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*Between the Economy  
and the Polity  
in the River Plate:  
Uruguay, 1811–1890*

*Fernando López-Alves*



**BETWEEN THE ECONOMY  
AND THE POLITY  
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URUGUAY, 1811-1890**

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# **Between the Economy and the Polity in the River Plate: Uruguay, 1811-1890**

## **Introduction**

This study forms part of a larger book in preparation, *State Formation and the Origins of Democracy in the Americas: Uruguay, Colombia and Argentina, 1810-1890*. In the larger manuscript, I compare the formation of the nation state in those countries and offer an explanation of both institutional change and the emergence of parliamentary rule in agrarian societies. The rationale behind the comparison is that Uruguay and Argentina presented two very similar economies and social contexts, but developed very different institutions of government. In contrast, Uruguay and Colombia saw the emergence of two very different social and economic contexts, but generated very similar political institutions. In the present paper I discuss different hypotheses about the emergence of democratic rule in Uruguay in much more detail and focus on aspects of polity formation that I only tangentially touch upon in the larger manuscript, which is more concerned with state agencies and institutions.

At a time when large numbers of social scientists are writing copiously on redemocratisation, the reconstruction of democracy or its consolidation and future trends, a look back into the origins of democratic institutions outside the classic European and the closer to home case of the United States may help to confront some of the challenges before us. Based on the European experiences, the emergence of liberal democracy has been attributed to industrialisation and the subsequent growth of a strong bourgeoisie. Authors separated by more than a century, such as Karl Marx and Barrington Moore, have agreed that the main 'ingredient' needed for a democratic outcome was the existence of a 'vigorous and independent class of town dwellers'. Be that as it may, the Americas have given rise to liberal democracies without the prior flourishing of such a bourgeoisie. Whether this bourgeoisie preceded the rooting of liberal democracy even in the United States is still a moot point; in Latin America, Uruguay and other countries (such as Costa Rica or Colombia) present an unconventional scenario in comparison to the 'classic' European cases.<sup>1</sup>

Uruguay provides an instance in which liberal democracy resulted from intense political mobilisation in a pastoral society that, in contrast to Argentina or Mexico, had neither abundant natural resources nor an independent cadre of modernising elites eager to transform the economy. In Uruguay, the factors that favoured democracy were more political than economic. In a comparative sense, rapid economic development has created conditions that were both favourable to instances of democratic reform while

also creating powerful obstacles for the rise of parliamentary rule. The classic reactionary alliance of the rural and urban upper classes (which according to Barrington Moore were more the rule than the exception in Europe) were a reaction against, as well as the product of, modernisation and economic development.<sup>2</sup> Democratic reform emerged in the revolutions that sought to undermine these alliances. In Uruguay, parliamentary rule was not backed up by a vigorous bourgeoisie or helped by economic development; however, it was facilitated by the absence of a 'reactionary configuration'.<sup>3</sup>

A second element that favoured democracy was intense collective action mobilising what modernisation theory has called the 'traditional' part of society.<sup>4</sup> Up until the late 1870s the modern entrepreneurial sectors of this small Republic were few in number and unable politically to impose their agenda. Political institutions developed separately from these sectors, who had only nominal participation in their evolution. Therefore, in contrast to the claims of modernisation theory, the modern part of society did not establish the pillar upon which parliamentary rule rested. Rather, those unsettled and, in the eyes of contemporaries, 'barbaric' forces that constituted the core of traditional society, did. Thus, a re-evaluation of classical postulates is needed. In agreement with Moore – and in disagreement with modernisation theory – I do stress that actors in the countryside 'deserve particular attention', but for different reasons from those found in his most famous book.<sup>5</sup>

During the period in which the Uruguayan party system developed and its state institutions were consolidated (1811-1890), the so-called *Banda Oriental* could be best described as a backward pastoral society ravaged by wars and personalism, a society which only dreamers or idealists could have envisioned as a model of democracy.<sup>6</sup> Yet that was precisely what it became. In the 1910s the country consolidated a lasting democratic rule that distinguished its political history from most of the less developed world. This was a rather early development and encouraged the idea that Uruguay was an exception to the rule in Latin America and the world, particularly in comparison to its larger and economically more powerful neighbours Argentina and Brazil. A short list of these 'exceptional' qualities would suffice to explain the views of contemporaries and the arguments of those who claim such 'exceptionalism'. It was the first Latin American country to have a Ministry of Labour and Industry and the first to pass the eight hour day plus additional labour legislation upon which many countries in the area modeled their own. In its 1917 Constitution, the country approved divorce and, for the first time in the Western Hemisphere, proposed a bill enacting the right of women to vote.<sup>7</sup> In addition, legislation passed in the late 1910s protecting the rights of illegitimate children constituted both a novelty and an example to Latin America and the world. Among the first welfare, by the 1920s the *Banda Oriental* had made a drastic breakthrough with its own past. As José Pedro Barrán and Benjamín Nahum put it, 'How great the abyss that

existed between the Uruguay we find towards the end of the *Guerra Grande* (Great War, 1839-1851), and that which was born in 1900!<sup>8</sup>

A minority of scholars have argued that Uruguay did not evolve into a democracy but rather into a corporatist state.<sup>9</sup> This thesis rests on problematic assumptions. Neither in the nineteenth nor in the twentieth century did the Uruguayan political system develop the mechanisms of interest intermediation among elites that characterised corporatist arrangements in Europe or Latin America, particularly those established in its two neighbours Argentina and Brazil. In terms of its institutions the country developed no sign of corporatism either. Despite considerable growth in the public sector after the 1920s, the state and labour developed few linkages with one another and unions remained autonomous from state and parties.<sup>10</sup>

As do most scholars, I argue that the historical record of this small republic shows a clear pluralist tradition. When did Uruguay really become democratic? It all depends on the definition of democracy one is willing to accept. If we believe that the existence of Congress and, above all, party competition marks the beginning of democratic rule, Uruguay had been democratic since shortly before the *Guerra Grande*. If we conclude that democracy emerges when Congress or Parliament are able to stand autonomous from economic and military elites, then Uruguay has been democratic since the late 1880s. If democracy, as both modernisation and Marxist theory alike have proposed, goes parallel to the development of some sort of industrial capital, the emergence of an urban bourgeoisie or the reign of the middle sectors, as Tocqueville argued for the United States, then Uruguay would not look democratic until the late 1940s.<sup>11</sup> Finally, if we accept that democracy emerges when parliaments, congresses, and presidents have to be voted in by popular vote, then Uruguay was democratic from 1911.

Most scholarly analysis uses this last definition. This body of literature argues that democracy was consolidated by the elections leading to the second presidency (1911-1915) of the foremost Uruguayan reformer, José Batlle y Ordóñez. The founder of a reform faction within the Colorado party (the *batllistas*), Batlle reached the Presidency early in the 1900s (1902-1906) and again in the 1911-1915 period. His administrations were characterised by a number of 'progressive' social and economic policies with an energetic populist bent which were to dominate Uruguayan political life from the early 1900s to the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> It was during his second administration that the franchise to all males was extended, and the secret ballot was adopted. Puzzled by the pace and character of these reforms, most work on Uruguay has tried to explain this turning point. Here, I intend to unravel what I see as a prior major turning point, i.e., the consolidation of civilian rule and final

party dominance over the military in the late 1880s. By 1890 a different regime, a different polity, a different way of understanding institutions of government and a different bond between the political parties and the military had emerged. I want to explain the political system that materialised at this point and look for the conditions that facilitated these changes in the period that extends from the Wars of Independence to the late 1880s.<sup>13</sup>

In my opinion, although I agree with the definition of democracy most literature has adopted, the late 1880s crystallised a crucial time of change in terms of party organisation and composition. A crucial year, 1886, marked the transition from militarism to civilian rule; as Carlos Quijano once put it, this was a time in which ‘the carriage of [the country’s] destiny changed horses’.<sup>14</sup> These transformations reflected cleavages that had originated in the 1850s and in the shifting alliances that distinguished the 1860s and the 1870s. It was in the aftermath of these transitions that the scenario for the reforms of the early 1900s was put in place. I agree with Barrán and Nahum that the political changes of the early twentieth century came from within the state and owed much to the autonomy of government institutions.<sup>15</sup> I submit, however, that the transformations that resulted in the regime of the 1890s were more the result of societal forces that operated outside the state apparatus than within the institutions of government. Admittedly, at that juncture the state had become much more autonomous and the shift to a more state-centred polity was increasingly possible, but it is this shift that needs explaining.<sup>16</sup> These arguments are complementary rather than contradictory. If we accept both, we might conceive the century as two stages of polity formation. First, there were the transformations that made it possible for the state to become more autonomous (1810-1880).<sup>17</sup> Second, starting in the late 1870s a different phase of polity formation began in which the state grew in terms of its autonomy and capacity, facilitating the reforms of the 1880s and the early twentieth century.

A brief examination of current hypotheses about the nature of *baillismo* leads to the conclusion that events in the 1890s were crucial to explain the success of reform in the following century. A first hypothesis argues that the exceptional leadership qualities of José Batlle y Ordóñez were aided by the exceptionally propitious atmosphere for reform created by the economic prosperity experienced by the country in the early part of the 20th century. Basically, favourable terms of exchange with Britain persuaded economic elites that they could afford reform. Unfortunately, this hypothesis rests on shaky grounds. Not only is it doubtful that the ‘bonanza’ of the early 20th century was such that it ‘convinced’ the elites of going along with Colorado reformers, but also we must remember that any export ‘bonanza’ came only later. Most figures situate the peak of the Uruguayan export industry in the 1920s and even much later in the late 1930s, long after political reform had been initiated.<sup>18</sup>

In other versions, the development of manufacturing plus the consequent formation of an early proletariat and the characteristics of the industry/agriculture cleavage all combined to help the leader. Incipient as it was, industrialisation and the formation of an early proletariat benefited reform because the establishment of slaughter houses in Montevideo attracted large numbers of workers who ended up backing Batlle's agenda. The enfranchisement of foreign workers and new arrivals from the countryside only increased and deepened support for reform. Both those who stressed the populist aspect of Batllismo and those who criticised Batlle as a demagogue have endorsed this position.<sup>19</sup> In addition, since industry constituted a forward linkage for Uruguayan agriculture, Batlle gained the backing of landowning elites who saw future gains in his project of industrialisation. All of the above increased the power of urban political interests over the agrarian, more conservative sectors. In an ironic twist, shared interests between industry and agriculture eventually evolved to the disadvantage of the conservative agrarians.

These are problematic propositions. Rather than a 'from the bottom up' reform based on working class support, from 1903 to the first serious effort at industrialisation (circa 1930) what we really find is a democracy imposed from above. Interpretations seeing this turning point as a political system commanded by a 'democratic bourgeoisie' that went hand in hand with the 'vigorous impulse' of industrialisation experienced by the country starting in the 1870s rest on no solid empirical grounds.<sup>20</sup> Even in the 1940s, when industrialisation was at its peak, it was too limited and modest to create a industrial-like bourgeoisie. And not all of the industrial bourgeoisie necessarily favour democracy. Working class support for the first Presidency was confined and moderate, and cannot explain the success of democratic reform. Although industrial establishments – mainly associated with the beef and wool trade – employed relatively large numbers of workers, they were not numerous enough to explain urban social change and a (more questionable) change in political behaviour. By and large, the country exhibited a rather incipient industrial base. Concentration was no doubt high: by 1926 about 20 per cent of the total workforce was concentrated in 0.2 per cent of establishments. However, there were very few industrial enterprises of this type.<sup>21</sup> In reality the support of workers of reform initiatives came later, in Batlle's second administration, and obviously cannot explain how Batlle reached the presidency in his first term.

Let me add that, given the limited extension of the franchise to foreigners, the popular mass-support thesis is problematic even to explain Batlle's second term. Surely by that time direct popular suffrage benefited the elected president, but less than half of the urban citizenry in fact voted. Very importantly, the characterisation of the agrarians as a conservative bloc defeated by a working class who supported reform lacks accuracy. As

indicated, it was precisely the absence of a conservative bloc that characterised Uruguayan political development.

Batlle's access to power responded, instead, to shifting alliances within the previous government; it was the already established political elite who voted Batlle into the presidency. Changes came from above and within government institutions. State autonomy had been carved out with the assistance of political parties. Although the well-established equation of strong parties and weak state, weak parties and strong state still applies here, what is interesting about their parallel development is that, in the end, both state and parties gained a relative autonomy which contributed greatly to the emergence of democracy. It was on the basis of disorderly, but autonomous, parties that the state built up its autonomy. Two major parties that had penetrated the military and did not represent the most entrepreneurial sectors of the economic elites, plus a state that had remained relatively divorced from upper economic groups, were the major salient characteristics of the political system that Batlle inherited. The study of the conditions under which this situation emerged occupies the rest of this discussion.

My focus on polity formation necessarily leads to an analysis of the institutions of government and the state.<sup>22</sup> Yet while I see state institutions as very important in terms of the practices they impose on policy-making, I keep a clear distinction between institutions and regimes and I am interested more in explaining changes in the latter than in the former. The reason is straightforward: state institutions may not change or expand (in terms of agencies and organisation), but substantial regime changes may occur that have great impact on polity formation. For example, if we were to accept that constitutions do provide a good variable to detect political change, then Uruguay would seem not to have changed much during the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> What I show below, however, is precisely the opposite. Contrary to what may appear at first sight, the reasons for *not changing* the original document were precisely related to rapid transformations in political coalitions rather than to the consolidation of a conservative, pro-constitution alliance. Not that there was agreement about its virtues. Constitutional reform *was* a highly controversial issue that frequently led to long and often rancorous legislative debate.<sup>24</sup> However, after prolonged armed struggle in which Uruguayans confronted several foreign invasions, the document became a symbol of the newly acquired nationality so that any attempt to change it or to modify the state bureaucracy that it called for came to be perceived as a move against the motherland.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, because it gave power to the executive branch and discouraged the formation of interest groups (specifically, by not including the right of citizens to organise in associations), when in office both major parties took to its defence and when in opposition they mildly criticised it. Political elites in control of the state retained their leverage over the economic elites precisely by following a



constitution that discouraged direct connections between the state and organised economic groups.

As is more often than not the case, political practice deviated from the actual guidelines of the original document, but the institutional design that it proposed remained basically intact until 1917. Even then, the modifications that it went through were somewhat mild. If we conceive institutional change as transformations in party organisation, then in this sense institutional change was apparent. By the mid-1880s the parties had been transformed both organisationally and in terms of their composition. Yet considering the extended process of guerrilla warfare that they themselves led and that shook the country over the whole nineteenth century, together with the rapid succession of different regimes that they generated, organisational transformations were not drastic. For their part, state agencies and institutions did not change much until the late 1870s either. Thus, this was a process of polity formation in which, despite vigorous party activity and protracted struggle between the parties, for more than 60 years parties and the state changed little while coalitions and regimes changed much. Crucial turning points in polity formation are better measured by detecting changes in governmental coalitions than transformations in institutions *per se*.

Careful examination of historical data for this case has convinced me that political history is best understood by identifying major breakthroughs. Rather than a continuous line of events that in increments changed the contours of Uruguay's historical development, I found that for the most part the political system changed through drastic and rapid fractures and that these fractures do not always coincide with transformations in the institutions of government. Periods of rapid political transformation allow us to identify the new and better to study the old. I have chosen 1811-1890 because the period includes the wars of independence and the final consolidation of civilian rule, which set the scene for the democratic reforms of the early twentieth century. It includes three distinguishable turning points.

The first was the wars of independence (1811-1828) in which Uruguay fought against Spain, Brazil and Portugal and developed a conflictive relationship with Argentina, particularly with the Province of Buenos Aires. Unlike customary arguments that have seen the wars of independence and their aftermath as mild reforms that in some cases even reconstruct part of the colonial past, I see this period as one of radical revolution. The regimes that emerged after these wars bore little resemblance to the pre-war *ancien régime*, and as such they represent a completely new political phenomenon. Recently, Gordon Wood has made a very similar argument for the United States. Very much as I do for Uruguay, he contends that the American war of independence was a radical revolution much more than a defence of US rights against British encroachment that preserved rather than changed US

society.<sup>26</sup> After 1811, a revolution also transformed Uruguayan society and culture, breaking away from the earlier way of conducting politics. Although in essence a radical liberal revolution, it was not accompanied by any sign of economic development; while these years marked a breach with the past institutionally and politically, the economy of the country, if anything, reverted to the worst aspects of colonial rule. The economic and political spheres neither adjusted to customary theories of development nor did they both change at the same pace or at the same time. In the following years this pattern continued, the polity changing rapidly with the economy showing no signs of any modernisation up until the ‘wool revolution’ of the 1860s.

In the second half of the 1870s there was a second turning point with the administration of Colonel Francisco Latorre (1876-1880). At that time, political change triggered economic change and set the scene for a regime that finally tied economy and government closer together. Until 1886 militarism permeated the political system, party activity lessened, and a coalition consolidated behind a different regime whose goals were economic development and modernisation. However, this alliance did not hold for long, and a third breach occurred in the late 1880s when militarism ended and civilian parliamentary rule re-emerged. My analysis ends in 1890, after civilian supremacy was established.

Part I offers a review of the existing literature on Uruguay. My purpose is twofold. First, I intend to extract the main lines of argument in this literature and to formulate its explicit and also its implicit theses. Second, by going over these sources my aim is to introduce the reader to a substantial part of the history of the country. The rest of the essay offers a reworking of some of the ‘weak spots’ found in the literature and an alternative interpretation which includes some additional evidence as well as comparisons with other countries.

## **I. Uruguayan Democracy and its Interpreters**

### **The Exceptional Country Thesis**

From very early on Uruguay was considered an ‘exception’; however this is not mirrored in the literature. Scholarly writings on other American countries that consolidated democratic regimes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the United States, Costa Rica or Colombia, for instance – consider them exceptions. For the most part, this literature discouraged comparisons and encouraged parochialism. By the 1950s Uruguayan

exceptionality had gained widespread recognition particularly within the ruling Colorado (Red) party and pervaded the ideology of the whole political elite, becoming an organic part of the discourse of the other major party, the Blanco (White) party as well as the Left.<sup>27</sup> This last party and most of the Left also concluded that Uruguay had been an exception in the Americas, a unique experiment that had no parallel in the new world. The Blancos, or National Party, argued that there were unique features to the creole inhabitants of the motherland and during the late 1960s and early 1970s the MLN (National Liberation Movement, or Tupamaros) not only argued for the exceptionality of the country but also for that of the movement.<sup>28</sup> One of the most radical expressions of the exceptionality thesis was articulated by the so-called neo-Batllismo movement that dominated Uruguayan politics during the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>29</sup> In believing their country an exception, politicians and academics joined the great majority of common citizens who since elementary school had been told that 'como el Uruguay, no hay' (there is no place like Uruguay). It can be argued that until the 1970s most Uruguayan historiography claimed exceptionality.<sup>30</sup> Academic work on Uruguay done in the United States and Britain also reflected this view.<sup>31</sup>

Exceptional country arguments varied and what I call a 'thesis' is really the loose articulation of claims of different nature that somewhat unsystematically surfaced in the literature. I distinguish four major variations.

The first was that Uruguay was born democratic by means of its distinctive, 'native' political culture. This political culture found its origins in the indigenous Uruguayan people who, by their very nature, 'had been born' fighting foreign invaders and authoritarianism. These consisted of *gauchos*, the so-called cowboys of South America, Indians who had lived in Jesuit missions until the expulsion of the Order, deserters from Spanish and Portuguese armies as well as unruly indians of Charrúa, Guaraní or Chana origin. Creole elites, who flourished prior to the arrival of larger waves of European immigrants characteristic of the later part of the century, were added to this native group to form the body of the 'precursor nationals'.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the rebellious character of the *gaucho* together with the nationalist ideology generated by the wars of independence were supposed to have forged an exceptionally good predisposition for liberal democracy.<sup>33</sup> While during the twentieth century the native-culture argument was inspired by the romanticism of the 1930s and 1940s, venerable classics such as Francisco Bauza also subscribed to it.<sup>34</sup> Rousseauian notions of incorruptible natural freedom and a celebration of the 'bon sauvage' inspired this political culture argument and with romantic flavour depicted modernisation as depravity and the intrusion of foreigners in the affairs of the republic as detrimental to its 'natural' development.<sup>35</sup> Frequent references to an honourable rebellious indigenous past went back to the 1870s, when Juan

Zorrilla de San Martín wrote his *Leyenda Patria*, a novel that attempted to capture the origins of the political culture and popular myths surrounding the creation of the country.<sup>36</sup> Thus, similar to S. M. Lipset's *The First New Nation* and most work done on the foundation of the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, this literature insisted that from the very start Uruguay shaped a political culture in which individual freedom and resistance against tyranny and authoritarianism were fundamental.<sup>37</sup> Apparently this positive appraisal of the role of *gauchos* and Indians contrasted sharply with the views of others, who saw in these unruly masses a dangerous, disruptive and barbaric force that threatened the very foundations of rational politics.<sup>38</sup> In formulating a different type of political culture argument, a second variant of the exceptional country thesis incorporated some of these misgivings about the rough and by nature anti-democratic instincts of the rural masses. In this version, the special political culture of the *orientales* resulted from the rapid pace of urbanisation of the capital city and the large European immigration it sheltered. Comparable only to Buenos Aires, by mid-century Montevideo looked, in the eyes of contemporaries, like a modern city. As early as 1852 the city sheltered 25.7 per cent of the total population of the country and 37.2 per cent of all Uruguayans could be classified as urban. Although, as Barrán and Nahum have argued, most of these urbanites still lived immersed in a rural lifestyle, it is undeniable that the pace of urbanisation was fast. As they themselves recognised, by 1908 about half of the total population of the country could be classified as urban, culturally and occupationally.<sup>39</sup> A *porteño* newspaper in 1867 put it this way:

‘Comparisons are not detrimental when there is a need for them. Montevideo, the Queen of the Plata, surpasses Buenos Aires by about one hundred years ... Really, Montevideo makes the Plata River proud ... There is nothing in Buenos Aires that can be compared with Montevideo's streets ... since (they) rival Sackville Street and other European cities.’<sup>40</sup>

By 1830 Uruguay had 74,000 inhabitants, of which 14,000 lived in the capital city. In 1843 a French observer came to the interesting conclusion that there were more French residents in Montevideo than in Algeria, a country that had been under French domination since 1830. By 1867, the population of Montevideo had grown to almost 130,000 – 75,000 of whom were foreign born. Although Spaniards were a majority among them, they outnumbered other groups only by a small margin. In 1879 Ippolito Garrou, Italian Consul General at Montevideo, reported on the distribution of the foreign population and wrote that according to a 1877 revised census Spaniards in the city outnumbered Italians only by 400. Moreover, he recorded that since the year 1839 the number of Italian immigrants arriving in Montevideo was much larger than any other group (including Spaniards, French, Brazilians and British, all of whom constituted a large presence).<sup>41</sup> By 1891 there were 150,000 inhabitants in the city, who represented 29.66 per cent of the total

population of the country; by the 1900s it had increased to 270,000.<sup>42</sup> The proportion of foreigners in the capital increased even more because of a double immigration pattern: while Europeans remained in Montevideo, creoles who had established residence in the city migrated to the countryside.<sup>43</sup>

Juan E. Pivel Devoto, Washington Reyes Abadie and Arturo Zum Felde stressed that the rural areas and the capital city were two worlds apart, culturally and politically, and that modernity was measured by the pace of urbanisation.<sup>44</sup> They were joined by others (among them Carlos Real de Azua) in arguing that what was unique about Uruguay was that, unlike the rest of Latin America, the city quickly conquered the countryside. Contemporaries also stressed a 'divorce' between urban political discourse and the 'real stuff' of politics in society as a whole. One can claim that F. Sarmiento's aspiration in *Facundo: o la civilización y la barbarie*, or John Stuart Mill's argument about the influences of urban life, seemed to have become true in the small republic. If the formation of political organisations in the urban environment were to be taken as a sign of the imposition of the urbanites over the 'barbaric' rural masses, then Montevideo can be said to have set the tone of political debate for the country as a whole. Urban politics became the *modus vivendi* of large sectors of the urban classes, most of whom had lost property due to protracted armed conflict. Particularly in the early 1850s and by the end of the *Guerra Grande* the political elite augmented its numbers substantially. While since the early 1800s the urban elites had sent their sons to study abroad or (later) to the local law school, by the end of that war and facing declining economic opportunities these young men saw in politics a means to secure social influence. A brotherhood of *notables* that had long characterised urban politics under the *cabildo* system, merged with these professionals to form a growing body of full-time politicians. These newcomers and most of the old political bosses were, by origin, tied to the merchant class of Montevideo, some of whom had invested in land after the completion of the wars of independence. *Hacendados* ruined by the war also joined. Altogether, they made up the group called the urban '*patriciado*', or the 'doctors', a sneering reference to educated learning.<sup>45</sup>

Urban politicking appeared to have little to do with the interests of the provinces, or *departamentos*. In 1850, a perceptive observer of his times, Luis Melián Lafinur, characterised the *Cámaras* (Parliament) as epitomising a completely different sphere of activity from the apparent ethos of an agrarian society such as then existed, characterised by armed struggle and low levels of technology, and internally weakened by political chaos. He stressed that the *Cámaras* housed intellectuals whose brilliant speeches and debates 'did not fit' at all with the country's needs and reality. Lafinur called the Senate and the House of Representatives '*Cámaras bizantinas*'. And both Reyes Abadie and Alberto Zum Felde described the institutions of

government as the most exquisite site of philosophical and political debate: 'a Parliament which is not a Parliament, but an Academy, a government that is not a body of government, but an Ateneo'.<sup>46</sup> Sophisticated discourse and awkward political practice made a target for bitter criticism as political theorising in the Cámaras contrasted with the stark and violent reality facing 'this unfortunate Republic'.<sup>47</sup> In sum, although an agrarian society little different from those of Central America, the small country was exceptional because of the European-like Montevideo, which was closer to the 'Greek cities of antiquity' or the political dynamics of the municipalities of medieval Italy than to the realities of the rest of the area.

The early emergence of an urban middle class added to this sense of exceptionalism and this led to academic comparisons with Europe. Research on the class composition of the city shows that by the early 1900s about 40 per cent of the urban population could be considered middle class.<sup>48</sup> Numerous European arrivals to the urban environment allowed for a 'reproduction' of European traditions which, when followed in the new small country, provided the basis of a democratic political culture. Although it was never explicitly stated, insistence on these exceptional trends pointed to the superiority of the country on account of its strong European ancestry.<sup>49</sup> Emphasis on the positive influence of Europeans on democracy contradicted prior arguments about the Spanish heritage of Latin America. Rather than contributing to progress during the 1930s and 1940s, several authors argued that Spain had endowed these countries with the 'dual scourges' of economic underdevelopment and a political ethos of authoritarianism. Reasoning that by the time of the conquest the physical and social sciences were not adequately developed in Spain, and because of the exportation to the New World of a rigid system of social stratification, combined with the strong influence of a very conservative Church, such authors held that Spain had set Latin America on a regressive path which fatally condemned it to a permanently secondary status in comparison to other lands of recent settlement such as the United States and Canada. At bottom, Spanish immigration had been detrimental for advancement and civil liberties; Italians, the second major European group arriving to the New World, had not fared much better. Such arguments, however, were not universally accepted. An alternative corpus of work emerged stressing that the Spanish legacy and the later European migrations were really a blessing to the *Banda* and the continent in general. In a very interesting discussion of this literature, in 1946 Julio Martínez Lamas suggested that

'... the spiritual incapacity of the Spaniards was simply the consequence of a special kind of environment (Spain). When this environment was gone, or, better put, the Spaniard was transplanted outside of it, his incapacity disappeared proportionally to the intensity of the existing difference between the new environment and the prior one ... when their children ... purified their surroundings and widely opened their frontiers ...

the Spaniards who continued to be incorporated to free America were and are as intelligent, laborious, and principled as the sons of the most privileged countries ...<sup>50</sup>

According to Martínez Lamas, the major difference between North and South America was not to be found in their different colonisers, but in the natural resources and the distances that separated them from Europe.<sup>51</sup> As far as comparisons went, Martínez Lamas was right when he insinuated that the United States was a worthwhile comparison. We can add that, in fact, Europe could neither offer very many cases of newly emerging democracies comparable to the ones emerging in Latin America, nor for the most part good instances of advanced social legislation or political liberties. In terms of institutions, pace of development, immigration, the formation of a middle class, and party organisation, it was another new country – the United States – that provided the real parameter of comparison. Unfortunately, to this day comparative work including the United States has been virtually non-existent.<sup>52</sup> Martínez Lamas was also right when, unlike exceptionalism and despite his defence of Spanish immigrants, he did not upgrade the cultural influence of white Europeans to be the most determining factor in forging a political culture of democracy. As we shall see, this was really of secondary importance.

To conclude, these two sides of the ‘exceptional country’ thesis conflicted with one another in terms of causality and derivative hypotheses because they formulated contradictory political culture arguments. On the one hand, democracy had found its roots in a political culture that originated in the struggle of native Uruguayans against the Spanish, French, British and Portuguese invaders. Indians and Mestizos (those of mixed Indian and white blood) were the major actors in this drama, which combined their quest for freedom with life in the open plains. On the other hand, it was the growth of the city and the influence of European immigrants that in the long run had brought democracy to a generally uncivilised reality. As is usually the case with political culture arguments neither one of them spelled out the precise conditions under which these particular political cultures could be attainable and, more importantly, whether or not the political culture constituted the cause or the product of a given political system that still needed to be explained. As we shall see, political culture was, if anything, a dependent variable; the tangible pillars of democratic reform were built through war, intense rural mobilisation, and the penetration of the military by the political parties.

There was a third political culture argument that was also a part of the exceptional country school of thought. In this version, a unique democratic political culture had originated as a result of the country’s bountiful natural resource endowment. An uncommon geographical situation and climate, the advantages of its small size, its incomparable plains and forests, its natural

seaport and its extraordinary waterfront plus the exceptional quality of livestock production were all brought to bear on this type of singular culture. An anonymous contemporary wrote in 1863 that

‘Of all sections of the Americas and in particular of the River Plate...none has made more progress than ...the Oriental Republic. None in the same proportion has developed commercial ties with Europe, none is more likely to offer newer and more diverse products, none has better geographical and economic conditions and none can present to European immigration and Commerce [a] better situation of stability, growth, wealth, future and employment.’<sup>53</sup>

Surprisingly given its scarce natural resources and constant state of turmoil, years later (1892) even the Bureau of American Republics argued that

‘To no other country in the world has nature been more lavish in her favors than to the Eastern Republic of the Uruguay; nowhere has she gathered or distributed more favorable conditions of life or national prosperity than in the comparatively small republic...’<sup>54</sup>

Thus, this liberal political culture was seen not as the product of industrial development, but of plain natural riches; abundance helped to alleviate social tension and explained its dominant middle-class composition.

As with other versions of ‘exceptional type’ arguments, literature on other countries also noted their respective extraordinary resource endowments and some kind of privileged status in order to argue for exceptionality or to wonder how it could be possible that countries with such vast resources should perform so poorly economically. Venerable scholarly traditions such as dependency theory contrasted what was perceived as excellent natural resources with the institutional instability and authoritarian tendencies of less developed countries. More often than not, however, assessments of real possibilities or handicaps are too simplistic. Literature on Uruguay was rather optimistic. Despite its dependent status and small size (which limited its resources considerably), the country was perceived as a promised land well suited for democracy. Rather than a curse, smallness turned out a blessing. In Rousseauian overtones it was suggested that only in a small society could democracy develop its true self.<sup>55</sup> Despite its modest industrial development, the small republic was highly conducive to the growth and development of a middle class, and despite its reduced participation in overseas trade – compared to its two ‘giant’ neighbours – small Uruguay seemed to have benefited culturally the most from its connections with Europe.



A fourth variation of the exceptional country thesis stressed the extraordinary qualities of Uruguayan political leadership. I call this interpretation the 'exceptional leader' hypothesis. Like its counterparts, this hypothesis was by no means alien to Latin American historiography.<sup>56</sup> In a nutshell, it claimed that Uruguayan political leaders were more liberal, more democratic, and had greater leadership skills. For the most part it flourished as an explanation of the exceptional statesmanship of Don José Batlle y Ordóñez; in the English language, Milton Vanger's work on Batlle constitutes the best example.<sup>57</sup> In Uruguay, much work on Batllism had been inspired by the same postulates. González Conci and Guidici, for instance, described the initiation of the Batllista reforms in the following terms:

'The social environment is primitive. The people are engaged in an intense process of moral and political dissolution, corrupted by the barbaric hands of dictators; (they had) consented ... to their fate ... in the immense desolation of their disgrace and spiritual poverty. But then, Batlle arrived.'<sup>58</sup>

From these stark versions in which the rise of democracy was attributed entirely to the influence of one single individual, literature inspired by this approach evolved into milder versions that sought a 'combination' formula that included the exceptional skills of the leader and structural factors (see above).<sup>59</sup> While the exceptional leader hypothesis has been mostly applied to Batlle y Ordóñez, the role of leaders and their skills in polity formation had also been a characteristic of the literature in the nineteenth century. Most of this literature argued for the outstanding personality of *caudillos* to explain party formation and the very rise of the nation state. Party founders such as Juan Antonio Lavalleja and Fructuoso Rivera plus a succession of other *caudillos* (Manuel Oribe, Venancio Flores, Timoteo Aparicio, Aparicio Saravia, etc) had been the creators of the political system. As discussed below, there is some truth to this claim; yet the interesting question is why and how *caudillos* gained such a central role.

### **White Europeans in a Land of Recent Settlement**

As discussed above, one prevalent political culture claim argued that liberal democracy was the result of the large numbers of European immigrants who, since the early nineteenth century, had reached Uruguayan shores. Combined with structural variables, this contention comes very close to 'lands of recent settlement' theory. Clearly, Uruguay fits perfectly in this last group; according to Adam Smith, these were countries that were more prone to develop liberal democracy than those in which more advanced colonisers had to exploit the labour of a pre-existing society. Similar to the situation that Frederick Turner described for the United States or Innis for Canada, Uruguay was, as Charles Darwin depicted it, 'a rather empty country' whose

institutions were built upon a weak colonial background and large numbers of European immigrants.<sup>60</sup> Yet, despite frequent references in the literature to the *characteristics* of recent settlement of the small republic, only one explicit allusion to the *theory* can be found.<sup>61</sup> Similar to arguments about the United States, landscape and people blended perfectly to create a cult of freedom and independence. For all practical purposes, the rural areas provided the equivalent to the US frontier.<sup>62</sup> In short, literature on these countries built upon the assumption that ‘empty new lands’ with scarce labour and sparse indigenous populations having little impact on society were more prone to democracy.

Such a view is neither new nor confined to academic circles. In 1887 the Spanish Consul reported that, while progress was making inroads in the small republic, a propensity to democracy was also evident thank to the emptiness of the land and the overwhelming majority of Europeans:

‘... the European population exceeds 300,000 souls among whom 60,000 were Spaniards ... (the country) enjoys a happy and prosperous condition, which contributes to the prosperity of the Peninsula because it promotes mercantile relations. Because these countries are empty they must encourage foreign populations to establish residence and therefore they must also establish democratic principles of government, conditions of equity that shall please the foreigner who ... comes to these lands to find a better morrow; this, he easily finds whatever his profession or the purchasing of lands at extremely inexpensive price. ... The confusion and disorder of Democratic Governments is charming and even convenient for immigrant classes who have no interest in taking a retrospective look upon a pretty daunting past. Whatever the origin of foreigners might have been at arrival in these countries ...[they] can with either merit or disposition forge a prosperous future and marry the daughters of the highest public officials or the wealthiest bankers.’<sup>63</sup>

A major problem in this vein of thought lies in the virtual absence of comparative work needed to test such propositions. Another land of recent settlement (Argentina) would have provided an ideal comparative case. Such comparison poses a challenge both to political culture and lands of recent settlement arguments. While these two countries shared a very similar social and economic make up, during the nineteenth century Argentina gave rise to much more centralised and authoritarian regimes, had a harder time consolidating a party system and developed a much stronger military establishment. Furthermore, while for most of the twentieth century Uruguay remained pluralist and parliamentary, Argentina experienced several versions of authoritarianism and corporatism. In a word, while very similar structurally and socially, the political cultures and the institutions of government of both countries were quite different.

Political culture and lands of recent settlement arguments run into additional difficulties when tested against cases that did not host large numbers of European immigrants and nevertheless evolved into parliamentary democracies. Colombia, with few European immigrants to speak of, a larger indigenous population in comparison to Argentina and Uruguay and a completely different economy from that of the River Plate, developed stable party systems in the context of parliamentary democracy. In conclusion, lands of recent settlement (Argentina, Uruguay) can give rise to different state institutions and political cultures, while countries outside that group can still reproduce the political culture and the institutions that the theory connects with the first set of countries.

### **Ideas and political organisations**

Classic work on party formation has taken ideology to be the major thrust behind the formation of the two major parties, the Blancos and the Colorados. Since the 1830s Uruguay developed two major parties that monopolised most instances of collective action and had a major influence in shaping the contours of the emerging polity. Because these two parties were very similar in terms of composition, to explain the cleavages that divided them has been a challenging task. Juan Pivel Devoto's classic work on party formation argued, among other things, that ideas constituted the major force behind party differentiation.<sup>64</sup> He also stressed the personalities of leaders. Partly as a result of his work and the application of models of party formation borrowed from elsewhere, ideologically the Colorados have been identified as liberal reformers and the Blancos as the more traditional, rural-based conservatives.<sup>65</sup> Although never clearly spelled out, the hypothesis maintains that the final triumph of the Colorado Party (which has been considered the 'moderniser' within the party system), plus its ability to establish several hegemonic periods during the nineteenth century, contributed much to the developments of the 1880s and the consolidation of democracy in the 1900s.<sup>66</sup> Liberalism was perceived as a major force behind the parties and the final triumph of liberal democracy. Some have even suggested that liberal and 'progressive' ideas imported from Europe found more receptive ears here than elsewhere.<sup>67</sup> As Seymour M. Lipset and Louis Hartz argued for the United States, liberal ideas were argued to be a major force behind institutional transformation, pervading all spheres of social and political activity.<sup>68</sup> Was liberalism such an important factor in the formation of the Uruguayan polity? Were 'European ideas' the main cleavage dividing the parties? No doubt all this played a role in the structuring of political discourse. The typical combination of liberalism, the enlightenment, Spanish collectivism, empiricism, and later on positivism and Darwinism influenced the political elite. North American political thought was also influential, and the federalist papers gained some popularity.<sup>69</sup> Liberalism coloured vivid speeches in the Cámaras, inspired lectures and induced numerous newspaper

articles.<sup>70</sup> Yet adherence to liberal ideas was too common a phenomenon in both parties to identify them as a main cleavage.

Although in early periods of party formation there were more liberals among the more cosmopolitan Colorados than among the Blancos, by the 1870s (the decade in which liberalism, as Pivel Devoto put it, 'commanded all the acts of the legislators') liberalism became dominant in both the parties' 'progressive' wings.<sup>71</sup> Both argued for the weakest possible state and even protested the creation of the Banco Nacional, because they considered its foundation an encroachment upon the private sector.<sup>72</sup> And it was at this precise time that the party system started to consolidate; in the next two decades Blancos and Colorados were to absorb new liberal-inspired urban-based parties and consolidate their party machines. After the peace of 1872 both parties agreed to 'co-participate' in government and Blancos gained the administration of four *departamentos* or provinces. New political organisations inspired by liberalism emerged at this point. It was the political ambition of urban upper classes and professional politicians who provided their backbone, attempting to challenge the predominance of the two 'traditional' parties.<sup>73</sup> Lawyers, physicians and accountants or doctors organised the so-called *Partidos de Ideas* (as opposed to the parties led by *caudillos*) and adhered to liberal discourse through *principismo*.<sup>74</sup> This was about imposing new rules on the existing political game, ending corruption in vote counting and assuring that electoral results were respected by incumbents. *Partidos de Ideas* were the closest to Liberal parties that Uruguay had in the 19th century, and their importance lay more in their success at modernising the old party machines (by finally merging with the so-called 'traditional' parties) than in their liberalism. In fact, by merging they diluted their original fidelity to classic liberal precepts.<sup>75</sup>

Why didn't the *Partidos de Ideas* prevail? Their decline as independent organisations was connected with the opposition they confronted from both urban and rural quarters. By the mid-1870s, and in spite of its commitment to modernisation, the coalition that formed behind state-builder Colonel Francisco Latorre (1876-1880) looked at the doctors with scepticism and mistrusted their 'idealism'. In the countryside, despite shared common interests between the pro-modernisation Asociación Rural (founded in 1871) and the doctors in weakening the political power of *caudillos*, the Asociación fiercely opposed the *principistas* because, according to them, they did not represent in the least *el país real* (the real country).<sup>76</sup> The rural masses considered the doctors and their parties outright enemies. In the rural areas, where crucial political organising took place, liberal ideology was rather weak. Some *caudillos* borrowed liberal ideas and defended individual rights, but their behaviour responded more to specific local circumstances than to the influence of liberal doctrines that, by and large, they scorned.

In sum, although I view political ideologies as a 'political glue' that was able to provide resilient linkages between individuals and organisation and regard liberalism as an important influence, I do not see them as the main cleavage that divided the parties. If anything, liberalism contributed to the opposite; sporadic alliances between liberal factions of the two parties took place quite frequently. By the same token, however, these alliances could never break the barriers dividing the two parties because the cleavages that separated them lay elsewhere. Pivel Devoto himself showed that in the 1880s liberal-inspired *principistas* ended up joining both parties.<sup>77</sup>

Rather than ideology, others have resorted to psychological explanations to explain the parties and their cleavages. Roberto Ares Pons argued that

'In his unconscious search for a father image, the *gaucho* finds the *caudillo*, and in his search for God, the Motherland or *la Divisa*. Both loyalties are related, as the obscure intimacy of the psyche relate fraternal and religious feelings. This explains the ... irrational adherence ... to banners and causes that contribute nothing to analytical thinking.'<sup>78</sup>

Martínez Lamas submitted that the parties embodied 'sentiments' rather than ideas and that they were the product of emotions rather than rationality.<sup>79</sup> He explained the establishment of these 'two political collectivities' as the result of love and loyalty to the heroes of the Independence movement. No doubt loyalties played a role, yet these explanations do not address the question of how these emotional attachments survived generations after the wars of Independence were over, or after the first founding *caudillos* disappeared from the political scene. In addition there is no explanation as to why political organisations here expressed these psychological mechanisms while elsewhere they were considered the product of rational choice. In the final analysis the common interests that kept these two 'collectivities' together remained obscure.

Some important evidence seems to suggest that a major cleavage dividing the parties was the difference between educated urbanite party leaders and the ignorant masses, between the doctors and the *candomberos*.<sup>80</sup> Pivel Devoto had identified this divide as crucial and Arturo Zum Felde argued along these lines when he insisted that the antagonism between the two parties was an expression of the existing split between 'on the one side doctors and on the other the *caudillos* with their massive following'.<sup>81</sup> Clashes between these groups have also been detected by others.<sup>82</sup> Although a very important development, a major problem with this interpretation is that it better explains divisions *within* both the Blancos and the Colorados than the cleavages dividing them (see above). Very importantly, in neither of the parties did doctors or *caudillos* predominate, so that characterising the parties as a party of doctors or as a party of *caudillos* is misleading.

A reworking of some explanations serves us better. As we shall see, more is to be gained by focusing on the process by which parties captured different geographical constituencies. In a country in which wars sharply divided city and countryside, one party became more rural-based and the other more urban-based, a cleavage that endured until the 1920s. Strong clientelistic networks built upon war were also important in party formation and ensuring cleavages; they divided the country in different zones, with the parties operating on the basis of captured constituencies. It is apparent from the historical record that, for all practical purposes, up until the 1870s parties were military organisations that fought for control of the central state and the port of Montevideo. Alliances with different groups in the capital city, crucial to consolidate control in case of a victory, also divided the parties and provided Colorado and Blanco linkages between city and countryside. To these factors we must add two more. The first was a constant fear of armed insurrection from below that encouraged connections among leaders in different *departamentos* and stimulated the formation of horizontal alliances. Fear was also conducive to party maintenance because it kept leaders in constant contact with the rural poor and allowed leaders to monitor the rank and file more efficiently. The second was the influence of regional factors on the parties. Colorados and Blancos started off as alliances with Brazilians and Argentines and the parties retained these connections up until the 1910s. This further encouraged interregional alliances and the formation of a national front. Regionally, pro-Brazilian or Argentine factions allied in accordance, contributing to form two larger national coalitions, the Colorados and the Blancos.

### **Structural factors and Uruguayan development**

Structuralist-type arguments made major scholarly inroads during the 1970s and 1980s; the work of Barrán and Nahum and of Lucía Sala de Tourón and associates represent the major works here.<sup>83</sup> The contribution of the former has still no parallel in the literature on nineteenth and early twentieth century Latin America. Reyes Abadie and Vázquez Romero's encyclopaedic volumes on Uruguayan history would be the only possible comparison.<sup>84</sup> Yet, beyond painstaking details and microscopic use of archives, there is a vacuum of themes and questions in this last collection. Published from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, Barrán and Nahum's seven volume study on Uruguayan rural development, *Historia Rural del Uruguay Moderno*, was followed by another seven volumes written during the 1980s, *Battle, los Estancieros y el Imperio Británico*, focusing on the political transformation undergone by the country in the Battle era. *Historia Rural* can be interpreted as a conscientious, extensive treatise on modernisation with a heavy emphasis on technological change. It is argued that the process of modernisation (or more accurately its absence) explained most of the economic and political rural life of Uruguay.

*Battle, los Estancieros...* is completely different. In a political economy fashion, the authors seek to understand the advent of reform during the early 1900s and to explain the consolidation of liberal democracy. Their concern is with institutions of government, party development, state autonomy and coalition formation. This second set of volumes built upon the earlier seven.

A central argument, however, is hard to find in Barrán and Nahum's work. The authors address vital questions and generate a number of interesting claims, but they are never able to weave together a central set of structured propositions or testable hypotheses. In fact they make a point of not establishing a theoretically grounded approach; yet the major contribution of their work is that it is laden with key implicit theoretical questions that emerge in the narrative as they examine the historical record. In part, their work can be taken as a test for rational choice theory. From what I would call an 'implicit' rational choice perspective, in both collections they show that individuals responded rationally to market incentives.<sup>85</sup> Whether they refrained from innovation or, quite often, opted for stagnation rather than risk their resources in pursuing growth, individuals always made the choice that they thought best satisfied their own material interest.<sup>86</sup> Plenty of examples are taken from the behaviour of the *ganadero* class (cattle raisers) and other *hacendados* to show that low land exploitation or resistance to technological innovation (a major theme of historiography on Uruguay) were rational ways to cope with markets. From the point of view of *hacendados*, despite its negative long-term consequences for the country's economy as a whole, *latifundia* ranching was not an 'irrational' strategy to follow. Resistance to technological innovation responded to an underlying rationality; the backwardness and inefficiency that characterised rural enterprises corresponded, in reality, to a market structure that did not provide enough incentives for more entrepreneurial and risky behaviour. The preference for less productive activities such as money lending, for instance, was also a consequence of the same rational principle; at certain points, financial speculation produced more profits than any other enterprise.<sup>87</sup>

In terms of explaining the political sphere, Barrán and Nahum are confronted with a problem that political economy has often overlooked, i.e., the rationality that applied to economic behaviour did not always apply to political behaviour. The same *estancieros* who responded smartly to markets acted less rationally when they engaged in politics. Political actions were certainly inspired by self-interest in general, but Barrán and Nahum found plenty of other evidence. The historical record showed that Blanco *estancieros* joined the party because of the magnet of the *div' a* (the cause); that both Colorado and Blanco élites believed that the rural masses followed their leaders through devotion and loyalty (particularly during the Artigas period; see below) and that *caudillos* still attracted followers on the basis of a system of incentives and rewards that did not really correspond to the

overall notion of economic rationality. In a word, political behaviour was still characterised by the same characteristics that the 'classic' literature had emphasised; this puzzle is explored in detail below.

Another somewhat unresolved problem in Barrán and Nahum was that of external *versus* domestic variables with the relationship remaining obscure. On the one hand, from an unspoken dependency perspective, they stressed the enormous importance of international markets, foreign finance and diplomatic influence in the construction of the nation state.<sup>88</sup> On the other, domestic developments seemed to overshadow external factors, even during years of intense integration in the world economy.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, their insistence on the pernicious effects of war on the rural economy to explain poor economic performance and (rational) indifference to markets placed strong emphasis on domestic factors.<sup>90</sup> In short, there is no clear indication as to how these two sets of variables combine, or whether the preponderance of one over the other responds to different kinds of issues. A way in which this dilemma could be partially solved would be to argue that the influence of one or the other depended on different stages of development. The further back in time, the more domestic variables explained events, while the more the economy developed and engaged in trade, the more external factors played a role.<sup>91</sup> On this point they would agree more, but not completely, with world system or dependency theories. I say 'not completely' because, as I understand it, such theories give plenty of indications that even after the full incorporation of the country into the global economic order the fundamental engine of political change was to be found in domestic factors. I agree, but then the insistence on international markets as the engine of change in *Historia Rural* and the urge to attribute to Britain a key role in the forging of the state in *Batlle, los Estancieros* should be more qualified.<sup>92</sup> Political institutions developed during periods in which domestic factors were predominant and these same institutions changed little when after the late 1870s the country more intensively entered the so-called British Informal Empire. Of course, changes in the state bureaucracy did take place after that point to cope with the needs of new banking, communications and the export economy. Yet coalitions and party politics changed only slowly. I suggest that we must differentiate regional from international factors. I place regional developments within the category of domestic factors, while I reserve the term international for events that were directly connected to European diplomatic, military or financial influence. Finally, Barrán and Nahum argue that the reforms of the early century can be explained by the relative autonomy gained by the Uruguayan state *vis-à-vis* economic elites.<sup>93</sup> State autonomy gave Colorado reformers the leeway needed to consolidate democracy. As indicated, I agree with this line of argument; changes in the twentieth century came from within the state apparatus rather than from civil society. In *Historia Rural*, however, we find a somewhat different view. References to the control exercised by the *ganaderos* on the state abound.<sup>94</sup>



They argued that during the 1880s the state left the *ganaderos* off the hook in terms of taxation; these interpretations are conflictive because *Historia Rural* argues for landowners' strong influence in the late nineteenth century while *Baile, los Estancieros* suggests the opposite. If landowners did control the state by the late nineteenth century, then the Uruguayan state would look very much like its Argentine analogue where, by the early 1880s, 'economic power fused with political power' in the hands of the landowning elite.<sup>95</sup> In contrast (discussed below), a major part of the development of the Uruguayan state is the history of its separation from the rural upper classes; definitely by the 1880s entrepreneurial landowners did not control the institutions of government. My reading is that the Uruguayan rural upper classes were able to influence economic policy, but they were not as effective in shaping public policy and political institutions. Both aspects of this influence must be differentiated.

Another major contribution to the problem at hand has been the work of Lucía Sala de Tourón and Rosa Alonso Eloy. From a Marxist standpoint, they have highlighted the impact of the international economy on class conflict.<sup>96</sup> Their interpretation is based on a mode of production class analysis and a semi-orthodox version of the dependency approach. In their view, merchants engaged in commerce rather than landowners played the most important role in early periods of state formation.<sup>97</sup> A greedy and wealthy class of urban merchants was able to render the state weak by making government dependent on private loans; their political visibility and urban bias exacerbated the rural-urban cleavage that wars had already strongly shaped. No sign of Barrán and Nahum's autonomous state can be detected in this early stage that extended approximately until the end of the *Guerra Grande*; rather, the state depended on an urban commercial class that shaped economic policy.<sup>98</sup> Finally, great emphasis is placed on the contradiction between pre-capitalist relations of production and the development of an 'incipient' capitalism. The country emerged from this 'contradiction' generated by a pre-capitalist mode of production and a surfacing system of dependent development; it was the transition from the former to the latter that shaped the nation state.<sup>99</sup>

My analysis coincides with their consideration of the importance of regional events to explain the characteristics of the polity.<sup>100</sup> Diplomacy, political linkages and war with Argentina and Brazil created the original party cleavages and had enormous influence on the state. Their use of political economy is also refreshing for, among other reasons, unlike most recent work from this perspective, it is fused with excellent historical research. For example, in explaining the formation of the nation state, they stress that the free-trade/protection divide had no meaning here, and that economic policy is not invariably the result of group pressure. They demonstrate that mild protectionist laws passed by the state (which survived basically on revenues

from customs duties) did not really express the interests of organised group pressure. Instead, it was growing competition with the port of Buenos Aires that shaped economic policy, especially taxes and customs duties.<sup>101</sup>

I differ from their views in two very important points. First, unlike Sala de Tourón and Alonso, I suggest that the Uruguayan political system was only timidly shaped by the world economy. Although their aim in this collection is not to explain the development of the polity in the whole nineteenth century, it is clear that they place an unwarranted (according to their own historical data) accent on the impact of foreign influence. For example, because they want to stress the negative leverage of alien powers in a trivial dependency fashion, they attempt a comparison with Mexico that I find pointless.<sup>102</sup> Second, I argue that mode of production explanations are unacceptable to account for the creation of political institutions. Curiously enough, although they do attempt a comparison with Argentina under Juan Manuel de Rosas, they do not acknowledge that this very comparison challenges their mode of production and dependency approaches.<sup>103</sup> In terms of their economies, factors of production, types of exports, linkages with the international market and pace of urbanisation, these countries were as identical as two cases can be. With slight variations, they shared very similar export economies and depended on the same markets (chiefly Britain). They borrowed from the same banks under similar terms, accepted the same kind of foreign investment, developed similar partnerships with foreign capital, and shared a similar geographical locale. In addition, these pastoral societies received similar strains of European immigration and developed a very similar social make-up. Politically and institutionally, however, both countries differed notably, and these dissimilarities remained substantial to this day. Needless to say, they present a serious challenge to dependency and world systems theories even in their latest, most sophisticated versions.<sup>104</sup> Differences between the two lay in different patterns of party formation that expressed different types of collective action on both shores of the River Plate.

## II. Parties, War and the Military

During the first half of the nineteenth century every single event that had a bearing on the political system was regional. More than any influences emanating from the world economy, invasions from Brazil and Argentina shaped the political parties and moulded institutions of government.<sup>105</sup> Regional conflict and military activity deeply permeated the political life of the *Banda*, which, after all, had started off as a military outpost.<sup>106</sup> In 1875,

based on a large number of Consular Reports from Montevideo, the British Foreign Office described the country quite accurately as a

‘...State originally part of the Spanish Vice-royalty of Buenos Aires [that] became the object of a long and ruinous war between Brazil and the Argentine Confederation which only terminated in the year 1828 through the mediation of the British Government... the territory being constituted as independent... under a treaty signed between Brazil and the Argentine Confederation, the object of which was to make a sort of neutral ground of which had long been a battle field between the people of Spanish and Portuguese origin... the creation of an intermediate and independent State [was to] separate them as to prevent the chance of any future collision between them.’<sup>107</sup>

Contemporaneous with the creation of the country were the cleavages that divided the polity into two *bandos*: the *abrasilerados* (pro-Brazilian factions) and the *aportenados* (pro-Buenos Aires factions). When direct invasions ceased, Brazil and Argentina still served as military and logistic bases for revolutionary forces that almost constantly tried to topple the government in Montevideo.<sup>108</sup> By the end of the 1830s, when the issue of Independence had been settled, two identifiable organisations emerged, directly linked with these countries and gathered around two war heroes, Fructuoso Rivera (a founder-to-be of the Colorados) and José Antonio Lavalleja (Blanco). One ‘embraced the dogma of liberty...although this was, most of the times, a different name for anarchy’<sup>109</sup> while the other, in a more legalistic fashion, wanted a government ‘*a la española*’ with more centralisation and a stronger bureaucracy. Brazilian and Argentine influence on Uruguayan political organisations was lasting and resilient. Indeed, extreme versions attributed all the tribulations of the republic exclusively to these influences. In 1863 a contemporary wrote that

‘In agreement with the historical record it can be guaranteed that without the impulse and cooperation given by political groups of neighbouring countries to the revolutionary element of the Banda Oriental...peace would have never been disturbed nor blood have been shed or the industry of foreigners and Nationals obstructed from following its natural development.’<sup>110</sup>

The resilient character of the party in the opposition was, thus, attributed to regional assistance. Both the Portuguese and the inhabitants of the original founding colonial capital, Buenos Aires, waged war against, and developed alliances with, Uruguayan political organisations in both the city and countryside. Tulio Halperín Donghi reminds us that the revolutionary junta in Buenos Aires held the domination of the *Banda Oriental* as a priority in its revolutionary agenda; the ‘war in the East’ became one of the most important fronts that the Junta must control to establish its supremacy in the region.<sup>111</sup> The same can be argued for Brazil, that regarded the possession of the *Banda*

as vital for its domination of the region. Because the strip was geographically a 'buffer state' between the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, it became from the very beginning a territory in dispute.

On the economic side, more than the structural limitations of an underdeveloped pastoral society, a permanent state of war explained the *Banda's* poor economic performance. While by mid-century, political processes in Argentina, as Oszlak tells us, were framed by 'profound changes in economic developments that generated growing expectations of material progress', in Uruguay the situation was exactly the opposite.<sup>112</sup> Differences in size, political culture or the more entrepreneurial attitude of the landed elite in the Province of Buenos Aires were less relevant in explaining differences in the level of development than the Uruguayan wars of independence and conflicts that followed (1811-1814, and 1815-1820), the Brazilian invasions (1825-1828) and the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1851). The *Banda* had no abundance of resources, but it was not completely devoid of them either. Despite its small size, it had excellent pastures and a first-rate sea port. Tellingly, in the eighteenth century it emerged as a serious challenger to Buenos Aires. In 1778, when Montevideo opened to overseas trade, the monopoly established by Buenos Aires was promptly affected; by the 1790s merchants and entrepreneurs of all kinds in Argentina complained in large numbers about competition from Montevideo. The *Banda's* harbour was doing exceptionally well; among others, the Italian Consul in Montevideo wrote enthusiastically about the blessings of its port:

'...the city...benefits from navigation and commerce.. (and)..Its port is more secure and comfortable than that of Buenos Aires...'<sup>113</sup>

If Buenos Aires felt threatened economically by the commercial activities of the port of Montevideo, the threat was short-lived. By the late 1820s Buenos Aires was already in a much better position than its sister city in attracting foreign trade. By that time, the Province of Buenos Aires started a period of economic expansion that was to establish it as the main partner of Britain in the leather, wool and beef trades during the later part of the century. In 1832, just two years after the approval of the first Uruguayan Constitution, Montevideo merchants estimated that almost 90 per cent of the ships and freighters entering the area had their final destination at Buenos Aires, as imported goods brought *via* Argentina into Uruguay doubled those that made the opposite journey. In terms of livestock production, a similar situation developed. Despite an encouraging performance in the early 1810s, the *Banda* already lagged behind Buenos Aires by the end of the Artigas Protectorate (early 1820s); the export economy was in a shambles and regional trade, upon which the country heavily depended, severely disrupted.<sup>114</sup> In 1874, the Executive reported that from 1860 to 1874 alone public debt increased about thirty times as a consequence.<sup>115</sup> This estimate

did not include the major wars that preceded the 1860s. Barrán and Nahum remind us that the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1851) set back livestock production to levels below those of the colonial period and that it marked a return to the technology and production habits of the colony.<sup>116</sup>

In terms of state building, state revenue remained modest at best; lack of economic diversification and inefficient and erratic taxation resulted in narrow dependence on customs duties from the Port of Montevideo. By 1829, from a total state revenue of 751,040 pesos, customs duties provided the state with 582,234 pesos. By 1872 the state's income totalled 8,099,554 pesos, out of which 7,207,907 came from customs duties.<sup>117</sup> So this was a city port whose revenue came almost exclusively from the use of its sea port rather than control of its hinterland. By the 1870s the executive was still unable to penetrate the countryside (it depended completely on the parties for communications and enforcement of ordinances) and the military, as a professional establishment that should respond to the executive, existed only on paper. State capacity, i.e. the administrative and coercive abilities of the state to implement its official goals, was minimal. A recognisable state structure did not consolidate until the 1870s and even then both the military and the state looked like a loose assortment of decentralised agencies, constantly suffering from lack of communication and a wretched budget that had a hard time carrying out the most elementary taxation.<sup>118</sup> In contrast, under Juan Manuel de Rosas, Argentina had already experienced the unification of the military and the expansion of its state bureaucracy. Much more intensively than in Argentina, continuous involvement of the Orientales in armed struggle forged a solid tradition of citizen militia. Up until the 1900s, war in the rural areas was perceived as a 'natural' feature of political life.

Not surprisingly, contemporaries observed that 'rivalry between the parties and chronic civil wars', more than anything else, had been responsible for the weakness of the state and skyrocketing external debt.<sup>119</sup> In 1870, the British chargé d'affaires wrote

'The consequence of this wretched state of the country is that the peons or labourers are taken from the estancias, the flock of the different proprietors mingle,...and what is worse the men who cultivate either their own bits of land, or labour for their employers on a larger scale in the tillage of the soil, are forced to join the military service of one or the other of the leaders or to seek refuge in the woods, and thus the cultivation of the land is abandoned...I believe my Lord that no political change could make the condition of this country worse than it now is, and which old inhabitants declare to be the more deplorable than it was in the nine years war ending in 1851.'<sup>120</sup>

While the economy deteriorated, Colorado and Blanco armies consolidated clientelistic networks on a geographical basis; collaboration among bosses connected those networks nationally. In the eyes of contemporaries the confrontation between these two parties was of such cruelty and intensity that it became a distinguishing feature of the *Banda*. John Munro, the British chargé d'affaires in Montevideo, depicted political confrontations between government forces and the opposition with horror. Writing to the Earl of Granville in January of 1871, his impression was that

‘In the battle of the 25th December both parties appeared to be imbued with a savage spirit of mutual hate, the rebel cavalry which commanded the engagement with their whole strength broke the infantry of the government force, and made a most inhuman slaughter, lancing the fugitives for leagues without mercy, and, by their own confession, running them through even when begging [for their lives]..Such extreme cruelty [stimulated] the spirit of revenge, and when subsequently the government troops obtained the advantage, their infantry also bayoneted [them] without scruple. I believe, for the mortality caused ...by the first cavalry charge of the rebels, that the government troops lost more men killed on this day that did the Blancos, but the former remained masters of the field...’

He called attention to the social consequences of these party wars and, in particular, to undefined victories; no contender seemed really able to dominate the other:

‘...the Blancos dispersing and flying in groups and, as is customary on similar occasions, committing every sort of robbery and atrocity in their flight. As is usual in this country, the victory, if it can be so called, has not been followed up, and the Blanco forces have reformed, though at a considerable distance from Montevideo, with the declared intention of continuing the war.’<sup>121</sup>

His description coincides with similar accounts given by other members of the diplomatic body in Uruguay.<sup>122</sup> In sum, the frequency of party insurrections was phenomenal and their intensity exceptional. In 1836 Rivera confronted Oribe and then the *Guerra Grande* dragged the country into turmoil until 1851; in 1863 the Colorado general Venancio Flores (with Brazilian support) revolted against the (Blanco) government of President Berro; in 1870 Timoteo Aparicio (Blanco) struggled against President Lorenzo Batlle (Colorado); in 1897 Aparicio Saravia (Blanco) fought against President Juan Lindolfo Cuestas (Colorado) and in 1904 the (last) revolution of Aparicio Saravia shook the (Colorado) government of Batlle y Ordóñez. Highly mobilised, these parties created a political system in which participation was equated with armed struggle – thus the ‘apathy’ of citizens who, when the opportunity arose, disappointed the party doctors by not casting ballots as eagerly as expected. Widespread indifference to electoral

politics caught the attention of observers, who could not understand the connection between highly mobilised parties and the reluctance of the rank and file to cast ballots.<sup>123</sup> A foreign observer put his finger on the reason for such apathy when he complained:

‘It is difficult to account for this chronic state of revolution.. [which has resulted in].. a sort of indifference on the part of the people, who allow themselves to be geared by a clique of ambitious men, the self elected representatives of the country.’<sup>124</sup>

This coincided with the judgement of another observer who in August of 1864 wrote that the reason for this indifference lay in the frequency of war, which had done so much damage to the Republic:

‘...the Oriental State has been at war since 1801 and amongst all its social classes has always existed mistrust and apathy [which extended] to the totality of business sectors as well...[in every single year] there has been a war in Uruguay of some sort or another. As a consequence of these wars and revolutions the Orientales and foreigners established in the Republic migrated to different countries, because not all of them wanted to serve in the war, nor did they share the same political creed; the years of peace were too short to restore their rights and heal them from the maltreatment that they had suffered’.<sup>125</sup>

Obviously, apathy resulted from a system in which only revolutionary forces could guarantee representation. As in the rest of the Americas and most of Europe, voting was not only clientelistic but also meaningless because of the absence of guarantees that elected authorities would remain in office. In studying the Argentine regime of the 1880s, Hilda Sabato has also been puzzled by a similar ‘apathy’; unlike Uruguay, however, apathy in Argentina defined more the behaviour of the upper classes, which suggests a crucial difference between these societies.<sup>126</sup> My conclusion is that while in Uruguay (see Section IV below) elites harboured a mixture of fear and respect for the lower classes, in Argentina that fear was, if anything, much less pressing.<sup>127</sup> In Argentina, the spectre of vertical alliances between contending elites and the lower classes, or general insurrection, was much less credible.

In Uruguay, apathy was encouraged by consternation over the issue of the military draft; to serve in the party militia was neither voluntary nor especially financially rewarding. Both political parties and the army resorted to mandatory and frequent instances of conscription that drained the economy and created a stronger sense of insecurity and apprehension.<sup>128</sup> Foreigners were at times forced to join up, Brazilians and Argentines being numerous among the militia of both parties and foot soldiers in the army. During the Venancio Flores rebellion in the mid-1860s Spaniards, Italians and some

British citizens were seized and forced to serve in the Colorado-Brazilian army of Flores; even 'Greek citizens [were] ... forced into serving and carried to the barracks'.<sup>129</sup> In a system in which no armed group could impose itself completely over the other and the state was too feeble to centralise power, negotiations in time became essential for survival. By the 1870s the costs of war were so high that arbitration had become a routine practice, the two parties using intimidation and informal negotiation to avoid armed confrontation. At the time of the Timoteo Aparicio revolt an observer wrote:

'As yet no collision of any importance has happened between the contending parties. Their mutual object, as usual in these civil wars, being apparently to avoid fighting and sending the usual bombastic reports to the head of their respective factions, the deplorable effect, however, of these lawless bands travelling over the country having already been experienced in robberies of horses and cattle...and increasing numbers of assassinations.'

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By the 1870s agreements in terms of quotas or representation and territorial influence materialised. Compromises were imposed on the dominant party (mostly the Colorados) by forces in the opposition (mostly the Blancos) and marked different stages in the formation of the party system.

Three of these wars, in particular, were crucial. A first revolutionary breakthrough was the wars of independence; these included the José Gervasio Artigas revolution (1811-1820) and subsequent conflicts. A second struggle that was decisive for party development was the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1851). The Flores insurrection of 1863 was also important, but it was the *Revolución de las Lanzas* (Revolution of the Spears, 1870-1872) that closed what I see as a crucial first period of polity formation that ended with the last *revoluciones de partido*.<sup>131</sup> The *Revolución de las Lanzas* resulted in the so-called *Paz de Abril*, which was followed by militarism and afterwards *civilismo*, relatively calmer periods that did not experience *revoluciones de partido*.

## The Artigas Revolution

'... [his army was] ... a group of gauchos transformed into field marshals'<sup>132</sup>

The 1811 revolution led by José Gervasio Artigas represented a turning point that laid the foundations for a new polity. Although the term 'revolution' reflects the terminology used by contemporaries, the struggle led by Artigas can be rightly called a revolution from the bottom up. It was an armed mass-based movement which challenged the state and set the basis of



an alternative regime by substituting ruling elites and enforcing changes in terms of access to the means of production (land). For the rural masses the very foundation of the country rested upon this revolution that established *La Patria Vieja*, 1810-1820, or *Protectorado*, a federalist system that aspired to form a League of Provinces. It demanded open access to the ports which, up until then, had been controlled by the cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo and defended by the military might of the Viceroyalty. It also demanded a deep re-structuring of the agrarian economy that could clearly be conceived as agrarian reform. Thus, unlike Argentina, in which the wars of independence were fought from the city to the countryside, in Uruguay the wars of independence were wars against the city. While Buenos Aires became the ideological and military locus of the revolution, Montevideo remained the stronghold of the counterrevolution. Moreover, while in Argentina enlightened urban minorities based in Buenos Aires took control of the independence movement, the struggle in Uruguay was led by the rural poor.<sup>133</sup> These differences had great consequences for future political development because, while after the first instance of revolutionary euphoria in Argentina the revolutionary leadership became more moderate (Mariano Moreno is a good example), in Uruguay the revolutionary programme was carried out to a much greater extent. The Uruguayan rural masses differed markedly from the urban revolutionary elites of Buenos Aires on the issues of land redistribution and a more equitable allocation of the spoils of wars; while the former became much more radical in their claims, the latter took on a significantly more moderate stance.

Colonial policies that created large numbers of 'free but miserable men' explain part of the rural-based revolutionary impulse of the *Banda*.<sup>134</sup> On 15 November 1781, the *Alcalde* of the Cabildo of Montevideo was concerned that

'...the grandsons and sons of the original settlers do not possess an inch of land to cultivate or raise cattle...it cannot be conceived that the cause for this state of affairs is land scarcity; rather, it lies in a few hacendados who occupy more land than all the others put together..all in detriment of [our] industry and population.'<sup>135</sup>

Intense demand for land marked the end of the colonial period and not surprisingly coloured the wars of independence. Land invasions and evictions became more and more frequent as the 1810s approached and, particularly in the southern part of the country, they triggered violence and discontent. Unlike other economies in which the existence of peasant or Indian villages with systems of share-cropping, rents or other type of dependent relations absorbed a great part of rural unemployment and inserted entire families in the rural economy, much evidence in the *Banda* points to high rural unemployment, unstable family life and no available land from the late part

of the colonial period.<sup>136</sup> In addition, a strong anti-city sentiment was widespread among the rural populations. High levels of absenteeism among the landed upper classes resulted in *haciendas* controlled from Montevideo; merchants invested in land and supervised their property from the city, for the most part remaining aloof from the countryside and adding to the resentment of landless labourers.

It must be pointed out, however, that this state of affairs, although directly resulting from colonial policies, was not the product of a 'feudal' mentality on the part of the Crown. Rather than the by-product of a feudal-like economic policy, widespread support for *latifundia* ranching on the part of the colonial authorities resulted from fears of a Portuguese invasion through unpopulated borders. In a situation of scarce population and much less scarce loyalists, the large *latifundio* was thought to provide a mechanism for border control; simply, landowners were expected to defend their property militarily. If these measures that more and more alienated the rural poor contributed to the revolutionary character of the wars of independence, other aspects of colonial policy also encouraged the idea of badly needed economic reform and thereby added to revolutionary fervor. In Felix de Azara's well-known *Memoria sobre el estado rural del Río de la Plata* one can find, as Barrán and Nahum, Campal and Real de Azua have argued, a strong precedent for the economic reforms launched by Artigas in 1815.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the sixth element of this fascinating *Memoria* proposes to grant property titles to those occupying tracts of land who did not have them; the document as a whole proposes a reorganisation of property, society and the distribution of wealth in the agrarian economy. Azara and others among the colonial authorities perceived the contradiction between the expansion of large *latifundios* and the needs of the *Banda*, but hoped that, after containing the Portuguese or establishing a stable alliance, attention could be turned to these burning issues. The wars of independence altered their plans and destroyed their hopes, for they provided a vehicle to channel the grievances of the rural poor.

It was in this context that Artigas launched his attack against the governments constituted in both Montevideo and Buenos Aires. His Federation of Provinces (1813) conveyed alarming news both for revolutionary Buenos Aires and conservative Montevideo, because a system dominated by the peripheral provinces suddenly became a threatening reality.<sup>138</sup> Economically, *artiguismo* granted access to land to the rural poor, created a group of middle-sized owners and tried to break the monopoly on both ports; politically, it pursued a very strong nationalism and wanted the expulsion of foreign powers from the region (Spain and Portugal). As the struggle for Independence unfolded (1811-1813) and the Artigas forces fought the Spanish and *porteños*, the rural poor became more prominent in the loose coalition that composed the armies of independence

(1813-1815).<sup>139</sup> Their active role triggered fear among some of the original *caudillos* that accompanied Artigas, large *hacendados* who in 1814 welcomed the *porteño* invasion and in 1817 the Portuguese encroachment. The movement had counted on the support of the old *cuero de hacendados*, an organisation of landowners created under the Viceroyalty that opposed the dominance of Spanish business in the city. In the early years of the struggle, they particularly supported Artigas's initiative to tax the urban sectors more heavily.<sup>140</sup> But as the movement took a radical turn, the role played by the upper classes in the revolution lessened; Artigas himself complained of the scarce number of those drawn from the upper classes remaining among his troops.<sup>141</sup>

In contrast, during the first siege of Montevideo in 1811 and the following so-called 'exodus of the Oriental people', popular support for the Artigas crusade was overwhelming. In a similar fashion to the Mexican revolution, in which entire populations migrated following their political leaders, the Uruguayan rural masses abandoned land, family and employment to follow Artigas and his lieutenants. All sources agreed with the leader himself who, in a letter to Galván, wrote:

'All the Banda Oriental follows me massively...some burning their houses and the furniture that they cannot carry with them, some on foot ... because they have worn out their horses ... old women and weak old men, innocent children...march [with me] in the midst of all imaginable deprivations'.<sup>142</sup>

While his troops were at the siege of the city, news of an imminent Portuguese invasion helped Artigas in recruiting a following in his retreat northwards that, at times, turned out to be too much responsibility for him and his troops.<sup>143</sup> Military support came from the northern Argentine provinces of his federation as well, and after years of struggle, on 26 February 1815, *artiguista* militia finally gained control of Montevideo. Legislation passed at that time is telling as to what the inspiration of the new regime was. Land was going to be taken from

'... those who left the motherland, bad Europeans, and worse Americans who without justification claimed property rights over their old possessions.. [and given to] men who deserve this commendation all under the conditions that those who are the most humble be the most privileged. Consequently, free negroes, mixed-bloods of this class, indians and poor creoles, all can be awarded *haciendas* so that with their work and goodness they will contribute to their own happiness and the greatness of the province.'<sup>144</sup>

My point here is that the conflict became more about the redistribution of land and wealth than about independence from Spain. One can argue that the endemic disorder that reigned in the *Banda's* countryside was aggravated

considerably by the wars and that the result was more a civil strife with regional and domestic dimensions than war against a foreign power.<sup>145</sup> All in all, Spain sent very little re-enforcement to the *Banda* and it was the confrontation between Artigas and the *Directorio* in Buenos Aires that won the day.<sup>146</sup> A new sense of nationality emerged that was more connected with the right of the lower classes to participate politically and economically than with the substitution of the Spanish authorities by a local creole elite. Most research on *artiguismo* points in a similar direction; it was no doubt a movement that fostered the interests of the lower classes and that placed the rural poor among those who stood to gain.<sup>147</sup>

Artigas's confrontation with Buenos Aires and his final defeat at the hands of the Portuguese was perceived as the ruin of those 'who were the most humble' and the 'good orientales' and as the victory of foreign powers and urban doctors. Tensions that characterised the state after 1830 and the sharp rural/urban cleavage that distinguished Uruguayan political history have a strong precedent in the relationship established between *artiguismo* and the city. After all, Artigas's army of mixed-blood *gauchos* and small rural producers had confronted urban merchants, international traders and manufacturers engaged in the jerked beef industry. In terms of class formation *artiguismo* also left a legacy. Most prominent was the so-called *minifundio ganadero*, ranchers who engaged in livestock production on small extensions of land or sometimes with no land at all, who prospered under the Protectorado.<sup>148</sup> Small farmers also mushroomed in the immediacies of Montevideo and some other cities, in turn somewhat changing the depiction of the country side as the province of large *latifundia*. After the defeat of the Federation, litigation seeking the recovery of the land grants bestowed under *artiguismo* flooded the courts. To be sure, after the fall of the *protectorado* most of these lands were declared public; legal petitions to recover them extended well into the late 19th century. In fashion with well-known arguments of relative deprivation, one can argue that the collapse of *artiguismo* partially explains the readiness of the rural poor to follow other *caudillos* and to mobilise intensively afterwards.

Tellingly, the end of *La Cisplatina* (the regime that followed *artiguismo* under Portuguese control) resulted from another insurrection headed by one of Artigas's lieutenants, José A. Lavalleja, who organised the so-called 1825 Independence Crusade. This was the *Cruzada de los 33 Orientales*, organised by Uruguayan exiles in Buenos Aires and, as its name indicates, counting at first only 33 volunteers. After their secret arrival from Buenos Aires the leaders organised an armed resistance against the Portuguese and did succeed in linking rural and urban interests, sharply divided after *artiguismo*. The outcome was the independence of Uruguay in 1828 through British diplomacy.<sup>149</sup> The 33 were also able to gain the support of middle-sized business groups disappointed with the Cisplatina regime together with sectors

of the lower classes who mistrusted foreign domination. The 'crusade' was also favoured by the emergence of the newly formed Rivadavia Administration in Buenos Aires.<sup>150</sup> Yet the urban-rural alliance behind the 33 Orientales was fragile. Its success was linked to shared dissatisfaction with Portuguese discriminatory policies in terms of property and cattle grants, old cleavages resurfacing as the invading forces returned home.<sup>151</sup> A 'reactionary configuration', in Moore's terms, was not to gain control of the state and development objectives were to remain second to peace for those in government.

### The Guerra Grande and Revoluciones de Partido

One more war pushed development objectives even further from the primary focus of political elites. The *Guerra Grande* (1839-1851) was largely a product of the expansionist ambitions of Argentina under Juan Manuel de Rosas and the resulting Brazil-Argentina conflict; it made the state even weaker and demolished the economy.<sup>152</sup> A diminishing workforce and alarming destruction of resources were part of the legacy of this war.

From the Departamento of Maldonado, Pedro Bustamante, at the time a young lawyer, wrote in 1853 that

'Sky and grass is what awaits the traveller who wants to cross from Minas to Maldonado. In 16 leagues of terrain I have not been able to count more than 400 head of cattle and horses. There are *estancia* owners who live off rice and dry beef, and those who can afford to offer you an *asado* cannot be called poor.'<sup>153</sup>

Newspapers abundantly reported on the appalling situation of the rural economy.<sup>154</sup> The consensus is overwhelming: scarcity of labour, lack of resources, depopulation, diminishing herds.

Incidents leading to the war started in October 1838, when Manuel Oribe (Blanco) was deposed by Fructuoso Rivera (Colorado). Rivera had developed a strong alliance with Brazil and, in fact, there is evidence that part of Rivera's army was on the payroll of the Brazilian government.<sup>155</sup> Once in control of Montevideo, Rivera tried to lessen his strong ties with Brazil by breaking his alliance with the insurrectionists of Rio Grande (southern Brazil) while at the same time opening communication with Juan Manuel de Rosas in Argentina. This last move was unsuccessful and Rivera could not undermine the already consolidated alliance between Rosas and Oribe. By 1839 a period of small battles and skirmishes started, in which Rivera, with French help, successfully confronted several insurrections on the part of Oribe's allies, the most notorious of all being ex-President Juan A. Lavalleja. Under the leadership of Lavalleja the supporters of Oribe, consolidating as

the Blanco Party, confronted the government troops on several occasions and finally had to accept defeat.<sup>156</sup> In Argentina, 1840-42 were years of insurrection and instability, severe confrontations between Buenos Aires and the Litoral Provinces being at the centre of attention. From Montevideo, Rivera openly embarked on a military campaign to support the insurrection and participated personally in the war. Ironically, he was now defeated by Oribe who, in command of Rosista forces, had been assigned to repress the uprising in the name of the central government. In 1843, Rivera and a handful of his officers, barely fleeing alive from the battlefield, sought refuge in Montevideo; at his heels were the Oribista forces who immediately started a siege of the city port. Oribe, with a force of 7,000 men, besieged the city from February 1843 to October 1851. Less than 4,000 men defended the city, among whom only 400 were Uruguayan born; indeed, according to the estimates of the United States and Brazilian Consulates, these last did not number more than 200 and 100 respectively.<sup>157</sup> Montevideo became the focus of resistance against Rosas and the natural refuge of anti-Rosas exiles. Immigration to Argentina drained the country to an extent never known before.<sup>158</sup> The Spanish Consul in Montevideo reported to the Secretary of State in Madrid that in view of imminent civil war in Uruguay 'emigration has augmented enormously, 15,000 persons having left the country in a very short period of time...'. As a result of this prolonged siege, in the city

'... the demoralisation prevailing amongst the larger portions of the inhabitants particularly the soldiery in consequence of the privations and hardships they have suffered (is so great) that it is impossible to foretell what might take place ... Great exertions have been made by the police authorities to preserve order and tranquillity ... bodies of new civilians have patrolled the streets from sunset to sunrise; in spite of all this care several assassinations have taken place, some in broad daylight ... the disaffection at times in the garrison has been unbearable.'<sup>159</sup>

If this was the situation in Montevideo, in the countryside things were not much better for both peons and producers. While plunder and pillage by loose bands of *gauchos* was alarming enough, direct exorbitant 'official' taxes were imposed on merchants and landowners to finance the war effort. General Fructuoso Rivera, the foremost Colorado leader and founder of the Party,

'... asked from traders in the Villa de Melo ... a forced loan of 12,000 duros, which he reduced to 4,000 afterwards, and as the merchants refused to pay not only because all were foreigners and considered themselves exempt ...but also because they wanted to remain neutral...[the colorados] threatened that if they did not approve that sum of money ...they would be expelled from the country ...their property confiscated, and in 40 days they had to clear their houses, during which time they could not conduct business... Incredulously, refusing to give up their rights, 17 Spanish merchants, one French and one Argentine were in fact taken outside the villa before General Rivera, who ordered that

they be transported to Brazil without farewell from their families...riding horses that, out of compassion, their neighbours lent them.<sup>160</sup>

The war was one of waiting, for there were long lulls in which ‘not a shot has been fired for about 384 days’ – it was towards the end that armed combat resumed ‘after almost two years’.<sup>161</sup> Despite its low combat intensity, however, the conflict became extremely important for polity formation. The city became known as *La Defensa* while the anti-Montevideo and pro-Rosas forces controlled a nearby small port next to El Cerrito (the little mountain). El Cerrito sought to establish its own administration and port at El Buceo and they considered themselves as a separate state project. Not surprisingly, given Rosas’s campaign against foreign commercial interests, namely his programme of *Defensa Americana* which preached the formation of a Latin American bloc against European penetration in the River Plate, all foreign powers involved in the conflict supported Montevideo and vigorously opposed El Cerrito.

Despite its low intensity, the war deepened the widening gulf between the city and the hinterland and dismantled what remained of the central bureaucracy. It also strengthened the parties by reinforcing the urban/rural cleavage; because of the siege, it provided the Colorados with captured constituencies in Montevideo and left the Blancos free to dominate the rural areas. As indicated, constituencies in the city counted on large numbers of foreigners, some of whom did join the Colorados and became leading members of the Party, giving the organisation a rather cosmopolitan outlook. Not surprisingly, two political communities separated by the walls of the citadel (Colorados and Blancos) in time formed and started to develop different identities and ideologies that contributed much to party cohesion. Urbanites incorporated into a Colorado Party that adopted more liberal platforms and reinforced its apparatus, eschewing its original rural outlook, became part of the apex of party hierarchy. Colorados became identified as pro-European and modernisers, while the party of El Cerrito, led by Oribe, became the stronghold of national indigenous interests. In October of 1848, the longest lasting newspaper of El Cerrito, *El Defensor de la Independencia Americana*, claimed that the assault on Montevideo was justified as an attack on Europhiles and other anti-nationalists.<sup>162</sup> It echoed the opinion of most within the forming Blanco party and a large number of the Uruguayan-born inhabitants of the city under siege. In short, the war consolidated the rift between the two opposing sub-regions; rather than a clear ideological split between conservatives and liberals, party formation was connected to the characteristics of the *Guerra Grande* which was transformed, at the end, into a *revolución de partido*.

After the war the parties reached an accord. A ‘*ni vencedores, ni vencidos*’ (neither winners nor losers) formula allowed for power sharing in the

national Legislative Assembly. The preconditions for a party system were thus in place. Parties and their constituencies were now distinct entities within a polity that they controlled completely. To the disappointment of a large sector of the economic elites, who sought to direct the state along a more purely economic path of development, the *Guerra Grande* had strengthened the parties and increased the political leverage of *caudillos*. Merchants, manufacturers and landowners were of course part of the ruling coalition, but they continued nevertheless to mouth the refrain that the parties were the chief obstacle to development. In time the Assembly would become dominated by either one or the other party and presidents who tried to bypass the parties found it impossible to govern. The first president after the war, Juan Giro, tried (unsuccessfully) to discourage party rivalry by appointing an equal number of representatives from *La Defensa* and El Cerrito to the Assembly. His successor, Gabriel Pereira, found staunch opposition to his attempt to create a *Partido Nacional* that would encompass Blancos and Colorados. And President Bernardo Berro (1859-1863) had to yield to the parties as well; his attempts at minimising their influence ended by producing the Colorado Venancio Flores's insurrection. A very important consequence of the *Guerra Grande* was that the professional army became more partisan. Rank-and-file soldiers who identified with either party adopted the appropriate banners of their commitments (*La Defensa* or El Cerrito) and party control over the professional military increased. This particularly applied to the Colorados. By the end of the war the government claimed that

‘the situation in the country is hopeful, pacification is complete, and this peace will be long lasting... atrocities committed in the past will not be repeated’.<sup>163</sup>

Yet the situation was far from stable. In the early 1860s the state was to be shaken by war again.

In terms of regime changes this decade was remarkable. It witnessed the consolidation of Colorado Party rule with the triumph of Venancio Flores's revolt in 1865. Flores deposed Anastasio Aguirre, an interim president who had publicly identified himself with the Blanco Party; it would take another 94 years for the Blancos to regain the Presidency. The political system looked more and more like a dominant one party system, with a party in opposition that, more often than not, refused to participate in national elections. This is not surprising. Once in government, the dominant party did its best to undermine the organisational capacity of its counterpart and denied the ousted party significant appointments in ministries or Congress; war remained the most reliable way to challenge authority and to obtain participation in the ruling coalition. Tellingly, after the Flores takeover, the Blancos immediately campaigned against the illegal Colorado government and attempted to revolt, hence the frustrated Bernardo Berro uprising. This was promptly followed by other insurrections in the name of the motherland and against foreign



manipulation as incarnated in the Colorados. Also in this decade the country participated in the Paraguayan War (1865-1870), which provoked radical changes in the military establishment.

The Flores Administration developed a highly controversial and clientelistic regime. Army revolts succeeded one another and even his own son, Colonel Fortunato Flores, accused of several crimes and according to contemporaries 'a person of detestable character', plotted successfully against the General and followed him as dictator.<sup>164</sup> In 1868 the revolt led by Fortunato, also a declared Colorado, is indicative of the close relation between the troops stationed in Montevideo and the party. Fortunato headed about 500 professional troops, i.e. almost the entirety of the rank and file stationed at Montevideo (the 'Libertad' Battalion) and its surroundings.<sup>165</sup> His father, meanwhile, counted on the support of high military officers and mobilised most of the rest of the army countrywide (about 600 to 700 men, according to different sources).<sup>166</sup> By contrast, the Blancos operated more on the basis of voluntary rural militia, although they also counted on the support of a few professional military. Tellingly, two years later in 1870, during another Blanco-led 'revolution' organised in Buenos Aires, the troops under the command of Blanco *caudillos* seem to have been a mixture of patriots and mercenaries, among whom men of Italian nationality were a majority. On 10 September 1870, describing the victory of the Colorado government over the Blancos in the periphery of Montevideo, the Italian chargé d'affaires wrote

'The troops recruited by Blanco leaders were by and large mercenary troops ... composed mainly of Italians ... Among the leaders that negotiated the settlement were two Italians, Bertelli and Ballotta, who, after the revolution failed, dared to ask protection from the Italian Legation.'<sup>167</sup>

Fortunato Flores was forced out of office by the counterrevolution led by his father, who condemned his son and wife to prison.<sup>168</sup> A newly appointed British chargé d'affaires at Montevideo wrote that

'although for some years [I] had been accustomed in the Spanish Republics of America, North and South, to see governments in power one more worthless than the other, never had I witnessed anything presuming to call itself a government more thoroughly despicable and more universally despised than the one imposed upon this country by ... Brigadier General Don Venancio Flores. The entire art of government as carried on by this pernicious *gaucho*, consists in putting his adherents into every post from which they may extract money, and his system has been carried out so unblushingly, that even in spite of the general indifference here to which I have so frequently alluded ... I cannot but think that the most callous will ... insist ... [that] things [must] be put to an end'.<sup>169</sup>

Venancio Flores's return to office, however, cannot be interpreted as the establishment of a military government. In fact, a major cause of Fortunato's uprising had been his father's decision to leave office in the hands of party authorities in 1868. Venancio's partisan commitment to the Colorados and civilian rule was not enough to hold a firm coalition together behind his government. A major problem was the long lasting alliance of the General with Brazil. Forecasting some of the increasing unpopularity that the General was soon to bear during his contentious short administration, on his first entrance to the city as the country's fourth President in 1865, clear signs of popular dissatisfaction with Flores' alliance with Brazil surfaced. These only increased when Brazilian troops were permanently stationed in Montevideo after Fortunato's failed uprising. The government's connection with Brazil stirred deep-rooted nationalist feelings from the time of the 33 Orientales crusade and reinforced old cleavages between the parties. When Brazilians were in fact appointed to some important posts in the Flores administration, this diminished the government's prestige even more since they '...(devoted themselves to) ... plunder and public robbery, a development that was formerly unknown'.<sup>170</sup>

The unpopularity of these measurements was shared by the foreign community. Spanish, Italian, Russian, French and British *chargés d'affaires* even considered asking their countries to break relations with Uruguay on account of abuses at the hands of Brazilians and others in the Flores administration, arguing that they had been unable to obtain justice in a single instance where murder had been committed.<sup>171</sup> In addition to these problems internal to the state bureaucracy, the war effort against Paraguay made the army more daring and the atmosphere was one of imminent military takeover. The alliance behind Flores never really consolidated and even his own followers were growing increasingly critical of his rule. Flores was more than aware of the instability of his government and on 15 February 1868 he left the government in the hands of Pedro Varela, President of the Senate; by March the country was expected to elect a new President for the period 1868-1872. Only four days after leaving office Flores was assassinated.<sup>172</sup> In 1870 the legacy of the Flores administration and his tragic death were described in the following way:

'There are in the Uruguayan Republic some fifty individuals, military men and lawyers, who look upon their private interests as those of the people. This knob of men is divided into three parties - the Floristas, partisans of General Flores, the Conservatives, and the Blancos. The Blancos cannot forgive the Floristas for having upset the regular Government through the assistance of the Brazilians. The Floristas cannot forgive the Blancos for the assassination of the Director-General Flores. The Conservatives, who are likewise accused of having participated in the assassination of Flores, ... being more numerous, are better able to oppose the other two parties.'<sup>173</sup>

Divisions within the parties upon the fall of the Flores government and his assassination were not deep enough to halt a tendency towards one party predominance, and the political system that followed retained the strong dominant one party system features of its predecessor. It was dominated by Colorado doctors who, unlike some of Flores's partisan *correligionarios*, had opposed too close an alliance with Brazil and had resisted the *candombero* tendencies of Flores. Yet this was a highly unstable system. Several small Blanco revolts took place, to which one should add others led by dissident Colorados. Colonel Máximo Pérez, for instance, headed some disturbances adding to a chaotic situation that would come to a head during the serious Blanco uprising of Timoteo Aparicio a few years later. Described as a 'petty military local chief ... joined by about 300 *gauchos* and vagabonds', in 1870 Pérez declared himself the leader of a revolutionary movement. In the eyes of foreigners he seems to have been 'a man of notoriously violent and crude intents' who in 1868 had 'raised a force and marched upon the capital and whose submission was purchased by the government of the period'.<sup>174</sup>

A serious challenge to the convulsive five years of Colorado control, equated with the power of '*doctores de la capital*' came from the Blancos when Aparicio's insurrection triggered another *revolución de partido* and in the end forced the Colorados to negotiate quotas of participation in the *Paz de Abril*. This was the so-called *Revolución de las Lanzas* (1870-1872). The Italian chargé d'affaires reported the stalemate between the two parties as one in which neither government troops nor Blancos could make any significant headway into the enemy:

'... hundreds of people died on both sides, among whom were large numbers of Spaniards and Italians but ... [after a while] things come back to be exactly as they were before ... [namely] the Blancos are not able to take the city over and the Colorados are not able to push the Blancos away from the city limits. Some people within the citadel were arrested because of their support for the Blanco revolution ... and it is impossible to know how long this situation will last.'<sup>175</sup>

Within the parties this revolution decreased the gap between doctors and *caudillos* (this was particularly true of the Colorados), and between the parties it forced cooperation. Aparicio challenged the government of Lorenzo Batlle who was the representative of the already firm alliance between the Colorados and the professional army.<sup>176</sup> Calling for greater participation in the government, Blanco insurgents took up arms. After two years of struggle the two parties verbally agreed that the Blancos were to be given control of four out of twelve *departamentos*. By this agreement, they obviously sanctioned electoral fraud and divided the parties regionally, as the results of elections in Blanco or Colorado controlled *departamentos* were highly predictable.<sup>177</sup> Yet the pact favoured state growth and facilitated government penetration of the rural areas. A major consequence of the revolt

was that it eroded Colorado hegemony; the possibility of a one party system with military backing was now out of the question.

The rudimentary system of co-participation that emerged was reconstructed several times up until the 1900s, but its basic structure remained the same. The *Revolución de las Lanzas* also triggered changes in party organisation and composition particularly in the Blanco Party. So far, the Party had operated on the basis of rural insurrections, but after 1872 it made a conscious effort to reinforce its civilian urban wing and to work on party doctrine and discourse.<sup>178</sup> Blanco caudillos found receptive ears among *principista* doctors who defended the right of political minorities to representation, sought to transform the Blanco Party into a *partido de ideas*, and feared the authoritarian characteristics of Colorado hegemony. After the *Paz de Abril* the linkages between *caudillos* and doctors in both parties strengthened.<sup>179</sup> It came at the time in which Liberalism was at its peak; this was the epoch of the *cámaras bizantinas* and the most incendiary speeches in Congress. Yet Liberalism consolidated upon the structure of a party system run by *caudillos* and intense collective action involving the 'traditional' part of society. It had been the legacy of the wars of independence and the *revoluciones de partidos* that transformed backward Uruguay into a fertile soil for liberal democracy which, corrupt as it was, nevertheless provided the institutional backbone for the daring reforms of the early twentieth century. In 1886, the influence of the *principistas* in both parties had grown strong enough to contribute to the final divorce of the professional military from the parties.

### III. Civilian Rule and the Military

Because of lack of data and the obsession in the previous literature with the economy and the parties, there has been no treatment of the evolution of the military and its relationship to both the state and the parties. This is paradoxical because, after all, until the turning point of the late 1880s, the Uruguayan executive was mostly run by *caudillos* who were military men as well. In a country permanently at war, government was composed of an unstable mix of military men and civilians. In such a situation there was no guarantee that civilian political elites would prevail. Yet constitutional provisions prohibiting active professional military men from serving in the Congress or campaigning for office were slowly but surely enforced. Why did political parties and civilian rule eventually prevail?

From the 1830s to the late 1880s generals and colonels were active in politics, but it is difficult to differentiate between the partisan militant and the

professional military. Since independence the Blancos had counted officers among their ranks as well, and after the same war military men garrisoned at El Cerrito remained tied to the Blancos and to the countryside. After independence both Colorado and Blanco military *caudillos* recruited their forces in the rural areas, where they made their reputation as political leaders. As late as the 1870s the military's ties with the countryside remained strong.<sup>180</sup> But from the October Peace of 1851 to the April Peace of 1872, to a great extent the professional military became Colorados. During the *Guerra Grande* the military headquarters located in Montevideo and the Colorado party leadership developed an intimate connection that transformed large numbers of officers into Colorado party members. Because during the so-called War of the Triple Alliance or Paraguayan War (1865-1870) the professionalisation of the military took place under Colorado governments, most high-ranking Generals took part in the Colorado cause. In the early 1870s the struggle against the Blanco revolt of Timoteo Aparicio was accelerated, professionalising the army even further. It can be argued that both of these wars were fought by an army of Colorado officers defending Colorado governments. Therefore, when the Colorados put forward the important democratic reforms of the 1880s and 1900s, they found only moderate resistance on the part of the army. The military-Colorado alliance that under party control had promoted army growth and professionalisation had also set specific limits on the role played by military men in Congress.

Most presidents turned out to be ex-generals who kept in close contact with the barracks, but who also consulted openly with party *caudillos* and doctors. Since the late 1830s generals and military heroes publicly expressed their party affiliation.<sup>181</sup> In the 1860s the veteran Venancio Flores ruled in the name of the *caudillo, candombero* wing of the Colorado party. But under his rule alliances between military men and doctors became even more frequent; in the 1870s the *Club Liberal*, founded by doctors who represented one of three major Colorado factions, counted great numbers of officers as active members.<sup>182</sup> No doubt after the War of the Triple Alliance the military became more aggressive politically. The Lorenzo Latorre administration (1876-1880), however, was the only example of a military government that attempted to rule without the parties (see below). The two military governments that followed developed close ties with them. The first was the Máximo Santos administration (1882-1886) and the second the regime run by his ex-Minister, General Máximo Tajes, who was President until 1890. Both presidents developed close alliances with doctors. Santos found support in Colorado *principistas* and Tajes developed an even closer relation with them, in particular with Julio Herrera y Obes, the leader of the movement called *Civilismo*, who finally replaced Tajes in office. The coalition behind President Herrera y Obes succeeded in rendering powerless the pro-Santos military-civilian alliance and was able to carry out the transition towards a

regime in which officers and civilians, the latter dominating the state, mixed less in public posts.

Overall, it was in the intermeshing of parties and the military, in the shared loyalties of generals and officers who were simultaneously military men and partisans, that the polity evolved into a liberal democracy. To a large extent this explains why it took so long for the military to emerge as a force divorced from party politics. As it can be seen in the chronological list of presidencies (see Appendix), generals and civilians shared the presidency, but they did so in the name of the Colorados or Blancos. Why the parties kept together in a situation in which class cleavages were weak and ideological differentiation thin, finds an explanation in these cross alliances and in loyalties developed in times of war. Military organising filtered into the parties through the parties' networks in the military and provided a significant part of their organisational backbone. In their origins, the two major parties had not been so much a product of the legislature as a result of the influence of major military figures. The two parties were also united by the role they played in the defence of the country in the wars of independence and in the immediate aftermath; after all, unlike Argentina, in Uruguay parties fought these struggles while the professional military played a subordinate role.

The Lorenzo Latorre administration deserves special attention.<sup>183</sup> Latorre was the foremost state-builder of the nineteenth century and his government stood alone as the only coalition which successfully attempted to govern without the parties. The equation seemed simple enough: the parties had to become weaker for the state to grow stronger. Economic elites vigorously supported his regime since for a long time they had perceived party rule as inimical to prosperity. In a country ruled by alliances of general partisans and doctors, by the 1870s business groups still had trouble penetrating government. In the aftermath of the Paraguayan War, military men felt uncomfortable under party control and resented a system of promotions that rewarded party loyalties and benefited the old heroes of *revoluciones de partido* more than distinguished officers. Economic elites found these military men to be natural allies, particularly among the corps stationed at Montevideo. By the mid-1870s this coalition consolidated. From 1876 to 1880 President Lorenzo Latorre represented urban business, part of the military and entrepreneurial *estancieros* who wanted centralisation of authority, modernisation and state growth.<sup>184</sup> He had participated in the Paraguayan War and had begun his military career under the command of Venancio Flores. Having built a reputation in the army as valiant and brilliant, in 1875 he became Minister of War under President Varela. His ascent to power, as described by a notable and outstanding member of the *ganadero* elite, is quite telling as to who supported the government:

'The people of Montevideo gathered yesterday in a General Assembly called by both national and international commerce, and acclaimed as Provisional Government the ex-Minister of War and Marine Colonel Lorenzo Latorre. Responding to the call of his fellow citizens, he has accepted such a demanding appointment until the first of March of 1877.'<sup>185</sup>

The 'call' came from a paralysed and stagnant country. Under the hegemony of Great Britain and the ascendancy of the United States, a changing market environment had triggered serious processes of modernisation in Argentina and Chile which had touched Uruguay only slightly. During the Pedro Varela presidency (1885-86) the country had faced one of the most critical economic depressions in years and widespread discontent marked the mid-1870s. John Munro expressed clearly his opinion as to the roots of these problems:

'It is not difficult..to find reasons for the state of prostration of this unfortunate country. The principal causes I believe to have been the lavish waste of public money immediately succeeding a four year civil war on the advent of General Flores to power, the ...licence afforded to bankruptcy and every sort of speculations upon fictitious capital, producing a monetary crisis which has lasted for three years and the complete neglect and oblivion of every interest in the interior of the Republic [which only adds to] the great fall in the price of wool and hides..<sup>186</sup>

Latorre's reputation as both an honest military officer and a leader able to provide a strong hand was appealing to many belonging both to the lower and higher classes. For the first time in the history of the country the army seemed to have grown professional enough to administer the affairs of government and for the first time a strong institutional force able to establish order and progress materialised as a real possibility.

The regime behind General Latorre was, compared to previous ones, quite homogeneous; it was supported by entrepreneurial self-made men, such as the Colonel himself, who despised 'traditional society' and professional politicians of illustrious origins such as the *principistas*. They, as Barrán and Nahum have suggested, were pragmatic men inspired by a strong work ethic.<sup>187</sup> Latorre sought to substitute the rule of both parties of *caudillos* and *partidos de ideas* by a state ruled by pressure groups. Radical as it was in its agenda of reform, the military regime of Latorre set the parameters for a type of military rule that still depended heavily on civilian partisans. The classical interpretation of the Latorre period as a time in which parties did not participate in government is only half true; if formally they did not as parties, informally their members cooperated with the regime in more than one way. Long before his ascent to power, the General had been perceived as a

moderniser by the *principistas* who, during his administration, shared his enthusiasm for change and renovation. Not only political liberalism, but also economic modernisation were part of the renovation agenda of *principistas*, a heterogeneous group among whose members were those who perceived in Latorre a step forward on the path of political renovation. Once the task of state building was completed and the institutional framework settled for parliamentary democracy, the country could go back to party competition on a fair basis. For many, this heavily depended on modernising the economy and establishing order, two things that Latorre had promised to do. From the times in which they designed the 1830 Constitution, the *principista* doctors had struggled to differentiate themselves from the *candomberos* and regarded the dismal progress of the country as a direct consequence of poor efforts towards modernisation. Among their projects, it should be remembered, were to colonise the ‘*campana*’ with British immigrants and to pursue all possible measures to eliminate the *gaucho*.<sup>188</sup>

At the other extreme of the political spectrum, traditional Blancos also felt attracted by the *caudillo*-like personality of the General. Reyes Abadie, quoting ‘*memorias*’ of contemporaries, reminds us that at the onset of the disastrous Pedro Varela government Latorre and the legendary Blanco leader Timoteo Aparicio developed a personal relationship that opened some lines of communication between the Blancos, representatives of the old Uruguay of *gaucho caudillos*, and the newer generation of professional military officers, sons of Spanish immigrants.<sup>189</sup> And, as far as the Colorados were concerned, Latorre was still regarded as a partisan Colorado officer. Not that the General did not make it clear that partisan rule was out of the question. In his first speech at the time of assuming office in 1876, he put it very clearly:

‘My personal opinions are well-known, yet as much as I am honoured to have been a Colorado and (as such) have taken an active part in the battles that have tinted with blood the republic, I am as well honoured to declare that my government will forsake all prior disagreements and political partisanship. As a partisan, I do not want to inaugurate in my country anything except the great party of public morality, of administrative honesty, of freedom within order, of respect for the law and all other rights guaranteed by the Constitution.’<sup>190</sup>

All in all, his government did accomplish much in this direction. But to govern required the expertise and collaboration of the political elite, and Latorre was wise enough to try to retain the loyalty of key party leaders. Public officials in his administration were never replaced by military men in ministries and key governmental posts; Latorre even kept some party politics alive by appointing a consultative committee of Blancos and (in larger numbers) Colorados. One can argue that he took power not to force upon the



country a government run by the military, but in order to impose order and transfer the executive branch back to civilians afterwards.

Real de Azua has pointed out – rightly, in my opinion – that this first military regime the country ever had was neither praetorian nor completely authoritarian. Bloodshed and violence (mostly in the countryside) were minimal considering the characteristics of the regime and its agenda.<sup>191</sup> It must be added that abuses of individual rights were taken seriously and violence decreased despite some misuse of authority and the violation of citizenship rights that usually goes together with the process of centralisation of power. From the reading of most consular reports issued by different legations one can conclude that the diplomatic body as a whole praised Latorre's administration and saw it as a serious attempt to impose law and secure the property rights of foreigners. Influenced by the Colorado populist, *candombero* tradition, but more than anything as product of his own initiative, Latorre instituted an important reform affecting one of the most (if not *the* most) important vehicle of social mobility in the country, the army. Traditionally, forced recruitment and the draft had most affected blacks and those of mixed blood. During the first year of his government Latorre abolished this measure as a regular practice and publicly declared that

‘It is a matter of honour for my government to abolish this abusive procedure that until the present has condemned citizens of colour to an imposition that not only contradicts the Fundamental Law of the State that demands equal rights for all, but also the democratic principles to which we adhere.’<sup>192</sup>

Above all else, economic elites (and the population at large) wanted order, peace and stability. Despite some turmoil, the modernising dictator provided that and more. Latorre promoted educational reform, balanced the state budget, monopolised the mechanisms of coercion, enlarged the state bureaucracy in order to provide services and carry out public works, and greatly improved the transportation system (the railway system in particular). Educational reform was one of the most impressive accomplishments of the regime. In 1877 Latorre appointed José Pedro Varela, the foremost Uruguayan educational reformer, as *Director de Instrucción Pública*. Varela, a well-known liberal of positivist inspiration, had written a bold programme of educational reform (*La educación del pueblo*, 1874) and in 1877 took before Latorre his project ‘Law of common education’, which was part of his new, acclaimed book *La Legislación Escolar*. Varela insisted that the country needed a democratic, free and secular educational system because ‘ignorant people can only have governments that are in direct relation to their ignorance’. By 1876 in his *‘Legislación Escolar*, he forcefully argued that

‘In 45 years we have had 19 revolutions. War is the normal state of the republic. Not even 10 books have been published since independence. We do not know anything about the country, its

population, or anything else...In the republic, no more than 18,000 to 20,000 children can acquire an education while about 60,000 to 80,000 remain in ignorance...The wisdom and efficiency of an educational system lies in successfully coordinating state policy with the freedom of the individual. The absolute control of the state over the educational system is...satisfactory, but contradicts the democratic idea. The mixed system that exists in the United States is more appropriate.' (pp. 40-52)

The quote is important, among other things, because it defines a lasting linkage between the state and public instruction in Uruguay. It was during the Latorre period that the state became the most important engine of public education, displacing the Church as an alternative source of learning. In fact, already by the early twentieth century most secondary education and the totality of higher education were in the hands of the state. The state bureaucracy under the Ministry of Public Instruction increased substantially during the next years and by the time that the reformist state of José Batlle y Ordóñez made literacy a priority in the government's agenda, the state was already perceived as the patron of public education.

On the economic side, in order to secure property rights in the countryside and encourage livestock production, a vigorous policy of enclosures was set in motion. While by 1877 the total amount of wire used in these enclosures amounted to 6,646 kilos, by the end of Latorre's administration in 1880 the total kilograms of wire used annually had jumped to 14,127.<sup>193</sup> Latorre was also responsible for enormous improvements in the telegraph and mail systems and a number of important reforms such as restructuring the Rural Code and the expansion of the scope and power of the Supreme Court of Justice, particularly in the rural areas.<sup>194</sup> If up until this point the state had not been able to pursue a coherent development strategy and had reacted slowly to market incentives or pressure from business, all this changed under the government of the 'Dictator'. Substantial efforts were made to increase efficiency and productivity in the export economy and in commercial sectors which translated into clear protectionist policies for the most modern sectors of livestock production. In terms of international trade, the regime reduced the external debt considerably and encouraged foreign investment. Commercial relations with Britain, after being suspended since 1871, were reestablished.<sup>195</sup> The state budget was finally balanced and during the General's mandate it tilted to the advantage of the country. Montevideo merchants benefited greatly, particularly the wealthiest members of that community.<sup>196</sup> Likewise, the Asociación Rural received a number of valuable benefits: order in the countryside, the *Reglamento de Policías* which augmented the police force in the rural areas, a reformation in the Rural Code that called for the state to enforce property rights, and a stronger voice in policy-making. Even the common citizen gained from the orderly peace imposed by the Dictator – in fact, the regime acquired such a degree of

popularity among the population of Montevideo that when Latorre established a timetable for the resumption of civilian rule he was asked to stay in power.<sup>197</sup>

The army, however, benefited less. Paradoxically, while as a result of the Paraguayan War (1865-70), the *Revolución de las Lanzas* (1870-1872) and the so-called *Revolución Tricolor* (1875) the army had increased its numbers, after 1876 and under a military regime men in active duty were dismissed and entire battalions eliminated. As part of its budgetary policies, the state drastically reduced the number of active soldiers and officers; this explains, to a great extent, Latorre's success in balancing the state budget. In March 1876 the officer corps numbered 1,205 men (including 3 Brigadier Generals, 16 Generals, 177 Lieutenants and 25 Marines). By the end of his government only 153 officers remained and from a total of eight active battalions at the time of Latorre's accession to power, there were only four when Latorre stepped down from office.<sup>198</sup> Clearly the most daring and strongest military government that the country had in the nineteenth century, it was also a coalition that managed to weaken the very instrument that had made its accession to power possible. Fear of more radical forms of military rule, in which business influence could have been ostracised, was another element that conspired against stronger military rule, not to mention fears that a more permanent military regime would have entailed a more expensive military apparatus. However, the most important factor that precluded the rise of a stronger military regime was party activity in and out of the barracks.

Not that Latorre had opposed the re-establishment of civilian rule or latent party activity. By 1879 the Dictator was ready to leave office. A strong believer in republican institutions and considering his government only provisional, he resigned to the General Assembly barely four years after accepting his mandate. In addition to his belief in republican rule, he also felt pressure on the political front, where parties were pushing for a return to electoral rule. Many were disappointed at his resignation. The Asociación Rural lamented the end of the Latorre period and so did the merchant elite of Montevideo. Popular demonstrations of support for his rule did not go unnoticed and his departure was followed by fear of chaos and a *revolución de partido*. After a brief transitional period his reputation certainly contributed to create consensus around the nomination of his comrade in arms, Máximo Santos, as President of the Republic; in the following years, military men shared in power with civilians during the administrations of Santos and Máximo Tajes. They ruled, however, under the tutelage of the Colorado party.

During the period of so-called *militarismo*, namely, the Latorre administration and the two subsequent regimes, the parties – while being muted – were not dismantled. A major reason was the state's modest degree

of penetration of society. Because there were not very many professional military men who could perform government functions adequately, and because the diplomatic body was composed of professional doctors, the government needed civilian politicians. On the economic front, the state also used parties to run the most basic functions of state maintenance. Taxation, for instance, remained a problem that presented both technical and political difficulties. Simple structural factors, such as the dominance of livestock production, had long constituted an obstacle to efficient collection. Because to tax movable goods such as cattle or sheep is always difficult, governments had customarily relied on the complicity of cattleowners, which meant that taxation remained based on political loyalties. Needless to say, Colorado governments tended to be more aggressive *vis-à-vis* Blanco ranchers and traders, while Blanco governments operated in a similar fashion *vis-à-vis* Colorado businessmen and landowners when they were in power.

Urban trade turned out to be difficult to tax as well. Again, inadequate taxation was due not only to the fluid character of trade, but also to party politics. A large part of the urban merchant and entrepreneurial classes constituted a shrinking portion of the tax base because as a reward for their earnest participation in party politics they had been partially exempted from contributing. Furthermore, during the whole century tax evasion had been common and speculation rampant, urban businessmen becoming professional creditors whose major client was, quite frequently, the state itself.<sup>199</sup>

For more than a few among the upper classes, the downside of *militarismo* was precisely its attempt to impose taxes regardless of party loyalties. Colorado businessmen who had expected deferential treatment at the hands of the Latorre government were disappointed. Thus, while on the one hand the economic elites could rely more on a government which was sympathetic to development, on the other the new state wanted to impose heavier taxation regardless of party loyalties. This made party rule under renovated, more 'modern' parties, still appealing. Among other things, as a response to these new opportunities, by the beginning of the 1880s the parties had begun a deep process of renovation intended to make their appeal stronger. Politicians representing the financial sectors of Montevideo remained in the leadership; Latorre's policies had mainly favoured producers rather than financial capitalists or speculators, who were still at the core of urban business and at the heart of political activity.

Ironically, therefore, *militarismo* ended up making the parties stronger by facilitating alliances between *principistas* and the old *caudillos*, and between some doctors and *candomberos*. By the late 1870s the traditional opposition between *candomberos* and doctors within the parties had led to an identification of both parties as *candomberos* while the *principistas* leading the *partidos de ideas* were perceived as the true doctors. The parties that

reemerged in 1886 at the time of the brief presidency of Francisco A. Vidal (1880-82) had been transformed. Despite internal divisions, the Colorado Party in particular could boast a combination of traditional *caudillos* who secured the loyalties of the masses in the countryside, together with a bright group of urban doctors who gave the party a much-needed ideology and agenda. From this point to the reforms of the 1900s the party, although a loose assortment of groups, rallied together because of an alliance that had succeeded in securing power and keeping the Blancos in the minority. From the point of view of state-building, the development of political parties remained a necessary tribulation. Under the Latorre administration, and even more so during the subsequent military regimes, the state still relied on party networks to perform basic functions. In 1882, during the first year of the Santos Presidency, rural *caudillos* seemed to have been as strong as ever and party networks determined the relations of the state with the localities through the *jefes políticos*. The immunity and independence of the latter has been abundantly documented by newspapers and reports of all sorts. An interesting summary was assembled by the Foreign Ministry in Madrid in May 1882. At the centre of attention was the murder of large numbers of Spanish citizens in the interior that, despite pressures from the whole of the diplomatic body and from local citizens, had gone unpunished because of the power of local political bosses:

‘Mr. Llorente [Consul] testified that he has confidentially asked General Santos to eliminate from the list of candidates to the Chamber of Deputies the names of the Jefe Político of Tacuarembó, Manuel Suárez, who has had an active part [in these assassinations]. The General refused to take this matter in his hands; instead, he has imprisoned Suárez’s negro assistant, Melitone, who is now charged with the perpetration of the crime. Mr. Llorente spoke with the Supreme Judge of Crime ...who confidentially disclosed that...the Executive protects...the Tacuarembó and other political bosses [Durazno, San Fructuoso] who have been elected Deputies solely with the vote of soldiers and guards...’<sup>200</sup>

Expected corruption in the countryside had partisan connotations. On 25 February 1882, Llorente had reported that, unlike many others, in the Departamento de Florida ‘...the political boss has done justice’ simply because the *jefe político* was a Blanco while the others belonged to the Colorado party.

President Santos (1882-86), while more militarist in the sense that he increased the number of military men participating in decision-making and further sought to professionalise the army, was, from the point of view of his Partido Colorado, more of a partisan than Latorre had ever been. Santos increased the number of rank-and-file soldiers to about 3,000 and created both the Military Code of 1884 and a much more technologically oriented

Military Academy.<sup>201</sup> Yet, recognising the power of the parties, and while War Minister in 1884, he had personally organised his *Gran Partido Colorado*. At the peak of his military regime, he honoured himself with the title of *Jefe del Gran Partido Colorado* and, while he consulted frequently with his party (a pattern dutifully followed by his successor Máximo Tajes), Santos was notoriously harsh in his dealings with parties that challenged the predominance of Colorados and Blancos (such as the Partido Radical and the Partido Constitucional). In order to maintain peace agreements, Santos acknowledged only the Blanco party as the legally recognised opposition. To be sure, Blanco *caudillos*, perceiving in Santos a leader amenable to re-organising the old party system, supported him in his attempt to eradicate the other parties. It was not by chance that, when the Latorre period ended, Blanco *caudillo* Timoteo Aparicio wrote to Santos (July 1880) endorsing his political views and assuring his lasting support and friendship because, after all, he was ‘neither a *principista* nor a nationalist; just a Blanco and a true personal friend’.<sup>202</sup> After the governments of Santos and Máximo Tajes (1886-1890), the political parties and the political class had grown stronger. Because Santos alienated important sectors of the political elite, while at the same time failing to be as thorough in economic matters as Latorre had been, a climate of continuous and increasing tension characterised his regime. The state budget showed a growing fiscal deficit. While in 1882 the deficit was 3,000,000 pesos, by the end of his tenure in 1886 this figure had increased to 12,000,000 pesos. Victim of an assassination attempt at the Cibils Theatre less than a year before the end of his term, when an ex-lieutenant shot him in the face, Santos incarnated the instability of *militarismo*. Some observers disagreed. The Italian chargé d’affaires in Montevideo, for instance, on 25 January 1884, stated that despite Santos being a member of the Colorado party he

‘...behaves impartially between the two parties...and, in comparison with the Latorre government, General Santos’s administration is much better, stable and democratic’.<sup>203</sup>

By the end of his period, however, he had been forced to open a dialogue with his most hated political enemies among the *principistas* and *constitucionalistas*; in fact, a few months before he stepped down from office, three important leaders in the opposition had been given appointments in his government.<sup>204</sup> Tajes, as critical of Santos as the latter had been of Latorre, completely opened the door to the political elite and restricted the military budget trying to reverse, in part, the fiscal allocations made by Santos. His so-called Minister of Government was Julio Herrera y Obes, who from that ministry prepared his own election as President in 1890. In 1887 he was described as an

‘...extremely astute politician, whose political position is to go to extremes in order to support the Colorado Party. Proof of that is

his favourite saying that "up the mast of the republic's ship, the flag of the old Partido Colorado". In fact, in April, during the celebration of the Crusade of the 33, he managed to place the flag of the Colorado Party on top of the so-called electricity tower, higher than the Government House which showed the national flag.<sup>205</sup>

If anything, Tajes marked the last transitional phase from the mixed form of military and civilian rule inaugurated by Latorre to an open return to civilian predominance which reduced the role of military men in government even further. The large and important *Quinto Batallón de Cazadores* had grown under Santos and become his major base of support within the army. After Santos stepped down, one of the targets of the anti-Santos political elite (which at this point had grown considerably to include even members of his now defunct Gran Partido Colorado) was the reduction in size of this battalion. Furthermore, because the battalion publicly expressed loyalty to Santos and lamented his absence as a great loss for the army, his officers became the targets of an anti-Santos campaign that Tajes only encouraged. On 28 December 1886, Tajes made a crucial decision: he decreed the dissolution of both the battalion and the presidential escort corp, also loyal to Santos. At the same time, Julio Herrera y Obes had successfully furthered the recruitment of officers by the Colorado party. In a situation in which the professional military felt divided loyalties after three administrations led by generals during which they had fared not much better than under Colorado tutelage, Herrera y Obes and his supporters, helped by the strong anti-Santos coalition that backed Tajes within the army, succeeded in developing *civilismo*. This was a system that took advantage of the centralisation of power in the executive granted by the 1830 Constitution to forge a lasting alliance with key elements within the military and the upper classes using the Colorado party as a vehicle. The two main objectives of the movement were to eliminate the old *caudillos* and *militarismo*. Propitious conditions to achieve both resulted from the events just discussed and from the very nature of the horizontal alliances that had provided the backbone of political mobilisation in Uruguay since the beginning of the century.

#### **IV. Political Institutions, the Fears of the Elite and the Mobilisation of the Rural Poor**

The notion that elite coalition behaviour may be triggered by what elites perceive as threats coming from below has been both an ancient and controversial notion. There is no certainty, for one thing, that ruling elites feel something similar to 'shared fear' nor that it would be enough to determine behaviour even if they did. Guillermo O'Donnell proposed the

notion of ‘perceived levels of threat’ as a way to understand better the violent reaction against the populace that characterised the military regimes of the 1970s in the Southern Cone. To put it simply, comparisons among different countries seemed to prove that the more mobilised the population before the coup, the more repressive the regime after the military takeover, and the more willing interest groups are to enter into coalitions with the far right.<sup>206</sup> More recently, Carlos Waisman has put forward a similar argument to explain the economic decline of Argentina.<sup>207</sup> In the 1940s, Juan D. Perón and state corporatism was the option that appealed most to the economic elites not because of their belief that this would be the best development option, but rather because of what they perceived as a serious threat from below (particularly an ‘activated’ labour movement). For the development of Argentina the consequences were devastating. Volatile as it may appear – certainly this factor cannot be measured – the experience of state-building in Uruguay supports the notion that fear motivates elites’ behaviour and contributes to explain political alliances and institutional crafting. In the context of a sharp urban/rural cleavage, a state of permanent war, a weak military and several attempts of revolution from below, parties that could control unruly masses became the key dominant forces.

Fear of party wars and rural mobilisation lay at the heart of the Uruguayan institutions of government. Real de Azúa long argued that the 1830 Constitution had pursued two main objectives. These were the demobilisation of the rural masses and to make a ‘political outcast of the military establishment’.<sup>208</sup> Very much like the first and second Colombian constitutions, the intention was to eliminate the ‘rural threat’ and, at the same time, control the loose army that had fought the wars of independence under different *caudillos*.<sup>209</sup> These last played a prominent role in the establishment of constitutional rule; the very law of the land resulted from a pact between the legendary figures of Fructuoso Rivera and José A. Lavalleja, the latter becoming the first president.<sup>210</sup> They divided the country into two spheres of influence; while Lavalleja governed the country but only dominated the city, Rivera retained the *Comandancia general de la campaña*. For a long time to come politics was to be played between these two spheres of influence, a split that would turn even sharper with the *Guerra Grande*. By July 1830 Uruguay had a constitution crafted by doctors, but sanctioned by *caudillos* through what was called ‘the generals’ pact’. The document, however, aimed at eliminating the parties and set limits to their power. Rather than an effort towards integration, the first 1830 constitution expressed the sharp split existing between doctors and *caudillos*.<sup>211</sup> The Constitution survived intact until 1917; one of the reasons for the lack of constitutional reform was its rigidity in terms of the procedures it required to allow constitutional change.<sup>212</sup> Another reason, however, was the deep political rift that during the nineteenth century divided Congress around the issue of constitutional reform. Opinions varied from those who blamed all the



evils experienced by the country on the form and inspiration of the document, to those who feared that Constitutional reform would weaken even further the political system and threaten the rule of law. Needless to say, it depended on who was in office and who was favoured by the centralised structure of power – with the President at its apex – that the Constitution had designed.<sup>213</sup> Thus, while the Colorados by and large were supporters of the original 1830 design, the Blancos, *principistas*, *constitucionalistas*, and at times the military frequently asked for constitutional reform. In its origins a document conceived by urban doctors, the constitution expressed the position of those who, many argued, could not see what was really going on ‘beyond the citadel’.<sup>214</sup> At the time in which it was written, although one of its basic precepts was the freedom to organise politically, the Constitution made clear that party bickering was perceived as the cause of all problems. These were the parties of *caudillos*, the old Colorado and Blanco organisations based on voluntary militia and generals trained in the battle field; these were the parties that recruited followers from the poorest and most ‘barbaric’ areas of the countryside; these were the parties identified with rural conflict, economic stagnation and the disturbance of the peace. In a word, the parties that represented all that the urban Montevideo did not wish to be. Therefore, the 1830s *Asamblea Constituyente* managed to impose a foreign governor in the presidential post (J. Rondeau) who was thought to be impervious to *caudillo* and party influence.<sup>215</sup> Many attempts to eliminate the parties followed. Formulas varied. At several points, from Buenos Aires, Colorado and Blanco parties in exile favoured the establishment of a moderate monarchy. In Montevideo several ‘schemes’ were considered to solve the ‘unsettled conditions of that country’. Included among them were:

- (i)       Becoming an Italian Protectorate
- (ii)       Becoming a British Protectorate
- (iii)      Forming a combined Protectorate of European Powers
- (iv)      Becoming a monarchy under an Italian or British Prince
- (v)      Becoming a monarchy under the aegis of Brazil.<sup>216</sup>

Most of these initiatives came from the city; according to a contemporary source, the Montevideo elites wanted the

‘neutralization of Montevideo as a free port like Hamburg, the interior of the republic being left to manage its own affairs as best it can’.<sup>217</sup>

Although in all truth both *caudillos* and doctors needed one another to cement the parties and to control constituencies, the most frequent cause of party divisions were clashes between these two. At the time of the defence of Montevideo, doctors such as Herrera y Obes and Andrés Lamas confronted the *caudillista* practices of Rivera. During the *caudillo* regime of Flores, ‘*fusionista*’ doctors plotted an insurrection that brought *caudillo* M. Oribe to

support the President, while doctors in both parties fought against the military-*caudillista* factions in the insurrections of *El Quebracho* and the *Tricolor*. And of course *caudillos* within the parties often plotted against the doctors. It was in part to curtail the political influence of *caudillos* that the Constitution excluded the rural masses from voting. Article 11 established that 'wage-paid peons, paid servants, rank-and-file soldiers, and vagrants' could not vote.<sup>218</sup> This, of course, was a common feature to most constitutions in the region, yet in a rural society in which labourers developed no ties to the land, most of the workforce fitted into the category of 'vagrants'.<sup>219</sup> 'Progressive' positions like those characterising North American liberalism or Colombian and Chilean defenders of non-restricted universal suffrage were virtually absent in the constitutional debate. It is interesting to note that by 1857 Argentina had extended the franchise to all males without restriction, in this way following the lead of the province of Buenos Aires (so similar to the Banda) who had earlier adopted this measure in the 1820s. On this issue, therefore, Argentina and Uruguay offer a sharply contrasting picture. A simple but sound explanation of these differences would be to argue that in Argentina the fear of rural insurrections was much less. Having a professional army in place and with a higher pace of economic growth that made elites more confident, apprehension about *caudillismo* and challenges from below diminished.<sup>220</sup> In Uruguay, most *principistas* were uncomfortable with 'daring' versions of liberalism which seemed not to adjust to the country's needs. As the influential Juan Carlos Gómez put it as late as 1876:

'That is why I reject universal suffrage...[and the direct election of authorities]..because..they mean the artificial symmetry of what in reality is asymmetrical and a route to mediocrity...If the yankees wanted to escape the predominance of mediocrity and remedy the harmful effect that the democratisation of certain functions have caused in the great republic, they ought to eradicate both things at the same time, things that have been introduced in the political world with more originality than discernment.'<sup>221</sup>

As late as 1887 only five per cent of the population was able to cast ballots and in the countryside those enjoying citizenship rights were even fewer. As a *caudillo* complained '[the number of voters were] less than the fingers of my right hand'. Small rural proprietors and the men who had participated in the wars of independence were, as Pivel Devoto wrote, 'neither electors nor elected'.<sup>222</sup>

Constitutional measures to weaken *caudillo* rule, however, backfired. Because the measures demanded that voters cast their ballot orally (*voto cantado*) this inadvertently contributed to increase *caudillos'* control. Literacy and property requirements limited rural participation further since illiteracy was much higher there and those who were indebted or had pending

business with the state more numerous. This strengthened clientelism because it reinforced the role of *caudillos* as the only linkage between those who lived on their *estancias* and the central government. While *caudillos* perceived constitutional legality as a trick of the doctors to rob them of influence, its provisions encouraged party organising and favoured their influence.<sup>223</sup> *Caudillos* therefore declined not by virtue of any specific acts of the Constitution, but as a result of the alliances that they were forced to establish with the doctors in the late 1870s.

Fear of parties and *gauchos* was rooted in the behaviour of pressure groups as well. Barrán and Nahum amply document that the Asociación Rural lived in permanent fear of a serious revolt. Many of its members connected events in Europe (especially the French Revolution) with dangerous insurrections at home, where the absence of both an indigenous bourgeoisie and a strong state, combined with the barbaric character of the possible insurrection seemed to make matters worse.<sup>224</sup> The example of the United States and Europe convinced the Asociación that *gauchos* and their leaders should be converted into farmers or a class of small agriculturalists. Widespread versions of nineteenth century racism were confirmed by the frequency of ‘revolutions’ involving mix-bloods, zambos and indians; not surprisingly, contemporaries depicted them as a violent and unpredictable rabble of the worst kind. Even in countries that had received plenty of European migration, foreigners argued that the racial mix of Spanish America left a lot to be desired. Lorenzo Chapperon, the Italian Vice-Consul described racial traits in the country in the following way:

‘The normal race of the Oriental people is Caucasian, imported from Europe, [yet mixed with].. Arab; .. it can be recognised by its thick black hair, ...its long sharp teeth and its brown colour, its tall height, and its nomadic habits,... its perverse and cunning gist, its repugnance for useful work with the exception of some simple pastoral habits; to this family belong the men who reside in the vast open spaces of Spanish America, vagabond and semi-savage people called *gauchos*’.<sup>225</sup>

Apprehensive of such ‘mixed-blood vagrants’, various regimes pleaded to party leaders to avoid them, which resulted in reinforcing overall party authority and the position of the *caudillos*. Though both were mistrusted, they were reluctantly accepted as the only effective control over those from ‘outside the citadel’.

What were the reasons behind rural mobilisation? Although from a factor or mode of production standpoint different causes have been adduced to explain mobilisation and revolution, violence has been present in all rural settings regardless of the use of labour. On the one hand, it has been observed that in complex labour-intensive rural economies with scarce availability of land, conflict tends to be high. Examples can be found in

Central America, Asia or Europe. Village life organised in sedentary communities facilitates resistance to state policies and may even be a cause of well-organised from-the-bottom-up rebellions. Revolutions, or at least the classic ones (China, Russia, France), typically occurred in settings in which large numbers of those who joined the revolutionary forces were dispossessed small landowners, frustrated agriculturalists who were denied access to land and, very importantly, small proprietors who had lost land to the advances of larger landowners and wanted to recover what they had lost.

On the other hand, violence and intense mobilisation also characterised frontier pastoral economies with no peasantry, scarce farms, minimal instances of slavery and no complex sharecropping arrangements. Labour-extensive cattleraising is likely to trigger explosions of violence caused by nomadic horsemen (*gauchos*, *llaneros*, etc.) who are not only resentful towards the white elites, but who are also militarily capable of becoming instant soldiers.<sup>226</sup> The result is as much violence and perhaps more 'barbarism' than in more complex peasant economies. Although the nature of this system of production requires only a minimal number of workers, the need for protection from bandits and other ranchers demands a watchful staff to ensure that herds can expand without reinvestment (very much the case in Uruguay) and can help alleviate the threat of cattle hunters, while at the same time making raids upon the cattle of others. Unlike labour-intensive peasant economies and despite the *Reglamento de Tierras* of the Artigas revolution, most of the labour force who were mobilised in Uruguay were not landless peasants or agriculturalists eager to settle down on their own small plots. Highly unstable markets for agricultural producers in a cattleraising country at war together with well-established prejudices against agricultural work, which was perceived as an activity that 'only gringos would do', prevented peons from seeing themselves as farmers. Better living conditions on the *estancias*, higher pay, the spoils of war and a skilful patron with enough influence to deliver the goods were major incentives for the militia who joined the *patriadas*. A distinguishing feature of Uruguay was that, while vagrant cowboys perpetuated the idea of a life of emancipation and the belief in 'cheap meat and freedom', this situation was similar to the mobilising patterns of the Venezuelan *llanos*, and those 'cowboys' working in the Rio Grande do Sul region in Brazil, the Province of Entre Ríos and of Buenos Aires in Argentina, and in the North of Mexico; yet in the *Banda* they did so as the rank and file of two major parties, thereby contributing to the foundation of parliamentary rule. Outcomes in other frontier economies were different.<sup>227</sup>

Leaders benefited from parties because parties provided the organisational structures that both kept the rural poor at bay and allowed the leaders direct access to pressure government. In the eyes of townsmen parties represented a setback, but were considered preferable to the uncontrolled bands of

vagrants that frequently preyed on the under-protected townspeople. For large numbers of landowners business success meant enforcing minimal property rights and maintaining effective military control over their clientele. A relevant factor to explain successful party recruitment seems to have been rural unemployment. Barrán and Nahum have argued along these lines. They maintain that the high rates of unemployment (caused by the enclosures of the *estancias* during the 1870s) were highly important in explaining why large numbers of rural males joined the *patriadas*. Small and medium-sized proprietors had to sell, while *gauchos* and renters were forced to leave the *haciendas*.<sup>228</sup> Barrán and Nahum calculate that in the 1870s about ten per cent of the rural population of the country was unemployed. No doubt this partially accounts for the success of *caudillos* in recruiting militia.

I said ‘partially’ because, first, the barbed wire fence only encouraged a trend that had been there since independence, for levels of rural mobilisation had been quite high long before the enclosures. Second, unemployment figures were not, comparatively speaking, much higher than those suffered by the similar economy of Argentina, where the rural population did not form the backbone of political parties and mobilised much less. Certainly on both shores of the River Plate many testimonies indicate that urban elites wished to exclude the ‘barbaric countryside’ from state affairs, but in Argentina (at least in the Province of Buenos Aires) the countryside seemed more under control than in Uruguay. Despite the sharp exclusion that Sarmiento had depicted between townsmen and horsemen in his *Facundo: o la civilización y la barbarie* (1845), in Argentina the effects of a rural-based revolutionary movement had not taken such a clear form as in the Artigas revolution and the uprisings that followed.<sup>229</sup>

In explaining party development some other factors should be discussed. First, I would argue that a very important clue for understanding party development lay more with the leaders than with the followers. As we shall see in the next section, divisions among the rural elites created a very active body of *hacendado-caudillos*, most of them military men, who were forced to rally to the support of their clientele. Second, fear also played a role locally. While the apprehension of the city *vis-à-vis* the unruly countryside is apparent, *caudillos’* consternation with the prompt reaction of the masses and the climate of intimidation created by rowdy local rank and file is not that obvious. The need to recruit militia in the context of war and a weak state was only encouraged by misgivings about *gauchos* and peons of all kinds who were not easy to dominate and who very likely would join the next-door enemy forces or remain in hiding when war efforts most required them. Loyalties had to be monitored frequently by calls to war and a reinforcement of party identity. A good description of the efficiency of local political bosses was published in 1832 by the newspaper *El Universal* reporting on the so-called ‘Convention of Rivera’:

‘Since the 5th of June orders had been given to the [Colorado] political bosses of different Departamentos...[they] have responded with incredible speed. The jefe from San José arrived to the meeting point with 207 men from different districts of his Departamento...Major Santa Ana with 70 from his [Departamento] and Captain Benito Ojeda with 122 from his area. Many more are expected in the following days’.<sup>230</sup>

In this context, political organising became a requisite to survival and constant monitoring of smaller, challenging *caudillos* a necessity. Agreements of mutual protection linked *caudillos* in the parties, and since no single protector could guarantee victory against a powerful rival, horizontal alliances materialised nationally based on the old cleavages that were based on regional alliances.

## V. The Weakness of the Conservative Coalition

If structural explanations are of any use to understand collective action and thereby the development of political institutions in Uruguay, it is in the composition of the landed classes that we find important structural variables. Divisions among the owners of the means of production were to a great extent responsible for party development and the weak resistance to democratic reform. While Argentina bred a tightly coherent ruling coalition, intimately linked with its pampean elite, in Uruguay the livestock sector presented a different picture.<sup>231</sup> As mentioned above, the Rosas regime in Argentina contributed a starkly contrasting picture. John Lynch has shown that by the 1830s the Argentine dictator had centralised power with the support both of rural elites and masses, becoming ‘*Caudillo of Caudillos*’.<sup>232</sup> Nothing like this occurred in Uruguay, where by contrast coalitions of landowners and their constituencies struggled unsuccessfully for predominance. Because of their effort, ‘barbaric’ as they were, the parties eventually prevented the consolidation of what Barrington Moore has called ‘reactionary configurations’. Unfolding divisions within the landed elites contributed to this development. From the end of the *Guerra Grande* onwards, one can argue that landowners were basically divided into three groups.

The first group consisted of large *estanciero-caudillos* of creole origin who, by and large, owned estates in the north, central and western regions of the country, closer to the Brazilian border and geographically further away from Montevideo. Their ties with the Brazilian market were solid, often crossing contraband cattle across the border. International markets *via* Montevideo were also available to them, but as a result of their refusal to cross-breed (which lowered the competitiveness of their cattle) and their

traditional mistrust of urban intermediaries, they tended to participate in those markets much less. Their party loyalties shifted between Brazil and Argentina. Strong anti-city feelings ran high among these *estancieros*, their base of power being their strong clientele. For example, during the Brazilian-Portuguese struggle of the late 1810s, they fought Montevideo under the Colorado banner, while during the *Guerra Grande* large numbers consolidated positions as leaders of the Blanco party. Venancio Flores, on the other hand, was able to recruit some of these landowners for his Brazilian-backed Colorado crusade on a regional basis. The point here is that, though their participation in wars and armed insurrections was high, they were only part-time producers, and were motivated by the spoils of war and the possibilities of advancement in a political career that occupied a good part of their time taken up in rallying support. Indeed, provoked by the encroachment of doctors within the parties, their militancy increased during the second half of the nineteenth century. From the Flores revolt (1863) to the Aparicio Saravia uprising (1904), officers were predominantly *estancieros* of this sort.<sup>233</sup>

Very close politically to these *estancieros* and often depending on their patronage, was the so-called *minifundio ganadero*, a legacy of the Artigas revolution. Between 1830 and the late 1870s, available data indicate an increasing number of landless *hacendados* who legally possessed no land, but owned considerable numbers of cattle.<sup>234</sup> Weak enforcement of land property rights allowed them to produce for the market without owning large estates. Some of them even became opulent cattle owners, free-riding on somebody else's property or on state (fiscal) pastures. When in the early 1850s the government attempted to enforce the rural code and carried out land enclosures, they strongly opposed the city and became alienated from the large *estancieros* tied to urban business. Urban and rural entrepreneurs perceived this sector as an obstacle to progress and potentially revolutionary. Confirming their fears, the *minifundistas* remained in no condition – or did not deem it necessary – to invest in new breeds of cattle or increase production.

A third group of landowners, reluctant to participate in *revoluciones de partido* and anxious to promote state centralisation and development, consisted of those who established close linkages with the urban upper classes. Large numbers of them were traders and owners of industry who engaged in export agriculture; in other words, they embodied the familiar picture of an urban-rural coalition. In terms of composition, however, this group changed substantially in the aftermath of the *Guerra Grande*. At that time, a wave of foreigners of European origin obtained large *haciendas* from the old *patriciado* who, broken by the war, became urban politicians. Already before the war foreign producers had been a common feature of the landscape. By the 1830s British, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese owners were

part of the large *estancieros*. *Hacendados* of Portuguese-Brazilian origin alone constituted a significant proportion (40%) of the landed class in very important departments such as Salto, Artigas and Rivera. This was the group that during the *Guerra Grande* and its aftermath Benjamin Poucel described as living in fear of expropriation and struggling to remain neutral in a constant war-like political climate dominated by the parties of *caudillos*.<sup>235</sup> While most foreigners were not coerced to serve in the 'voluntary' battalions of Colorados or Blancos or the National Guard, 'Spaniards ...who (at the time) had no Consul' were in fact forced to serve in the army.<sup>236</sup> This was also the group that had to make pacts both with loose *gaucho* 'malefactors' and the parties in order not to be the constant victim of plunder. In addition, parties, the army and unruly local leaders were constantly draining their labour force, sometimes leaving them only with women, children and foreign personnel to attend the business of the *estancia*.<sup>237</sup> Not surprisingly, by the end of the *Guerra Grande* foreign landowners despised politics and perceived it as the cause of all problems.

In the postwar new wave, even larger numbers of British, French and German livestock producers aggressively pursued sheep-raising (the so-called wool revolution). Hence the prominence of foreign landowners when in the 1850s and 1860s sheep-raising transformed the Uruguayan rural economy, in particular in the littoral regions nearby the city – the Departments of Soriano and Colonia. We know that by the 1860s British, German and French *hacendados* represented ten per cent of that class in these Departments and the Department of Rio Negro. By the close of the century, the proportion of foreign *estancieros* had increased; by 1900, the *Censo Ganadero* indicated that Uruguayan-born ranchers constituted only 64 per cent of the ranching elite and that they controlled only 45 per cent of livestock production. Therefore, foreign *estancieros* represented 36 per cent of the landed elite and possessed 55 per cent of the cattle.<sup>238</sup>

These cleavages within the rural economy undermined the possibility of strong alliances among the landed elites and also weakened the political participation of the rural sector as a whole. Very importantly, such cleavages facilitated control of the parties by the less entrepreneurial sectors of the *hacendados*. These last invested more in political influence than in their rural enterprises. Since returns were not measured in terms of productivity by hectare but, rather, in terms of land rent, the large landowner on the borders of Brazil and the northern parts of the country, without risking investment ventures could obtain as much return as the more business-oriented proprietor of the south or the littoral. This was an economy in which large land ownership was the major goal of the creole upper classes, politics providing a vehicle to acquire and maintain control of immense extensions of land. As Barrán and Nahum have noticed,



'Traditional society offered in Uruguay much more resistance [to entrepreneurship]...The reason was simple...faced with two *estancieros*, the entrepreneurial and the primitive, the first had to invest large sums [of money] to obtain yields that the second, without so much effort, could obtain as well.'<sup>239</sup>

Foreign ownership of the means of production was important, but not because of the usual reasons stated by dependency or world system theory; it was relevant because it contributed to the monopoly of the political scene by the less entrepreneurial sectors of the creole elite, therefore promoting the rise of a state that operated relatively autonomously from foreign and creole entrepreneurs. Foreign-born *estancieros* refused to participate in the parties and all in all remained aloof from politics, which resulted in weaker linkages between the most modern sectors of the rural elites and the state. This imported component of the landed upper classes retained their native citizenship, regarded party politics as a corrupt and backward practice and above all did not want to take risks in a political career that would require the acquisition of Uruguayan citizenship. Becoming a national would have meant higher taxes and the loss of some privileges – in terms of port usage and taxes, for instance – that only foreigners enjoyed, not to mention the frightening thought of being eligible for the draft. In addition, foreigners regarded their respective embassies and *chargés d'affaires* as being much more reliable authorities than the very government, that had repeatedly acted in an inefficient and corrupt manner in defending their interests.<sup>240</sup> Foreign ranchers also had access to pressure groups, such as the Asociación Rural or later the Rural Federation, plus other organisations established by their different national communities; they made these organisations the main instruments through which to voice their interests. True, they found *partidos de ideas* and *principismo* much more palatable, but all in all they remained outside party structures.

Therefore, the state grew more dependent on parties composed of rural *caudillos* and doctors whose ties to exporters were not direct. State dependence grew stronger for those indigenous *estancieros* who were reluctant to invest in new pastures or breeding because their major income came from war. In the renewed party structure of the 1880s, these *caudillos* allied with doctors whose ties to the export economy were also indirect or, at most, reduced to the representation of urban merchants. This explains the 'relative' autonomy of the state from the entrepreneurial landed groups up until that decade, a time in which consensus over the advantages of participating in the British-controlled beef trade within the political elites finally favoured exporters. Consensus resulted from the increasing influence of the *principistas* and almost a decade of relative peace and militarism in which the parties became even closer to urban interests. State autonomy and the predominance of parliamentary rule that characterised the 1890s and the early 1900s was a result of this political vacuum that characterised the

relation between the strongest sectors of the exporting economic elite and the state. It was this vacuum which, extending from the wars of independence to the 1870s, permitted the *caudillos* to permeate and dominate the state. Unlike Argentina and with the exception of some notables during the Latorre regime, very few members of the most entrepreneurial body of ranchers even sat in the Cámaras or gained political visibility.

In these divisive circumstances it was hardly surprising that a rightist, conservative bloc never emerged and that a conservative party did not consolidate; the state remained staffed, for the most part, with politicians who did not directly belong to the most entrepreneurial sectors of the rural economy. To make analogies linking the Blanco party with conservative groups elsewhere would be misleading. A well-structured Conservative ideology was lacking; historiography that has focused on the Blanco party and consciously looked into its roots and development coincide in that, if anything, it was, at times, more reformist and anti-*status quo* than the Colorados.<sup>241</sup> In the final analysis there was neither a body of Conservative doctrine backing the Blancos, nor a party organisation supported by the traditional pillars of conservatism in Latin America: the Church and the old agrarian elite. After the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 the only remaining order, the Franciscans, collaborated more with the cause of independence and liberalism than with conservatism.<sup>242</sup> And in terms of the older, more 'traditional' *hacendados*, this group can be said to have supported both Colorados and Blancos. If the ideological persuasion of the Blancos was different from conservatives elsewhere, so were their tactics; they opposed Colorado rule in ways that resembled more the vaguely reformist bourgeois Argentine Unión Cívica Radical party or populist movements than right wingers associated with the *status quo*.<sup>243</sup> In fact, as Barrán and Nahum suggest, for large sectors of the Uruguayan population of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Blanco party had been the party that had fought against Colorado centralism for universal suffrage, equal participation, and democracy.<sup>244</sup> Hence the absence of a clear Conservative/Liberal divide; the parties made no public declaration of liberalism or conservatism and in fact both of them adhered to a grey, mild version of the two. As late as the 1870s the Colorado party, assumed to be the liberal pole of the party system, did not have a more liberal political platform than the Blancos.<sup>245</sup>

Economic policy reflected the weakness of the traditional conservative/liberal divide. It was the supposedly more liberal Colorados who became strongly protectionist after the 1910s, while the Blancos expressed a very unclear position on economic policy altogether. In reality, both parties pursued a simplistic version of free-trade economics which they accepted up until the early twentieth century. What party leaders understood about tariffs and their overall effects on the economy was really very little; for the most part, the position of the parties coincided with that of the

population at large in supporting free trade, particularly with Europe. Thus, economic policy does not provide a reliable variable to explain coalition formation. Frustrating as it might be for a large body of political economy literature that interprets alliances and policies in terms of the free trade/protectionist divide, and although in Uruguay as elsewhere economic policy resulted from intense political debate in Congress, by the late 1880s these issues were marginal to party agendas and Congressional controversy.<sup>246</sup> Order, more than free trade or protection, was at the core of the interests of business; the *Asociación Rural*, for instance, which one might have expected to support liberalism, ended up demanding state protection for the livestock sector. While a debate about the inappropriateness of state intervention in the economic sphere did take place, its role as a coercive force able to impose order on market mechanisms and reduce uncertainty was welcomed by business. Before the peak of liberalism (1870s and early 1880s), *revoluciones de partido* convinced the economic elites that the state should play a major role as an agent of development and protector of property rights. The *Asociación Rural*, for instance, constantly asked for state assistance in the foundation of banks, schools, roads and infrastructure in the rural economy.<sup>247</sup> By the end of the 1860s the most entrepreneurial sectors of the landowning elite still found state growth desirable and centralisation of power a crucial need: hence their support for Latorre. Yet up until the last decade of the century the history of their plight was a history of frustration and discontent and, when they were finally able to gain more influence, they did so through painful bargaining with the old political elite and the *principistas*, negotiations that resulted in the control of the state apparatus by the latter.

## VI. Conclusions

Already in the turbulent late 1860s the Spanish Consul in Montevideo believed that the Republic was definitely heading towards parliamentary democracy and attributed these promising trends to the land-of-new-settlement characteristics of the country and its loose social structures. Yet the lower strata of the population, he observed, had a different perception, and expected too much of institutions of government:

‘The lower classes, who are the most numerous, attribute the transformations in their state to democratic institutions when, in reality, these are just the natural and exclusive result of local circumstances.’<sup>248</sup>

According to him, these ‘local circumstances’ were basically structural. Rather, previous analysis has shown that the ‘local circumstances’ that

acquired paramount importance in shaping the polity included war and regional conflicts and had more to do with the characteristics of collective action and the type of vertical alliances that parties were able to develop. The mode of production, international trade or the characteristics of European migration were less consequential, and although they had an effect on the polity as well, I have argued that from the wars of independence to the 1880s their influence was definitely modest. Structural factors directly related to the emergence of democracy and a rather autonomous state in Uruguay were more linked to the characteristics of the rural elite. The term 'structure' in this account should be used only to highlight the existing divisions among sectors of livestock production that resulted in weakening political influence. These divisions, however, were not only the product of different types of linkages between the rural economy and Montevideo and the international market or differences in terms of modernisation, but also the outcome of regional vertical alliances between *gauchos*, peons and patrons.

The period studied ended in a process of state consolidation under civilian hegemony. In 1886 the consolidation of the *civilista*-led alliance after the last military administration (Máximo Tajes) was ideologically and administratively guided by an ethos of liberalism and parliamentarism. Institutionally, it was controlled by two parties, with the Colorados in a prominent position. Still feeble, the state was nonetheless in the hands of a political elite that was relatively disengaged from the most powerful economic sectors. This explains not only the fast pace of state growth the country experienced in the next decades, but also the tendency of the state to become more interventionist and autonomous while still operating within a pluralist framework. Internal wars and regional conflict carved party cleavages and provoked changes in elite composition that differentiated Uruguay from the neighbouring and similar pastoral society of Argentina. A particularly important development in this differentiation was the early mobilisation of the rural poor and the characteristics taken by the wars of independence in the form of the Artigas League. After these wars, the *revoluciones de partido* linked political parties and the military, which remained bonded by a strong mutual dependence. At certain points in time, the Colorado party and the state developed what Richard Bensel, analysing state formation in the United States, has labelled 'unmediated party rule', that is, situations in which the state and one party were almost one and the same thing.<sup>249</sup> All this contributed to the triumph of *civilismo*, and by the end of the period a partisan military had been replaced by civilian predominance.

In terms of the state and the political parties, a remarkable development was that the parties remained strong while at the same time the state showed a high degree of autonomy. This is quite an unusual outcome, since the old wisdom on the relations between parties and the state has been to see them as inversely related: namely, strong state, weak parties; weak state, strong

parties. If the exceptionality thesis on the development of the country holds some truth, it lies in this dynamic between the state and the parties. Yet, it is precisely this dynamic that I claim to have explained *without* appealing to exceptionalism but, rather, to comparative history. The pattern just described was altered only with the military coup of 1973.

This study concludes that there was no direct correlation between levels of economic development and the economic elites' ability to penetrate the state. With regard to the literature on this issue, two hazy hypotheses emerge. One is that the higher the level of development, the more the state responds to the interests of economic elites. The rise and formation of capitalism is a classic example. Higher levels of development created stronger and better organised economic elites who in turn were able to control the state more successfully; market economies made penetration only the easier. A second hypothesis is that the lower the level of economic development, the more likely is the existence of an 'oligarchy'. This oligarchy, in control of the means of production (or whatever other definition we choose for natural and technological resources) has no major problem controlling the state. In this situation, the unity of the upper classes and their scarce numbers, in addition to the lack of competition from alternative elites, facilitate state control by a small group. Agrarian societies which have experienced scant industrial development provide typical examples. Evidently, these hypotheses are at odds one with another.

Possible counter-arguments reveal further weaknesses. With the first hypothesis, it is possible to respond that as development makes society more complex the structure of states also grows more intricate; state bureaucracies, therefore, are very likely to acquire more independence, and the service sectors and political elites to play a more prominent (and more autonomous) role. Thus, state autonomy would very likely increase rather than decrease. In the second hypothesis, one can reply that the lower the level of economic development, the weaker organised are the economic elites, and the more likely it is that strong authoritarian military regime will emerge. Even if affected by rapid development, as Samuel Huntington has long suggested and as the Uruguayan elites learned, these societies must rely on the only agent able to guarantee order and some sort of legality, i.e. the military. Neither hypothesis is confirmed in the Uruguayan case. Far from what either hypothesis predicts, in the Uruguayan situation, which featured a state mostly financially bankrupt in a frontier society, the state was able to establish a relative degree of autonomy from the 'oligarchy'.

A very important question was why in due time the parties did not fade away overrun by the forces of modernisation. As they operated for most of the nineteenth century, they structured a primitive type of political representation that was bound to disappear under the impact of modernity. Were the parties that reemerged after the militarism of the late 1880s and

commanded the political scene in the next century different from the traditional Colorados and Blancos or did they basically retain the same defining features? My argument has been that parties evolved at a much more rapid pace than state institutions and that definitely by the late 1880s they represented different levels of composition and organisation. By the same token, however, I have also suggested that the core of the parties, i.e. the rural clientelistic networks, were reinforced by fear of the lower classes and the need for frequent mobilisation. Therefore, while the same organisational core remained paramount in the countryside, in the urban environment parties adopted different outlooks and formed new alliances with doctors who had long opposed the traditional Blancos and Colorados. All this was done in the name of the two major parties and on the assumption that the control of the countryside was crucial. It was under these premises that the coalitions of the late 1880s were consolidated; when at this time the 'traditional' parties merged with the *partidos de ideas* this core remained as their power base up until the 1930s. I pointed out that it was because of these networks that parties could provide the state with mechanisms of control over the *departamentos*, making state growth possible. In essence, the task of modernisation was performed using the old 'traditional' party structures.

It was through being shaped by these events that the modernisation of political institutions in Uruguay took place. According to modernisation theory, 'political modernisation' and institutional change result from the increasing penetration of the political system by new elites. Such penetration was bound to trigger a much more pragmatic competition among 'subsystems'. Of special importance for the advent of democracy was the abandonment of 'traditional' ways and the adoption of more instrumental, secular and 'rational' values. Democratic polities resulted from a movement towards the rationalisation of authority, which 'always involved change and the disintegration of a traditional political system'.<sup>250</sup> Two different arguments coexist in this school of thought. First, what could be called a 'development argument' assumed that economic development and a number of other factors (literacy, urbanisation, mobilisation, etc.) would increase the likelihood of pluralism and democracy. Second, in sharp contrast to the first argument stood the 'cultural argument' that assumed that normative behaviour and culture lay at the basis of polity formation and explained differences between outcomes.

During its phases of formation before 1886, the Uruguayan political system was shaped by the development of those forces that modernisation theory had long perceived as inimical to progress and change, forces that lay at the core of 'traditional' society. And political culture was more an effect than a cause. Parliamentary rule and a party system were made possible by clientelistic networks, violence, minimal property rights, a weak state, and a group of highly mobilised *gauchos*. Democracy, if anything, owed as much

to the barbaric countryside as to the enlightened city. This is not to say that modernisation and its repercussions should not be taken seriously. After all, it was the modernising alliance under Latorre that was responsible for building the infrastructure of the state. But politically the Latorre regime was unsuccessful at changing the traditional ways of doing things; partisanship was still strong and the political foundations of his regime remained tied to the political class and partisan generals. Thus, on a closer look, we can see that the foundations of this democracy were established more by its 'traditional' core than by its modern sector.

Democracy in Uruguay did not rest on a 'special' kind of political culture either. Culture in relation to political behaviour was more a creation of the political institutions that emerged from party struggles and the rural/urban cleavage than an independent causal factor of democracy. A party culture, so to speak, forged during the Artigas struggle and the subsequent conflict, contributed to explain party cohesion and the ideological preferences of both elites and rank and file. And there was certainly a political behaviour associated with the doctors of the *cámaras bizantinas* that could, if one wished, be understood as a manifestation of an urban political culture. But simple comparisons with the similar culture and society of Argentina would suffice to show that political culture, if anything, comes to be a by-product of other events. If the political culture argument put forward by land-of-recent-settlement and modernisation theory has any solid foundation, then Argentina and Uruguay, very similar culturally and socially, would have developed very similar political institutions. Yet they did not.

Finally, there was the relation between the polity and the economy. Barrán and Nahum, operating from a well-documented structural approach, came to face the fact that political behaviour operated under a different logic than economic behaviour. What that logic was went ignored by the authors. Despite this, it is quite clear that the relations between politics and economics is not a linear one. In the last analysis, I have insisted that collective action, more than economic considerations, shaped the polity. This action, of course, took place in a definite setting in which structural factors delineated both its substance and scope. Yet I have suggested that a comparison with the similar economy of Argentina renders structural determination problematic. Was collective action 'rational'? It was, but this confirmation contributes little to the solution of our fundamental question. In explaining the formation of the political system we have found that, not surprisingly, political conflict seemed to respond to rational calculations and material gains. But this awareness neither contributes to enhance our knowledge of the institutionalisation of power relations, nor does it ease the theoretical quandaries that emerge from an historical investigation of Uruguayan political development. If we were to argue that the evolution of political institutions in Uruguay was the sum of rational actions on the part of individuals who acted to maximise their utility, i.e. to achieve their political

objectives, this still would tell us nothing about their characteristics and types. In the final analysis, it would make no difference whether we take a rational choice approach, because the theory becomes almost impossible to falsify. Stated simply, for more than seventy years the historical record shows no record of 'irrationality' against which to measure or contrast 'rational' actions. Little room would be left for the counterintuitive rich evidence that is portrayed by the historical record. Such richness would most likely disappear, submerged and forgotten in the monotonous and muddy waters of rationality.



## Appendix

### Presidents of Uruguay, 1830-1907

General Fructuoso Rivera	November 1830 to February 1835
General Manuel Oribe	March 1835 to October 1838
General Fructuoso Rivera	March 1839 through the <i>Guerra Grande</i>
Juan Francisco Giro	March 1852 to September 1853
General Venancio Flores	March 1854 to September 1855
Gabriel Antonio Pereira	March 1856 to March 1860
Bernardo Prudencio Berro	March 1860 to March 1864
General Lorenzo Batlle	March 1868 to March 1872
José E. Ellauri	March 1873 to January 1875
Pedro Varela	January 1875 to March 1876
Colonel Lorenzo Latorre	March 1876 to March 1880
Francisco Vidal	March 1880 to February 1882
General Máximo Santos	March 1882 to March 1886
Antonio Vidal	March to November 1886
General Máximo Tajes	November 1886 to March 1890
Julio Herrera y Obes	March 1890 to March 1894
Juan B. Idiarte Borda	March 1894 to August 1897
Juan Lindolfo Cuestas	March 1899 to March 1903
José Batlle y Ordóñez, First Presidency	March 1903 to March 1907

## Notes

1. Despite instances of corruption and the existence of strong clientelistic structures, institutions of government in Latin America have most closely resembled the liberal democratic paradigm.
2. According to Moore, 'reactionary configurations' such as those that characterised Germany (a coalition between the old landed elites and the newer commercial and industrial bourgeoisie against the lower classes in town and countryside) were to be found in most cases. See Moore (1966).
3. As shown in part IV, in Uruguay no strong conservative organised alliance was consolidated. Though efforts to form coalitions were forthcoming, their associations were sporadic and no lasting associations endured.
4. As in modernisation theory, I use the term 'traditional' to indicate that part of society characterised by rigid social structures and established values that represented the other side of the coin of the newer, modern part.
5. For details on this aspect of Moore's argument, see Moore (1966), especially pp. 418-20.
6. Contemporaries used other names to refer to the territory today known as Uruguay including *Banda del Norte*, *Banda Septentrional* or *Banda de los Charrúas*; the two first designations expressed the location of Uruguay in relation to the capital of the Viceroyalty, Buenos Aires. The latter referred to the presence of Charrúa nomad indians who originally inhabited that territory.
7. This right was not passed by Congress immediately, but it was finally approved in 1932.
8. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 4, p. 18.
9. On a neo-corporatist argument, see Lanzaro (1986). On a somewhat ill-formulated corporatist argument see Weinstein (1975).
10. For a more extensive critique of the corporatist model as applied to Uruguay, see López-Alves (forthcoming, a).
11. Even then it basically remained, as other countries in the area, an agrarian society with only a small industrial bourgeoisie.

12. Batlle died in 1929, but his political legacy did not. As Henry Finch has put it, 'Batllism refers to a national style or ideology of development within which Uruguayan public life was conducted from early this century to the end of the 1960s'; see Finch (1981), p. 2. For most Uruguayan scholars, the so-called 'Batlle era' started with the first presidency (1902) and ended with the Great Depression (1929).

13. A comprehensive examination of the period 1880-1914, which includes both the reforms of the 1890s and those implemented by Batlle, goes beyond my purposes in this essay. In collaboration with David Rock I examine this period elsewhere as part of an ongoing research project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. There, we closely compare the social, political, and institutional histories of Argentina and Uruguay during these years.

14. Quijano (1949), p. 292.

15. Barrán and Nahum (1979-85), especially vol. 1. Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 8 were written jointly. The rest of the collection was written by José P. Barrán alone.

16. This issue is acknowledged and an explanation of this shift is attempted in Barrán and Nahum (1979-85).

17. In my definition a state is autonomous when it can enact policy independently from pressure groups; autonomy is, of course, a relative concept.

18. See, for instance, the figures offered in Finch (1981).

19. It has been argued that Battle's demagogic machinations *vis-à-vis* the working class hampered the formation of a strong labour party and, ultimately, benefited the political elite. See, for example, Sala de Tourón and Landinelli (1984).

20. A good example is Julio A. Louis (1969), especially pp. 9-11 and 64-88.

21. For details, see Lamas and Piotti de Lamas (1981), p. 177.

22. Although historiography on Latin America has touched tangentially upon this subject, few studies specifically related to state formation in Uruguay or on Latin America have been conducted. Notable among the few is Oszlak (1985).

23. The first 1830 constitution remained unchanged until 1917.

24. Attempts to change the original document abounded (1838, 1842, 1851, 1853, 1878, and even more frequently during the 1880s). On the Constitutional

debate of the first half of the nineteenth century, see Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991), vol. 2, pp. 126-7.

25. Carlos Real de Azua shows this quite eloquently: (1984), p. 74.

26. For details, see Wood (1992).

27. From the 1920s prominent *colorados* (reds) and members of the intelligentsia wrote numerous press articles and editorials in the Batllista newspaper *El Día* that argued for the country as an exceptional case.

28. On the MLN, see López-Alves (1989).

29. For a detailed examination of neo-Batllism (and the exceptionality thesis) see López-Alves (forthcoming, a).

30. A brief, but useful, review of this literature can be found in an unfinished essay by Carlos Real de Azua (1987). Perhaps because of the unfinished character of this manuscript, however, Real de Azua did not develop an alternative position. He correctly points out the limitations of the 'classic' thesis in terms of the lack of empirical evidence and the absence of a vigorous methodological and comparative framework.

31. Charles Gillespie, for instance, implicitly accepts most of the postulates of the exceptional thesis; see, for instance Gillespie (1984), especially pp. 1-5.

32. In Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991), vol. 2, pp. 58-107, one can find a good description of these nationals. Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy are mentioned here only as a reference; they do not subscribe to this political culture argument.

33. Emphasis on the personality of the *gaucho* and the struggles of the rural populations and rural *caudillos* in the forging of this special political culture can be found in Pivel Devoto (1942); Pivel Devoto (1956), especially vol. 2; Pivel Devoto and Ranieri de Pivel Devoto (1948); de Herrera (1984); and García (1956).

34. Among other writings see Bauza (1887); Pivel Devoto (1965), p. 95.

35. Much later, and in a much more systemic way, dependency theory also echoed some of these notions.

36. Zorrilla de San Martín's novel *Tabaré: la leyenda patria* remains the foremost literary epic of the foundation of the nation. It insisted on the mixed

European and Indian ancestry of the country and stressed the spirit of freedom of the original native populations (the Charrúa and Chana indians).

37. For details on this political culture in the United States, see Lipset (1963); also, more recently, Lipset (1990).

38. I discuss this in detail below.

39. Barrán and Nahum (1979-85), vol. 1, p. 109.

40. Quoted in Reyes Abadie (1977), p. 27. The comparison is interesting precisely because the article had been written in the antagonistic city of Buenos Aires.

41. 'Sulla Proprietà Territoriale Degli'Italiani Nel Dipartimento di Montevideo', *Bolletino Consulare*, vol. 16 (Rome, Biblioteca Ministero degli Affari Esteri). The peak of Italian migration can be established in the late 1860s, early 1870s.

42. See Barrán and Nahum (1979-85), p. 14.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

44. Pivel Devoto (1942), especially pp. 58, 207, 209, 224. The strong rural/urban cleavage constitutes the main interpretative variable of Uruguayan history also in Zum Felde (1920). The same can be argued of Reyes Abadie (1990) and (1977).

45. On the notion of *patriciado* and its evolution in Uruguay see Real de Azua (1961).

46. Reyes Abadie (1977), p. 51. See as well Barrán and Nahum (1979-85), chiefly vols. 1 and 3.

47. The expression became very popular in British Consular Reports on Uruguay, which constantly made reference to the chaotic 'and divorced from reality' character of Uruguayan politics. For a good example, see Public Record Office, FO 51, no. 160, dispatch 20, 16 July, 1870.

48. See Barrán and Nahum (1979-85), vol. 1, p. 158 and *passim*. The authors, however, suggest that the weight of the middle classes was not as important as it might appear.

49. Scholarly work on Uruguay and other countries in the continent has long toyed with the idea of a comparison with Europe. Systematic comparisons have

never materialised, however, except in a rather loose fashion in the literature on transitions to democracy.

50. Martínez Lamas (1946), p. 81.

51. He argues that a comparison in terms of geography and natural resources rather than in terms of culture is called for in order to find an answer to the real causes of Uruguayan underdevelopment. *Ibid.* pp. 86-88.

52. Some very apparent reasons spring to mind: 1) the explicit bias on the part of a dominant Marxist-inspired structural tradition against considering the United States as a case for comparison (the United States is still today scarcely taught in Latin America); 2) prejudice harboured by scholarly work on the United States which for the most part did not consider Latin America as part of 'the West', modernisation theory being a good case in point. In sum, predominant parochialism on the part of both literatures. In López-Alves (forthcoming, b), I venture into this comparison in some detail.

53. MDAE, document attached to Dispatch 13, Montevideo September 1863, *Confidenziale*, Pacco 357, September 29, 1863.

54. Bureau of the American Republics, *Uruguay*, Bulletin no. 61 (Washington, DC, 1892), p. 45.

55. Up until the 1970s such conviction permeated Batllista thinking and was not uncommon among the Left and the population at large.

56. To stress the qualities of leaders to explain political systems and society at large is a well-known approach of the social sciences. Popular for some time in the literature on Latin America, it has been prominent in scholarly work on Colombia, which has the oldest two-party system in the continent besides Uruguay.

57. Vanger (1980a) and (1980b). Charles Gillespie had also been influenced by this approach; see Gillespie (1984).

58. González Conci and Guidici (1957), p. 120.

59. Others have argued that it was the persuasiveness of Batllista discourse that helped reform. For a study of this discourse that emphasises the exceptional qualities of the leader as well, see Panizza (1990).

60. On the United States, see the classical work of Frederick J. Turner (1920). On Canada, see Innis (1933).

61. This body of literature has so often remarked on some of these characteristics that it would be too long to list references fully in a footnote. Among others, good examples are the contributions to Real de Azua (1968a) and also Real de Azua (1984). In terms of a structured 'land of recent settlement' argument that includes Uruguay, to my knowledge only Donald Denoon has incorporated the country in the context of a wider comparison. See Denoon (1983).

62. J. P. Barrán and B. Nahum have acknowledged the importance of the frontier phenomenon in Uruguay. See Barrán and Nahum (1989), p. 76-7. It must be added that in terms of their love for freedom and life in the open spaces a great part of the indigenous people of the United States have been described in very similar terms to those used to depict the Uruguayan and Argentine *gauchos* and Indians.

63. MAE, Madrid, Uruguay: Asuntos Políticos, no. 24, Legajo 2707.

64. See Pivel Devoto (1942), especially vol. 1, p. 236 and *passim*; and (1956), vol. 2, in which ideological issues are taken as the major dividing lines between the parties.

65. Although this view has been quite pervasive both in the literature and in public opinion, it is difficult to find it in a 'pure' formulation. For arguments along these lines see Vargas (1958); McDonald (1978); Pendle (1963); Pérez Santarcieri (1989); and Weinstein (1975).

66. For a critique of this characterisation of both parties, see Real de Azua (1990). For a description of the different divisions suffered by the Colorados, see Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, p. 113 and *passim*.

67. Reyes Abadie (1977), notes the unusual influence of liberal ideas in Montevideo. Some of the most recent work on Batlle has also acknowledged the dominant liberal (and even socialist) content of Batllista discourse as a distinctive feature of the Colorados. See Panizza (1990), especially pp. 37-55.

68. This was discussed above as part of the exceptional country thesis. On the influence of liberalism in the United States see Hartz (1955), which is considered a classic. See also Lipset (1963).

69. During the late 1870s pragmatism in its North American and continental versions definitely influenced the celebrated educational reform of José Pedro Varela as well.

70. Washington Reyes Abadie, for instance, has insisted on the importance of liberal ideas among the Uruguayan urban political elite. See Reyes Abadie (1977). See also Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, pp. 107-60.

71. Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, p. 137.

72. Pivel Devoto (1942), vol. 2, pp. 138-9.

73. Most of these newcomers constituted the remnant of the old Uruguayan 'patrician' classes ruined by civil wars, particularly the *Guerra Grande*, 1839-1851.

74. *Principismo* was inspired by a strong conviction in forms of *civilismo* (civilian rule), and argued for its advantages over military rule. On *principismo* and *Partidos de Ideas*, see Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, 1967, pp. 201-9; Oddone (1956), especially pp. 7-20; Reyes Abadie (1977), pp. 33-49; Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, chapter 3; and Torres Wilson (1973), pp. 37-45.

75. The first *Partidos de Ideas* were created in the 1850s (Andrés Lamas and his Unión Liberal, 1855), but their peak was in the 1870s under *principismo*. This movement inspired the emergence of the Partido Radical, 1872 and the Partido Constitucional, 1880. In the 1870s the Club Nacional and the Club Libertad, formed by Blanco and Colorado youth respectively, represented, within these parties, also an *anti-caudillo* movement led by doctors.

76. Cf. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, p. 411. The *principistas*, we should remember, were also a part of the old *patriciado* that the Asociación regarded as part of an old, less entrepreneurial elite.

77. For details, see Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, p. 137.

78. Ares Pons (1967), p. 41.

79. Martínez Lamas (1946), p. 115.

80. *Candombé* is a drum-based musical tune and an inheritance both of black slaves brought to Uruguay during the seventeenth and eighteenth century and also of runaways escaped from Brazil. The 'official' political usage of the expression is attributed to *principista* Juan Carlos Gómez, who characterised the presidency of Lorenzo Batlle (1868-1872) as a *candombero*, lower class administration. In its more general meaning, it has been understood as synonymous with popular culture or the political culture of the uneducated. The masses following the parties of *caudillos*, for instance, were called *candomberos*. Elitist, educated doctors were assumed to stand at the other end of the political spectrum.



81. Zum Felde (1920), pp. 34-44.
82. Barrán and Nahum (1972 and 1979-85) and Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991) have attributed great importance to this divide.
83. Barrán and Nahum (1972 and 1979-85) and Sala de Tourón (1991).
84. Reyes Abadie and Vázquez Romero (1981).
85. Although their use of rational choice is mostly implicit, several direct references to rationality can be found in Barrán and Nahum (1972). Among others, see vol. 1, p. 83 and *passim*; also vol. 2, pp. 74-6, on the subject of cross-breeding.
86. This argument runs throughout Barrán and Nahum (1972), and Barrán and Nahum (1979-85) is consistent with this position as well. See, especially, their study on the economic crisis of the 1890s and the responses it triggered in different groups, in vol. 3 of their 1972 book.
87. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 2, pp. 74-6.
88. See, especially, the whole of vol. 3 of Barrán and Nahum (1972). Also vol. 2, p. 49, and vol. 6, pp. 206-63.
89. There are instances of the preponderance of domestic factors everywhere in both Barrán and Nahum (1972) and (1979-85). Among others, see (1972), vol. 1, pp. 253-4.
90. See, especially Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 11-58.
91. In fact, when asked, Barrán himself resorted to this line of argumentation. Correspondence with J. P. Barrán, July 1991.
92. Peter Winn has also emphasised the importance of trade with Britain in the development of the Uruguayan state, and made a very strong dependency-type argument. See Winn (1973), pp. 100-26.
93. This is the argument followed in Barrán and Nahum (1979-85); see, especially, vol. 1, pp. 213-69.
94. See, for instance, the study on taxes in Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 2, pp. 177 and *passim*.
95. Botana (1977), p. 71.

96. See, especially, Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991). Also Sala de Tourón, Rodríguez, de la Torre and Alonso Eloy (1970).

97. In particular, Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991), vol. 1, pp. 17-23 and 47-72. In vol. 2, pp. 224-45.

98. *Ibid*, vol. 2, pp. 315-33. In contrast with most literature on the period, a similar argument has been made in a very interesting paper by Jorge F. Sábato about the 1880s in Argentina. See Sábato (1988).

99. Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991), vol. 1, p. 28.

100. *Ibid*. especially vol. 2, pp. 112, 152, and 224-38.

101. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 52-3. Most historiography coincides with Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy in stressing the rivalry with Buenos Aires to explain tariffs and the terms of trade rather than group pressure.

102. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 320.

103. On the comparison with Rosas, see *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 223 and *passim*.

104. For a good defence of dependency theory, see Schwartz (1989).

105. This coincides with most of the findings of Pivel Devoto in (1942), pp. 12, 63-71, 75, 86, and especially chapter 3 in vol. 1. Sala de Tourón and Eloy Alonso have made a similar point (1991), especially vol.2, pp. 112, 152 and *passim*.

106. Montevideo was founded by the Spanish Viceroyalty in 1723 mainly as a garrison meant to stop the advances of the Portuguese southward. Three hundred men were sent at that time from Buenos Aires to build up the Montevideo fortress.

107. PRO, FO 51, 179, p. 112. *Brief Sketch of the Political History of Uruguay*. 1875. Printed at the time in the Foreign Office, London.

108. This at times was done with the actual military collaboration of both Argentines and Brazilians with backing for one of the parties at the negotiating table.

109. Pivel Devoto (1942), vol. 1, p. 96. As in most of Latin America, these represented divisions between *Ministeriales* (inspired by the political and administrative life of the Cabildos) and their challengers, loosely embodied by those more in tune with the nascent republic.

110. Report attached to MDAE, Dispatch no. 2, Confidenziale, Montevideo, September 19, 1863, Pacco 357, Rugero Moscati, Roma: Tipografia Reservata, 1963.
111. See Halperín Donghi (1989), pp. 67-80.
112. See Oszlak (1985), p. 49.
113. General Console G. B. Raffo, 'Commercio e Navigazione del Porto de Montevideo', in Bollettino Consolare, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Torino, 1863, vol. 2, p. 883.
114. During the first seventy years of the century, trade with Europe, although important, was not the major source of revenue. Up until the 1880s regional trade with Brazil, Cuba, Peru, and Argentina accounted for most of the country's income.
115. See table on public debt in Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, p. 187.
116. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-70.
117. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 186.
118. See President Pedro Varela's *Mensaje del Presidente de la República al abrirse el Tercer Periodo de la Undécima Legislatura*, February 1875 (Montevideo: Imprenta El Uruguay, Pasaje del Mercado Viejo). The document is fairly accurate in regard to the disastrous state of the bureaucracy and state resources.
119. Quoted in Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol.1, p. 111
120. PRO, FO 51, 160, 16 July 1870. From Munro to the Earl of Clarendon, dispatch 20, p. 90. On the disastrous conditions of city and countryside, see also FO 51, 167, dispatch 11, Buenos Aires, 13 September 1870.
121. PRO, FO 51, 162, 15 January 1871, Consular Dispatch, No. 1.
122. Similar descriptions abound in Italian and Spanish Consular Reports. In Rome, see the archives of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri, especially Moscati, pacco 1482, vol. 6. serie politica no 9, report on January 1875 from consul Giovatta Cerruti to Ministero degli Affari Esteri. In Madrid, see Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Uruguay, Serie Política; there are numerous reports about party violence and wars, especially in Legajo 2705 and 2706, years 1850-1855 and 1864-1870.

123. See, for instance, Consular Dispatch no. 1, PRO, FO 51, 143, Montevideo 28 July 1867, from Le Heson to Lord Stanley.

124. PRO, FO 51, 160, Montevideo 24 February 1870. Dispatch no. 2.

125. MAE, Madrid, Uruguay, Serie Política, Legajo 2706, 1854-1865. Letter of Spanish delegation in Montevideo to the Spanish consulate in Lisbon. Part of package entitled 'Dirección de Asuntos Políticos'.

126. Hilda Sábato, presentation at Workshop on Latin American Politics and History, UCSB, May 1991. See also Sábato (1992), pp. 139-63.

127. My argument on Uruguay finds confirmation in Jorge Sábato's argument that in Argentina the 'dominant class' had really no great contender; Sábato (1988), pp. 156-9.

128. In Argentina the professional military more than political organisations controlled the draft.

129. J. Letteson to Earl Russell, Dispatch 39, PRO, FO 51, 130, Montevideo 18 April 1865.

130. PRO, FO 51, no. 160, Decree 6, Confidential. Montevideo, 10 April 1870. From John Munro to the Earl of Clarendon.

131. By *revoluciones de partido* I mean struggles in which the parties confronted one another with the full extent of their military strength. Uprisings led by party factions, such as the one led by Conservatives and 'Fusionists' against Flores (1855) or the *Tricolor* insurrection against President Varela (1875), are not considered *revoluciones de partido*. I do not regard the Blanco Aparicio Saravia revolt (1903) against President Batlle y Ordóñez as a typical *revolución de partido* either. In that instance, we had a government with the backing of its professional army fighting a rural insurrection that did not count with the full support of the Blanco Party.

132. A description of the troops under Artigas command quoted in Machado (1984), vol. 1, p. 46.

133. In Barrán and Nahum (1989), José Pedro Barrán makes a very similar argument.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

135. *Ibid.*, p. 72

136. On these issues, Campal (1964), and his articles in the weekly *Marcha* during 1964 and 1965, constitute a very good source with details about rural unemployment and the social consequences of the expansion of *latifundio* ranching during the late colonial period. See, in particular, Campal (1964a).

137. See Barrán and Nahum (1989), pp. 88-90; Real de Azua (1961), p. 140 and *passim*, and also Campal (1964a) on the *Memoria* and the personality and background of Azara. The anonymous 'Noticias sobre los campos de la Banda Oriental', written in 1794, also stresses that 'reform of the rural economy is more than badly needed'.

138. The Federation included the *Banda* together with Santa Fe, Corrientes, Córdoba, Candelaria, and Paraná. It surrounded Buenos Aires north and east, and successfully imposed Artigas's authority on Montevideo. A complete account of the *Liga* and its development can be found in Reyes Abadie and Vázquez Romero (1981), vol. 2, pp. 337-63.

139. Barrán and Nahum (1989), pp. 104-8; Machado (1984), vol. 1, pp. 47-52.

140. Cf. Barrán and Nahum (1989), p. 101.

141. 'Many times I heard him complain that few sons of distinguished families in the country wanted to fight under his command; perhaps because of the deprivations and struggles that go along with military life, and that this led him to rely on the *gauchos*, in whom he found more resignation, more perseverance and endurance.' From *Escritos históricos del Coronel Ramón de Cáceres*, quoted in Barrán and Nahum (1989), p. 102.

142. Letter to L. Galván, in Bruschera (1969), p. 66.

143. For a full description, see Machado (1984), vol. 2, pp. 31-99 and Reyes Abadie (1990).

144. 'Reglamento Provisorio de la Provincia Oriental para el Fomento de su Campaña y Seguridad de sus Hacendados', 10 September 1815.

145. Most sources can be interpreted as arguing along these lines. In addition to those already cited, see Sala de Tourón, Rodríguez, de la Torre and Alonso Eloy (1970).

146. For details on the relation between Artigas and Buenos Aires, Tulio Halperín Donghi provides a brief and clear account; see Halperín Donghi (1989), chapter 3.

147. De la Torre, Rodríguez and Sala de Tourón (1972); Machado (1984), vol. 1; Reyes Abadie, Bruschera and Melogno (1968); and Reyes Abadie and Vázquez Romero (1981), vol. 2, pp. 281-461.

148. For details on the *minifundio* see part IV.

149. For details, see Zum Felde (1920), pp. 107 and 110, and Herrera (1984).

150. A large number of pro-Argentina groups in Uruguay by this time had perceived the Rivadavia government as a strong hegemonic force that would render the 'orderly' influence of the Portuguese in the Banda unnecessary.

151. For details, see Barrán (1990), p. 41.

152. On the *Guerra Grande* see Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1; Pivel Devoto and Ranieri de Pivel Devoto (1948); Reyes Abadie and Vázquez Romero (1981), vol. 2; and Zum Felde (1920).

153. In Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, p. 37.

154. Abundant and thorough citations of newspaper reports on the *Guerra Grande* can be found in Acevedo (1933), particularly vols. 2 and 3. For an overview with abundant citations of newspaper reports, see also Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 28-47.

155. For details, see Machado (1984), vol. III, p. 33

156. Some estimate the casualties of some of these battles at more than 1,000 men. For a detailed account, see Acevedo (1933), vol. 2, especially pp. 148-50, 311-8, 383-93.

157. Approximate percentages are as follows: 2,500 were French soldiers, 500 were Italian, and another 500 were Argentine *Unitarios* under the command of General Paz, who became the 'Supreme Chief of Defence'. There were also 50 foreign vessels ready to defend the city. Machado (1984), vol. III, p. 36.

158. Montevideo, 2 February 1854. Secretaría de Estado. Archivo Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid, Serie Política Uruguay, Legajo 2706, 1854-1865.

159. PRO, FO 51, 41. No 5, Confidential. Montevideo, 19 July 1846.

160. Madrid, AME, Uruguay, Serie Política, Legajo 2705, 1845-1853. Informe no. 120, Montevideo, 31 December 1853.

161. Good detailed research on newspaper accounts and other primary sources are to be found in the account of the *Guerra Grande* offered by Pivel Devoto and Ranieri de Pivel Devoto (1948).

162. No. 5, 11 October 1848.

163. 'Mensaje del poder Ejecutivo a la Octava Legislatura de la República Oriental del Uruguay en la apertura de sus sesiones ordinarias', 15 February 1858, Montevideo, Imprenta de la República. Signed by Gabriel Pereira, Antonio de las Carreras, Andrés A. Gómez and Federico Nin Reyes.

164. On Fortunato Flores, see PRO, FO 51, 144, Dispatch 33, Private, July 1867. For a full description of his corrupt personality and that of his associates, see MAE, Montevideo 19 February 1868. Informe No 25. Asuntos Políticos, Legajo 2707, 1866-1881.

165. A good detailed account is offered by Italian Consul Raffo in dispatch dated June 28, 1868, pacco 1481, Moscati V, VI, MDAE.

166. See Reyes Abadie (1977), p. 30.

167. Serie Política no. 32, Pacco 1481, Moscati V, VI, Rome, MDAE.

168. The mother of Fortunato, wife of Venancio, was described as an 'ignorant and vulgar woman who on learning of Colonel Fortunato's travel abroad refused to accept it saying that his morals would become corrupt'. PRO, FO, 51, 145, Dispatch 53, Montevideo 12 June 1867.

169. PRO, FO 51, 143, 28 July 1867, Dispatch no. 1, from Le Heson to Lord Stanley, p. 35.

170. PRO, FO 51, 143, 28 July 1867, Dispatch no. 1.

171. PRO, 51, 144, Dispatch 47, 21 October 1867.

172. The ex-President was murdered on 19 February, 1868, after being ambushed in downtown Montevideo. While traditional historiography connected his assassination to the Blancos, particularly to ex-President Bernardo Berro (who was killed the same day in another confusing incident as a consequence), a more convincing explanation would attribute his death to the ongoing clash between *principistas* and *candomberos* within his own party. Flores, no doubt a *candombero*, was in fact succeeded not by Blancos but by Colorado *principistas*.

173. 'Conservatives' were, in reality, Colorado partisans who had opposed Flores. PRO, FO 51, 160, Dispatch no. 2. to Earl of Clarendon, Montevideo 24 February 1870.

174. PRO, FO 51, 171, Dispatch no. 17, Montevideo, 9 December 1874. From J. Munro to the Earl of Derby.

175. MDAE, Pacco 1481, Serie Política no. 35, Montevideo, 12 December 1870. From Raffo to Viscount Venosta.

176. Batlle was a General trained in France, an *ex-principista* Colorado who had plotted against the first Flores Administration in 1854. As his predecessors had done, he appointed an overwhelming majority of his partisans in the *Cámaras* and ministries.

177. Some intense rural migration followed the agreement, since the rural population sought residence in the *departamento* under the protection of the *caudillo* of their choice. This consolidated even further the sub-cultures of the parties.

178. Such efforts materialised in the newspaper *La Democracia* and a party manifesto elaborated by *el Club de los Nacionalistas* in June, 1872, in which the party rejected violence and argued for elections as the best and safest mechanism to guarantee the rights of political minorities.

179. In 1881 the *principista* Colorados launched another manifesto similar to that of the Blancos. The manifesto argued for individual liberties, political rights, civilian rule and peaceful transfers of power through elections.

180. It was at that time that the *Jefes Militares* published a manifesto that reflected their discontent with the abandonment suffered by the countryside at the hands of the *partidos de ideas* and urban politics. See Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, p. 155.

181. This was started of course by the founders of the parties, José Antonio Lavalleja, Fructuoso Rivera and Manuel Oribe, who were not just self-made *caudillos*, but professional military men.

182. Cf. Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, p. 113.

183. On his administration, see León Bengoa (1936); Fernández Cabrelli (1975); Fernández Saldana (1969); and Reyes Abadie (1977). For a good overview of Latorre and militarism as a whole, see as well Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 479-585.



184. His administration started a period of military rule that was to end in 1886.
185. Communiqué by *hacendado* Oscar Hordenana to the Foreign Diplomatic Body in Montevideo, 11 March 1876.
186. PRO, FO 51 160. Dispatch no. 20. Montevideo 16th July, 1870, From John Munro to the Earl of Clarendon.
187. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol.1, p. 484.
188. Reyes Abadie (1977), p. 44
189. *Ibid.*, p. 58
190. Opening Presidential Address,
191. Real de Azua (1969).
192. Quoted in Reyes Abadie (1977), p. 72, from the original 1876 disposition.
193. Méndez Vives (1975), p. 12.
194. On the impressive modernising accomplishments of the Latorre government see, among others, Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 486-522, and Reyes Abadie (1977), pp. 34-57.
195. Some have argued that this move, in reality, increased the dependency of the country on foreign capital, and that for all its merits Latorre's economic policy was, all in all, unsuccessful in increasing returns and savings. See Méndez Vives (1975), pp. 29-31.
196. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 481-482.
197. In approaching the deadline to return to constitutional rule, the regime sent 'Notices ...to the Political Chiefs of the various Departments that the elections of Deputies and Senators would duly take place in November ...when the Republic will return to constitutional form of government...but the general public is in favour of a prolongation of Colonel Latorre's Dictatorship, whose government inspires at least comparative confidence.' PRO, FO 51, 177. Consular Report no. 23, 2 June 1876.
198. Reyes Abadie (1977), p. 71.
199. For details see Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991), vol. 1, part 1.

200. MAE, Ministerio de Estado. Mayo 1882, Palacio. Uruguay, Serie Política, Legajo 2707, 1866-1881.
201. Méndez Vives (1975), p. 33
202. *Ibid.*, p. 33
203. MDAE, Serie Política no. 17, Pacco 1483, Moscati V, VI
204. These were José Pedro Ramírez, Juan Carlos Blanco and Aureliano Rodríguez, key figures during the period of civilian rule that started in the 1890s.
205. MDAE, Serie Política no. 125, Montevideo, 10 July 1887. Pacco 1483.
206. For details and an application of O'Donnell's concept to the emergence of military rule in Uruguay, see López-Alves (1985).
207. Waisman (1987).
208. Real de Azua (1984), p. 28.
209. I mention Colombia because shortly after independence this country, like Uruguay, also embarked on dismantling the army and in the nineteenth century developed two parties which very much resembled the Uruguayan party system.
210. Pivel Devoto (1942), vol. 1, p. 30 and *passim*.
211. The citations that follow belong to the original edition of the Constitution, *Constitución de la República Oriental del Uruguay* (Montevideo: Tipografía El Nacional, 1830).
212. See articles 153 to 158.
213. Presidential powers were extensive under the 1830 design. There was no designated Vice-President on a permanent basis, and the President of the Senate, elected annually, performed the role of Vice-President only under extreme circumstances.
214. Zum Felde (1920), p. 125 and *passim*.
215. For details, see Pivel Devoto (1942), vol. 2, p. 154.
216. PRO, FO 51, 130, Dispatch 31, 29 March 1865, William Lettson to the Earl of Clarendon.

217. *Ibid.*

218. Ownership of property was required in order to be able to run for the presidency as well. Inspired by the French Revolution, the Constitution determined that in order to be president, candidates must possess at least 10,000 pesos in cash, or own property worth the same amount; at the time, this amounted to a small fortune.

219. Certainly not all of the rural population were mobile wage earners. There were also some small farmers on the outskirts of Montevideo who, dependent as they became on the city's economy, were not considered part of the 'dangerous' rural masses. All in all, however, they represented a tiny minority.

220. Voting might have been as inconsequential in Argentina as in Uruguay, but for very different reasons; in the absence of strong parties – with the exception of the so-called *Orden Conservador* that started in 1880 – the electorate did not feel motivated enough. On the 1880s in Argentina, see Botana (1977).

221. Letter from *principista* Juan Carlos Gómez to Pedro Bustamante, 2 May 2 1876.

222. Pivel Devoto (1956), vol. 2, p. 72-6.

223. *Caudillos* were often asked to represent small rural proprietors in litigation involving land invasions, property rights, or the plight of entire populations *vis-à-vis* rich *hacendados*. Plenty of these instances are recorded in Nelson de la Torre, Rodríguez and Sala de Tourón (1972), 1972), chapters 4 and 6.

224. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, p. 560 and *passim*.

225. Bollettino Consolare, MDAE, vol. 3, Torino, 1865. Rapporto del signore Lorenzo Chapperon, Vice-Consul at Montevideo, 31 December, 1864.

226. The skills of the labour force are close to pre-modern warfare. Such men could easily make a living by plundering and smuggling cattle; they could at the same time be useful members of any militia.

227. Strong frontier features resulted in militarism and authoritarianism (Venezuela) and centralism and militarism combined with parliamentarism in the context of weak parties and no party system in the very similar Argentina.

228. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 558-61.

229. After all, in the 1860s Venancio Flores demonstrated that the countryside was almost always ready to march into the capital city and impose its conditions. In 1872 Timoteo Aparicio successfully imposed his requirements on the central government and, even after militarism had tamed the countryside considerably in the early 1900s, Aparicio Saravia could still recruit 14,000 men to fight the central government of Batlle y Ordóñez.

230. *El Universal*, No. 866, 10 June 1832.

231. On horizontal alliances in Argentina and the cohesion of its economic and political class, see Sábato (1988).

232. For a good study on the ascension of Rosas to power and the characteristics of his regime, see Lynch (1981).

233. 'The high command of the Timoteo Aparicio movement was a high Command composed of *estanciero*-colonels and *estanciero*-captains'. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, p. 195.

234. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 80-2.

235. Poucel (1864).

236. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134. Also quoted in Barrán and Nahum (1972), p. 39.

237. Poucel wrote that by the end of the *Guerra Grande* 'we did not have more than foreigners in our service, with the exception of some 12 to 15 year old children. At that time, there were 7 different nationalities (in the estancia): one Polish, several Italians and Spaniards, British and one Bolivian (plus some French). *Ibid.*, p. 146.

238. Conversations with José P. Barrán, Montevideo, July 1990. For details, see Barrán and Nahum (1985), vol. 1, pp. 226-7.

239. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, p. 342

240. This result is apparent from the readings of Consular reports of different foreign delegations.

241. For details, see Reyes Abadie (1989). See also Herrera (1984).

242. For details, see Sala de Tourón and Alonso Eloy (1991), vol. 2, pp. 47-9.

243. Favourite tactics of the *Blancos* were to abstain from participation in elections, to plot insurrections and of course to use guerrilla warfare. Ideologically, they were a mixture of populism, nationalism and legalism.

244. Barrán and Nahum (1979-85), vol.2, p. 403.

245. This, despite the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1851), was a time in which the Colorado party had been able to gain large urban constituencies and started to be perceived as the more liberal of the two.

246. Most political economy has made the free-trade/protection divide the central issue in explaining policy making. Among others, a major problem with the approach has been its reductionism and its somewhat light consideration of the historical record. Among others who have focus on Latin America, see Frieden (1991).

247. Barrán and Nahum (1972), vol. 1, pp. 414-16.

248. MAE, Serie Política No. 124. Montevideo, October 11, 1867. He added that intellectuals had missed the real causes of the rise of democracy as well. The idea that political institutions mattered was just the illusion of young men with some University training '...who despite their exaggerated ambitions have not been able to reach the public posts to which they aspire... [thus they] exploit these beliefs of the lower classes to support...their predilection for the democratic principle...these are the same young men who have...supported the revolution now being attempted in Spain.'

249. For details, see Bensel (1990).

250. Huntington (1968), p. 35. Based on Daniel Lerner's definition, modernisation was described as a 'syndrome' because its key aspects '...urbanization, industrialization, secularization, democratization, education, media participation, (did) not occur in haphazard and unrelated fashion'.

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