

THE LOGICS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN THE URUGUAYAN TRANSITION*

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I. INTRODUCTION

As it is well known, Uruguay lived a long and sound democratic institutionalization that continued until the mid-twentieth century. This institutionalization was completely broken in 1973, following the government coup d'état when the President dissolved the parliament. By that time, the usual centrality of the parties in the political system had disappeared. Since the defeat, the traditional *Nacional* (or *Blanco*), the *Colorado* parties and the recent leftist coalition – the *Frente Amplio* – after enduring different levels of repression, had to walk a long and difficult road that finally led them to recover their central role after restoration. To achieve this, it was necessary to ratify that in Uruguay the military did not interfere in the political and government processes and that the parties had already overcome their deep crisis.

A look at the transition process from its beginning, as considered by general consensus to be in 1980, to its highly polemical climax in 1989, allows for an interpretation based on the behavior of several political actors – parties and army leaders – during three specific historical junctures.

These include a plebiscite and a referendum, which respectively mark the beginning and end of the transition process. The military government proposed the 1980 plebiscite to reform the Constitution. The 1989 referendum was an initiative of the social movement that arose during the term of the first post-dictatorial government and was intended to ratify or reject the law that held the military liable for human rights violations. The third juncture, the 1984 Agreement signed at the Club Naval, was the result of a positive and definitive growth of the political and social forces striving for a democratic recovery, and also of the military decision to cede political

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power. Undoubtedly, there are other significant occasions. However, these were selected because they represent the decisive situations required to understand the process that led to democracy in Uruguay.

These three junctures represent specific periods from which the logic of their dynamics can be derived. In any case, the initial approach points to the fact that political actors determine their actions according to three different kinds of decision-making processes and behaviors, which are primarily based on strategies, traditions or disobedience.¹

The logics are supposed to be a determinant factor for the participants' actions and discourses. This essay will examine how this logic explains the aforementioned historical junctures, as well as the path that the political actors followed. The analysis also will try to isolate the influence of the different rationalities - associated with each logic - which underlie the behavior of every political collectivity.

It is necessary to clarify that this analysis is centered on the consideration of the final decisions made by the above-mentioned collective actors. In no case is the internal process of decision making, on which the final collective decisions were made, taken into consideration.²

Therefore, this essay has been structured as follows: 1) A brief description of the three behavioral logics. 2) An analysis of each historical juncture and the behaviors that the participants displayed according to their historical determinants. 3) an interpretation of role each logic played and how its rationalities and limitations affected the development of Uruguayan political collective actors.

II. THREE LOGICS THAT DETERMINE POLITICAL BEHAVIORS

On the basis of each collective political behavior perceptible throughout the historical transitions, there are at least three different logics – strategy, tradition and disobedience – which are deeply rooted in national culture and history, as well as in the distribution of power and interests among the main actors.

Each logic is based on a mode of action that the collective political actors select. They constitute guidelines that are followed and, at the same time, they contain the different rationalities employed. It is important to point out *a priori* that not all logic supposes a design, a calculation and strategic behavior.

Thus, the logic strategy is limited here to the selection of objectives and the corresponding allocation of instruments to achieve those objectives. However, in the other logics, there also is rationality. These other rationalities differ from those that proceed, seeking the adequate means for

the ends and calculating the costs and benefits for the different courses of action.

However, when we use the term “strategy” we do not refer to military operations, but instead to a political activity that in the long-term encompasses the achievement of institutional goals at national level.

Therefore, the strategic design includes several steps; particular stages and partial goals within the essence of a broader political plan designed to achieve long-term political objectives. For that purpose, political activity combines multiple means to meet an objective which modifies or reinforces the social and state dynamics and, in turn, integrates specific procedures as input to achieve the expected objective. In this sense, the strategy is understood and applied as a behavioral logic within this paper’s argumentation.

Tradition is another one of the logics which creates the basic framework for the transition process. It is important to mention that tradition was used as a comprehensive and structural principle that for a long time has guided, or ruled, political behavior according to institutional and societal roots. It is the set of values and criteria accepted and reproduced far beyond the elective rationality.³ This does not necessarily mean, however, that tradition in and of itself constitutes the antonym to modernizing and progressive rationalities. Neither does it mean that tradition only involves emotional choices. It is of course a natural restraint to change, but in this case, where the rupture of authority preceded the transition process, it was used to rethink and reshape the positive values and codes that pertain to tradition. Thus, the logic of political behavior, according to tradition, acts according to those codes, values and criteria that have been selected through learning generated in diverse and complex political moments and situations; and in which the results have been effective. Furthermore, tradition is a source of useful knowledge and experience in the assessment of every present and future political scenario.

Finally, by referring to and considering disobedience as one of the logics of political behavior in the transition processes, we must admit that it implicitly refers to the norms, customs and identities present in political activity. Why? Simply because it calls for parameters in order to determine, evaluate and confirm if an attitude, conduct or behavior becomes disobedient. Thinking on the controversial subject of identity, and endorsing it as political identity, disobedience is seen as the multiple ways in which party loyalties are broken or neglected. These values had been learned from the ruling or opposition ideologies, according to which the political identities

of individuals or collectivities that are taken as part of the traditions, become weak or are lost.

Consequently, disobedience is conceived of as a behavior expressed through acts of ratification which reveal an original irreverence in relation to the ruling institutions and ideology, and it also is a determination which breaks with its own collective tradition.

Lastly, it is important to stress what different rationalities are implied in each logic. In the logic of strategy, the actors base their actions on a design of means and ends and a cost-benefit calculation. In the logic of tradition, the actors base their actions on codes, criteria and values that during their history protected the growth and development of the same. In the logic of disobedience, the actors guide their actions by disavowing institutional customs and rules or ideologies and defend their values or reinforce their identity, or to the contrary, the intent is to wear down the other actors' values and identities.

III. TRANSITIONAL HISTORICAL JUNCTURES AND POLITICAL BEHAVIORS

As mentioned above, these are the historical junctures that define different moments of transition.

1980: Constitutional Reforms

On the basis of the creation of a political plan in 1977⁴, the military's strategic logic was clearly perceptible: the institutionalization of a government limited to a political debate among the parties, *ad hoc* to the armed forces. In other words, they intended to recreate the institutionalization of the regime; that is, they sought a false democracy with political participation, elections and military supervision. This meant a clear obliteration of the foundations of the democratic system. But it was also the only way to initiate the withdrawal of the armed forces from the administration, and to transfer the government to civilian authorities.

There also was a specific schedule that was an essential part of the 1977 plan, which achieved its goals step by step. Without further discussion, it imposed a new statute on the political parties, and there was a substantial constitutional reform that focused mainly on electoral legislation and formation of the executive branch of government and its consulting agencies. This constitutional reform was to be submitted to a plebiscite in November 1980.⁵

The armed forces basically worked on this plan, particularly between 1978 and 1980; they maintained the firm conviction of not allowing any politician to take part in the specific discussion related to the terms of the

statute.⁶ On the other hand, for the constitutional reform project, they looked for a general consent from the politicians. Only after the new framework for that constitution was established in August 1980, was there an official willingness to initiate a dialogue with the traditional parties. The parties did endorse this dialogue.

According to the military's strategy, the final goal was to work out a reform which accommodated and established the legal framework for the institutionalization of the regime. In this way, the armed forces created the appropriate instruments to achieve their goal, without trying to hide their constant concern for the institutionalization process, and striving to receive consensus from a society accustomed to deciding the support or rejection of an initiative through electoral processes.

The politicians replied with another initiative that sought an understanding with the military regime. The military position, however, was one that supported reforms without discussing the contents of these reforms. General Queirolo has summarized the military's "attitude" toward a real dialogue: "No conditions can be imposed on the winners."

The political plan evidenced the fact that military actions were based on the work already done: the house was in order and the surgical labor – in the language of the national security doctrine – had been successful. The conditions had been established to pave the way for institutionalization, which required participation of the party mediators, who were the principal actors in the nation's political history. Indeed, the military saw construction of the forms and mediations from the horizon of their own doctrine. Consequently, the parties required a revamping⁷ that, together with other constitutional reforms, would make the most important goal in their strategy possible.⁸

From this point of view, it is possible to say that the strategic design was characterized by rational elections, i.e. the electoral process as the best means of achieving a given purpose. However, in at least one of the stages – the plebiscite⁹ – the military's behavior was not only strategically conceived but it also was founded on the logic of tradition. Why? Because the military leaders could not leave out the importance that the national political culture placed on plebiscites for approving or rejecting any basic reform.

What was the result of the plebiscite called for on November 30, 1980?¹⁰ A categorical rejection of the official project: the opposition obtained majority support with 57 percent of the votes.¹¹ Such a reverse was not only a defeat in terms of numbers, but also in qualitative terms because it created the expression of a party movement which gradually was becoming stronger, as expressed through this first and vigorous demonstration.

The political parties governed their behavior in this situation by complementing the three logics. The parties' logic of strategy was based on a simple design: obtaining unanimous opposition response from the citizens opposed to the military proposal. Thus, they would open a space in public life that the military had denied them up to that moment. The risk in this strategy for the parties, in this case the Nacional Party and the Colorado Party, was of not achieving a more or less immediate incorporation in the political system. However, greater importance was placed on the strategic calculation of the strength that would be accumulated by generating a significant citizen response.

But the parties also acted in agreement with the logic of tradition. This consisted in appealing to the value of identifying an *a priori* policy, which in the case of Uruguay had been historically reinforced in the family environment and in the manifestation of a loyalty for all party proposals against the political initiatives of a military origin.

Finally, the logic of disobedience that the parties followed is clear in the disavowal of the military government's authority, even when it offered a road to a "certain opening." Thus, it was more important to calculate the value of belonging to the parties and affirming their respective identities, according to the traditional logic. Likewise, they questioned the military government's capacity to direct a massive act of disobedience against the constitutional project, even through this did represent a political activity that was an opening to include the parties themselves.

The underlying motivations, which explain the parties' behavior within tradition, may be found in the following manner. It may well be thought that, if political identity is the progenitor of all identities within the Uruguayan society, the collective imaginary certainly would include the privileged role of the parties in the state and government administration. This is born from a historical reality: the parties are the main actors in the whole dynamics of the political system. Thus, this political behavior, which is oriented by the logic of tradition, includes a strong share of learned rationality. For this reason, what the plebiscite required, to be adequately implemented in the Uruguay, was a strong analysis and discussion inherent to political activity.

Nevertheless, the weight of the logic of tradition, combined with the power the collective imaginary granted to the party's response, led to the realization of a collective action essentially originating from disobedience over any other assessment of the proposed reforms. Indeed, several provisions of the 1996 reforms only were approved through a plebiscite.¹² Therefore, reconsidering the events from the present point of view, the 1980

disobedience involved a strong element based on an evaluation that was divergent from the strategic calculation.

At that time, it could hardly be thought – due to the limited possibilities of political response or organizational capacity around the plebiscite campaign, as well as to the prevailing climate of terror – that the dearest national traditions and expectations would not only be fully accomplished, but they also would mean the complete invalidation of the military proposal. Thus, a close analysis of the speeches, statements and every sort of public expression that the parties were allowed evidences the fact that, from the parties' point of view, on November 30 there was more of an appeal to the democratic values of tradition in a different logic of political behavior than a well-defined military strategy.

1984: The Club Naval Agreement

The 1984 negotiations at the Club Naval represent the critical moment for the transition process, since this is the point where the formula for withdrawal of the military dictatorship finally was found. Likewise, it is at this historical juncture when the participants clearly assume and display all their behavioral logics.

A picture of this juncture shows a crossroad of the different strategies together with strong traditional logic inherent to each participant, and, finally, strokes within the behaviors that are based on the logic of disobedience. The following data is the result of a brief synthesis.¹³

For the army leaders, the ideal institutional design was clearly expressed by General Rapela: "We understand that the leadership of the government should be performed by the political parties, but they must admit or assume that the Armed Forces should occupy a different place in the government than the one they traditionally had (before June 1973)".¹⁴ It was a strategy that establishes their goals and which also shows the relative cost required attaining those goals. The military's strategic logic acknowledged the political parties: "of course, only those who actually were considered as democratic" as the exclusive participants in the government administration, although by the armed forces' new status, the political parties were restricted to a consulting organism capable of making decisions, but unable to examine military actions between 1972 and 1985. Therefore, the military was ready to accept a government which would be in the hands of the least radical political force, guaranteeing an orderly withdrawal without punishment or retaliation, and ensuring an ad hoc legislation.

The preface of the Club Naval Agreement was delivered to the parties on May 1 1984, as part of the military plan for a political withdrawal. It

implied an amendment to the 1967 Constitution, in force at the time of the coup d'état in 1973.¹⁵

In spite of the differences between the Colorado Party, which the armed forces considered as acceptable, and the Nacional Party, which it disapproved of, the final response was one of common rejection. A common spirit still prevailed over their differences between the parties, but almost immediately a new event produced a rupture. This was Wilson Ferreira's return to Uruguay; Ferreira was the most important leader of the Blancos. The armed forces' subsequent reaction was to expedite an arrest warrant, which had been issued against him long before.

The arrest of Ferreira Aldunate¹⁶, and the proscription of other politicians and political parties, represented the turning point in the logics of the political behavior all the forces involved in the process displayed.

The armed forces gradually accepted the need for the participation of other political parties.¹⁷ In this sense, Lieutenant General Hugo Medina's statement explains his position, and the position of the army as a whole at the time of this historical juncture. "First they had to know with whom they were going to talk (...) The party representatives came in (...). Well, when we had to swallow that bitter pill, that the Nacional Party was not coming, we had to put up with it, and recognize the Frente Amplio (...). A hand-in-hand agreement with the Colorado Party was not useful" (Achard, 1992: 181).

It was a more important assertion in terms of political consequence, rather than in terms of the number of negotiators who would take part in the dialogue. Moreover, the consequent integration of a new participant in the negotiation in fact would deny support for the thesis of a transition model which excludes any party linked to an international ideology.

So, the Frente Amplio became the focus point for the other participants' actions, in order to define the lines of negotiation. In this way, the Frente Amplio shifted from a situation in which it was considered a politically excluded sector, rejected and restrained by the others, into an essential force capable of achieving the objectives that would lead to the end of the dictatorship.

For the Frente Amplio coalition, the fact of coming out from illegality to an active participation in the agreement – even accepting proscriptions and other actions that restricted the democratic character of an immediate electoral process – was extremely difficult. It became even more difficult for the coalition to reach an internal consent. The latter was true, if we consider the importance of setting aside the more radical position they traditionally had sustained. They also had to abandon their traditional alliance with the

Nacional Party and form a coalition with the Colorado Party, which had a still more reserved opposition profile. Indeed, this was the real difficulty for the Frente Amplio in assuming their new political role.

Is it possible to understand such a big change in behavior? It has been repeatedly discussed that, under such circumstances, the freeing of Seregni – the Frente Amplio’s principal leader – was fundamental in outlining the path for this negotiation.¹⁸ The Frenteamplista’s response was to achievement more general legality. In the words of Seregni: “(...) the objective was to drive out the dictatorship and from then on to re-establish democratic institutions completely (...) and the fact that my rights were suspended, and that Wilson could not be present, was for me a much lower price in comparison to what we were pursuing (...)”.¹⁹

It is understandable that this vision found a strategic logic which had, implicitly, a principal objective: to reinsert the Frente Amplio into the political system with another status, the same status that the Colorado and Nacional parties had enjoyed throughout history. This meant ceasing to be the youngest political force – and the “disruptive” force confronting the old democratic order – to become a peer among peers. Furthermore, this not only was recognition granted by the accordant forces but it also established the historical circumstances for future national history. In this way, a new political perspective was evidenced, a more profound perspective in that, by giving priority to liberating prisoners and regaining legality, the nation also was coming close to the end of the dictatorship.

The Frenteamplista’s strategy was directed toward competing for the historical position that the Blancos and Colorados had within the political system. At the same time, this strategy assumed a break with the leftist political tradition, a force always placed at the farthest end of the spectrum, demanding maximalist positions and backing itself on a logic of disobedience as a substantial component for its decision-making process. At this juncture, it was acceptable to negotiate in order to conquer some of the important issues required to pave the way for democracy.

With respect to the Nacional Party, it is difficult to determine precisely when the party began to radicalize. That is, it is not known whether this radicalization responded to Wilson Ferreira’s mandates or to a general spirit in favor of consolidating the demands that had been made throughout the dictatorship. In particular, at the juncture defining negotiation, the Blancos favored mobilization for elections. “It was not about designing the classic electoral strategy, but about bringing forth a frontal fight” against any attempt to manipulate the voting process (Varela, 1984:3). The Blancos held this view within a climate they considered as one

of heroic solitude, after abandoning the inflexible positions taken by the Colorados; remember the most recent example – the response to the military proposal on May 1 1984.

The Nacional Party interpreted the agreement to negotiate at the Club Naval as treason. Its decision not to participate was the most important split in the convergence that the party previously had achieved. When, during the first months of 1984, the subject was the relationship with the military government, the controversy was between the Blancos and the Colorados.²⁰ Once Seregni was freed, and Ferreira Aldunate imprisoned, the controversy and the confrontation moved from the Colorados to the Frenteamplistas.

What had happened? The Blancos adopted a maximalist behavior. They sought to achieve total exoneración, unrestricted amnesty and elections without bias, for all candidates. This behavior was understood as a consequence of recent events, and it also was valid under democratic principles and ideals. Thus, the Blancos founded their actions on the logic of disobedience. This logic consisted of questioning the block of all proscriptions and norms that the dictatorship had imposed. Furthermore, it showed that, in contrast to the other parties, they indeed had defied the principal of dictatorial authority and the authoritarian customs that were established during the military regime.

There also was visible motivation rooted in disobeying the historical politics of agreements, based on the covenants sealed between the Blancos and the Colorados. Likewise, there was a disruptive attitude with respect to the order born during the nineteenth century, an order based on co-partnership and a two-party system as the main axis for important national decisions. However, what happened also was what always occurred before any important agreement: the Blancos' behavior was based on irreverence, insubordination and accusations against the urban and intellectual order. Within the context of this situation, why not? Furthermore, it can be asserted that such behavior evidenced the power of the logic of tradition.

Finally, to what extent was it not also a weight on their possible electoral triumph? If the Blancos grew in terms of percentage and became the preponderant force in the internal 1982 elections²¹, this was not extrinsic to a specific moment. The Frenteamplista's vote was divided and a significant fraction of the left wing had joined the sectors within the Colorado parties that were most opposed to the regime. The Blancos, and Nacional particularly the sector that followed Ferreira Aldunate's leadership, came out victorious in the contest and were favored by the Frenteamplista's rupture.²²

Therefore, a strategic logic that sought to repeat the 1982 experience was not completely mistaken, particularly, if the party believed that the Frente Amplio would not be permitted to participate in the elections. However, it was a mistake not to anticipate the Frente Amplio's change in strategy and, at the same time, not to assess that the 1982 coalition, – beaten, repressed and with pieces of non-structured activity – was very different from the current restoration of the parties.

Why wasn't an agreement reached? The Blancos' strategic logic did not take into account the Frente Amplio's new strategic logic.

The Colorado Party always maintained the same position, sustaining a more cautious discourse than its opponent did. The party's historical position was institutional and its appeal, contrary to its main competitor, was directed to the citizens²³, not to the masses.

The majority of the Colorado Party's position was inspired by a certain "political realism," which proposed an "honorable and orderly" withdrawal. In contrast, the Blancos' position was construed as irresponsible, while the left wing was identified as the hypothetical beneficiary of a revolutionary outburst. The danger of the "radicalization" of the process thus was reaffirmed.²⁴ Consequently, the parties' behavior was founded on a strategic logic oriented by a single path: negotiation, although certain specific situations continued to be unresolved.²⁵

As result, negotiation with the military – with Ferreira Aldunate proscribed – was favorable for the Colorados, particularly for Sanguinetti. Within a climate of political radicalization and hegemony of the democratic discourse, Ferreira could have been more convincing than Sanguinetti because each of them had their own opposition emphasis, shown in their different forms of dissent. At the same time – although nobody thought that the Blancos would stay out of the negotiation – the Colorados preferred to compete with the Frente Amplio, even with Seregni as candidate, because at that time he did not represent a danger in the presidential contest.

Therefore, the strategy of achieving victory through a "peaceful change" guaranteed the Colorados the support of the military forces, who would feel protected with a government willing to endorse an agreement and with no feelings of revenge against those who had come to power through the use of force. In addition, the replacement of the Nacional Party by the Frente Amplio, together with the proscription of Ferreira Aldunate, assured the Colorados that the Blancos' electoral option would be weakened.

Thus, the Colorados made their strategy of logic coincide with the logic of tradition that, in this case, meant following the path of negotiation. However, they did break with the usual integration of the agreeing forces: at

the Club Naval, the political parties were not the only participants in the agreement, since the military forces also took part. Furthermore, the Frente Amplio replaced one of the parties – a historical party.

It is possible to conclude that the deliberate choice of changing actors, from the military and the Colorados' point of view, was more important if both wanted to secure a Colorado government and both were willing to abandon one of the historical parties and tolerate the entrance of the political spectrum's most radical faction. This was a rationality derived from the Colorado Party and military forces' strategic logic but, perhaps, it did not envision the Frente Amplio's historical capacity for political action.

1989: To Ratify or Reject the Expiration Law

“(…) once democracy was restored, there were some like us who understood that the only way of consolidating it (democracy) was to look ahead, because we couldn't go on as hostages of the phantoms of events that occurred fifteen years before”.²⁶ This opinion was expressed in 1989 by Julio Ma. Sanguinetti – who at that time was and is today the President of Uruguay – to the Madrid press, concerning the results of the referendum which ratified the law that granted impunity to the people responsible for crimes against humanity. His statement was the representative opinion of the Nacional and Colorado political spectrum. Nonetheless, in 1984 the attitude toward forgetting such crimes was not so clearly perceived.

In December 1986, a law known in Spanish as ‘Ley de caducidad de la pretensión punitiva del estado’²⁷ (translated as the Law in Favor of Nullification of Punitive Claims Against the State) was passed. As a result, a broad social movement promoted the resource of a referendum, which was provided for in the Constitution; they demanded that the law be supported or revoked by the highest citizen instance. This resource was successful, and a referendum held on April 16, 1989 did ratify the law.

Based on this referendum, it is possible to conclude that the citizens expressed their will to forget, to forgive and to accept the existence of men with legal privileges, in that they committed crimes without ever being submitted to any kind of judgment.²⁸

In terms of the actors' behavior, this law and the resource of a referendum had different values. The military gambled for a transition that would guarantee their new status. Furthermore, this transition had to take place during the first elected government, which had to be willing to overlook the military's behavior during their authoritarian period.

Thus, the law responds to the Nacional and Colorado parties' decision to adopt a logic of disobedience in terms of the traditions of national history

and the armed forces' customs and habits for behavior which they had maintained until the 1970s. The event that was used as the pretext for the drafting and approval of the law was the following: the warning during 1986 concerning the power that the military continued to hold behind the scenes, and the conviction that the military would refuse to respond to any summons to court and be held in contempt of court, if that civil court demanded response to accusations of human rights violations.

Undoubtedly, the logic of disobedience that the military developed once they were defeated as a political and social project – although not in the military aspect – went beyond the proposed actions. The results of the referendum gave the military greater support for their guarantees than they had expected. It also allowed them, contrary to the 1980 plebiscite, to find success an outcome of rationality based on disobedience.²⁹

The Colorado and Nacional parties, the core of the political system, were not interested in considering the historical consequence of setting aside a basic principle of liberal democracy. Their behavior, which overestimated their own interests, was designed to solve the pending conflict of the dictatorship. They asserted that the transition could not be over if the armed forces had the potential to unite against a civil enemy looking for revenge. Consequently, the parties' advocates supported the law, since it could "pacify and guarantee" results for the political system, according to a statement made to the Madrid press by Sanguinetti, among others.

The Blanco and Colorado legislative majority, when passing this law wagered on one of the ideological features of Uruguayan society: its conservatism. On the basis of tradition, they turned to conservatism and, in a contradictory form, disobeyed a mandate rooted in the national establishment of liberal democratic principles and in the ideals put forth by the French Revolution. Thus, the behavior of the historical parties in the Uruguayan political spectrum permitted a coexistence between the tradition which adopted conservative values and the tradition of disobedience, which defied supposedly very deeply-rooted principles and ideals.

Nonetheless, as has been discussed, the Uruguayan political system reflects the Uruguayan society, even in its most subtle features.³⁰ Among the Blancos there were some who opposing the mandate from the party leaders and the elite, showed a notorious divergence. They first voted against the law in the legislative branch, and then joined the National Movement in Favor of the Referendum. The behavior that Rocha's National Movement (MNR), from the Nacional Party, followed mainly was based on the perception that the new Uruguayan encounter after a split, such as the one caused by the dictatorship, only would be possible through justice and truth.

The Frente Amplio, like the MNR from the Nacional Party, ratified the agreement concerning the times of the dictatorship. They asserted that in order to consolidate democracy, it was necessary to carry out justice and to discover and punish those responsible for human rights violations.

The MNR, as well as the Frente Amplio, based their action of calling for a referendum on the logic of tradition. Uruguayan history has registered a significant number of episodes in which the defense of liberal and democratic values leads to an affirmation and expansion of the parties' political strength.

In any case, the behavior that the political actors followed in opposing the law ratified the left wing's historical disobedience to the Blanco-Colorado government, particularly after the mid-twentieth century; it also ratified the national tradition of society as a group making important decisions through a plebiscite or a referendum. This game of tradition and disobedience logics shows how political behavior is linked to decisions that involve values, and that this political behavior does not only follow strategies which respond to a documented targeted-instrumental rationality.

IV. CONCLUSIONS: SOME LESSONS FROM HISTORY CONCERNING THE RATIONALITY OF POLITICAL ACTORS

Undoubtedly, the historical recreation presented above from a point of view that takes into account the logic that influenced the decision-making processes and the determination of behavior, shows that the interaction of behavioral principles between two or more actors can play against their expected benefits.³¹

Consequently, it is possible to assert that the behaviors resulting from the intersected logics of each actor have had unexpected consequences, to the degree that the results expected from a logical agreement are not the same as from other logics. Likewise, the actors do not always consider the logics by which others act or at least they do not take some of the logics into account. Indeed, the interaction between actors has resulted in a surprising transformation of institutional dynamics. Thus, in this way, many of the expectations that existed when these decisions were made are destroyed.

Some examples of what has been reconstructed during the main junctures of this transition process may clarify what is being analyzed.

The 1980 process, planned as an essential stage for the *ad hoc* institutionalization of the military project, was interconnected with the belief that every basic proposal must be determined through a plebiscite. To what extent was the conjunction of the two logics – strategy and tradition –

completely balanced for the armed forces? To a certain extent, one injured the other.

This scenario certainly was not the military's best bet, just as it had occurred in the previous scenario of events established in the 1984 Club Naval negotiations, which were designed to weaken and push aside the Blancos who would have been the probable winners in the electoral contest.³² Why did this happen? Because, in the short-term, this scenario favored the strategy of organizing a controlled retreat and securing a compliant and non-revengeful government, as was the Colorado administration. However, on the other side, the alienation of the Blancos, which only was possible due to the existence of a spare actor, permitted this actor – the Frente Amplio – to strengthen its presence until it reached a privileged situation within the political system. Now, if we are talking about fulfilled expectations, the military's strategic logic achieved a result contrary to their long-term objectives, as established in the National Security Doctrine. Thus, and in *sensu contrario*, it is possible to say that the Frente Amplio showed a strategic rationality which achieved the best long-term results.

Another situation in which a contradiction between the logics of the same actor can be observed is the case of the Frente Amplio, when the party participated in the Club Naval negotiations. There, the party almost exclusively followed a strategic logic that sought complete incorporation in the political system, as well as subordination of the logic of tradition. This logic of tradition dictates that the historical Left at all costs has always relied on the defense of democratic principles as the guideline for their behavior.

Obviously, when arriving at the last juncture in the 1989 referendum, victory was ensured for those who sought harmony: the military and the Colorados. This also was true for the Blancos who drafted the law, as they stressed their alienation from the Club Naval Agreements.³³

The Blanco-Colorado and military's logic of disobedience was a stance that, by every possible means, affirmed the necessity of obstructing citizens' declarations in the framework of the lack of knowledge concerning liberal norms and traditions. This posture also was encouraged by the fear that this declaration would lead to revoking of the Impunity Law. On the other hand, the social movement, in which the Frente Amplio and the MNR participated – the MNR as the main manifestation of the historical parties – deployed a logic of political behavior based on tradition, namely the defense of ethical and political values. The rationality rooted in this logic ended with unfulfilled expectations.

It was in this context in 1989 that it was possible to observe that the logic of disobedience that the Blanco and Colorado majority deployed, was subordinated to a logic of tradition by both parties.

The game between the political decisions concerning transitions has resulted, although not always deliberately, in new scenarios. Many of these scenarios were different from the one instituted at the beginning of the century which established the basis for the relationships and hierarchy within the Uruguayan political system.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the lesson learnt from the history of the Uruguayan is that political behavior logics cannot always be reduced to just one pattern characterizing a strategy. To the contrary, it is possible to observe the actors deploying distinct rationalities that express their respective decision-making process and logics for actions.

Notes

- 1 This model of interpretation may be seen as a transition from a strictly historical approach to the sociological one. In any case, as Raymond Aron said, if anyone wants to find out the academic difference between both subjects, one would say that history, even if it is studied as compared history, focuses more on the description of specific concepts rather than on abstract concepts. This is more typical of sociology and other kinds of studies. But as Aron points out, there is no logical or epistemological base for a substantial differentiation. Why? Because there is no resurrection of the past, only a reconstruction, which requires concepts and arises, implicitly or explicitly, from a given point of view (see Raymond, 1996).
- 2 One text which can illustrate some aspects of the political left's distinct behaviors is that of Caetano et. al. (1995).
- 3 With respect to the strategic election of means, I follow Jon Elster's definition of rational election; he characterizes rational election as an instrumental selection driven by results. Elster explains this concept by saying that actions are evaluated and chosen not only in and of themselves, but as a more or less effective means of achieving another goal. See Elster (1989).
- 4 It was approved by the *Santa Teresa* Conclave and confirmed by the top civic and army leaders in a summit held on Aug. 9, 1977.
- 5 The summons for national elections to be held in 1981, with just one candidate for the presidency by a common agreement from the two traditional parties was also defined as culminating in the 1986 transition process, when new elections were to be held with two candidates participating.
- 6 Alejandro Vehg Villegas in the second memorandum, issued on August 15, 1977 supported this resolution. The military rejected it. This decision probably contains part of the mistake that the army made: they turned down an agreement with the traditional parties, fearing an implicit negotiation. Vehg said: "My proposal (...) is that the political parties must start acting before any other political actor (...)." Compare this statement with Diego Achard (1992: 263).

- 7 The reform eliminated the current practice of a simultaneous double voting, forcing the parties to appoint just one nominal candidate for all the elected political offices. It was innovative in terms of the principle of proportional representation, in that it granted an absolute majority to the political party that came out victorious in the general elections, and thus reserved proportionality for the distribution of parliamentary seats among the minorities. It also modified the party legislation by giving the executive branch of government the exclusive right to propose initiatives, while the parliament would decide through a qualified majority.
- 8 A large number of politicians thoroughly discussed and disapproved of this dimension of the army's strategy. Enrique Tarigo, leader of the *Colorado* Party in the campaign against the 1980 reform, declared: "this means that, nothing more, nothing less, from now on we are institutionalizing; we are giving constitutional validity to the current civic-military administration and to a government and successive governments with the co-partnership of civilians and the military, of political and military forces." Excerpt from *Opinar* (1980a: 3).
- 9 Understood as the mechanisms through which citizens vote to approve or reject a government action.
- 10 As Jon Elster (1989) pointed out, even though the rational election or process is not infallible, what could be considered the best way to do something may not always be so.
- 11 For more information, see "Histórica mayoría. Una diferencia como se han visto pocas" in *Opinar* (1980b: 4).
- 12 The Parliament discussed a review of electoral and party legislation between 1994 and 1996. A first attempt at reform was submitted to a plebiscite in 1994, and the citizens rejected it. In December 1996, another reform was submitted to a plebiscite. This reform was approved by more than 50% and, among other things, it partially modified the "ley de lemas" and imposed a single candidature on the parties, as well as a second round of elections.
- 13 For a study on the negotiation of a political solution look up Gillespi (1991).
- 14 See "General Rapela: opción entre partidos y gobierno". In *Correo de los viernes* (1982: 7).
- 15 The local press extensively covered the issue. See, for instance, the article "Evolución de las propuestas militares". In *Jaque* (1984a:5).
- 16 As Lieutenant General Hugo Medina said: "'Wilson Ferreira could negotiate the place of his imprisonment, but not the imprisonment itself. Look, there was an obvious incoherence [stated Diego Achard]: Arismendi could be running an electoral campaign in Uruguay, while Wilson Ferreira was kept in prison. 'Arismendi was a communist, so he was an enemy; therefore, he was not qualified (...). Everything he could do was possible, presumable (...) Wilson Ferreira was a man of the Traditional Parties. The damage he did was not within the predictable (...). For us, he was an enemy of the military government, and an enemy of the country.'" See also Achard (1992: 177-178).
- 17 The possibility of a general vindication had been mentioned some time before. "The aforementioned four-point plan included the exoneration of some leaders and political parties, the repeal of Act 7, the repeal of restrictive measures on the political activities and freedom of the press." See also *Jaque* (1984b: 3).

- 18 Simultaneously with Seregni's release, "The Frente Amplio directed its political action on the basis of three fundamental pillars: mobilization, agreement and negotiation". See Bayley (1985:61).
- 19 Excerpt from the interview with Liber Seregni. In Dutrénit (1994: 202).
- 20 *La democracia* (1994) said that if the military regime, supported in its action by the *Colorado* Party, succeeded in establishing the terms for the transition, everybody would become a hostage.
- 21 Held as part of the implementation of the statute on parties, issued two years before, and considered a necessary step in defining the parties' powers (for authorized organizations) and that later would hold talks with the military.
- 22 The left wing played an important role in Wilson Ferreira's policy of alliances. This rapprochement contributed to the success of internal elections, although no significant cooption occurred after this episode.
- 23 I am using the traditional and strict definition of "citizen" as a member of the population who has all the rights and privileges of citizenship.
- 24 Assertions made by the press at that time, especially by *Opinar* (a weekly magazine issued by the *Colorado* Party) during the first months of 1984.
- 25 "It is just as everything else; we knew that we were not going to achieve 100 percent the first day, and if we achieved 90 percent, well, we could go on. You are telling me, what is the difference? What is that eighty nine or that ninety one? (...) there is the difference of each negotiation, and we all knew that we had to sacrifice something." Julio Ma. Sanguinetti made this statement at the juncture of the *Club Naval* and the agreement for military withdrawal. Excerpt from the interview with Julio Ma. Sanguinetti. In Dutrénit (1994: 149).
- 26 Published in *El País* from Madrid and reprinted in *El Día* (1989: 13).
- 27 This Law, known as the Impunity Law, forbids punishment of those who committed crimes against human rights. It also reverts the nation's basic values by placing property rights above the right to life, in that it submitted to justice those who attempted crimes against property and refused to judge those who violated basic human rights. Furthermore, this law does not only renounce punitive claims in the case of crimes prosecuted *ex officio*, but it also prevents individuals from filing claims against presumed criminals, as long as they acted in the above-mentioned circumstances. In addition, this law authorizes the Executive Power to carry out investigations pertaining to judges in the court of the first instance.
- 28 A contradictory fact because, in common political actions, legal equality is asserted and at a crucial and definite moment is then denied.
- 29 However, in the intermediate term, the ratification can be questioned in that, by looking to the national and international press at the present time, we can see that the problem still exists. It is judged by different social and political sectors, causing a continuous mobilization in order to clear up the truth with respect to the crimes against humanity. The Mexican newspaper, *La Jornada* (1997: 61) points out that "Three weeks ago [Sen. Rafael Michelini (...) provided the courts with records of a private investigation, mentioning the existence of clandestine graveyards in certain military units." Furthermore, the weekly magazine *Brecha* (1997:3) in Uruguay, points out that the statements that Sen. Michelini made "contrast with the silence kept by President Julio María Sanguinetti on this matter."
- 30 The in-depth understanding between the political system and civilian society has given rise to this discussion. See Varela (1981) and Hafliker (1986).

- 31 Elster maintains that every set of options produces a set of rewards. The reward that each player receives depends on all the other players' options and not is based only on his own decision. Presumably, each player chooses his option independently, since they cannot make any joint agreement to co-ordinate their decisions. However, in another sense, their options are interdependent because each of them must make his decision based on what he expects the other or others to do. See Elster (1989).
- 32 It is important to remember that the *Blancos'* position was radical, and their victory would have meant an examination of military actions.
- 33 What was the meaning of this alienation? That the military amnesty was agreed upon at the *Club Naval*, and that they had just made a law out of this agreement.

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