transition. This is not to deny that Chile's democracy today would be enhanced by a judiciary that takes seriously, for example, the rights of Mapuche activists to be tried under regular criminal law rather than anti-terrorist legislation from a bygone era. It is only to point out that the Chilean transition has established a flourishing liberal democracy under the watch of what Hilbink characterises as a deficient and illiberal judiciary, and it would have been interesting to hear her discuss this.

Judges beyond Politics provides an important contribution to the theoretical literature on comparative courts and politics. Further, Hilbink has provided a first-rate history of Chilean politics, seen through a legal lens. Chilean scholars have long viewed the judiciary's institutional culture as an impediment to its more liberal performance. None, however, has corroborated their conclusions with so thorough a historical account based on original research. This is the first study to systematically articulate a precise thesis of how to characterise this internal culture, and to trace how it hindered the protection of liberal democracy before, during and after the Pinochet regime. Judges beyond Politics is a beautifully written, succinct and engaging book that should be read by those interested in Chilean political history as well as students of law and politics, comparative politics, and human rights.

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J. Lat. Amer. Stud. **41** (2009). doi:10.1017/S0022216X0900580X

Fernando F. Sánchez C., *Partidos políticos, elecciones y lealtades partidarias en Costa Rica: Erosión y cambio* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad Salamanca, 2007), pp. 355, € 20.00, pb.

Fernando Sánchez's careful, well-researched work presents a systematic examination of the process of political dealignment in Latin America through a detailed case study of Costa Rica's changing party system. This relatively common phenomenon of declining partisan attachment to political parties has been examined and well addressed in the political science literature for advanced western democratic countries. The author builds on these existing theories to present a persuasive, theoretically sophisticated explanation for the decline of partisan support for Costa Rica's oldest political party, the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN), and simultaneously offer insights into dealignment processes in other Latin American countries.

The central contribution of the book is that it both identifies the process and extent of the erosion of political party identification (dealignment) in Costa Rica and generates a theoretical explanation for that process that melds aspects of the two dominant theoretical approaches (political and sociological) used to understand dealignment in advanced democratic countries. Sánchez argues that to understand the Latin American variation of dealignment, serious consideration needs to be paid to the role of personalistic leaders (personalismo) in generating party support and cohesion. Personalistic leaders, he notes, are an important aspect of party loyalty in Latin America, but only of marginal importance in advanced democratic countries. The author argues that while personalistic leaders are central to cementing partisan support for parties, their deaths contribute to the dealignment process as party supporters lose their ties to the party. This process has been exacerbated in Costa Rica by subsequent poor governance by their namesake sons.

The book is structured in five parts; Part One lays out the parameters of Costa Rica's electoral changes since the late 1990s and details the dominant theoretical approaches to explaining political dealignment in developed democracies. The second part of the book places Costa Rica's political parties in their historical context up to the short 1948 civil war, which is generally accepted as the beginning of the country's contemporary political system. The second chapter in this part examines the institutional underpinnings of the country's post-civil war, stable two-party system. Part Three of the book demonstrates the extent of partisan dealignment in Costa Rica and identifies its origins in the build-up to the 1998 presidential and legislative elections. The final two parts of the book contain three chapters and offer a compelling alternative explanation for the dealignment process and draw conclusions that are readily applicable to many other similar cases in Latin America.

Much of the book is an excellent and very detailed case study of the PLN. Although the PLN promotes itself as a social democratic party, partisan personalistic ties to its founder, José Figueres, and subsequently to his son, José Maria Figueres, run deep (Chapter Three). The party was created by the winning forces in the aftermath of the 1948 Civil War, a war sparked by electoral fraud rather than class or ethnic differences. Consequently, partisan loyalty has historically been defined not by class, but by loyalty to the winners (Figueres) or losers of the war (Rafael Angel Calderón). Indeed, in Costa Rica the names of the two major parties' founding leaders are often synonyms for the parties themselves; voters frequently identify themselves as Figueristas (PLN) or Calderonistas (PUSC) rather than by party name.

Sánchez presents evidence to dismiss the role of electoral laws (writ large) as a cause of the pronounced dealignment of Costa Rican politics; instead, he accepts the common view that those electoral laws have facilitated the cementation of the two-party system (Chapter Four). It might transpire that the creation of a constitutional chamber of the Supreme Court (Sala Constitucional) in 1989 may have provided an important institutional facilitation of the dealignment process. The actions of the country's constitutional court, one of the most active courts in the hemisphere, appear to have weakened the legislative powers of the major parties while simultaneously enhancing the policy-making influence of smaller parties in the congress. The increasing power granted to small parties to influence policy might have encouraged traditional partisan voters of the dominant parties to throw their support to smaller parties. Voters understand that their votes would not be 'wasted votes' due to the increasing policy-making relevance of smaller parties, which may further contribute to the dealignment process.

If the value of a book's insights is that it can explain (and predict) events that take place after the book manuscript is completed, then this is an extremely valuable book. The book's story of party system dealignment and the breakdown of Costa Rica's two-party system up to the 2002 general election is made still more salient by events after that election. The 2006 general election revealed a continued major decline in electoral support for the country's traditional parties and increasing abstention rates. The 2006 election results strengthen the book's conclusions about declining PLN partisan support and demonstrate an almost total collapse of the PUSC party support. The rout of the PUSC during the 2006 election illustrates that its partisan support was weakened even further than that of the PLN: PUSC electoral support declined from approximately 40 per cent in during the 2002 general

election (being the largest party in the Legislative Assembly), to less than 4 per cent for its presidential candidate (less than 8 per cent in the Assembly) in the 2006 election. The desertion of party support was no small part the result of two consecutive PUSC governments that were very unpopular and the arrest of two of the party's former leaders in major corruption scandals.

The transformation of a dissertation into a book is often a difficult one, but in this case it was clearly successful. Sánchez's book is a must-read for scholars of Costa Rican and Latin American politics as well as for students of political parties in advanced industrial democracies, as it presents a compelling explanation for the major transformation of Costa Rica's political party system and offers significant insights into Latin America's region-wide dealignment process. Fernando Sanchez's book is peerless in the literature on Costa Rican political parties.

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J. Lat. Amer. Stud. **41** (2009). doi:10.1017/S0022216X09005811

Anthony B. Chamberlain, *Privatization in Costa Rica: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America Inc., 2007), pp. 159, $26.95, pb.

This book provides an in-depth historical analysis of privatisation in Costa Rica, focusing on the efforts to privatise four public organisations. Instead of discussing privatisation in its ideological and theoretical context, the book looks at it from an empirical perspective. This approach has two benefits. Firstly, it avoids a cumbersome repetition of the theoretical arguments in favour and against privatisation, too often read by any researcher interested in Latin America. Secondly, by using a case study approach the author emphasises that privatisation has different implications depending on what is privatised, something often overlooked by both proponents and critics of privatisation. The author provides an extremely well informed account of the attempts to privatise different agencies and branches of the Costa Rican public sector. The case studies do not just discuss privatisation in terms of its costs and benefits, but also look at the origins, functions, and public perception of the public agencies that are being or will be privatised. The study is informative and very useful for the researcher interested in Costa Rica and Central America. Costa Rican scholars may find Chamblerlain's key arguments familiar, as they converge with those of the array of local authors that he draws from and quotes. One of the book's accomplishments is precisely that it provides the English- speaking academic community with a well-structured account of the interesting story of privatisations in Costa Rica, very familiar to Costa Ricans but so far not very well known outside of Central America.

Chamberlain uses the Costa Rican case to articulate a strong criticism of privatisation, based on the idea that it may undermine the social stability that has allowed this small Central American country to reach remarkable levels of economic and social development, and to avoid the revolutions and coups that affected all of the democracies of Latin America during the Cold War. The author explains the origins of the Costa Rican welfare state and its evolution, highlighting how, in several sectors such as telecommunications, it has provided the population with services even more efficiently than some of its regional and global privatised