect. This reflects conflicting expectation in the literature. While some argue that higher GDP per capita discourages protests since it implies better living standard, others argue that it may lead to higher expectations and thus to relative deprivation (Gurr 1970).

## **Discussion**

Our original goal was to provide some nuance to the study of party system institutionalization and social protests. Specifically, we are interested to examine whether and how party system institutionalization affect the level of participation in different types of protest activities. While our findings are far from uniform, they suggest that low levels of PSI tend to increment citizen's participation in illegal protests. However, there is not a uniform relation between PSI and legal protests.

These findings, which cover the period of transition from neoliberal demobilization to a new wave of protests (1996 to 2005), complements Rice (2003) and Arce's (2010) findings. Their studies covered from 1978 to 1995 (Rice) and from 1978 to 2005 (Arce) and used international newspaper reports of protests. At the individual level, using self-reporting participation in legal and illegal protests, we found that inchoate party systems make citizens more likely to assume risks and participate in unauthorized repertoires of protests. Nonetheless, there is no clear effect on legal protests. Following the literature on collective action, we think that perhaps the level of legal protests are not particularly influenced by the level of PSI. We hypothesized that legal protest is prevalent when there is a strong PSI but, as several case studies on social movements show, in contexts with weak institutions –such as competitive/electoral authoritarianisms-, citizens tend to combine legal and illegal repertoires (Tarrow 1994).

Factors such as the institutionalization of the opposition parties (Su 2012) or the effectiveness of other relevant institutions (Machado et al. 2011) still need to be integrated to the models we used. Political parties are not the only institutional channels to voice demands (Schmitter 2001, Machado et al. 2012). For instance, cases in Colombia and Argentina have demonstrated that civil society can ally with courts to pressure the government<sup>12</sup>. We used the institutional trust variable but, although we found what we expected regarding the positive association with legal protests, we also found a positive relation with illegal protest, which goes against our basic theoretical expectations. Lastly, we should not forget that under certain conditions, parties can also incentive illegal protests (as several radical right-wing and left-wing parties have shown in most Latin American countries). Su's argument on the level of institutionalization of opposition parties can help us to account for this variation.

Furthermore, we should also discuss the the quality of our data. While Rice and Arce rely on data collected from American newspapers we use individual level data. Yet, we are not rid of validity problem of the dataset since some respondents may feel reluctant to report themselves engaging in unauthorized activities. Therefore, the lack of quality data is also a challenge to test the main causes of social protest in a cross-national quantitative analysis.

In sum, although this paper has found some evidence of the impact of weak PSI on illegal protests, it is not conclusive. Further research should better control for state capacity (repression), resource availability and alternative institutional channels to protest. Moreover, better quality data is necessary to keep testing these hypotheses.

---

<sup>12</sup> See: Botero, Sandra. 2015. *Courts That Matter: Judges, Litigants and the Politics of Rights*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.

## References

- Arce, M. (2010). Parties and social protest in Latin America's neoliberal era. *Party Politics*, 16(5), 669-686.
- Deonandan, K., Close, D., & Prevost, G. (2007). *From Revolutionary Movements to Political Parties: Cases from Latin America and Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Flores-Macias, G., & Flores-Macias, G. A. (2012). *After neoliberalism?: the left and economic reforms in Latin America*. Oxford University Press.
- Finkel, S. E., & Opp, K. D. (1991). Party identification and participation in collective political action. *The journal of politics*, 53(02), 339-371.
- Gamson, W. A. (1975). *The strategy of social protest* (pp. 89-109). Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.
- Jenkins, J. C. (1983). Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements. *Annual review of sociology*, 527-553.
- Kitschelt, H. (2006). Movement parties. In: *Handbook of party politics*, 278-290.
- Latinobarómetro, C. (1997-2007). Informe Latinobarómetro 1997-2007. *Santiago, Chile*.
- LeBas, A. (2011). *From protest to parties: party-building and democratization in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Levitsky, S. (2014). Peru: The Institutionalization of Politics without Parties (forthcoming).
- Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction.
- Lupu, N. (2014). Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America. *World Politics*, 66(4), 561-602
- Machado, F., Scartascini, C., & Tommasi, M. (2011). Political institutions and street protests in Latin America. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 55(3), 340-365.
- Mainwaring, S. (2006). The crisis of representation in the Andes. *Journal of democracy*, 17(3), 13-27.
- , & Scully, T. (1995). Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America. In: *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- , & Torcal, M. (2006). Party system institutionalization and party system theory after the third wave of democratization. *Handbook of party politics*, 204-27.
- & Zoco, E. (2007). Political Sequences and the Stabilization of Interparty Competition Electoral Volatility in Old and New Democracies. *Party Politics*, 13(2), 155-178.
- McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (Eds.). (1996). *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American journal of sociology*, 1212-1241.
- Moser, R. G., & Scheiner, E. (2012). *Electoral systems and political context: How the effects of rules vary across new and established democracies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A., & Sprague, J. (1986). *Paper stones: A history of electoral socialism* (pp. 45-6). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Rice, R. (2003). Channeling Discontent: The Impact of Political Institutions on Patterns of Social Protest in Contemporary Latin America. *Research Papers Series* No. 40. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico
- Roberts, K. M.. (2009). Beyond Neoliberalism: Popular Responses to Social Change in Latin America. In: *Beyond Neoliberalism in Latin America?: societies and politics at the crossroads*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rucht, D. (1996). The impact of national contexts on social movement structures: A cross-movement and cross-national comparison. In: *Comparative perspectives on social movements*, 185-204.
- Rudig, W. (2010). Boon or Burden? Antiwar Protest and Political Parties. In *The World Says No to War: Demonstrations against the War on Iraq*, ed. Stefaan Walgrave and Dieter Rucht. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and party systems: A framework for analysis*.
- Schmitter, P. (2001). Parties Are Not What They Once Were. In Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther, eds., *Political Parties and Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Seawright, J. (2012). *Party-System Collapse: The Roots of Crisis in Peru and Venezuela*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Su, Y. P. (2012) Party Institutionalization and Popular Protests in Latin America. Paper presented for the LASA 2012 conference.
- Taagepera, R., & Shugart, M. S. (1989). *Seats and votes: The effects and determinants of electoral systems*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Tarrow, S. & Tollefson. (1994). *Power in movement: Social movements, collective action and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Cott, D. L. (2005). *From movements to parties in Latin America: the evolution of ethnic politics* (p. 37). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.