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NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL HEGEMONY IN PARAGUAY

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Abstract: The Colorado Party has now been in power in Paraguay for almost 60 years, surviving through periods of civil war, dictatorship and, more recently, democracy. This paper analyses the political causes of such hegemony, focusing on issues such as the structure of the dictatorship, the uses of repression and cooption, links to the state and military, and the pervasiveness of corruption and clientelism. However, this paper argues that such causes, whilst central, fail to portray the emotional appeal of the Colorado Party that underlies its continued success. Instead, the (generally underestimated) role of Colorado nationalism represents a powerful additional explanatory factor.

Nationalism, it is argued, was refashioned and remoulded by writers in the early twentieth century, and was then claimed for its own by the Colorado Party during and after the 1947 Civil War. It was then manipulated for political ends during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954-89), representing a key mechanism of social and political control. Under electoral democracy it has continued to underpin Colorado hegemony, particularly in moments of crisis. The paper argues that the Paraguayan case offers an important theoretical contribution to the nature, use and power of nationalism in political hegemony.

Keywords: Paraguay - Nationalism - Colorado Party- Stroessner.

Resumen: "Nacionalismo y hegemonía política en Paraguay". Hace casi 60 años que el Partido Colorado está en el poder en el Paraguay, sobreviviendo períodos de guerra civil, dictadura y desde 1989, democracia electoral. Este artículo analiza las causas de su hegemonía política, enfocando en temas tales como la estructura de la dictadura, los usos de represión y cooptación, los vínculos del partido con el Estado y las FFAA, y la profundidad de la corrupción y el clientelismo. Sin embargo, el artículo sugiere que tales causas no logran transmitir el poder emocional y afectivo del partido que subyace y sustenta su popularidad hasta hoy. El nacionalismo fue 'redescubierto' y remodelado por escritores a principios del siglo XX y pronto fue apoderado por el Partido Colorado durante y después de la Guerra Civil de 1947 como ideología suplente. Durante la dictadura de Alfredo Stroessner (1954-89) fue manipulado por fines políticos, llegando a representar un mecanismo clave de su control social y político. Bajo la democracia electoral, sigue apoyando la hegemonía colorada, sobre todo en momentos de crisis. El artículo argumenta que el caso paraguayo ofrece una importante contribución teórica a la investigación sobre la naturaleza, el uso y el poder del nacionalismo en la hegemonía política.

Palabras clave: Paraguay - Nacionalismo - Partido Colorado - Stroessner.

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