

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*The “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, hegemonic battles,
and Costa Rica’s democratic institutional development from
the 1820s to the 1960s*

Maria Emanuela Hedayat

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Government of
the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy, London June 2014**

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotations from it are permitted, provided that full acknowledgment is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent.

I warrant that this authorization does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of 99,968 words.

Statement of use of third party for editorial help

I can confirm that my thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by my husband - Ali Hedayat.

Abstract

The aim of my thesis is to explore the role of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary in promoting Costa Rica’s democratization process by applying a novel analytical framework that combines insights from post structural discourse theory, discursive institutionalism and ideational theories. It addresses the following puzzle: *How was it possible for a society that historically prided itself on being “exceptionally” egalitarian, homogenous, peaceful, and democratic to become transformed into revolutionary agents by an unknown political figure (Jose Figueres) in a fight against the Caldero-comunista administrations responsible for creating the very institutions consensually attributed as serving as a base for Costa Rica’s democratic stability?* To understand how civil war was averted during previous periods of deep socio-economic crisis and after fraudulent elections, it contrasts the discursive context during the 1940s with that of the liberal oligarchic hegemonic period. From its independence until the 1930s, political leaders had been able to disarticulate political alliances between potentially antagonistic groups by differentially incorporating the demands made by labour movements, peasant associations, and anti-imperialist movements through institutional and legislative means, thus preventing populist ruptures. The dislocatory effect of the Great Depression encouraged the proliferation of new discourses battling for hegemony. The hegemonic battles fought amongst the liberal oligarchs, the communists, the Christian Democrats and the social democrats within an ideational context polarized by World War II and the Cold War created the discursive conditions of possibility for the 1948 Civil War. After failing to garner support for their political project aimed at founding a social democratic Second Republic, Figueres took advantage of the political crisis created by the annulment of the 1948 presidential elections to launch an armed insurrection. However, the ideational path dependency created by the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary encouraged reformist as opposed to foundational institutional development during the immediate post civil war period.

Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	5
Introduction	7
Chapter One: Existing Theories Explaining Costa Rica's Exceptional Democratization Process	40
Chapter Two: Costa Rica's Transition to Democracy and the Rise of the Liberal Oligarchic Hegemony (1820s-1890s)	69
Chapter Three: The Liberal Oligarchic Response to the Dislocatory Events (1900s-1930s)	112
Chapter Four: The Discursive Condition of Possibility of the 1948 Civil War (1940s)	140
Chapter Five: Reformist Institutional Development During the Immediate Post Civil War Period (1948-1949)	188
Chapter Six: Costa Rica's Democratic Consolidation and the Rise of the Social Democratic Hegemony (1950s - 1960s)	226
Conclusion: Lessons to be Drawn from Costa Rica's Democratization Process	267
<i>References</i>	279

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have heard mothers who compare finishing their PhD to giving birth to another child. Having done both, I must say I do not believe this comparison is adequate. With the option of an epidural or a C-section, childbirth can be a less taxing experience by a wide margin. If anything, it is best compared to the first two months of your first-born child - especially if you have not read Gina Ford's book on sleep training, or if your baby is determined to prove her wrong.

I believe the more adequate comparison is running a marathon. Just like in running, writing a PhD requires skills, determination and discipline but other factors such as weather conditions, terrain and how your health is on the morning of the race are also crucial. While running and writing may seem isolating experiences, in both the support you get from those around you plays a crucial role.

During my PhD "marathon" I have been fortunate to have many people supporting me along the way. I would now like to give them the acknowledgement they deserve.

I would like to give a special thanks to my husband, best friend, and childhood sweet heart, Ali Hedayat. When the hill started getting particularly steep, the wind was pushing me back, and my knee pain was sharp during my PhD marathon, Ali gave me the strength to keep on going. His faith in me – which has always been far superior to the one I have had in myself - gave me the courage to get to the finish line. Thank you my love! Our daughters Maryam Alessandra and Ariana have provided me with the perfect amount of hugs, kisses and comic relief to remind me that no matter what happened I always had their unconditional love.

My supervisor, Dr. Franciso Panizza, gave me the valuable coaching and training without which I could not have registered for the race to begin with. Through our meetings and through his academic works, he greatly inspired my work. During my PhD marathon, I often got painful leg cramps. Dr. Panizza was there to advise me to stop and stretch it out. When I was ready to get back into the race, he made sure I was on the right track. I can honestly say that I would have never finished my PhD without his precious help. The only thing I will miss about the PhD writing process will be our meetings. For all your help, I will be forever grateful!

I would also like to give a special thanks to my advisor Dr. Bill Kissane. He helped me place my PhD racing experience in a wider context suggesting appropriate comparisons to broaden my vision. He encouraged me to see both the trees right in front of me as well as the forest ahead of me. His input significantly improved my work. A big thank you!

Just like in marathons, throughout my PhD there were many friends and family members on the side-lines cheering me on. Although it was difficult to spend time with them (sometimes even impossible to spot them in the

crowds), knowing that they would be there at the finish line to celebrate with me kept me going. A special thanks to my wonderful parents for their unconditional love, to my sister, Alessandra, for our long chats when I needed a break, to my supportive brother Giovanni and my daughters' wonderful nanny Melecia.

I would also like to give a special thanks to the *University of Costa Rica* history professors David Diaz, Ivan Molina and Ronny Viales and the sociologist Jorge Amador for their advice, insights and guidance.

I would also like to give a special thanks to my aunt and uncle Marianela and Ricardo Adolfo Jimenez for all their help with my research and setting up interviews. I cannot wait to sit down and discuss the dissertation with you after you read the final version.

Once again I have to thank my wonderful husband for his precious help editing the multiple versions of my dissertation and for his valuable insights.

Last but certainly not least, Thank you God!

Just like in a marathon, no one is to blame for the limits of my performance except for myself.

INTRODUCTION

Costa Rica is the oldest and most stable liberal democracy in Latin America (Peeler 1985, 1991, Booth 1999; Mahoney 2001; Lehoucq 2001, 2012; Seligson 2014). Its exemplary levels of human development, free and open quadrennial elections, outstanding human rights record, use of negotiation for resolving conflict, and adherence to the rule of law make it an exception in a region that has been dominated by social, economic, and political turbulence for most of its post-independence history (Seligson 2014: 362).

Costa Rica has a highly legitimate central government with a clearly defined system of checks and balances amongst its four branches, and a weak executive relative to other Latin American countries (Booth 1999:442)¹. The president cannot veto a budget, use line-item vetoes, assume emergency powers without a two-thirds Congressional majority, rule by decree, or stand for re-election without sitting out a term (Isbester 2010:190). The legislature and the executive share the legislative agenda, deferring to the president only during extraordinary sessions. The judiciary, particularly the Constitutional Court, settles jurisdictional disputes amongst the other powers and interprets the constitutionality of the law. Access to the courts is broad and virtually costless, guaranteeing citizens their constitutional rights and protections (BTI Costa Rica Country Report: 2012). The government inaugurated the electoral branch, the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones*, in the wake of the 1948 Civil War, charging it with guaranteeing free, fair, and open elections. International electoral observers praise Costa Rica's electoral system as an exemplary model (Seligson 2014:361).

The current academic consensus argues that Costa Rica's "exceptional"

¹ As Isbester (2010) states, while all Latin American constitutions establish the separation of powers into three branches of government (or four), they are rarely equal and autonomous. The judiciary and legislature generally are granted less power than the executive. Emergency powers –which the executive can invoke – allow for the suspension of civil liberties and democratic procedures and the ability of the president to rule by decree. However, emergency powers must be approved by the legislature and are for a limited time period. Typically, the courts do not have the right to judicial review (Isbester 2010:78).

liberal democracy evolved due to a combination of factors including: a) atypical socio-economic factors present during the colonial period which led to the early development of an ethnically homogenous, egalitarian, consensual and innately democratic political culture (Monge Alfaro 1966, Rodriguez Vega 1972, Ameringer 1982); b) policy choices made by key political actors during critical junctures leading to path-dependent democratic institutional development (Yashar 1997, Mahoney 2002, Cruz 2005, Isbester 2010); c) Costa Rica's neutrality during the Central American wars in the post-independence period (Mahoney 2010); d) the public division of the political elites during a period that coincided with the rising organization of marginalized sectors demanding political inclusion (Yashar 1997); e) positive relations with the United States and its neighbours (Longley 1997); and f) the political leadership of key actors – notably the founding fathers Juan Mora Fernandez (1825-1833) and Braulio Carrillo (1838-1842), the liberal oligarchic benevolent dictator Tomas Guardia (1870-1880), the liberal presidents Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1906-1910 and 1928-1932) and Ricardo Jimenez Oreamuno (1910-1914, 1924-1928 and 1932-1936), and the social democratic leader Jose Figueres (1948-1949, 1953-1958 and 1970-1974).

The academic consensus argues that Costa Rica's democracy was consolidated through an elite pact² made between the major political actors after the brief but bloody 1948 Civil War. Its democratic stability is attributed to the post-civil war institutional framework including: the abolition of the military, the establishment of the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones* as a fourth branch of government ensuring free and fair elections, the extension of suffrage rights to women and blacks, the reduction of the power of the executive vis-à-vis the legislature, its extensive welfare system, the strength and legitimacy of its state, the allocation of technical functions of the government to autonomous institutions, its stable party system, the quality of political leadership, and good public policies leading to high levels of human development (Booth

² An elite pact is defined "as an explicit but not always publicly explicated or justified, agreement among a select set of actors, which seeks to define (or better to redefine) rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the vital interest of those entering into it" (O'Donnel and Schmitter 1986:36 quoted by Isbester 2010:58)

1999; Lehoucq 2012; Seligson 2014).

John A. Peeler (2004) argues that Costa Rica has remained *politically* stable for decades because (its state) was structured to maintain *social* and *economic* stability (Peeler 2004:54, emphasis in original quoted by Isbester 2010:189). After the civil war, new public sector companies operating autonomously from partisan politics were created to stimulate economic production, tackle unemployment, reduce poverty, sponsor job training, and promote human capital (Isbester 2010: 191). According to Katherine Isbester (2010), the post Civil War developmental state “became the mediator in all aspects of society, negotiating conflict between sectors and insuring order. Improving social justice to protect citizens from economic inequalities was an integral part of preserving that order. This required the state to become highly active in both the economy and social issues (Isbester 2010:189), which in turn, strengthened the state and granted it legitimacy. Scholars argue that the combination of these factors created a “reservoir of regime support” which has allowed the Costa Rican democracy to withstand periods of deep socio-economic crisis (Seligson 2002:163; Seligson and Gomez Barrantes 1987,1989; Booth 1991:53).

Scholars point out that Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation is exceptional in a region where authoritarian legacies persist after the establishment of façade democracies³. As Isbester (2010) states, by focusing on the procedural component, most Latin American states have produced “minimum”, “electoral” or “illiberal”⁴ democracies. Although they have free, fair, contested and regular elections, people remain socially, politically and economically excluded. The rule of law is not always respected and freedom of speech is often curtailed (Isbester 2010:69). As George Philip notes, pre-democratic patterns of political behaviour—institutional, organizational, and cultural—have all too

³ Uruguay and Chile are the other exceptions to this rule.

⁴ According to this definition, only Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Costa Rica have genuine democracies (Wiarda and Kline 2007:85; Isbester 2010:64). Isbester states that the combined weakness of the states and of civil society institutions has crippled these democracies. Limited rule of law, code-law constitutions, fragmented political parties, poor legislative processes, presidentialism and weak bureaucracies have undermined democratic institutions, procedures and norms (Isbester 2010:99).

often survived democratization leading to “non-consolidated democracies” (Philip 2006:12). The bureaucracies remain patrimonialist, law enforcement is weak, and public favour falls upon openly law-breaking political leaders (Philip 2003: 2). In sharp contrast, the consolidation of Costa Rica’s democracy has meant that laws, rules, and procedures not only exist, but also have been internalized, accepted, and valued. Under such circumstances, overt rule breaking alienates constituents and is therefore prohibitively costly (Philip 2003: 13).

One factor continuously highlighted by national and international scholars, policy analysts and political leaders to explain Costa Rica’s “exceptionalism” is its consensual, peaceful and innately democratic political culture. Proponents of this view argue that the atypical socioeconomic factors present during the colonial period in Costa Rica - a lack of exploitable natural resources such as gold or silver, an abundance of fertile agricultural land, scarce indigenous populations, isolation from colonial centres of power due to mountainous and difficult terrain (allowing early experiments in self-government), and non-coercive social relations due to labour-scarcity and land abundance - led to the absence of class struggle and facilitated intra-elite cooperation. There is an argument that these conditions created an “exceptional” democratic political culture that enabled the emergence of a so-called yeoman democracy (Monge 1966) and shaped Costa Rica’s national identity. An essential part of the construction of this national identity has been the contrast created by Costa Rican political leaders between Costa Rica and the rest of the Central American region. Costa Ricans have defined themselves as the opposite of their neighbours, portraying themselves as a predominantly white, homogenous, egalitarian, peaceful and innately democratic society, while portraying their neighbours as predominantly indigenous, hierarchical, violence-prone and autocratic/dictatorial societies. According to these accounts, the early consolidation of this “exceptionalist” national identity created a sense of internal social cohesion that favoured the emergence of a consensual/ deliberative democracy (Fischel 1990, 1992; Sala 2008, Vargas Araya 2005, Diaz 2009, Palmer and Molina 2009).

Explaining the 1948 Civil War poses the greatest challenge to scholars analysing Costa Rica's democratization process. How was a civil war possible in a society that prided itself for being innately democratic, egalitarian, peaceful, consensual and ethnically homogenous? This dissertation addresses this puzzle left unsatisfactorily answered by the existing literature. Before introducing how this dissertation addresses this puzzle, section one will discuss the antecedent conditions of the 1948 Civil War. Section two reviews the existing literature explaining the 1948 Civil War. Section three outlines the contributions this dissertation seeks to make. Section four explains the analytical framework adopted by the dissertation. Section five presents the data that has been analysed. Section six provides the chapter outline.

Antecedents of the 1948 Civil War

The justification for the civil war was the annulment of the 1948 presidential electoral results by the Congress. Two political coalitions participated in the 1948 presidential elections, the first of which was the governing Christian Democratic political party (the *Independent National Republican Party*), which had formed a coalition with the *Vanguardia Popular* communist party. This coalition was known as the *Bloque de la Victoria*. The presidential candidate of this *Caldero-comunista* alliance was the former president Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia (1940-1944). The opposition had formed a coalition known as the *Union Nacional* composed of progressive liberal oligarchs led by Otilio Ulate, conservative coffee barons led by Jorge Hine, and social democrats led by Jose Figueres. The progressive liberals were the strongest members of the opposition coalition, with Otilio Ulate having overwhelmingly defeated the social democratic and the conservative candidates in the *Union Nacional* convention. Presidential elections were held on February 5th, 1948. On February 28th, 1948 the Electoral Tribunal announced that the *Union Nacional* coalition's candidate Ulate had defeated Calderon of the governing political coalition obtaining 55.3% of the votes. Voter turnout was estimated at 57.66%. However, the *Calderonista*-dominated Congress viewed these results as fraudulent, annulling the election results on March 1st 1948, and stating that the opposition's control of both the newly established Electoral

Tribunal and the Electoral Registry had allowed them to commit fraud.⁵ According to the *Calderonistas* and the communists, thousands of their followers had not been allowed to vote due to confusion associated with their electoral identification cards or the fact that they did not receive them in time to vote. Right after the annulment of the presidential elections, *Ulatistas*, *Hinistas*, *Calderonistas*, communists and the Catholic Church began to search for a consensual solution - as was the norm after previous contested elections. The two main leaders of the opposition – Otilio Ulate (progressive liberal oligarchs) and Jorge Hine (conservative liberal oligarchs) were close to reaching a compromise solution with president Picado and the Christian democratic presidential candidate, Calderon, aimed at selecting amongst a list of “neutral” political figures to choose one who could rule Costa Rica for two years after which new elections would be held.

The social democratic *Figueristas* were the only party that did not want to find a consensual solution to the impasse created by the annulled election. Since 1944, Jose Figueres had been trying to gather popular support for the *Partido Social Democrata*'s political project, which consisted of the substitution of the liberal oligarchic order with a social democratic “Second Republic”. However, the *Partido Social Democrata* represented only 5% of the electoral votes in the 1948 presidential elections (Delgado 1998). Failing to garner popular support for his “Second Republic”, Figueres took advantage of the political crisis created by the presidential elections to launch an armed insurrection with the support of the Caribbean Legion. During his exile in Mexico in 1942, Figueres had met a group of political exiles known as the Caribbean Legion plotting to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, the Trujillo dictatorship in Santo Domingo, and the Tiburcio dictatorship in Honduras. Right after the annulment of the 1948 presidential elections, Figueres contacted the Guatemalan General Juan Rodriguez Garcia of the Caribbean

⁵ The fact that electoral fraud was committed against the *government* is one of the atypical practices of the Costa Rican example. On July 1947, the opposition staged a strike to protest among other things the use of fraud in the mid-term congressional elections of 1946 that had granted the caldero-communistas control over Congress. Picado had granted the opposition control of the Electoral Registry and the Electoral Tribunal as a concession to end the Huelga de Brazos Caidos strike.

Legion stating the annulment of the elections by the *Calderonista*-controlled Congress proved that Calderon was seeking to establish a dictatorship in Costa Rica with the help of the communists. Figueres promised the Caribbean Legion that, in exchange for their help, he would in turn help them overthrow the remaining dictatorships in Latin America starting with the Somoza dictatorship upon their victory in Costa Rica. He argued that Costa Rica would serve as a perfect base for the Caribbean Legion's subsequent attack on Nicaragua. The rebels' victory in Costa Rica and Nicaragua would reinforce anti-dictatorial movements throughout Latin America. The Caribbean Legion agreed to help Figueres under those conditions and, with their backing, Figueres launched his armed insurrection on March 12, 1948. The social democratic revolutionaries framed their armed insurrection as a defence of the sanctity of the vote in order to mobilize support amongst the other members of the opposition - the *Ulatistas* and the *Hinistas*. Exaggerating the influence of the communists over the Picado administration, the social democrats argued that a *Caldero-comunista* dictatorship would pose an "existential threat" (Norval 2000) to Costa Rica's "exceptionalist" national identity. With this crisis narrative, Jose Figueres was able to transform peaceful citizens into revolutionary agents.

When Picado heard that Jose Figueres had launched an armed insurrection, he erroneously believed he could find a consensual solution. He did not order the military to crush the insurrection but rather sent a mobile unit to contain the insurgency. At the outset, the only two factions fighting were the social democratic revolutionaries under the leadership of Jose Figueres and the communists under the leadership of Manuel Mora. Neither one of the two presidential candidates - Ulate or Calderon - mobilized their supporters to fight in the civil war. Ulate did not fight at all but rather remained in the Archbishop of Costa Rica's house, and Calderon joined the communists only one month after the civil war started when Manuel Mora directly asked him for help. As the war progressed, the conservative oligarchs and progressive liberals joined the social democratic forces to fight against the communists. The United States ambassador to Costa Rica, Nathaniel Davis, urged Picado to negotiate a cease-fire to avoid a potential communist take-over (Longley 1997: 72).

The priority of the US was to avoid the conflict from spreading to other Central American countries. The government did not provide appropriate armament to their communist⁶ “allies” as top members of the Picado administration also feared a potential communist take-over. When Picado was informed that the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza was planning an invasion to avoid the victory of the Caribbean Legion-backed social democratic revolutionaries, the president surrendered. The forty-four day long civil war was officially over on April 19 1948, when the warring factions signed the “Pact of the Mexican Embassy” naming Picado’s Vice President Santos Herrera as an interim president. Calderon, Picado and Mora went into exile.

Upon their victory, the social democrats believed their military success had granted them the right to rule (Shifter 1986:274). However, the opposition coalition expected Figueres to hand over power to Otilio Ulate. To avoid further bloodshed and based on his understanding that Figueres would continue to fight if not granted interim authority, Ulate negotiated a standstill agreement. On May 1, 1948 Ulate and Figueres signed a secret pact known as the Ulate-Figueres Pact which stated that: 1) a social democratic revolutionary Junta would govern for eighteen months with a possible extension of six months; 2) elections would be held on December 1948 to select a constitutional congress to produce a new constitution; and 3) the Junta would recognize and declare that Ulate was the legitimate winner of the previous elections and would allow him to take over after the Junta’s mandate expired (Aguilar Bulgarelli 1986: 396-7). On May 8 1948, the self-proclaimed *Junta for the Foundation of the Second Republic* had its opening session. During the first six months, the Junta ruled without congressional oversight passing a series of highly contentious decrees including the nationalization of the banking system, an extraordinary tax of 10% on capital over 50,000 colones - the equivalent of \$8000 US dollars - and a 10% increase on minimum wages for coffee and sugar-cane workers (Bowman 2002:98). A powerful and feared *Tribunal for Immediate Sanctions* was created, charged with seizing the properties of members of the previous administration (Munoz

⁶ President Calderon Guardia and the Costa Rican Communist Party leader, Manuel Mora, formed an alliance in 1942.

Guillen 1990:15; Bowman 2002:95). On July 18 1948, the Junta passed a decree outlawing the communist party. There was growing popular opposition to the Junta rule, which was viewed as an illegitimate body as the population had expected an Ulate administration after the war.

On December 7, 1948 Constitutional Assembly elections were held. The *Partido Social Democrata* party was humiliatingly defeated by the *Ulatista* progressive liberal *Partido Union Nacional*, which won 34 out of the 45 Constitutional Assembly seats receiving 72.4% of the popular vote. The social democrats obtained only 4 seats receiving 7.6% of the popular vote. The conservative oligarchic faction, the *Partido Constitucional*, secured 6 seats with 10.8% of the popular vote. The social democratic Constitutional Proposal was rejected. The only social democratic amendments approved by the Constitutional Assembly were those perceived as in keeping with the liberal spirit of the 1871 Constitution. On April 3, 1949 Edgar Cardona attempted a coup demanding the immediate return to constitutional order with an Ulate administration. Ulate did not support Cardona's insurrection because he did not want his administration to be associated with a coup. Although the coup was averted, Figueres recognized that prolonging the period of the Junta rule was being counter-productive as it was helping the opposition unite against him. On November 7, 1949 Figueres handed over power to Ulate. Soon after, Figueres started to prepare his campaign for the 1953 presidential elections. To reverse the negative perception the Costa Ricans had of the Junta, Figueres focused on spreading the social democratic narrative of the 1948 civil war and its aftermath. Soon after winning the 1948 Civil War, the social democrats started the process of creating the *National Liberation* myth. In an interview with the *Diario de Costa Rica* conducted on the 20th of July 1948, Figueres stated:

The popular "effervescence" was manifest in all the corners of the country and it arrived to its climax on the 1st of March 1948 when a Calderonista dominated Congress annulled (in an absurd and unconstitutional manner) the presidential electoral results in which the opposition had obtained an honest and clear victory. The Costa Rican population was left with only two options: an armed insurrection or the unconditional surrender, who knows for how long, to a dictatorial regime [...] These were the origins of the revolutionary movement that due to a

twist of fate I had the luck of leading (Diario de Costa Rica - July 20, 1948).

Through this re-interpretation of events, the social democrats presented the armed insurrection as a defence of Costa Rica's democracy by arguing that Figueres had prevented the emergence of a so-called "*Caldero-comunista* dictatorship". Through discursive strategies known as "populist interventions"⁷ (Panizza 2009), Figueres was portrayed as a political outsider who "due to a twist of fate had the luck of leading the revolution". They called their army the *National Liberation Army* to portray the revolutionaries as pro-democratic freedom fighters. The social democratic narrative disregarded the facts that: a) Figueres had been planning his armed insurrection since he met members of the Caribbean Legion in 1942; b) that negotiations were taking place between the head of the opposition, Otilio Ulate, and the presidential candidate of the governing party, Calderon Guardia, to find a compromise candidate; c) that the only faction of the opposition who wanted to go to war was the *Figuerista* faction, which represented only 5% of the opposition forces; d) that the success of his armed insurrection depended on the armament, technical, financial and manpower support provided by the Caribbean Legion and not on mass Costa Rican popular support; and e) that after the war the Junta had committed anti-democratic acts such as outlawing the communist party, exiling its leaders, and persecuting former *Calderonistas* and communist party members.

The social democratic re-interpretation argued that Figueres had installed a Junta only because it had been indispensable to the re-establishment of order and that he had handed over power as soon as the political situation had stabilized. This narrative highlighted that no other successful leader of a revolution in Latin America had ever voluntarily handed over power. It did not

⁷ Panizza (2009) argues that because populism is best understood as a political discourse or as Kazin (1995:3) phrased it a "flexible mode of persuasion" it makes sense to talk about "populist interventions". A populist intervention is a distinctive style of political rhetoric that sets the leader apart from the political establishment and draws him closer to the popular sectors. Populist identification is strengthened by the leader's adoption of cultural elements that are considered markers of inferiority by the dominant culture.

mention the growing popular opposition to the Junta.

To shift the responsibility for starting the civil war away from Figueres, this narrative argued that the civil war was the inevitable result of the political polarization in Costa Rica during the 1940s triggered by the socio-economic crisis after World War II. The victory of Jose Figueres in the 1953 presidential elections allowed the social democrats to spread their own interpretation of the 1948 Civil War. Social democratic academics wrote hundreds of books presenting their interpretation of the 1948 Civil War. The Deans of the most important university of Costa Rica – the *University of Costa Rica* - as well as leading social democratic intellectuals such as Rodrigo Facio helped propagate this interpretation through their influential books. One of the most influential works of the period was Alberto Cañas's *The Eight Years* (1955), in which he argued that the *Caldero-comunista* regime had deviated Costa Rica from its democratic path and portrayed the civil war as a necessary measure to return Costa Rica to its democratic path. Although several prominent individuals of the *Caldero-comunista* regime wrote memoirs, their accounts did not receive sufficient attention (Lehoucq 1991:39).

Existing Literature regarding the 1948 Civil War

As Lehoucq (1991) states, a corollary of the social democratic interpretation was the perception that the 1948 civil war was inevitable. This interpretation influenced the best works subsequently written by academics regardless of their ideological inclination.⁸ The academic consensus that emerged during

⁸ The following is a list of the best academic books regarding the 1948 civil war: Acuna, Miguel (1974) *El 48* (San Jose: Imprenta Lehman). Aguilar Bulgarelli, Oscar (1969) *Los Hechos Politicos de 1948* (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica). Bell, John Patrick (1971) *Crisis in Costa Rica* (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press). Canas, Alberto (1955) *Los Ocho Anos* (San Jose, Editorial Liberacion Nacional). Mora, Manuel (1958) *Dos Discursos en Defensa de Vanguardia Popular* (San Jose: EUNED). Rojas Bolanos, Manuel (1986) *Lucha Social y Guerra Civil en Costa Rica* (San Jose: Alma Mater). Contreras, Gerardo and Cerdas, Jose Manuel (1988) *Historia de una Politica de Alianzas* (San Jose: Editorial Porvenir). Guido Miranda Gutierrez "Desarrollo Historico de la Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social" en Gaceta Medica de Costa Rica Suplemento No 2 Ano 2006 Salazar Alfaro, Javier (2008) "El Acuerdo de la Discordia: Huelga Medica y Conflicto Socio-Politico en Costa Rica Mayo-Junio 1946" en *Dialogo Revista Electronica de Historia* (San Jose: Universidad de Costa Rica)

the 1960s and 1970s argued that the civil war was the result of rising class tensions and growing political polarization as a result of the socio-economic crisis triggered by World War II. Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli (1969) and John Patrick Bell (1971) analyse the growing opposition to Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia amongst the dominant classes due to: a) his dispute with former president Leon Cortes; b) his administration's confiscation of property and imprisonment of German descendants during World War II; c) the progressive reforms that gave birth to the Costa Rican Social Security System (1941), the country's first Labour Code (1943), and the amendments of the constitution known as the Social Guarantees (1943); d) Calderon's alliance with the Costa Rican Communist Party; e) accusations of fiscal corruption and nepotism; and f) accusations of electoral fraud during the 1942 legislative elections and the 1944 presidential elections. They argue that the annulment of the 1948 presidential election by the *Calderonista*-controlled Congress during a politically charged environment naturally led to the 1948 Civil War. Lehoucq (1991), Rosenberg (1981), Cruz (2005) have criticized the assumption that the dominant classes opposed Calderon because his policies harmed their economic interests. Lehoucq, Rosenberg and Cruz highlight that, in contrast, Calderon passed many policies that protected the economic interests of the dominant classes such as tax exceptions and subsidies. The national social security system did not incite much opposition to the government because the Christian democratic congressmen were able to get congressional approval for it only after they agreed to exclude seasonal workers - which meant that agricultural workers comprising much of the country's workforce were not covered. The progressive liberal oligarchs and the social democrats can be shown to have supported a good deal of Calderon's progressive policies criticizing only his paternalistic policy-making process and his manipulation of these reforms for political ends. In fact, after the war, the social democrats and progressive liberals passed reforms that strengthened and improved the same institutions created by presidents Calderon and Picado.

Other scholars have focused on socio-economic factors leading to the civil war. According to Jorge Salazar Mora (1981):

The 1948 elections could not resolve peacefully the dispute between the two political groups of that epoch, because the degree of social tension between class fractions and classes exceeded the limits of peaceful co-existence. Consequently a trial of strength was required to restructure the state apparatus. (Jorge Salazar Mora 1981: 51)

Manuel Rojas Bolanos (1979) focused on the growing opposition amongst the peasants due to the war-induced scarcity of basic goods, high levels of unemployment, and inflation (Rojas Bolanos 1979:89). Jorge Rovira Mas (1988), Gerardo Contreras and Jose Manuel Cerdas (1988) also argued that class interests determined the behaviour of political actors. However, Lehoucq and Molina (2002), Cruz (2005), and Diaz (2009) have shown that the alliances formed during the 1940s did not follow a class-based logic. Members within classes were split in different factions. Workers and peasants were divided between those mobilized by the CRCP trade union and those mobilized by the Costa Rican Catholic Church trade union. The members of the Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales (the Centristas) included young intellectuals coming from the lower, middle and upper classes (Cruz 2005). Although there was growing discontent amongst the elite and the masses, these sectors did not initiate the civil war. A marginal political force, the social democrats, started the civil war with the aim of installing a Second Republic.

As Lehoucq (1996, 1998, 2012) correctly points out, the civil war was not the inevitable result of class conflict. Lehoucq presents an alternative interpretation arguing that the civil war was the result of electoral breakdown. Lehoucq states:

The 1948 elections, the triggering event of the civil war of that year culminated nearly a decade of struggle between an ambitious president and his often-strident opponents (Lehoucq, 1991). Political competition began to polarize once Calderon of PRN deployed the presidential power to exclude his opponents from the political system. The election of Picado to the presidency was widely perceived as a product of fraud even if there was no proof that it was the defining thing. Equally destabilizing was the marginalization of the opposition in Congress. Between 1940 and 1944 the PRN and PVP held approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of all legislative seats. By upsetting the delicate balance of power responsible for maintaining political stability, Guardia provoked the formation of groups dedicated to using force to capture state power (Lehoucq 2012: 63).

Lehoucq's argument that the civil war was due to the disruption of the delicate balance of power does not answer the question of why there was a civil war in 1948 and not during other periods in which the balance of power was also biased in favour of the president. Since electoral fraud was the norm up until 1953, why didn't other highly polarized and fraud-ridden elections spark civil wars? Why were Costa Ricans willing to die for Ulate and not for other political leaders who had also been denied their legitimate right to rule?

The theories focusing on political polarization and socio-economic factors fail to explain why Costa Rica avoided a civil war after the 1930s Great Depression when the socio-economic situation was worse than during the 1940s and when the CRCP was actively creating social antagonisms to mobilize the workers against the government as they did from 1931 to 1936. The current academic consensus argues that Figueres took advantage of the political polarization and the socio-economic crisis to launch his armed insurrection due to his personal vendetta against Calderon following his exile in 1942, and to vent his frustrated political ambitions (Diaz 2009). Although these factors were undoubtedly crucial factors leading to the civil war, the political agency based interpretations still fail to explain how Figueres was able to transform peaceful citizens into revolutionary agents - especially considering that he was an unknown political figure for most Costa Ricans. Without mass support, his armed insurrection would have been as unsuccessful as the June 24th 1946 failed coup attempt headed by Edgar Cardona.

The dominant interpretations of Costa Rica's democratization process are still heavily influenced by the social democratic interpretation. This has meant that scholars exploring Costa Rica's democratization process have not integrated the findings made by Costa Rican historians during the past decade. Katherine Isbester's interpretation of Costa Rica's democratization process is a perfect example of this. Isbester (2010) states that:

When Calderon stole the (1948) election, Figueres organized a protest, which became an insurrection spearheaded by his own private army. [...] When it became obvious that Figueres would win, negotiations resulted in a peaceful end to the civil war. Those supporting Calderon's reforms wanted them

protected, as did Figueres and his supporters. So there was a considerable overlap of agendas, the primary difference being a respect for democratic mechanisms. Thus, a pact was created between competing elites and conflicting social classes. The pact agreed to establish political stability by permitting Figueres to run Costa Rican for 18 months; when the time was up, he would turn the presidency to Otilio Ulate and a newly elected legislative assembly. In his 18 months as dictator, Figueres substantially changed the political and economic organization of Costa Rica, ending the liberal republic and beginning the era of social democracy (Isbester 2010:188-89).

Isbester's account does not acknowledge the indispensable role that the Caribbean Legion played in the civil war referring only to Figueres's "private army". Isbester incorrectly argues that Picado had to surrender when it "became obvious that Figueres would win" (Isbester 2010:188). Costa Rican historians have shown that Figueres's victory was far from certain at the time Picado surrendered. They have also proven that Picado had chosen not to mobilize the military and refused to properly arm his allies – the communists (Cruz 2005, Vargas Ortega 2010). Although Isbester correctly points out that there was a considerable overlap between the agendas of the Calderon and Picado and those of the social democratic revolutionaries led by Jose Figueres, she does not explore what other factors may have led to the civil war. She argues that the difference between these factions was that the *Figueristas* wanted to guarantee the "respect for democratic mechanism". The fact that Figueres did not launch the civil war for his stated cause of respecting democratic mechanisms is evident by his unwillingness to hand over power to the president elect Ulate when the civil war was over. Isbester assumes that Figueres was able to substantially change the political and economic organization of Costa Rica as a result of his victory. She does not acknowledge the enormous opposition that the Junta faced from all sectors of Costa Rican society. She incorrectly attributes to Figueres the creation of the Electoral Tribunal (which was created in 1946 under the Picado administration). She states that Figueres "wrote an innovative constitution, parts of which became the founding constitution of 1949" (Isbester 2010:189). She does not acknowledge the fact that the draft constitution written by the social democrats was widely rejected by the Constitutional Assembly and that only the reforms perceived as in keeping with the liberal spirit of the 1871 Constitution were accepted. Isbester also states that "Figueres unexpectedly

lost to the conservatives in the 1949 elections” without exploring the reasons why he lost. Reading the newspapers of the time, the multiple biographies and autobiographies of the civil war veterans, it is evident that the social democrat’s defeat was far from “unexpected” as the vast majority of the Costa Rican population opposed his illegitimate Junta rule. Isbester then states:

Given Figueres’s past record of operating outside the system, it would have been entirely possible for him to insist on remaining in power using his charisma, track record, and private army to create a personal power base. Yet Figueres’s commitment to social democracy meant that he became its architect, although not its first president (Isbester 2010:189).

Isbester does not acknowledge that Figueres’ “charisma” and “track-record” could not be used to attract popular support without first creating a narrative of the civil war that made his actions appear compatible with Costa Rica’s “exceptionalist” tradition. To be effective, Figueres’s populist interventions had to be grounded on a widely accepted myth. Isbester assumes that the social democrats’ military victory naturally led to their rise to hegemony. This dissertation disputes this consensual view.

Contributions made by this dissertation

First, this dissertation addresses the following puzzle that remains unsatisfactorily answered by the existing literature: How was it possible for a society that historically prided itself on being “exceptionally” egalitarian, homogenous, consensual, peaceful, and innately democratic to be mobilized by an unknown political figure (Jose Figueres) belonging to a marginal political party (*Partido Social Democrata*) to fight against two progressive Christian Democratic leaders responsible for creating the very institutions consensually attributed as being the base for Costa Rica’s modern democratic stability (the national social security system, Social Guarantees and Labour Code passed under the Calderon Guardia administration, and the National Electoral Tribunal passed under the Teodoro Picado administration)? To solve this puzzle it explores a dimension that has not been analysed by the existing literature – the discursive condition of possibility of the 1948 Civil War.

Second, it seeks to close a gap that exists between the dominant interpretation of Costa Rica's democratization process and the findings made by Costa Rican historians regarding the 1948 Civil War.

Third, it disputes the dominant view that the social democratic military victory facilitated the party's rise to hegemony. It argues that, paradoxically, their military victory and subsequent Junta rule proved to be an obstacle to their rise to hegemony as it allowed their opponents to frame their actions as incompatible with the Costa Rican "exceptional" national identity. The social democrats' rise to hegemony was a very complex, non-linear, highly contested process in which the victors had to make significant changes to their original goals and strategies. When analysing the social democrat's rise to hegemony, it explores the emergence of the *National Liberation* myth, which portrayed Jose Figueres as the "founder of Costa Rica's democracy". It argues that although Figueres had tried to use his charismatic personality and discursive strategies known as "populist interventions" (Panizza 2009) before the civil war and during the immediate post civil war period, it was not until after the *National Liberation* myth became hegemonic that these populist interventions became effective. It also supports Panizza's (2009) argument that different varieties of populist interventions have context-dependent relations with democratic institutions. It analyses how Costa Rica's democratic institutional framework helped shape the political discourses that emerged.

Fourth, it argues that Ulate's contribution to Costa Rica's democratic consolidation has been under-appreciated by the existing literature due to the influence of the social democratic narrative, which downplays Ulate's input to highlight Figueres's contribution. For this reason, the Ulate administration remains under-analysed by scholars exploring Costa Rica's democratic consolidation.

Fifth, it explores how two contradictory myths have co-existed in Costa Rica. The "exceptionalist" collective imaginary that argues that Costa Rica's democracy naturally evolved as a result of its innately peaceful, egalitarian,

consensual and democratic society has co-existed with the *National Liberation* myth that argues that a civil war was necessary in order to consolidate Costa Rica's democracy. It explores the roles that these myths have played in consolidating Costa Rica's democracy.

Analytical approach

This dissertation uses a novel analytical approach to analyse the discursive condition of possibility of the 1948 civil war and the role of myths in consolidating Costa Rica's democracy. It applies a social constructivist analytical framework that selectively borrows insights from post structural discourse theory - PSDT - (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Howarth and Glynos 2007, Norval 2006 and 2009, Howarth and Griggs 2012), discursive institutionalism - DI - (Vivien Schmidt 2002, 2008, 2010) and ideational theories - IT - (Hall 1993, Colin Hay 2001, Gofas and Hay 2010, Daniel Beland (2005, 2008, 2010, Kjaer and Pedersen 2001). Despite significant ontological and epistemological differences amongst these approaches, the author agrees with Carstensen (2011), Schmidt (2012), and Panizza and Miorelli (2012) that there is sufficient common ground among them to allow for fruitful cross-fertilization. They all seek a more dynamic analysis of politics, have similar constructivist views of the relations between subjects and society and share a critical view of structuralist and individualist approaches to political analysis (Panizza and Miorelli 2012:15). Combining these approaches provides "a more rounded analysis of the discursive dimension of institutions and the institutional dimension of politics" (Panizza and Miorelli 2012:2).

This analytical approach breaks from the interest based, neo-materialist approach that continues to dominate the literature analysing the 1948 civil war and Costa Rica's democratization process. When these works assign a role to discourses they present them as controllable, self-contained tools used by political actors to achieve their fixed and pre-determined interests based on their socio-economic position and within "objective" socio-political and historical contexts. This dissertation disputes this current consensual view. It argues that discursive structures are best conceptualized as one more set of institutions influencing political outcomes by: a) shaping the way political

actors interpret their socio-economic and political context; b) influencing the perceptions of interests held by key political players; c) delimiting the types of discourses and actions considered legitimate within historically specific national and international ideational contexts; d) determining which political outcomes are considered feasible depending on the “crisis narrative” that prevails during critical period; e) influencing the way political leaders present themselves to the public by outlining which attributes are considered desirable in a political leader; f) impacting the ways political leaders respond to international factors; g) structuring social relations within a polity; and e) structuring political dynamics amongst opponents by determining the possible modes of political mobilization during specific historical periods.

It therefore falls within the “discursive turn” in the human and social sciences. As Howarth and Griggs (2012) explain, rather than searching for law-like or causal explanations, scholars working within this tradition focus on the need for understanding, interpreting, and critically evaluating social and political phenomena. The dissertation adopts a “thick” definition of discourse that views discursive structures as articulatory practices, which in turn constitute and organize social relations (Howarth and Griggs 2012:308; Laclau and Mouffe 1985:96).

The dissertation analyses the transformation and stabilization of the liberal oligarchic regime during Costa Rica’s post-independence period leading to the country’s transition to democracy and its substitution with the social democratic regime during the post civil war period, further consolidating democracy. While analysing this process, it shows how the dislocation of the liberal oligarchic hegemonic regime during the 1930s and 1940s was the first step towards creating the discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 civil war. To explain how this dislocatory process happened, it adopts Jason Glynos and David Howarth’s PSDT (2007) model of practices and regimes.

Practices, regimes and logics

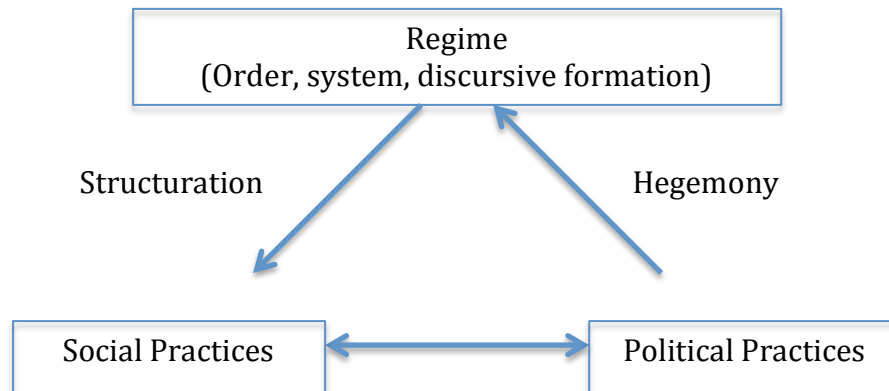
Glynos and Howarth (2007) argue that social actors can react to dislocatory events such as major economic depressions leading to closure of businesses,

mass unemployment, inflation, and so forth in drastically different ways. They can interpret and respond to this situation through passive resignation, despair and alienation or through mounting rage and outrage leading to new grievances. These grievances can be articulated as claims and demands. If people realize that other people also have unfulfilled demands, they may create links between the demands of disparate groups, forming new political projects or social movements. In the process, new political identities and subjectivities are created. As Glynos and Howarth state, “there may emerge a radical political subjectivity and ideology that seeks to transform social relations along fundamentally different lines. Equally, of course, these developments may provoke renewed efforts by power holders and political elites to meet or deflect claims and demands, thus channelling and reshaping grievances into the existing institutions and structures of power” (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 105). A dislocatory experience serves to show the contingency of taken for granted social practices, highlighting the fact that the existing system represents only one way of organizing social relations.

Glynos and Howarth formalize these processes by inscribing them into a broader framework of concepts. They define social practices as “the ongoing, routinized forms of human and societal reproduction” (Glynos and Howarth 2007:104). These social practices contribute to the reproduction of wider systems of social relations. Every practice is *articulatory* “as human beings constantly engage in the process of linking together different elements of their social lives in these continuous and projective sequences of human action” (Glynos and Howarth 2007:104). While social practices and the identities they sustain tend to conceal the inherent contingency that inhabits social systems, this does not mean that social systems are closed. Building on Heidegger (1962), and Lacan’s work (2006), Glynos and Howarth state that: “the irreducible presence of negativity means that any social edifice suffers from an inherent crack which may become visible in moments of dislocation” (Glynos and Howarth 2007:105). In such situations new possibilities emerge allowing actors to create new identities. A dislocation of social relations can provoke *political practices* defined as “struggles that seek to challenge and transform existing norms, institutions and practices – perhaps even the

regime itself – in the name of an ideal or a principle” (Glynos and Howarth 2007:105). This entails the construction of political frontiers, which divide social space into opposed camps. The power bloc can disrupt the construction of antagonistic frontiers by breaking down the equivalential links being created by different demands. To explain how antagonistic relations are constructed, Laclau and Mouffe develop the concept of *logic of equivalence*, which consists of the dissolution of the particular identities of subjects within a discourse by creating a purely negative identity that poses a threat to them. That is, if $a = b = c$ with respect to d , then d must totally negate a , b , and c . Therefore, $d = - (a, b, c)$. The identity of the different actors is split between a set of particular differences (a , b , c) and the more universal threat, d (Howarth 2000: 107). They define “ d ” as the “constitutive outside” giving unity to the discursive formation. By contrast, Laclau and Mouffe introduce the *logic of difference* “to account for the expansion of a discursive order by breaking existing chains of equivalence and incorporating the “disarticulated” elements into the expanding formation” (Howarth 2000: 107). As Howarth explains: “whereas a project principally employing the *logic of equivalence* seeks to divide social space by condensing meaning around two antagonistic poles, a project mainly employing a *logic of difference* attempts to displace and weaken antagonisms, while endeavouring to relegate divisions to the margin of society” (Howarth 2000: 107). While discourses using the *logic of equivalence* lead to *relations of antagonism*, discourses using the *logic of difference* lead to *transformist* models. As Norval explains, *transformist* projects consist of efforts to expand the system of difference defining a dominant bloc. *Transformist* projects result in a lessening of the antagonistic potential of the remaining excluded elements and a broadening of the hegemonic bloc (Norval 2000:220).

As Glynos and Howarth explain “a hegemonic movement can exercise a transformative effect on an entire regime of practices, resulting in the institution and sedimentation of a new regime and the social practices that compromise it” (Glynos and Howarth 2007:104). Glynos and Howarth have developed the following model to illustrate the relationship between regimes, social and political practices.



A simplified model of practices and regimes

This figure displays a triangular relationship between regimes and social and political practices. *Regimes* have a structuring function in the sense that they order a system of social practices. The institution of a particular regime (for example, the Thatcherite regime) is always defined in opposition to a contested regime (for example the Keynesian Welfare State regimes) and this oppositional contrast defines the regime's practices. Yet *political* practices can shape, modify or reorder the regime itself. If these practices succeed in constructing a new hegemonic order, they come to redefine key parameters of a range of practices (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 106).

Glynos and Howarth use a three-fold typology of logics – social, political and fantasmatic - to characterize practices and regimes, to account for their dialectical relationship, and to explain how and why they change or resist change. They define social logics as “the substantive grammar or rules of a practice or regime”(Glynos and Howarth 2007). Political logics enable us to understand the way a social practice or regime was instituted or is being contested or instituted. These political logics include the *logic of equivalence* and the *logic of difference* previously explained. The *fantasmatic logic* allows us to explain the appeal of an existing or anticipated social practice or regime. Glynos and Howarth (2007) explain:

By invoking fantasmatic logics we suggest that one condition for subscribing to an existing or promised social project concerns the extent to which it can tap into the subject's existing mode of enjoyment (in Lacanian terms). When working in tandem with political logics, fantasmatic logics

may be invoked to help explain why certain demands – or responses to demands – succeed in gripping or interpellating a particular constituency. Equally, they can be mobilized to account for the way explicit challenges to existing social structure or institutions are blocked (Glynos and Howarth 2007:107).

Discourse theory's definition of a myth and its function

This dissertation argues that the concept of myths developed by Laclau and Mouffe can help us explain the appeal or lack of appeal of particular political projects (i.e. the fantasmatic logic). Laclau and Mouffe introduce myths and the social imaginaries as analytical concepts aimed at explaining the process through which the precarious unity of the social is established. They argue that myths become particularly important during moments of political change or structural dislocation, because they help restore the perception of social coherence and order. As Noval explains, according to Laclau:

The work of myth is to re-establish closure where a social order has been dislocated. This is done through the constitution of a new 'space of representation.' A myth, as a novel principle of reading, thus attempts to reconstruct the social as objectively given; its operation is nothing other than an endeavour to reconstitute the absent unity of society via the naturalization of its divisions and a universalization of the demands of a particular group. In so far as it succeeds, or manages to become institutionalized, it can be said to have become hegemonic. Under such circumstances, the myth has been transformed into an imaginary: a horizon on which a multiplicity of demands may be inscribed (Norval 2000:329).

Thus, myths emerge to “compensate for a ‘lost fullness’ and [...] offer a reorganizing principle when identities have been dislocated, concealing the contingent ‘origins’ of social institutions” (Buenfil Burgos 2000: 86). When a myth is overwhelmingly accepted by a society it becomes a “collective social imaginary” defined by Laclau as a “horizon or absolute limit, which structures a field of intelligibility”. He gives “The Enlightenment” as an example of a collective social imaginary.

Carstensen's model of incremental ideational change

Martin Carstensen (2009) builds on insights from PSDT to develop a model of incremental ideational change that allows us to explore how different discourses gradually and continuously change during hegemonic battles. Carstensen (2009) argues that the mainstream perspective on ideas is based

on an oversimplification. Theorists tend to focus on the role of ideas in times of crisis (critical junctures) and, by doing so, overlook incremental yet significant ideational change in times of stability. Existing models fail to show how ideas develop gradually and how they continuously inform institutional change. To understand this micro-mechanism, Carstensen borrows insights from PSDT. Rather than conceiving of ideas as stable, coherent, closed entities (as neo-materialists and rational choice scholars do), Carstensen views them as constituted by a network of related elements of meaning that typically do not reach a final stage of equilibrium. He argues that actors are “a-rational” because there are “no clear rational course of action in the absence of interpretative filters” (Parsons 2007:98).

Political actors are seldom perfectly aware of what their interests are or how to maximize them due to the level of complexity around them. They use ideas to identify those interests, to create the content of their policies, and to legitimise these policies (Beland 2009). A-rational actors need socially constructed heuristics to reduce societal complexity and to enable them to act. The elements of meaning within an idea act as cognitive shortcuts. While ideas can be a powerful political tool used by political actors to influence political outcomes, they can also serve as a source of constraint for the same political actors. Discourses do not operate in a vacuum - actors must place new ideas within a network of previously existing ideas. The range of different possible networks is therefore structured by the existing ideational tradition of a policy area exerting ideational path dependency because in order for a new idea to have public resonance, it must be linked to existing ideas. The ideational environment of the new idea is determined by the national political culture and by the previous policy paradigm. This dissertation argues that Carstensen’s notion of ideational change can be linked to Howarth and Glynos’s concept of fantasmatic logic to help explain the appeal of alternative political projects. This dissertation thus combines insights from Carstensen’s model of incremental ideational change with those of Howarth and Glynos (2007). It also borrows the concept of “crisis narrative” developed by Colin Hay.

Colin Hay's concept of crisis narratives

According to Hay's model of punctuated evolution, policy paradigms tend to become institutionalized and, in the process, internalized by political actors over time, thus creating the conditions for stability (Hay 2001: 197). There are two broad types of institutional change:

- 1) An incremental (yet developmental) cycle within which policy changes iteratively within the parameters of the existing paradigm in response to strategic learning on the part of policy makers [...]. This happens in the absence of wide-scale public debate about such policy failures and fiascos that manages to link policy contradictions to a more generic sense of crisis [...]. [T]he narration and definition of the problem is likely to remain internal to the state apparatus itself.
- 2) A punctuating cycle of paradigmatic transcendence, by which the very parameters of the policy-making process are periodically redefined. This happens when there is a *perception of the need to make a decisive intervention* [...]. The narration of crisis here plays a crucial role (Hay 2001: 202-3).

The insight from ideational institutionalism that is most of interest to this research is the notion that for paradigm shifts (defined as profound institutional change) to be possible, there must be a *perceived* crisis. Although the “weight of accumulated contradictions” may facilitate a paradigm shift, “it is at best a *necessary* but *insufficient* condition” for change (Hay 2001: 203). Change requires “an awareness and an understanding of current political and economic circumstances [...] as indicative of contradictions that not only *must* be dealt with but that *can* be dealt with.” That is why a *crisis narrative* is essential. Hay further argues that “if we wish to analyse the mechanisms of institutional development, we have little choice but to acknowledge the perceptual or discursive quality of the moment of crisis and hence consider the process through which competing narratives of crisis struggle for ascendancy in the battle to shape the course of subsequent institutional development” (Hay 2001: 204).

Finally, this dissertation also borrows insights from discursive institutionalism to compensate for the blind spots left by PSDT. As Panizza and Miorelli (2012) explain, Laclau's notion of politics corresponds to what another member of the Essex School, Aletta Norval (2006:245), defines as a “heroic” conception of the subject. This conception is grounded in the distinction

between “subject positions” understood as sedimented identities located in the structure as a result of their everyday participation in social life, and the “subject” as an autonomous political agent on the other. As Panizza and Miorelli point out, PSDT tends to privilege political actions such as those when a populist leader mobilizes people in mass protests to create a counter-hegemonic order, over those of a local councillor working to address the needs of the community (Panizza and Miorelli 2012: 18). Thus, Laclau downplays the role of institutions because he equates “politics” and “the political” with “populism” (Panizza and Miorelli 2012:8, Ardit 2010, Laclau 2005). As Panizza and Miorelli point out, by equating politics with populism and populism with anti-institutionalism, Laclau is indirectly stating that politics cannot be about institutions. The emphasis placed on the constitution of political agency involving a radical break with existing institutional arrangements risks leaving the political out of everyday politics in highly institutionalized political orders (Panizza and Miorelli 2012:8). They suggest an analytical approach that combines insights from DI with PSDT. PSDT’s concept of “social logics” proposed by Glynos and Howarth 2007 is compatible with DI’s notion of institutions, defined as rules about acting in the world (Panizza and Miorelli 2012:9). We will now briefly summarize DI’s main contributions to new institutionalism.

Discursive Institutionalism

DI is an umbrella term for the vast range of works in political science that account for the substantive content of ideas and the interactive process of discourse that serve to generate those ideas and communicate them to the public (Schmidt 2000, 2002a ch. 5, 2006 ch. 5, 2008; Schimdt and Radaelli 2004). On a substantive dimension, DI includes different types of ideas (cognitive and normative), different levels of ideas (policy ideas, programmatic ideas or paradigms, and philosophical ideas) and different representations of ideas through discourse (frames, narratives, scripts, myths, collective memories, and stories). On an interactive dimension, DI covers works that focus on the discursive processes by which ideas are constructed in a “coordinative” policy sphere by political actors, and deliberated in a “communicative” political sphere by those actors and the public (Schmidt

2011: 47). DI pays close attention to the institutional context in which and through which ideas are communicated.

It is instructive to contrast DI with its precursors. The three older institutionalisms conceive of institutions as external rule-following structures, constraining actors with rationalist incentives, historical paths, or cultural frames. In this new approach, institutions are simultaneously constraining structures and enabling constructs internal to “sentient” agents whose “background ideational abilities” explain how they create and maintain institutions at the same time as their “foreground discursive abilities” allow them to communicate critically about those institutions to change or maintain them (Schmidt 2008, 2011).

DI provides a different definition of institutions and deals with continuity and change in a novel way relative to the older new institutionalisms. Because rational choice institutionalism (RCI) assumes fixed preferences and is focused on equilibrium conditions, it tends to be static and can only account for change exogenously, as the result of external shocks (Levi 1997), which prevents it from explaining satisfactorily why institutions change over time (Green and Shapiro 1994, Blyth 1997, Schmidt 2011: 50). RCI scholars’ recent incorporation of the role of ideas into their work has been problematic, because adding ideational variables makes it difficult to retain the range of assumptions about objective interests, fixed preferences, and neutral institutional incentive structures which had previously given this approach its parsimony and its ability to model rational actors’ games (Schmidt 2011: 52).

As Schmidt states, historical institutionalism (HI) is better at *describing* rather than *explaining* change, despite its recent attempts to focus on incremental change through processes of drift, layering, and conversion (Thelen 2004, Streeck and Thelen 2005). DI uses HI findings as background information. A third approach, sociological institutionalism (SI), focuses on the forms and procedures of organizational life resulting from culturally specific practices. Institutions are conceived as norms, cognitive frames, and meaning systems that guide human action. They are also conceived as the cultural scripts and

schemata that diffuse through organizational environments. SI argues that rationality is socially constructed and culturally and historically contingent. According to Schmidt, this approach tends to provide an overly static account of change over time. Further, SI fails to provide a set of general propositions to explain why certain institutional scripts intermittently become vulnerable to displacement (Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

DI, by contrast, provides a more dynamic model of institutional change. Viewing institutions not only as structures that constrain actors but also as constructs changed *by* actors, DI accounts for the effects on institutions of actors' daily political battles. Yet Schmidt notes that DI's has not yet developed an adequate model for tracing ideational change at a micro-level (Schmidt 2011: 55). Schmidt suggests that one promising way forward is to build on the work of PSDT confirming Panizza and Miorellis' (2012) argument that these two approaches are not only compatible but also complementary.

This dissertation will thus adopt an analytical framework that combines insights from PSDT, DI and IT to analyse the rise and fall of the liberal oligarchic hegemony, its dislocation during the 1930s – 1940s which was key in creating the discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 civil war, and the rise of the social democratic hegemony in Costa Rica. It argues that the “exceptionalist” national identity is best conceived as a collective social imaginary fulfilling a function defined by Glynos and Howarth as that of fantasmatic logic. The “exceptionalist” collective imaginary served as one more institution, as defined by DI, shaping political outcomes. Borrowing Carstensen's model of institutional change, it shows how, in their hegemonic battles, political actors continuously rearticulated the web of related elements of meaning derived from the exceptionalist collective imaginary (homogeneity, equality, democracy, poverty and peace) by placing their particular political discourses - liberalism, communism, Christian Democracy, social democracy - as the nodal point of the new discursive formation. The dynamic interaction between these discourses battling for hegemony within the confines of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary led to gradual yet continuous ideational shifts regarding the conception of the appropriate role of the state, the most

suitable economic development model, and the expanding concept of democracy. These incremental ideational changes led to gradual but significant institutional changes facilitating Costa Rica's democratization even during critical periods such as during the post civil war period.

The dislocatory effect of the 1930s Great Depression created the discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 Civil War. The social democrats created a *crisis narrative* to induce a “paradigm shift” (Hay 2001). Failing to garner enough political success for their Second Republic, they decided to launch their armed insurrection. However, despite their military victory, the social democrats remained a marginal political force. It was not until after the *National Liberation* myth had become widely accepted, that the social democrats were able to start the process of becoming hegemonic. Therefore, to understand Costa Rica's democratic consolidation we must explore the hegemonic battles fought amongst the liberal oligarchs, the communists, the Christian democrats and the social democrats within the confines of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary and the changing international and national ideational context.

Data Analysed

This dissertation analyses political speeches made by Tomas Guardia during his dictatorship (1870-1881) contrasting them to those made by the Guatemalan dictator Rufino Barrios (1873-1885) and the Nicaraguan dictator Jose Zelaya (1893-1909). It also analyses the speeches of the following Costa Rican presidents: Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1906-1910 and 1928-1932), Ricardo Jimenez (1910-1914, 1924-1928 and 1932-1936), Leon Cortes (1936-1940), Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia (1940-1944), Teodoro Picado (1944-1948), and Jose Figueres (1948-1949 and 1953-1958). It also analyses the following primary data: *Boletin Oficial* newspapers during the Battle of Rivas (April – May 1856), the liberal newspaper *El Ciudadano*, and the conservative newspaper *7 de Noviembre*, a book written by the Olympians in 1886 titled *Los Deberes*, a book written by the Nicaraguan liberals published in 1906 titled *Jose Santos Zelaya President of Nicaragua*, a book written in 1889 by the Swiss scholar Paul Biolley – *Costa Rica and her Future*, selected

articles from the Communist newspaper *Trabajo* (from 1931-1940), key speeches by the Costa Rican Communist Party leader Manuel Mora, selected articles from the liberal oligarchic press *La Tribuna* (1940 - 1948) and *Diario de Costa Rica* (1940-1948), the social democratic newspaper *Accion Democrata/ Social Democrata* (1945-1948), and the 183 Acts Congressional debates held by the 1949 Constitutional Assembly. As background information the author has relied on the most current works available on the historical period under study (1820-1958), as well as the memoirs and interviews made by other scholars of the main political figures and 1948 Civil War veterans.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 provides a literature review of the existing theories of Costa Rica's democratization process. It highlights the gap between these theories and the findings made by historians regarding the 1948 Civil War. When filling this gap it becomes evident that to deepen our understanding of Costa Rica's democratization process, we must analyse the crucial role that discursive structures have historically played in shaping political outcomes.

Chapter 2 traces the emergence of the liberal oligarchic hegemony. It contrasts Costa Rica's liberal reform period with that of Nicaragua and Guatemala. While the Costa Rican political leaders chose to develop discourses following the *logic of difference*, the Nicaraguan and Guatemalan leaders chose to develop discourses using the *logic of equivalence*. Applying the prevailing *logic of difference*, the Costa Rican liberal oligarchic political leaders expanded their base of consent by differentially incorporating the "democratic"⁹ demands made by labour movements, peasant associations,

⁹ According to Laclau, a democratic demand is a demand which satisfied or not remains isolated. Laclau argues that democratic demands can become popular demands when a plurality of demands, which through their equivalential articulation come to constitute a broader social subjectivity. Laclau argues that popular demands start at a very incipient level to constitute the people as a potential historical actor (Laclau 2005: 74). A demand, which is met does not remain isolated; it is inscribed in an institutional/differential totality. So we have two ways of constructing the social: either through the assertion of a particularity – in our case, a particularity of demands – whose only links to other particularities are of differential nature (as we have seen:

and anti-imperialist movements through institutional and legislative means, thus disarticulating political alliances between these potentially antagonistic groups. By gradually absorbing and domesticating opposition discourses, they prevented the emergence of *relations of antagonism* prevalent in the rest of Central America during this period. The *logic of difference* also influenced the anti-liberal oligarchic discourses making it possible for the liberal oligarchic political leaders to co-opt their leaders. Therefore, Costa Rica developed a *transformist* model, while the Nicaraguan and Guatemalan dictators imposed their oppressive authoritarian regimes using *relations of antagonism*.

Chapter 3 contrasts the political dynamics during the height of the liberal oligarchic hegemony (1880s-1920s), with those during the dislocation of the liberal oligarchic order following the Great Depression. During the 1930s, the emergence of the Costa Rica Communist Party (CRCP) created for the first time in the country's history an internal political frontier. This chapter analyses the strategies used by the CRCP leaders to build a counter-hegemonic movement, and those used by the political leaders in the country to counter the communist threat. It traces the emergence of the *comunismo a la tica* myth. It applies Carstensen's model of ideational change to show how the communists were able to combine elements of meaning derived from the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary with typical Marxist elements despite their inherent contradictions.

Chapter 4 traces the emergence of the discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 Civil War during the 1940s. It analyses the hegemonic battles fought between the Christian Democratic *Generación de los Años 40* led by President Calderon (1940-1944), the social democratic coalition composed of an intellectual arm led by Professor Roberto Brenes Mesen and Rodrigo Facio under the *Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales* and a political arm led by Jose Figueres under the *Accion Democrata/Partido Social*

no positive terms, only differences); or through a partial surrender of particularity, stressing what all particularities have equivalentially in common.

Democrata, the communist faction led by the CRCP leader Manuel Mora, the conservative oligarchs led by Hine, and the progressive liberal oligarchs led by Ulate. It argues that there were three main differences between the 1948 presidential elections and the previous highly polarized and fraud-ridden elections held during periods of socio-economic crisis that were resolved consensually: 1) the existence of a political discourse creating an internal political frontier attempting to divide Costa Rican society into two antagonistic blocks (the communist discourse); 2) the changing international ideational environment that a) made possible the alliance between Calderon and the CRCP during World War II but turned this alliance into a great liability during the emergence of the Cold War, and b) fostered anti-dictatorial Latin American movements such as the Caribbean Legion willing to support Figueres; and 3) the existence of a political discourse seeking to induce a paradigm shift (the creation of a social democratic Second Republic) by creating a *crisis narrative* that exaggerated the communist threat to Costa Rica's "exceptional" democracy. Without these factors, the social democrats would not have been able to mobilize certain sectors of the opposition to fight the civil war. In turn, without this mobilization the other political leaders would have resolved the 1948 political stalemate through consensual means as previous leaders had done after contested elections. Rather than interpreting the 1948 Civil War as the result of "objectively" antagonistic socio-economic and political interests and personal vendettas, as the dominant view states, this chapter argues that these social antagonisms were discursively constructed by the social democrats in their hegemonic pursuit.

Chapter 5 discusses the negotiations following the cessation of the armed conflict. It explores the difficulties the social democrats encountered in legitimating their Junta Rule due in large part to the perceived incompatibility between their actions (starting an armed insurrection, imposing a military Junta and supporting the Caribbean Legion) and the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. It shows how the social democrats had to change their approach from arguing that their military victory justified their political power and attempting to impose radical change, to showing their commitment to peace and consensual politics and highlighting the elements of continuity between

the social democratic project and the previous liberal oligarchic model to induce reformist change. This chapter interprets Figueres's decision to abolish the military as an attempt to prove the social democrats' compatibility with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. By reviewing the 183 Acts of the 1949 Constitutional Assembly, it shows how the battles between the social democrats, the conservative liberal oligarchs and the progressive liberal delegates led to reformist changes to the 1871 constitution despite the social democrats' initial foundational ambitions.

Chapter 6 focuses on a period that remains under-analysed by scholars explaining Costa Rica's democratic consolidation – the Otilio Ulate administration (1949-1953). It argues that Ulate played a crucial role in facilitating the emergence of the social democratic hegemony. Ulate chose to adopt the *National Liberation* myth despite its historical inaccuracies because he realized that this narrative could suture the dislocated order and help re-establish peace and stability. Without Ulate's acceptance of this myth, the social democratic rise to hegemony would have been made much more difficult. This chapter traces the social democrats' rise to hegemony.

Chapter 7 concludes outlining some broad lessons that can be drawn from the analysis of Costa Rica's democratization process focusing on the previously under-analysed discursive dimension.

CHAPTER ONE

Existing theories explaining Costa Rica's "exceptional" transition to democracy and its consolidation

This chapter reviews the existing theories analysing Costa Rica's "exceptional" democratic development placing them within the theories of democratization informing them. It argues that the dominant interpretation of Costa Rica's democratic consolidation does not take into account key findings made by Costa Rican historians regarding the civil war period. By incorporating these findings, it becomes evident the crucial role that discursive structures played in the consolidation of Costa Rica's democracy. We will begin with the earliest interpretation of the founding of Costa Rica's democracy – the socio-economic and cultural precondition approach.

Socio-economic and cultural pre-conditions approach

Influenced by modernization theory, the *pre-conditions* approach first emerged during the 1950s and 1960s at a time when democratic forms of government were the exception rather than the rule. It argued that certain levels of literacy, urbanization, industrialization, and capitalist development were required for democratization (Chang 2002:59). Seymour Martin Lipset's seminal piece *Some Social Requisites for Democracy: Economic Development and Political Development* (1959) established a theoretical link between the levels of development of a given country and its probability of being democratic – "the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy" (Lipset 1959:75 quoted by Wucherpfenning and Deutsch 2009:1).¹⁰ According to Lipset, modernization manifested itself largely through changing social conditions that fostered a democratic culture by increasing the receptiveness to the types of norms and values that mitigated conflict, penalized extremist groups and rewarded moderate

¹⁰ The relation between socio-economic development and political democracy is one of the most analyzed questions in political science. Lipset's conclusion has become conventional wisdom. As Julian Wucherpfenning and Franziska Deutsch (2009), some of the most influential contemporary books analyzing this relation are Przeworski et al. (2000; Przeworski & Limongi 1997), Boix (2003), Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005).

democratic parties (Lipset 1959: 83-84 quoted by Wucherpfenning and Deutsch 2009:1).¹¹

Inspired by the *pre-conditions* approach, the proponents of the *rural democratic/egalitarian theory* argued that liberal democracy arose in Costa Rica as the result of a combination of atypical socio-economic structural variables present in Costa Rica during its colonial period. These structural variables gave rise to an egalitarian, violence-avert, ethnically and religiously homogenous, and innately democratic political culture. One of the first proponents of the *rural democracy theory* was Carlos Monge Alfaro (1966) through his highly influential book *Historia de Costa Rica*. Other works include Eugenio Rodriguez Vega's *Apuntes para una sociologia Costarricense* (1979), James Bussey's *Notes on Costa Rican Democracy* (1962), and Charles Ameringer's *Democracy in Costa Rica* (1982). They present the following interpretation of Costa Rica's colonial history.

Costa Rica's lack of resources - the absence of significant deposits of exploitable minerals (such as gold or silver) and the scarcity of indigenous

¹¹ During the same period, Walt Whitman Rustow (1960) developed a model outlining five progressive stages that led from economic development to democratization. Rustow's model was criticized for its assumption that this process was linear and inevitable. Based on the European and American experience, this model was seen as inadequate for explaining Asian, African and Latin American countries. During the 1970s, dependency theorists argued that instead of focusing on domestic socio-economic and cultural factors hindering processes of democratization in "traditional" societies, it was necessary to focus on international factors hindering processes of development in "dependent" or "peripheral societies". They argued that the position of each country within the world capitalist system determined the probability of the country's democratic and developmental success or failure. Dependency theorists focusing on Latin America concluded that this region's integration into the international market economy enhanced the necessity for authoritarian order in order to maintain its competitive advantage in the international economy. Those focusing on Central America argued that multinational firms and United States' intervention explained the development of pervasive and harsh authoritarian rule in the isthmus. Dependency theory was subsequently harshly criticized for its failure to provide a clear and compelling explanation of the diverse patterns of democracy and development in the third world (Yashar 1997:12)¹¹. Cardoso and Faletto (1979) argued that although international factors were catalytic as they structured the export economy, shaped the international political climate, and underwrote capital and military alliances, they did not primarily or singlehandedly cause either democracy or authoritarianism in the absence of domestic conditions that could found and sustain these regimes (Yashar 1997:13).

labour - prevented the Spanish conquistadores from replicating coercive relations found in other parts of Latin America. The insufficiency of indigenous labour and abundance of unclaimed land meant that the colonists could not successfully introduce the exploitative *encomienda*¹² system used to man large *hacienda* estates elsewhere in the region. Instead of relations of coercion between capital and labour, relations of mutual dependence developed. Landowners needed hired labour. They had to treat the labourers well; otherwise, they would work for someone else offering better working conditions. The lack of indigenous labour also meant that many colonists were forced to till their own land or work side-by-side labourers. Therefore, the colonists who chose to stay in Costa Rica were people looking for a new life in the new continent (much like the pilgrims in the United States), rather than for a way of extracting the maximum amount of wealth to take back to the old continent (the typical colonial model in South America).

Gudmundson (1989), Samper (1990), Paige (1997) argued that the emergence of a small property owning society without a rigidly stratified class structure and a relatively egalitarian distribution of resources promoted Costa Rica's democratic development. Influenced by Barrington Moore's class-based historical structural approach¹³, they argued that lack of extensive *hacienda* estates in Costa Rica resulted in a more even distribution of land

¹² In order to encourage Spaniards to go to the New World, the Spanish crown started the practice of the *encomienda* whereby the Spaniards would be granted command over indigenous people. The indigenous people had to give the *encomendero* tribute and work for them, in exchange for which the *encomendero* was charged with converting them to Christianity and taking care of them (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012).

¹³ In his book *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Moore sought to explain how changes in social structures over long periods of time led to diverse societies: democracy in Britain, France and United States, fascism in Germany and Japan, and communism in Russia and China. The type of route a given country took was determined by the relative configuration of five factors: 1) the power distribution amongst the elite, 2) the economic basis of the agrarian upper-class, 3) the class constellation, 4) the distribution of power between classes, and 5) the state's autonomy vis-à-vis the dominant class. (Wucherpfenning and Deutsch 2009:2) He viewed economic classes as the main actors in social and political change. Democratization according to Moore was the result of the loss of social and economic power of the landed aristocracy vis-à-vis the emerging bourgeoisie class. Moore considers the emergence of liberal democracy as a direct manifestation of bourgeois dominance and bourgeois interests (Peeler 1985: 15). "No bourgeoisie, no democracy" (Moore 1966).

and wealth. This led to the predominance of the bourgeois class or “yeoman farmers” believed to be conducive to democratization. The fact that Costa Rica was a poor colony also meant that the colonial administrative institutions were very weak (Diaz Arias 2007: xvii). Given that it was far away from Guatemala - the capital of the isthmus - Costa Rica had some experience with self-government prior to independence. The combination of these atypical socio-economic factors led to the emergence of a particular egalitarian, democratic, peace-loving and consensual Costa Rican culture (Wilson 1998:12). These works reversed the logic of the socio-economic prerequisites approach, which argued that a certain degree of economic development was needed for democratization by arguing that the key to Costa Rica’s democracy lied in its poverty. However, socio-economic factors remained crucial since the key to Costa Rica’s democratic success lied in its relatively egalitarian socio-economic structures. These socio-economic structures encouraged the creation of an egalitarian political culture breeding values of moderation, political trust, social cohesion and consensus.

They then contrast Costa Rica’s colonial experience with that of other Central American countries. In the rest of Central America, the abundance of indigenous labour coupled with the scarcity of land meant that the elite had the incentive to concentrate land in their own hands through a gradual privatization of Indian lands. These latifundista elites were able to keep wages low and to exploit workers because the broader population had no other source of subsistence (Perez Brignoli, 1994; Lauria-Santiago, 1999). When indigenous workers would rebel against this oppression, the large landowners would successfully pressure the state to coercively force them into submission. The defence of the economic interests of the hegemonic landowning elites led to the militarization of the Central American states excluding Costa Rica (Gudmundson 1995). This view argued that autocracy emerged in all Central American nations except for Costa Rica in order to defend the commercial agricultural interests of the elites (Lehoucq 2012). This is the argument of the classics of Central American sociology (Paige 1997, Torres-Riva 1994) and of the economic historians (Cardoso 1975, Samper 1998, Williams 1994 and Weeks 1985, Baloyra-Herp 1983, Brockett 1998,

Dunkerley 1988, Perez Brignoli 1989, Robinson 2003, Vilas 1995). As Lehoucq (2012) argues, these works neglect political factors because they wrongly considered Central American states as little more than instruments of local elites, foreign companies, or the United States government. Therefore, most historical studies have focused on the economic and social constraints on political and economic development (Smith and Boyer, 1987; Smith, Boyer, and Diskin, 1988).

Limits of the *rural democracy theory*

During the 1980s and 1990s, a series of political scientists started to criticize the accuracy of the socio-economic analysis made by the proponents of the rural democracy theory. For example, Carlos Melendez Chaverri (1982) argued that land distribution during the colonial period was not as even as had been claimed. In his work *Conquistadores y pobladores: Origenes historico-sociales de los Costarricenses* he stated that, while it is true that land in the Costa Rican Central Valley was more equally distributed relative to other Central American nations, the rest of the country had a different fate. In the northwest large cattle ranches known as haciendas emerged and on the Atlantic coast large cacao plantations were established. Chaverri claimed that in these areas the social differentials between the large estate owners and the labourers of the land was immense. Chaverri stated that even in the Central Valley, despite the fact that the colonizers had to work their own land due to scarce labour, daily life was nonetheless based on status differences defined in accordance to Spanish tradition (Chaverri 1982). Samuel Stone rejected the notion of an egalitarian distribution of power in Costa Rica's colonial period. In his work, "*Aspects of Power Distribution in Costa Rica*", he argued that during the 16th and 17th centuries Spain created a pattern of power distribution that continued to determine the nature of Costa Rican politics. It reserved access to political posts for conquistadores and hidalgos, thus giving control of the province to a small group of families by virtue of their descent (Stone 1974). Later studies made by Gudmundson (1999) questioned the extent of social equality during the colonial period by using previously unanalysed census material. In his article "Costa Rica Before Coffee", Gudmundson argued that in the early 19th century, the Costa Rican village

economy was characterized by complex and unequal land tenure, and that social division of labour affected all but the most isolated peasants. Tangible differences existed between the 'elite' and the peasant masses, as well as within the peasantry and among a surprisingly well-developed urban artisan group and agricultural sector (Gudmundson 2001). Samper (1994) showed that Costa Rican land distribution was similar to that of El Salvador in the first half of the twentieth century. Booth (1999) and Lehoucq (2012) argued that Nicaragua's ethnic composition was not dissimilar to that of Costa Rica as they both had a predominantly mestizo ethnic composition. Nicaragua also had extensive unclaimed lands during the colonial period (Cruz 2000:287). Aguilar and Alfaro (1997), Melendez Chaverri (1975) and Rojas Bolanos (2010) have disputed the claim that Costa Rica is an ethnically white homogenous society and pointed out the existence of a significant Afro-Caribbean population living in the Atlantic region. Molina (1990) disputed the degree of harmony amongst the colonial elites and the indigenous population. These new findings led to the consensus that socio-economic variables were at best *necessary* but *insufficient* conditions for explaining the emergence of democracy in Costa Rica. Scholars used insights from *political crafting approaches* to search for alternative explanations.

Political Crafting Approach

The *political crafting* approach was first developed during the 1970s and 1980s as a critique of the socio-economic and cultural determinism of the *pre-conditions* approach. The failure to find a set of identical conditions that could yield clear results regarding the presence or absence of democratic regimes led to the replacement of this endeavour by more modest contextually-bounded approaches to the study of democratization (Yashar 1997). This gave way to more *process oriented* approaches emphasizing the open and contingent nature of political reality. These democratic theories shifted their emphasis from explaining the *pre-conditions* for democratic stability to explaining what conditions led to democratic *transitions*. *Political crafting* scholars argued: "in their functional concerns, these pre-conditions theorists concentrated their attention on the functional relations between existing democracy and some socio-economic or socio-cultural variables and

neglected the generic issue of developing and crafting democracy” (Chang 2002:61). What scholars viewed as *pre-requisites*¹⁴ of democracy – patterns of greater economic growth and more equitable income distribution, as well as higher levels of education – were in fact best conceived as the *products* or *outcomes* of democracy.

Political crafting scholars were influenced by the *elite pact-making* theories first developed by Robert Dahl. In his *Polyarchy*, Dahl (1972) wrote that “the rules, the practices, and the culture of competitive politics developed first among a small elite whose ties of friendship, family, interests, class and ideology restrained the severity of conflict. Later, as additional social strata were admitted into politics they were more easily socialized into the norms and practices of competitive politics already developed among the elites” (quoted by Chang 2002: 65). Building on Dahl’s works, they argued that the decision to transition into a democracy emerged not out of a fundamental shift in values but out of political strategic considerations. Elites chose democracy instrumentally because they considered that the costs of attempting to suppress their political opponents exceeded the costs of engaging them in constitutionally regulated competition. As Chang states, according to this view what mattered in the decision phase was not the values the leaders held dear, but the concrete steps they were willing to take to found a democracy (Chang 2002:67). Arturo Valenzuela (1977) also argued that choices made by politicians shaped the democratic trajectories. In his book *Latin American Democracies: Colombia, Costa Rica and Venezuela*, Peeler (1985) concluded that elite accommodation was the crucial variable in the establishment and maintenance of liberal democracies in Latin America.

Proponents of the *political crafting* approach argued that political leaders were capable of transcending structural constraints in order to found and sustain

¹⁴ As Dankwart Rustow (1970) argued, Lipset was careful to speak of requisites not pre-requisites of democracy acknowledging the difference between correlation and causation. But this subtlety escaped many readers who then translated it to preconditions. Rustow argues that: “the text of the article, moreover, encourages the same substitution, for it repeatedly slips from the language of correlation into the language of causality (Rustow 1970:342).

democracy (Linz 1978; Di Palma and Whitehead 1986; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Di Palma 1990; Higley and Gunther 1992). Some scholars analysing Costa Rica's democratization process such as Alexander (1962), Aguilar Bulgarelli (1969), Baez Flores (1969), Acuna (1974), Bonilla (1977), Cañas (1982) and Guerra (1997) shared this view. Their works attributed a predominant role to Jose Figueres when analysing Costa Rica's democratization process.

In his book *Quest for Democracy* (1999), Booth combined elements of political crafting (elite settlements) with class-based structural approaches (Booth 1998:197). He argued that the coffee elites were forced to share power and accept political democracy when an emerging middle class gained sufficient power and resources to challenge their rule. This was possible due to the weakening of the liberal oligarchic elite's grip on power under the Calderon administration (1940-1944) when Calderon abandoned his oligarchic supporters and formed an alliance with the CRCP party leader Manuel Mora with the blessing of the Costa Rican Catholic Church's progressive archbishop Monsignor Victor Sanabria. This in turn led to a decade of class conflict that inevitably culminated in the 1948 civil war. Costa Rica's democracy was consolidated only after the war through an elite settlement between the two victorious political groups, the social democratic revolutionaries led by Jose Figueres and the progressive liberal oligarchs led by Otilio Ulate. The elites had to negotiate with the politically activated working class leaders, who had become too strong to ignore (Booth 1998: 197). Booth's book fails to incorporate the latest historical findings of the period leading to the 1948 civil war, which prove that the civil war was not the result of class conflict (Diaz 2009, Molina 2002).

Booth's book *The Quest for Democracy* suffers from the same limitations of other works that base their analysis on information biased by the social democratic re-interpretation of the 1948 civil war. These works do not acknowledge the high degree of opposition faced by the social democratic victors in the immediate post civil war period due to the widespread narrative developed by their former pre-war allies (progressive liberals and

conservative coffee oligarchs) that portrayed the Junta as an illegitimate body. To understand Costa Rica's democratic consolidation process it is necessary to explore how the social democrats succeeded in reversing their initial widespread opposition during the immediate post civil war period to subsequently becoming a hegemonic force during the late 1950s early 1960s. Only by exploring the discursive dimension can we explain this.

Deborah Yashar's book *Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reaction in Costa Rica and Guatemala 1870-1950s* also suffers from historical inaccuracies. Yashar claims that there is an unanswered puzzle in the literature explaining Costa Rica and Guatemala's divergent regime types after the mid 20th century: despite sharing a number of similar characteristics (regional location, size, position in the world economy, levels of economic development) and similar patterns of political change and development up until the middle of the twentieth century, Costa Rica and Guatemala represent Latin America's most divergent political regimes in the post-war period (Yashar 1997:6). Using a critical juncture approach, Yashar argues that the cycles of reform and reaction in the 1940s and 1950s were regime-defining moments exerting path dependent tendencies: while the Costa Rican "counter-reform movement" installed political democracy in 1948, the Guatemalan "counter-reform movement" installed authoritarian rule in 1954. Yashar concludes that:

The cases of Costa Rica and Guatemala suggest that democratizing coalitions emerged in the context of publicly divided elite and the rising organization of marginalized sectors demanding political inclusion. The ability to sustain these democratizing coalitions, however, rested on their capacity both to redistribute elite property and to develop political control of the countryside. Rapid but bounded redistributive reforms implemented during the transition to democracy were more conducive to democracy's endurance than their implementation after democratic institutions were assumed to be in place (Yashar 1997:4).

The main problem with Yashar's work is that her central premise that Costa Rica and Guatemala were similar up until the middle of the 20th century is inaccurate as has been pointed out by many scholars including James Mahoney (2001), Fabrique Lehoucq and Ivan Molina (2002), and Consuelo Cruz (2005). After their independence, Costa Rica and Guatemala followed

quite different political trajectories. To understand their divergent paths we should not focus on the 1940s and 1950s as Yashar does, but rather trace their divergent paths from the post-independence period onwards. This dissertation focuses on one factor that remains under-appreciated by the existing literature explaining these two nations' divergent political paths. It argues that since their independence, Costa Rica's and Guatemala's political dynamics have been structured in profoundly different ways in part due to the predominance of the logic of *transformism* in Costa Rica and the logic of *relations of antagonism* in Guatemala and the rest of the isthmus.

Rational Choice Institutionalism

Other scholars have tried to explain Costa Rica's exceptional democratic institutional development using rational choice institutionalism (RCI). Arguably the best works used to analyse Costa Rica's democratization process using RCI are those written by Fabrice Lehoucq in collaboration with Ivan Molina. These include: *The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Cooperation in Costa Rica* (1996), *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform and Democratization in Costa Rica* (Lehoucq and Molina: 2002), *Democratic Institutions and Political Conflicts in Costa Rica* (2010) and *The Politics of Modern Central America* (2012). Throughout his works, Lehoucq sustains that the choices made by Costa Rican political actors can be explained using the premises that politicians want to hold office to shape public policy and that the rules governing access to state offices generates incentives for them to act in fairly predictable ways. Based on these assumptions, the decision to respect the result of the ballot box is a product of strategic and institutional constraints. Unable to impose their rule on their rivals, politicians settle for what they can get and not for what they want (Lehoucq 1996:329). Lehoucq suggests that this inductive strategy can serve to identify the conditions that prompted incumbents and adversaries to respect and to build democratic institutions in Costa Rica after the 1948 Civil War (Lehoucq 1996:336).

Lehoucq argues that although Costa Rica had made some significant progress towards democratization prior to the 1948 Civil War, its transition to democracy dates to the post civil war period. He correctly points out that

electoral fraud was the norm until after the 1948 Civil War. As Theodore Creedman points out from 1889-1936 only four elections (1910, 1920, 1928 and 1936) were considered untainted. Three (1890, 1884 and 1932) were accompanied by minor uprisings. The remaining five (1898, 1902, 1906, 1914 and 1924) were the result of *continuismo* – the constitutional prolongation of a term of office, illegal imposition of candidates or other illegal procedures (Creedman 1971:53). He argues that the high and unchecked concentration of power on the presidency granted by the 1871 Constitution meant that, once in power, the president could do as he pleased – including appointing the next president. This made the position extremely coveted, encouraging the opposition to consider the use of violence to obtain the presidential seat. Even if the political elite recognized the need to reduce the power of the presidency, all attempts would fail due to the influence of the political machines backing the incumbent president at the time. No one was willing to give away the advantage they had acquired (Lehoucq 1996, 2002, 2010).

Politicians began to respect electoral results only after the 1948 Civil War when the institutional reforms a) reduced the power of the president, b) provided a meaningful role to the opposition, and c) guaranteed the opposition that they would have a fair chance of attaining power in future elections. Political competition became more peaceful as those parties that failed to capture the presidency were nevertheless allowed to occupy legislative offices. Lehoucq further argues that democratic stability was the product of decisions made by incumbents and their opposition to share state power. Lehoucq states:

Under the threat of being overthrown, incumbents began to permit electoral competition to select the occupants of executive and legislative offices. The ability to send representatives to Congress also encouraged ruling and opposition parties to start respecting the results of the ballot box. Concerned with their political survival, incumbents and their rivals struck a bargain whose by-product was the gradual increase in rates of compliance with democratic institutions (Lehoucq 1996: 342).

Lehoucq's work provides a wealth of knowledge regarding Costa Rica's electoral reform process and the development of its electoral democracy. However, his work offers a narrow conception of democracy adopting an

“aggregative model of democracy¹⁵” and prioritizes suffrage rights over other elements of democracy. As the current consensual academic view states, free, fair, and transparent elections are a necessary but insufficient condition for democracy. A broader conception of democracy requires an analysis of other factors neglected by Lehoucq. Lehoucq’s work also leaves many interesting questions unanswered. Although he correctly points out that electoral fraud was the norm in Costa Rica during the liberal oligarchic period, he does not explore why none of the contested elections in Costa Rica led to civil unrest. One of the most interesting things to note about this period is that although there was instability at the individual level (with presidents being removed and replaced), this did not translate into instability at the regime level. Considering the Central American context at the time, it is quite surprising that these tense electoral battles did not lead to civil unrest. Lehoucq provides only two options for the incumbents – either being overthrown or permitting electoral competition. He does not explore why incumbents did not consider mobilizing a large sector of the population to fight against their opponents – as was common in the rest of Central America. In other words, he does not inquire why Costa Rican political leaders had less power of mobilization than their Central American counter-parts.

When comparing Costa Rica with the rest of the region in his latest book, Lehoucq (2012) states that the origins of their divergent regime trajectories lied in the nature of political competition itself. He states:

Where the struggle for hegemony led to on-going stalemates, as in Costa Rica, contending political forces learned to share state power, an arrangement that gradually reduced the powers of the executive and enfranchised increasing number of voters. Where strongman managed to impose themselves, as in the rest of the isthmus, the military became the arbiter of state power. The chaos that engulfed Central America so well analysed by Munro 1918 and later Mahoney 2001 typically ended when a strong man vanquished his rivals and institutionalized his rule in personalistic dictatorships so common in isthmus (Lehoucq 2012:28).

¹⁵ As Laclau and Mouffe (2001) explain, the aggregative model of democracy reduces the democratic process to the expression of those interests and preferences, which are registered in a vote aimed at selecting leaders who carry out the chosen policies.

Lehoucq does not explore further what factors led to these differences, namely addressing what factors structured political competitions in these countries. Furthermore, he does not explore why strongmen were able to impose themselves in the rest of Central America, but not in Costa Rica. To understand this we must explore the discursive context present in each country - a factor RCI scholars dismiss. This dissertation argues that the prevalence of a *transformist* logic of articulation meant that Costa Rican political leaders did not/could not mobilize their supporters in the same way that Central American leaders did. While the liberal Guatemalan and Nicaraguan dictators were able to mobilize their supporters portraying the conservatives as an “existential threat”, the Costa Rican conservative or liberal leaders chose to present their opponents as “adversaries” as opposed to “enemies” (Norval 2000). Neither the conservative nor the liberals in Costa Rica wanted to destabilize the existing order structured by the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. The Costa Rican population liked the positive self-image portrayed by this collective imaginary and the positive interpretation of their democratic institutions derived from it. This meant that the Costa Rican political leaders could not mobilize support for themselves as individuals outside of the existing democratic institutional structures. As a result, Costa Rican political leaders were not able to concentrate the power that other Central American dictators amassed for themselves.

Costa Rican leaders did not establish the patron-client relations established by their counter-parts. The “exceptionalist” collective imaginary made the Costa Rican masses view democracy as the only regime compatible with their “exceptional” national identity. In order to gain political support, the conservatives and the liberals had to show that they were democratic (according to the standards established at that historical period) and that they respected the rule of law. The only way they could win popular support was by addressing the demands of as many diverse political groups as possible. They created an elaborate institutional framework to address specific demands differentially preventing populist ruptures. This meant that the liberal period in Costa Rica was significantly different from that in the rest of the region. One of the best works contrasting the liberal reform periods in Central

America is the book written by James Mahoney using a historical institutionalist (HI) approach.

Historical institutionalism

In his book *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependency and Regime Change in Central America*, Mahoney (2001) argues that in order to understand the divergent regime types and historical paths that the Central American countries took, it is necessary to analyse the choices that the liberal political actors made during the 19th century liberal reform period. Building on Collier and Collier's (1991) concept of critical junctures and path dependence, Mahoney argues that the adoption of radical liberalism, reformist liberalism, or aborted liberalism helps explain subsequent political dynamics in the region (Mahoney 2001: 4). In all the countries analysed, liberal reform brought reactions from actors who were excluded or marginalized during the reform process. These contrasting reactions – ranging from major democratizing efforts to efforts of authoritarianism to anti-imperialist movements – can in part be explained as a consequence of the type of liberal reform undertaken in a given country. The persistence of military-authoritarian regimes in Guatemala and El Salvador, a democratic regime in Costa Rica and traditional dictatorships in Honduras and Nicaragua over many decades in the 20th Century can be explained by the legacies of the three patterns of radical, reformist and aborted liberalism. However, Mahoney does not explore what factors influenced the decisions taken by political actors in the first place. This dissertation argues that to understand why Costa Ricans chose reformist liberalism, Guatemalans and Salvadoreans chose radical liberalism and Hondureans and Nicaraguans were not able to implement liberalism it is necessary to analyse the discursive context prevalent in each country during the liberal reform period.

In his later book *Colonialism and Post Colonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective*, Mahoney (2010) compares the postcolonial development of Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay. Mahoney argues that only Costa Rican and Chilean postcolonial actors were able to establish competitive economies and sustain

real growth via primary exports. According to Mahoney, what gave Chile and Costa Rica an advantage was their ability to elude the adverse consequences of international war (Mahoney 2010:190). Mahoney argues that stability and peace in Costa Rica allowed political actors to exploit early on their export potential – coffee production. Mahoney once again does not take a step back to analyse what factors encouraged Costa Rica to avoid the civil unrest faced by all other Central American countries in the first place.

The prevalent explanation of why Costa Rica's political actors chose policies conducive to stability and peace during the post independence period states that Costa Ricans had an innately peaceful and democratic political culture. This view has been influenced by the *political culture theory*. We now briefly outline the main arguments of this approach.

Political culture theory

During the 1980s and 1990s, *political culture* theory elaborated on modernization theory, emphasizing the importance of certain values or civic culture for the emergence of democracy. Scholars such as Inkeles and Diamond (1980) and Inglehart (1990) re-formulated the *pre-conditions approach* eliminating the ethno-centrist bias of modernization theory, which equated modernization with westernization. When analysing the relationship between democracy and political culture on the one hand, and between democracy and economic development on the other, they concluded that political beliefs, attitudes and values were an important intervening variable in the relationship between economic development and democracy (Chang 2002: 60). Inglehart (1988) argued that a civic culture would have a higher probability of producing a democratic system. Lipset, Seong and Torres (1993) and Huntington (1991) also argued that cultural factors appeared to be more important than economic ones in determining democratic success (Chang 2002: 60). When analysing the transition to democracy of the former communist countries, Welzel and Inglehart (2008) argued that the mass protests that helped topple the authoritarian regimes and the struggle between the elites and the people were not about economic issues but about political rights and civil liberties. They conclude that: "the major effect of

modernization is not that it makes democracy more acceptable to elites, but that it increases ordinary people's capabilities and willingness to struggle for democratic institutions" (Welzel and Inglehart 2008:136 quoted by Wucherpfenning and Deutsch 2009:6). Drawing on survey data of global scope, they demonstrate the linkages between macro socio-economic development and micro-emancipatory value changes in order to counter the argument that value change is a consequence as opposed to a cause of democracy thereby supporting their theory of democratic culture (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel and Inglehart 2006).¹⁶

When analysing Latin America's failed democratic experiences, several scholars (Morse 1954, Dealy 1954; Smith 1974) concluded that this region had inherited an anti-democratic culture from Spain. According to Wiarda (1974) the Catholic, corporatist, hierarchical, authoritarian, patrimonialist and semi-feudal Spanish heritage inhibited the democratization of Latin America. In their most recent work, Wiarda and Klein (2014) contrast the United States' political culture with that found in most Latin American countries. They conclude that whereas the political culture in the United States has been mainly democratic, liberal, and committed to representative government, that of Latin America has been historically elitist, authoritarian, hierarchical, corporatist and patrimonial (Wiarda and Klein 2014:12). Wiarda and Klein argue that:

When Latin America became independent in the 19th century, a new political culture based on representative institutions emerged, even while the old political culture¹⁷ remained strong. The result was two political

¹⁶ As Wucherpfenning and Deutsch (2009) state, Hadenius and Teorell (2005) have criticized Inglehart and Welzel's work stating that they fail to distinguish between causal effect and correlation. Because they do not sufficiently control for prior levels of democracy, their proposed causal relationship is spurious.

¹⁷ Wiarda and Klein state that: "Latin America has long been dominated by a political, social and economic structure that had its roots not in modernity but in medievalism. Much of Latin America's recent history involves the efforts to overcome or ameliorate that feudal past. Because this feudal legacy remains so strong, because the heavy hand of ancient history hangs so oppressively over the area, we must come to grips with Latin America's past to understand its present and future (Wiarda and Klein 2014: 17). Colonialism and imperialism also devastated the area. The institutions that Spain brought to the New World reflected the institutions that had developed in the mother countries during their struggles against the Moors and their effort to form a unified nation-state out of disparate social and regional forces. These institutions

cultures, one authoritarian, and the other nascently liberal existing side-by-side and vying for dominance throughout the 19th century and into much of the 20th. The two political cultures also had different social bases: the more traditional one was centered in the church, the landed elite, the military and the conservative peasantry, with the newer, liberal one concentrated in urban areas among intellectuals, students and emerging middle class, and some business elements. With no single political culture dominant (unlike the United States after the civil war when the liberal-democratic ethos definitely triumphed), Latin American politics was often unstable and torn by frequent civil war between the two ways of life (Wiarda and Klein 2014: 13).

Wiarda and Klein argue that this legacy still impacts Latin America's democracies today.¹⁸

In his book, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: the Latin American Case*, Lawrence Harrison (1985) argued that Costa Rica was an exception to this rule. Contrasting Costa Rica and Nicaragua, he suggests that, while Nicaragua failed to democratize because it was part of the "main-stream of Hispanic-American culture", Costa Rica's special colonial experience "in some ways reminiscent of the New England colonies" led to significant modifications of its culture enabling its democratization process (Harrison 1985:54). Costa Rica's unique socio-political development was due to "the values and attitudes that flow(ed) from a common levelling experience" when colonizers had to

included a rigid, authoritarian political system, a similarly rigid hierarchical class structure, a statist and mercantilist economy, an absolutist church and a similarly closed and absolutist educational system (Wiarda 2014: 19).

¹⁸ Although a political consensus has emerged in the region that democracy is the preferred form of government, "the authoritarian temptation is still often present" (Wiarda and Klein 2014:3). Democracy does not always work well or quickly enough and it is still threatened by upheavals, corruption and vast social problems. (Wiarda and Klein 2014: 4) Many new democracies are not very well institutionalized lacking strong and independent legislatures, judiciaries and court systems, and bureaucracies. Governments have not been very effective in carrying out public policies. On the positive side, there has been an emergence of interest groups, NGOs, and governmental organizations monitoring governments, the legislature, court systems, police and local governments with the mandate of overseeing that public institutions provide public goods and services rather than merely jobs, patronage and handouts. Political parties are better organized, with real mass base and real programs and ideology, as compared with small, personalistic and patronage-based parties of the past. However, patronage and special favoritism still operates (Wiarda and Klein: 2014). Most Latin American democracies can be referred to as electoral democracies (formal elections are held) but not *liberal* democracies in the sense of being open, pluralistic, and egalitarian. Many regimes in the area are still partial or limited democracies, designations that indicate links to the past.

work side-by-side their labourers to survive. Political stability was maintained in Costa Rica because “that common levelling experience triggered a process of cultural change that is self-reinforcing” (Harrison 1985:54). More recent studies made by Costa Rican scholars have criticized this view that atypical socio-economic factors naturally led to the emergence of an innately peaceful and democratic political culture.

The dominant interpretation of Costa Rica’s “exceptionalist” national identity

As David Diaz states (2009), contemporary works analysing Costa Rica’s national identity have been influenced by the constructivist perspective of the Canadian historian, Steven Palmer. Palmer criticized the previous consensual view that argued that Costa Rica’s exceptional national identity naturally evolved because of the atypical socio-economic structure present since the colonial period (Rodriguez Vega 1950, Monge Alfaro 1959, Facio 1971). In his book *A Liberal Discipline: Inventing Nations in Guatemala and Costa Rica 1870-1900*, Palmer (1990), claimed that there was nothing spontaneous about this process. He rejected the primordialist argument that national identity is a naturally evolving phenomena shaped by a common language, race, ethnicity, territory and history, as well as the instrumentalist argument that it is the result of economic, social and political processes. Influenced by Ernst Gellner (1983) and Eric Hobsbawn (1989), Palmer asserted that instead of nationalism serving as the basis for state building, the reverse happened. There were some pre-requisites that had to be met before the emergence of Costa Rica’s national identity. These included the construction of a stable state power with an ideologically unified political and economic elite sharing similar interests, the expansion of the coffee export economic model that ensured the viability of the state, and the ability of the liberals to restrain the influence of the Catholic Church, which had dominated the Costa Rican cultural realm using religious ideas instead of nationalism to promote its own interests. Once the elite imposed their socio-economic and political model, the intellectuals saw the need to legitimate their power and incorporate the masses (Diaz, David xix). Applying Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of imagined communities, Palmer argued that Costa Rica’s

national identity did not emerge until after the liberal dictator Tomas Guardia (1870-1882) consolidated the Costa Rican modern state. Thus, he argued that Costa Rica's "exceptionalist" national identity was a cultural construct created during the 1880s by a group of liberal intellectual elites known as the *Grupo del Olimpo* or *Olympians* who self-consciously engaged in the elaboration of a national mythology in order to establish the foundation of a secular, liberal oligarchic hegemony (Palmer 1990).

The current dominant interpretation widely accepts Palmer's constructivist thesis. It argues that the Costa Rican nation emerged as a project of domination of the elite classes achieved through the construction of symbols of cohesion by the liberal state and through educational reform. It argues that the different cultural projects directed from the state made diverse sectors of society identify with this national identity leading to cultural homogenization. The elites were then able to create a social universe that served as a base for the oligarchic project of domination. Also, the internalization of the ethnically white discourse helped construct a shared culture (Alvarenga Venetulo 2004). The best works addressing this view include (Fischel 1990 and 1992), (Molina and Palmer 1992), (Taracena and Piel 1995), (Acuna Ortega and Diaz Arias 2002), (Molina Jimenez 2002), (Sandoval Garcia 2002), (Acuna Ortega, Mendez Alfaro and Fumero Vargas, Amoretti 2002), (Cortes 2003), (Diaz Arias 2006, 2007) and (Sojo 2010). These scholars have focused on the different methods used by the liberal intellectuals to spread their political mythology – the liberal educational reforms (Fischel 1992, Molina and Palmer 2003), the re-interpretation of historical events, the creation of new heroes, the introduction of civic holidays (Mendez 2007, Diaz 2006, Diaz 2007), the liberal oligarchic historiography (Molina 2012), and the role of the press (Vega Jimenez 2000).

These academics share the view that political mythologies and discourses are mere tools used by the political elite in order to pursue their own strategic interests and to legitimatise their particular socio-economic and political project. They do not acknowledge that a hegemonic order is the result of the *interaction* between different political actors' discourses and not the single-

handed imposition of one group's ideology on others. Nor do they acknowledge that the *Olympians* were also constrained by the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary and the international ideational context. The fact that the types of discourses that were accepted by the Costa Rican population were only those perceived as in keeping with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary restrained the actions of the political elites. Another weakness with the existing literature is that most works take the economic interests of the coffee oligarchs as the starting point of their analysis. Most works are heavily influenced by RCI's conception of interests.¹⁹

This dissertation adopts the PSDT's conception of interest as discursively constructed. Actors give meaning to their interests only after placing them within contextually and historically specific discursive structures. The existing literature neglects the influence that the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary played in shaping political leaders' conceptions of their own interests, delimiting the types of political identities that could be created, and determining the possible modes of political mobilization. This dissertation argues that the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary was politically powerful because "discursively constructed identities and discourses grant specific interpretations of the social world a hegemonic position, thereby legitimizing the organization of specific structures and hierarchies, which eventually come to be seen as the natural order of things. By regulating what can be said, what can be thought of as true or false, rational or irrational, these discursive structures condition and constrain political action by legitimizing certain aspects and policies and delegitimizing certain others" (Madianou, Mole, Ifversen 2007: 210).

¹⁹ Berman criticizes RCI's narrow conception of interests arguing that: "actors are not motivated simply by a desire to maximize income, wealth and resources; indeed, ideational scholars believe that actors often (purposively) behave in ways that will not maximize material interests, however defined, and that these nonmaterial interests, goals, and identities will critically shape the way they evaluate different courses of action" (Berman 2012:16). Berman states that rational choice scholars need to expand their understanding of what types of interests motivate political behavior, as well as how these interests are shaped by the actors' subjective understandings of specific events and by their particular thought-processes in order to address the full complexity of human motivations (Berman 2012:17).

Contrary to the belief that the *Olympians* created the “exceptionalist” national identity during the 1880s, this dissertation agrees with Consuelo Cruz’s view that it dates back to the colonial period. This dissertation reverses Palmer’s logic that a strong state is needed to create a national identity, arguing instead that a strong national identity is a *pre-requisite* for a strong state.²⁰ It then builds on the work of Consuelo Cruz (2000, 2005). In her article *Identity and Persuasion: How nations remember their past and make their futures* and her book *Political Culture and Institutional Development in Costa Rica and Nicaragua: World Making in the Tropics*, Cruz (2000, 2005) argues that the founding governor of the Costa Rican province, Juan Vazquez de Coronado was the first to develop the “exceptionalist” national identity. Cruz sustains that the colonial ideational context at the time of his arrival to the Costa Rican province had a significant impact on determining the particular type of national identity he created. Spain did not appoint a governor to Costa Rica until 1559 due to this province’s lack of natural resources and its small indigenous work force. During the period in which the encomienda system was in place and the harsh treatment of the indigenous population by the conquistadores was condoned, Costa Rica did not have a colonial governor. By the time Vazques de Coronado arrived to the province, the violent uprisings throughout the colonies against the encomienda system had convinced the Spanish Crown that Friar Las Casas’ arguments that the Spanish colonial rule was being debilitated and delegitimized by the abusive treatment of the natives was correct. The Crown issued new royal guidelines stating that the conquerors had to “live in harmony” with local populations and that the governors had to rule “in peace and tranquillity” and “deal peacefully” with the Indians, who were to be “attracted” to the faith (quote from Cruz 2000:290). To prove he was respecting this mandate, Vazquez de Coronado sent letters to the Crown dwelling on the “great love and benevolence” with which he treated the Indians, and how the natives reciprocated this (Cruz 2000:295). As Cruz states:

²⁰ The absence of a unified national identity and a common political project has been a constraint to democracy throughout the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. It was one of the main limits of the Arab Spring.

He enveloped his narratives in an almost technical aura, as when he very straightforwardly reported that his benign method of colonization proved 'so efficacious that it was publicized throughout the land, and that one Chief came to render obedience and to recognize his serfdom'. These exemplary exercises in reportage, then, documented the ideal conquest – a conquest seemingly free of jealousies, among conquerors wilful deceit or wanton violence against the natives (Cruz 2000: 295).

As Cruz states these rhetorical practices influenced the relations between the Spanish governors and the creole "nobles":

Costa Rica's governors routinely pressed the nobles' agenda and accorded them the respect they craved; and the nobles for their part, celebrated their governors as 'protective fathers' whose 'progressive administration' promoted the province's tranquillity. Meanwhile, in Nicaragua (as in the rest of Central America) acrimonious relations between the Spaniards and creoles destabilized the colonial order. The contrast merely emphasized Costa Rica's exceptional image (Cruz 2000: 296).

Therefore, by the time Costa Rica received its independence, its political elite perceived themselves as having exceptional traits. Cruz argues that political actors situate their struggles within dominant rhetorical frames defined as "a discursive structure that articulates in accessible ways the fundamental notions a group holds inter-subjectively about itself in the world and that allows or disallows specific strategies of persuasion on the basis of presumptive realism and normative sway" (Cruz 2000:275). Political contests between them "engender a collective field of imaginable possibilities, defined as a restricted array of plausible scenarios of how the world can or cannot be changed and how the future ought to look" (Cruz 2000: 277). She further argues that political cultures shape actors' understanding of what is fair and feasible. Actors are realistic because in their pursuit of their agendas, they seek a reasonable grip on the possibility of things. Their realism is normative because people look for compelling reasons to select one alternative over another when facing a difficult choice. In the struggles and settlements over vital issues no reason can be more powerful than one that appeals simultaneously to actors' selfishness, sense of justice and notions of the possible. She concludes that Costa Rica's political culture crucially affected democracy's chances and the way that democracy actually worked (Cruz 2005:2).

Although this dissertation builds on Cruz's research on the colonial period, it adopts a "thicker" definition of discourse arguing that discursive structures not only influenced the way political actors understood their particular world, but also structured political dynamics by delimiting the possible modes of political mobilization and by structuring hegemonic battles. The concept of identity developed by PSDT differs from that developed by Cruz's SI approach. PSDT offers a bottom-up approach, placing particular demands as the most basic unit of analysis. Cruz focuses on macro variations of normative systems of meaning. This macro view encouraged Cruz to adopt a conception of ideational change that favours ruptures and punctuations in otherwise stable set of norms. According to Carstensen (2009) this is a common mistake made by ideational theorists.²¹

Cruz argues that at key points "political culture itself can change at a surprisingly rapid pace, sometimes ahead of institutional and even socioeconomic restructuring" (Cruz 2005: 22). Cruz states that political

²¹ Cartensen states that PSDT and the interpretative approach offer a helpful tool-kit for understanding incremental ideational change. Cartensen adopts PSDT's relational understanding of language to his definition of an idea. Thus ideas are conceived as being constituted by a web of related elements of meaning. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue ideas are constituted by regularity of dispersion rather than an underlying principle external to the idea, so that different parts of the idea depend closely to each other (Cartensen 2009:600). Cartensen further explains that: "we can speak of the relation between elements of meaning within an idea as the *internal* determinant of ideational meaning. There also exists an *external* determinant of meaning, namely the ideational environment that the idea is part of" (Cartensen 2009: 600). To explain the *external* determinates of meaning, Cartensen builds on Bevir's arguments (1999) that the meaning of an idea derives neither from logic or experience, but rather from the other ideas it is related to. Cartensen quotes Bevir:

If people are to accommodate a new understanding, they must hook it on to aspects of their existing beliefs. The content of their existing beliefs, moreover, will make certain hooks available to them. To find a home for a new belief among their old ones, they must make intelligible connections between it and them. The connections they can make will obviously depend on the nature of their old beliefs. People can integrate a new belief into their existing beliefs only by relating themes in the former to some already present in the latter ... As people alter one belief, so they almost necessarily have to modify the beliefs connected with it, and then the beliefs connected with these others, and so on (Bevir, 1999, pp. 235–6).

learning can occur in a compressed time period: “When discursive formations fall into dispute, they can cause accelerated political-cultural change. Political-cultural shifts can occur swiftly because actors can learn to recognize the broader, unintended consequences of their rhetorical politics and amend them accordingly” (Cruz 2005: 22-23). She concludes that the 1948 Civil War was “the result of political-cultural change that was fast in pace, minor in its alteration of normative realism, and profound in its political-institutional ramifications” (Cruz 2005: 42). Cruz perceives institutional change as the result of political actors’ recognition of flaws in their rhetorical politics. This dissertation argues that institutional change is best conceived as the result of gradual and incremental ideational change resulting from hegemonic battles fought amongst political actors. It argues that the conditions of possibility of the 1948 Civil War can be traced back to the dislocation of the liberal oligarchic hegemony after the 1930s Great Depression. This “political-cultural shift” (Cruz) was not fast in pace, but rather evolved gradually as the different discourses battled for hegemony during the 1930s and 1940s. During this period, these discourses influenced each other and in the processes shaped the national ideational context.

Taking the consensual view, Cruz assumes that the social democrats’ military victory guaranteed their rise to hegemony. Cruz therefore fast-forwards from the end of the civil war to the first Figueres administration (1953-1958). This dissertation also differs from Cruz’s conception of politics. Cruz adopts Habermas’s model of “deliberative democracy”, while this dissertation adopts the “adversarial model of politics” proposed by Laclau and Mouffe. We will now outline PSDT’s adversarial model of politics.

Post Structural Discourse Theory: Radical Democracy

In the second edition of their seminal book *Hegemony and the Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe criticize the liberal conception of politics “which envisions democracy as a simple competition amongst interests taking place in a neutral terrain” (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: xvi). They argue that although Habermas’ concept of deliberative democracy offers the most promising and sophisticated vision of progressive politics, it is based on

the flawed assumption that arriving to a consensus is possible if people are able to leave aside their particular interests and think as rational beings. They agree with the Habermasians on the following points: a) their criticisms of the aggregative model of democracy; b) their argument that political identities are not pre-given but constituted and reconstituted through debate in public spheres; c) their belief that politics does not consist in simply registering already existing interests, but plays a crucial role in shaping political subjects; and d) their concern for widening the field of democratic struggles. However, they criticize Habermas's belief that the aim of the democratic society is the creation of consensus and that the elimination of conflict is possible and desirable. Laclau and Mouffe argue that:

The central role that the notion of antagonism plays in our work forecloses any possibility of a final reconciliation, of any kind of rational consensus, of a fully inclusive "we". For us, a non-exclusive public sphere of rational argument is a conceptual impossibility. Conflict and division, in our view, are neither disturbances that unfortunately cannot be eliminated nor empirical impediments that render impossible the full realization of a harmony that we cannot attain because we will never be able to leave our particularities completely aside in order to act in accordance with our rational self – a harmony which should nonetheless constitute the ideal towards which we strive. Indeed, we maintain that without conflict and division, a pluralistic democratic politics would be impossible. To believe that a final resolution of conflicts is eventually possible – even if it is seen as an asymptotic approach to the regulative idea of a rational consensus – far from providing the necessary horizon for the democratic project, is to put it at risk (Laclau and Mouffe 2001:xvii-xviii).

As Inigo Errejon Galvan wrote in an article commemorating Laclau's life and his works, Laclau's conception of politics is best conceived not as a boxing match (mere clash between existing actors), or a chess game (strategic choices, movements and alliances between pre-existing actors with pre-defined identities in a fixed context), but rather as a continuous Gramscian "war of positions" (April 13, 2014 edition of the Spanish newspaper *Diario*). Adopting Carl Schmitt's notion of politics built around the friend-enemy antagonism, and re-articulating the Gramscian concept of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe view politics as the continuous hegemonic battles fought amongst different political actors attempting to temporarily inscribe and partially fix the meaning of floating signifiers within a certain discursive chain to the exclusion of others. Politics implies a disruption process, which challenges established

identities and norms (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014:4). Mouffe argues that one of the specificities of modern democratic societies is the following:

A democratic society makes room for the 'adversary', i.e. the opponent who is no longer considered an enemy to be destroyed but someone whose existence is legitimate and whose rights will not be put into question. The category of the adversary serves [...] to designate the status of those who disagree concerning the ranking and interpretation of values. Adversaries will fight about the interpretation and the ranking of values, but their common allegiance to the values, which constitute the liberal democratic form of life creates a bond of solidarity which expresses their belonging to a common "we". It must be stressed however, that the category of the enemy does not disappear, it now refers to those who do not accept the set of values constitutive of the democratic form of life [...] there is no way for their demands to be considered legitimate within the "we" of democratic citizens, since their disagreement is not merely about ranking but of a much more fundamental type (Quoted by Norval 2000:230).

Therefore, as Norval states, democratic politics is not about overcoming the "us/them" distinction, but about the different ways of establishing that distinction through the discursive creation of political frontiers. Power struggles cannot be eliminated from democratic systems even if the political actors stop perceiving each other as enemies.

As Panizza and Miorelli (2012) highlight, power struggles are at the centre of all hegemonic battles:

Discursive practices involve binding together heterogeneous ideational elements that have no necessary logical relations among themselves and were not previously thought of as belonging together in a relational ensemble. Thus, discursive practices enable actors to experience and think about the world in certain ways. In doing so, discourses crystallise power struggles and set the parameters of what is *sayable* and indeed *thinkable* in a given social order (Laclau, 1980). (Panizza and Miorelli 2012:5)

Laclau and Mouffe argue that it is impossible to have a world where hegemonic power struggles and emerging hierarchies cease to exist (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014:6). They assign a special role to progressive intellectuals in processes of democratization due to their power of persuasion. According to them persuasion occurs when new elements enter into a given situation that cannot be accommodated by the old view. At this point, a new view may forcefully displace an old view by introducing a principle of coherence and intelligibility into the situation (interview conducted

by Worsham and Olson to Laclau and Mouffe 1999). Intellectuals are responsible for being the vocal advocates of the new view and showing the contingency, incoherence and contradictions of non-democratic regimes. Laclau and Mouffe view “literacy” as a crucial element in any kind of revolutionary struggle, but do not restrict literacy to formal education. They state that: “literacy begins to be possible in a situation in which there is a proliferation of discourses opposed to oppression” (Worsham and Olson 1999: 3).

The formation of alliances and the development of a coherent political project are also crucial factors determining the success of a counter-hegemonic movement. When criticizing the “radical Centre” strategy adopted by leftist political parties after the fall of communism, Laclau and Mouffe proposed an alternative strategy. They state:

If one is to build a chain of equivalences among democratic struggles, one needs to establish a frontier and define an adversary, but that is not enough. One also needs to know for what one is fighting for, what kind of society one wants to establish. This requires from the Left an adequate grasp of the nature of power relations, and the dynamics of politics. What is at stake is the building of a new hegemony. So our motto is “Back to the hegemonic struggle” (Mouffe and Chantal 2000:xix).

Thus, they claim that the possibility of a free society depends on the understanding of relations of power and creating productive alliances leading to new hegemonies (Worsham and Olson 1999: 3). Scholars influenced by PSDT have applied the concept of a counter-hegemonic bloc to interpret the anti neo-liberal globalization movements that have emerged over the last 15 years: from the Zapatistas, the Seattle Protests²², to the more recent Arab Spring, the Spanish indignados, the Greek aganaktismenoi and the Occupy Wall Street movement²³. In the introduction to the new book *Radical*

²² As Alexandros Kiolipkiolis and Giorgios Katsambekis states, the Zapatista and Seattle Protest gave rise to theoretical debates over the import of their ideological and political forms (Baiocchi 2004, Day 2005, Holloway 2005, Tormey 2005, Robinson and Turmey 2007, Newman 2011).

²³ All of these movements shared the following characteristics: a) they appear to be leaderless and self-organized insurgencies of common citizens, b) their membership was socially and ideologically heterogeneous, c) they had no set agenda or ideology, d) they used new technologies and social networking. They were committed to direct

Democracy and Collective movements today: Responding to the Challenge of Karios, Alexandros Kiolipkiolis and Giorgios Katsambekis explore the current debate in political theory between the horizontal multitude (non-representative networks of autonomous multiplicities) proposed by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt versus the politics of hegemony proposed by Laclau and Mouffe. When analysing the “re-awakening of history” with the post 2011 global popular uprising, they conclude that: “Gramscian politics of hegemony and the construction of counter-hegemonic bloc are arguably more than ever required in order to arrest the humanitarian disaster and the existing social dislocation.” Arditi (2014) and Panizza and Miorelli (2012) however warn that PSDT’s conflation of hegemony with politics seems to close the conceptual space for any other kind of politics that does not entail hegemonic practices and articulations.

Alternative interpretation of Costa Rica’s democratization process applying a social constructivist approach

Analysing Costa Rica’s democratization process allows us to appreciate both the impossibility and undesirability of eradicating conflict from politics, but at the same time the crucial importance of channelling this conflict through institutional means. This dissertation agrees with the consensual view that Costa Rica’s democratic success lies to a great extent in its solid institutional framework. Yet it argues that the existing literature has disregarded the importance of one crucial institution – the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. This discursive institution has structured political dynamics by encouraging political actors to transform antagonistic relations into agonistic ones. It has also encouraged political actors to create narratives interpreting socio-economic indicators in ways that have facilitated democratic political stability. The “exceptionalist” collective imaginary has also encouraged political actors to address emerging demands differentially, leading to the expansion of the state and the avoidance of populist ruptures.

democratic participation of all in the procedures through deliberate and coordinated actions.

This *transformist* logic has been broken only once – during the 1948 Civil War. Applying a social constructivist analytical approach allows us to explore the discursive condition of possibility of the war and the hegemonic battles fought during the 1930s and 1940s. This approach encourages us to place these hegemonic battles within the changing national and international ideational context. It allows us to appreciate that the success of the various political projects being proposed depended to a large extent on the public perception of the consistency between the particular political projects and the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. It also allows us to explore the new myths developed by the intellectuals and later used by the political leaders and the population to structure social relations - such as the *Juan Santamaria* myth, the *comunismo a la tica* myth, and the *National Liberation* myth. This approach further lets us explore the role that these myths played in shaping Costa Rica’s democratic institutional development. In a nutshell, the social constructivist approach proposed by this dissertation encourages us to focus on the role of intellectuals/ political leaders, myths, hegemonic battles, and discursive strategies in analysing Costa Rica’s gradual and reformist democratic institutional development.

Focusing on these factors allows us to have an alternative, but certainly not definitive interpretation of Costa Rica’s democratization process. This dissertation acknowledges that the complex and multi-dimensional process of democratization cannot possibly be explained by a single approach. Social scientists focus on building and assessing models that are forced to simplify a far more complex reality. Therefore, all theories inevitably direct our attention towards some issues while obscuring others, thus creating a distinctive “play of light and shadow” (Jensen 1989 from Hall 2005). This dissertation’s ambition is modest – it merely seeks to shed light on discursive factors that have remained in the shadows of the existing literature. Shedding light on them opens up new ways of understanding Costa Rica’s democratization process.

I have no doubt that the sons of Costa Rica, inspired by their desire to contribute to the well-being of our country, will once again embark with me on the task of making it grander and preserving it, which is our task at hand. My fellow compatriots, disregard any voices that can deviate you from the path of the inalterable wise and healthy values of our country; show the whole world that you are capable of being free: foster your peaceful nature; and never, never, give a step that is not bound by the law. This will be, I guarantee you, the guiding principles of my administration and I will be its most faithful guardian.

President Jose Rafael de Gallegos acceptance speech delivered to Congress

San Jose, March 9th 1833.

Chapter 2

Costa Rica's transition to democracy and the rise of the liberal oligarchic hegemony

This chapter explores the Costa Rican political elite's unique response to the dislocation of the colonial order during the post-independence period. While this dislocatory effect triggered devastating civil wars between conservatives and liberals throughout Latin America, Costa Ricans were able to channel the conflict between conservatives and liberals through democratic/institutional means. The fact that the battles over hegemony in Costa Rica were fought within the confines of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary limited the modes of political mobilization available for Costa Rican political leaders and influenced their political projects. Neither faction sought to make alliances with their counter-parts in the region, resulting in a situation where Costa Rica was able to avoid involvement in the regional wars. The conservative and liberal political leaders viewed it in everyone's interest to maintain the external political frontier that placed Central Americans as the "constitutive outside" of their political order. This strong external political frontier weakened internal differences and encouraged the emergence of a *transformist* political project.

Using discourses applying the *logic of difference* to integrate the demands of the conservative elites, the liberal intellectuals belonging to the *Tertulias Patrioticas* succeeded in forming a stable hegemonic order. As was common in the region during the post-independence period due to the influence of liberal ideas, the members of the *Tertulias Patrioticas* assumed that politics was the exclusive domain of the educated elites. Yet unlike the rest of

Central America, the Costa Rican political leaders understood the importance of addressing the needs of the Costa Rican population in order to guarantee the country's political stability.

During the 1870s a counter-hegemonic movement led by Tomas Guardia, a member of the *Grupo del Olimpo*, sought to end the domination of the coffee oligarchs on Costa Rican politics and strengthen the Costa Rican state. Without challenging the socio-economic power of the coffee elites, they sought to expand the liberal hegemonic order by integrating the masses into Costa Rica's political system. In order to transform the illiterate masses into "responsible" citizens with "appropriate" democratic values (Ferraz 1889), the *Grupo del Olimpo* started an educational reform program and created a new myth of national unity - the Juan Santamaria myth. This myth combined elements of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary with elements of liberalism. Both conservatives and liberal leaders adopted this unifying myth as they appreciated the structuring effect that it had vis-à-vis the masses. Costa Rica's transition to democracy was facilitated by the continuous expansion of the liberal oligarchic hegemony.

This chapter argues that one of the key factors explaining why Costa Rica followed a drastically divergent path relative to its neighbours was due to differences in the predominant logics of articulation during the post-independence period. It contrasts the discourses used by the *Olympians* during the Tomas Guardia dictatorship (1870-1881), which applied the *logic of difference*, with those used by the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan liberals under the Guatemalan Rufino Barrios dictatorship (1873-1885) and the Nicaraguan Jose Zelaya dictatorship (1893-1909), which applied the *logic of equivalence*. It also illustrates the process by which the *Olympians* sought to transform the masses into citizens by analysing excerpts from the liberal newspapers *Boletin Oficial* (April – May 1856) and *El Ciudadano* (1880-1883). To illustrate how the conservatives also adopted discourses using the *logic of difference*, it selects excerpts from the conservative newspaper *7 de Noviembre* (1889). Other primary data analysed includes the following: a book written by the Juan Ferraz in 1889 entitled *Librito de los Deberes*; a book written by the

Nicaraguan liberals published in 1906 entitled *Jose Santos Zelaya President of Nicaragua*; a book written by member of the opposition to Guatemala's dictatorship Alvaro Contreras *A los Pueblos de Centro America* published August 1, 1879; and a book written in 1889 by the Swiss scholar Paul Biolley – *Costa Rica and her Future*.

Dislocation of the Colonial Order

The news of independence came as a shock to all Costa Ricans. On the 12th of October, Juan Manuel de Cañas, the subaltern political head of the Costa Rican province, received three letters: 1) a copy of the Acta de Guatemala of 15 September 1821; 2) a copy of the Bando de Leon of the 28 of September of 1821; and 3) a letter by the Jefe Politico Superior of Guatemala giving his views on the events that transpired. These letters gave the Costa Ricans three choices: they could form part of the Mexican Empire, form a new Central American entity under Guatemala or stay subordinated to Nicaragua. On October 13th, 1821 de Cañas invited the members of the cabildo de Cartago and other important functionaries to Cartago, the capital of the province, to decide how to respond to these letters. Despite the desire of all Costa Rican elites to have greater autonomy, they realized they could not become a viable nation due to their small dimensions, low population (approximately 50,000 people), economic weakness, and the risk of being invaded by other nations (Acuña Ortega: 67). Juan Manuel de Cañas tried to diffuse the rising tension amongst the conservative factions prevalent in Cartago, and the liberal factions prevalent in San Jose, Heredia and Alajuela. The meeting was disbanded when a conservative political representative from Cartago, Osejo, argued that this body did not have the right to agree on anything because the representatives had not been elected and not every major city of the province of Costa Rica was represented. Other participants agreed and the meeting came to a close. Juan Manuel de Cañas was asked to visit the remaining mayors in the cities of the province that had not been invited to the meeting to ask them their views. San Jose and Heredia were in favour of staying aligned to Leon. In the meanwhile, the leaders in Cartago were discussing the potential conflict that could emerge between Guatemala and Nicaragua. They decided that the wisest thing would be for Costa Rica to remain neutral and

pressed other cities to annul the vote altogether. The leaders in San Jose agreed with those in Cartago and Alajuela while those in Heredia decided to retain their support for the Diputacion of Leon. The political elite in San Jose suggested another meeting with representatives of all the cities and towns to discuss the topic further. Initially, the representatives of Heredia stated that they would not send any delegates to this meeting as they stressed that they would not change their mind on maintaining their support for Leon. After much insistence from other representatives, the political elite of Heredia agreed to send a representative stressing that they would do so only to demonstrate their “patriotism” and “their brotherly union” with the rest of the province (Acuña Ortega 1995). It is interesting to note the dynamics used by the Costa Rican elites to settle their differences. Everyone agreed that the decision had to be taken through institutional “democratic” means. The discourses used by the different factions retained external political frontiers, placing them either in Guatemala or in Nicaragua depending on their position, which in turn were influenced by the economic ties that these elites had established with Guatemalan or Nicaraguan elites during the colonial period. Neither one placed the political frontier inside the Costa Rican province.

On November 12, 1821, the meeting of *La Junta de Legados Denominada de los Pueblos* was held in Cartago. The representatives were called *legados* and not *diputados* as Costa Rican political elites had decided not to create a new Constitution but rather to make amendments to the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 (Calderon Hernandez 2003: 216). The name used for the representatives was considered important because it signalled the elite’s desire to maintain continuity with the colonial past, thus maintaining a sense of stability. During this meeting, the Junta accepted the renunciation of de Cañas who chose to abdicate his position freely as there were rumours that de Cañas would be deposed since he had been appointed by the Spanish Crown and not elected by Costa Rican representatives. The fact that de Cañas did not try to impose himself as a new dictator or was not used as a puppet by the elites to promote their interests reflects the influence of the *transformist* logic of articulation. Juan Manuel de Cañas and the rest of the elites knew that they could not mobilize significant sectors of society to

support a dictatorial imposition perceived as going against the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary.

The influence of the *logic of difference* on the discourse used by the political leaders is clearly visible in the document produced during the *La Junta de Legados Denominada de los Pueblos* meeting which they called the “*Pacto de la Concordia*” (The Pact of Harmony). The delegates agreed that this Pact would serve as “the base of conciliation amongst all the people of the Costa Rican province during the period in which the provisional government would rule” until the fate of the province was settled (Calderon Hernandez 2003: 216). The preamble of the document stated:

Upon swearing absolute Independence from the Spanish Government, the people were free to form a new government. This province, wanting to stay free, united, safe and quite, has formed a covenant of union and concord, while a supreme constitutional government is formed (with the other Central American nations) (quoted by Calderon Hernandez 2003: 216).

As this excerpt states, the priorities of the Costa Rican political leaders were to remain “united, secure, and in peace”. To this end, a *Junta Superior Gubernativa* composed of 7 elected permanent members and 2 substitutes was formed. It was agreed that elections would be held every six months to renew half of the Junta. Every three months elections would be held to confirm if the president could stay in power (Calderon Hernandez 2003:217). To avoid conflict amongst the political actors of the four major cities San Jose, Cartago, Heredia and Alajuela over which city would become the capital, the *Junta Superior Gubernativa* decided to rotate the capital every three months amongst these cities. This shows the degree of consensus amongst the Costa Rican elites that internal conflict had to be avoided at all cost. As Cruz states this is one of the first examples of a *transaccion* (bargaining to arbitrate conflicts among competing claimants) in Costa Rica’s history (Cruz 2005:88). The Pact of Harmony encouraged the political elite to remain united to avoid civil unrest:

Countrymen, if you remain united in your opinions, you shall observe from the tranquillity of your homes the disastrous picture of anarchy that unfortunately becomes visible in many provinces of this continent. (We must) remain attentive to the cruel circumstances of other countries so that we may perfect the political wisdom that brings us honour (quoted by Cruz 2005:88).

The writers of the Pact of Harmony placed the external political frontier outside the Costa Rican province (in other Central American countries) in order to diffuse internal tension amongst the Costa Rican political leaders. This political frontier sought to delimit the types of actions that could be considered appropriate and legitimate in Costa Rica. It created subject positions by stating that the Costa Rican elites had to “subordinate themselves to the authority of the ruling government” because failing to do so would lead the Costa Rican province down the “Central American path” of anarchy and violence. The writers of the Pact of Harmony argued that in order to “perfect the political wisdom that brings us honour” (quoted by Cruz 2005:88), Costa Ricans had to retain internal unity.

Meanwhile, from Mexico the Emperor Iturbide sought to annex the Central American region. On 1823, the Guatemalan elites decided to join the Mexican Empire but the Salvadoreans did not. Iturbide’s forces defeated the Salvadorean forces and Salvador was annexed by force. The Costa Rican political elites had not reached a consensus on whether to join the Mexican Empire. The elites in Cartago and Heredia argued in favour of joining Mexico in order to avoid an invasion and certain defeat by the Mexican armies as had happened to El Salvador, while the elites in San Jose and Alajuela argued that it was more prudent to wait and see how circumstances evolved. However, the elites in Cartago under the leadership of Joaquin Oreamuno of the Partido Anexionista, declared a proposed date for Costa Rica’s annexation by Mexico. The fact that Oreamuno acted without the consensus of the rest of the provinces made the San Jose political elite furious. During a *Cabildo Abierto* held in San Jose, Jose Gregorio Ramirez was named General Commander and was asked to organize an army to fight against Oreamuno’s followers in Cartago. On 5th April 1823, in the Alto de Ochomogo, the forces of San Jose under the leadership of Jose Gregorio Ramirez defeated those of Cartago due to major desertions of the Oreamuno forces. It is interesting to note that the rationale for going to war was because Oreamuno acted without the consensus of the rest of the province, not because he posed an “existential” threat to the nation. Other Central American political leaders

mobilized the masses to fight their opponents (conservatives versus liberals) by portraying them as enemies posing an “existential threat” to the nation. Another interesting thing to note is that the first Costa Rican civil war lasted only three and a half hours precisely because the cause was not considered sufficiently grave by the combatants to justify risking their lives.

The San Jose political elite also reacted differently to their victory. In other Central American countries, the military victors would become dictators - instead, Jose Gregorio Ramirez convoked an extraordinary session of Congress. He explicitly stated that no one who had fought in the Battle of Ochomogo should be present as their participation in the battle prevented them from being in the right state of mind to negotiate (Acuña 1995). Therefore, Ramirez was making a clear separation between war and administration: people who participate in wars should not be take part in the task of administration. This was a profound contrast to the rest of the region, where a military victory legitimized the right to rule of the victorious faction, in part because the leadership skills required in combat were perceived as desirable skills for political leaders. In essence, they perceived political administrations as a continuation of the revolutions against their conservative or liberal enemies. Thus the logic of articulation used in the battlefield also informed their administrative policy choices.

In the meanwhile, opposition to Emperor Iturbide’s rule had grown amongst former members of the Mexican Congress, Mexican military leaders who had not been adequately paid, and Mexican Republican intellectuals. An opposition coalition led by General Santa Ana defeated Iturbide’s forces, leading to his surrender and the Mexican Empire’s collapse. Since Costa Ricans believed they could not remain independent due to the province’s small size and poor economic situation, they agreed to join the Central American Federal Republic founded in 1823 with its capital in Guatemala. Internal strife developed between Central American liberals and the conservatives reflecting tensions between the centralists and the local nationalists (Hayes 2006: 39). In 1824 civil war broke out in Nicaragua. With the intensification of the war, Guanacaste asked to be annexed by Costa

Rica.²⁴ By 1828, the internal fighting amongst all Central American leaders led to the disintegration of the Central American federation.

The *Tertulias Patrioticas* intellectuals

Immediately before the disintegration of the Central American Federation, a group of Costa Rican liberal intellectuals formed a group called the *Tertulias Patrioticas*. These intellectuals were heavily influenced by masonic ideas. They viewed the United States founding fathers as their role models and set up a presidential system based on the United States model. The first president of the *Tertulia Patriotica* was Juan Mora Fernandez, who became the first president of Costa Rica in 1823, ruling until 1833. He was a lawyer by profession and established the foundation for a sound judicial system with a Supreme Court, expanded public education, brought the first printing press to the country, and founded its first newspaper to spread the group's liberal views.

Other members of the *Tertulias Patrioticas* included Mariano Montealegre, one of the most influential political figures in Costa Rica's independence period and the priests Manuel Alvarado, Felix Bonilla and Camilo de Mora. The members of the *Tertulias Patrioticas* wanted to preserve good relations with the Catholic Church in order to maintain stability. They sought to combine elements of the Catholic discourse with elements of the liberal discourse in order to integrate the masses and the conservatives into their emerging hegemonic regime. The Costa Rican political leaders continued to rely on the Catholic Church to act as intermediaries between government authorities and the masses as they had done during the colonial period and left the Church in charge of health care and education until 1884.

The post-independence liberal political elite knew the Catholic Church could play a vital role in maintaining social cohesion and containing rising tensions –

²⁴ Guanacaste is an interesting region because it shows how people with Nicaraguan heritage and socio-economic structures acted in politically distinct way once they were integrated into Costa Rican society through the “exceptional” collective imaginary.

a role it played with some success. This is seen in a letter sent to all priests by Jose Joaquin de Alvarado the Costa Rican ecclesiastic vicar dated the 7th of February 1835:

Peace is the serenity of the mind, the simplicity of the heart and the bond of love; without it there is no stillness nor order in families or in peoples, without it the whole edifice of society is ruined and destroyed; with it comes all good [...] Therefore, I charge you and strongly pray that in your exhortations to the people, and in your family or in your private conversations, you highlight the enormous benefits brought to our state, if we succeed in establishing a solid and perpetual peace. Also remind them that the Authorities have been decreed by God to procure all possible goodness both temporal and spiritual [...] (ACM Box N 67 sf)

The Costa Rican Catholic Church's discourse also incorporated elements of meaning derived from the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary to encourage the maintenance of peace, tranquillity and unity. The Church's discourse reinforced the subject positions used during the colonial order in which the masses had to be submissive and obedient to the authorities, while the authorities had to address their basic needs. The liberals did not want to change those subject positions. The Church's discourse argued that by retaining internal peace and stability all citizens would help the state to fulfil its duty to the people, portraying social harmony and peace as a precondition for progress. They added "Peace" to the Liberal Latin American slogan "Order and Progress". Their slogan "Peace, Order and Progress" reinforced their message that peace was a pre-requisite for order and progress.

All of this led to an interesting dynamic emerging in Costa Rica. During the moments of greatest civil conflict in the region, the Costa Rican political elites pursued reformist policies to preserve their internal peace. They argued that social harmony could be guaranteed by providing property ownership to the greatest number of people and that Costa Rica's exceptionalism was derived from this more egalitarian distribution of land and from peoples' resulting respect for private property.

During the immediate post-independence period, Costa Rica's economy was based on subsistence farming in nuclear settlements and small trading networks based on the domestic consumer market for imported textiles, the

exportation of cacao, livestock, silver and some tobacco to Panama and Nicaragua, and through the trade of food and handicrafts in the daily local market (Mahoney 2001:83). The Costa Rican liberals created a coffee-based agro-export development model maintaining small and medium sized farms as opposed to creating large latifundia. Public land policies were passed which granted homesteading rights and confirmed ownership based solely on peaceful occupation of unclaimed land for ten years or more (Gudmundson 1989: 229). In 1825 the national government removed the tithe on coffee and other potential export crops. In 1828 it awarded up to 110 acres of extra land to growers who managed to establish permanent crops on underutilized lands. In 1832 it passed legislation offering direct subsidies for successful coffee growers (Mahoney 2001: 144). Within the central coffee districts of Costa Rica, smallholding was the overwhelmingly predominant form of landownership between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century (Gudmundson 1989:231). While the small and medium sized property holders benefitted from coffee expansion, the indigenous communities of the Central Valley suffered from the privatization of communal lands and were forced to move to the wilderness (towards Talamanca). By the time Braulio Carrillo became president in 1835, coffee production and exports became the engine of economic growth. The insertion of Costa Rica into the global capitalist market through coffee exports generated sufficient resources to finance the expansion of Costa Rica's state apparatus (Taracena, 1995: 56), a symbol of which was Carrillo creating a new currency by modifying the existing Central American coins.

In the process of state formation, Carrillo had to deal with two forces suffering negative consequences from the emergence of a stronger national state: the Costa Rican Catholic Church and the local governments known as *ayuntamientos*. Carrillo maintained the conciliatory approach towards the Church. He supported the Costa Rican Catholic Church's successful plea to the Vatican for them to be able to form their own ecclesiastic government in Costa Rica, granting them functional independence from the Nicaraguan Church.

Carrillo centralized power in a strong state. He repealed the legislation that had allowed for the rotation of the capital between San Jose, Cartago, Heredia and Alajuela as had been agreed under the Pact of Harmony. Upon receiving this news, a group of political leaders from Heredia, Cartago, and Alajuela formed a “League” to attack San Jose, but were easily defeated. Carrillo’s opponents could not mobilize significant sectors of Costa Rican society, therefore, the civil conflict did not last long and the liberals consolidated their power in San Jose (Mahoney 2001:81).

The insertion of Costa Rica into the capitalist system through a single product – coffee - made them vulnerable to changing coffee prices and international crisis. By 1840, coffee represented roughly 80% of all exports from Costa Rica (Mahoney 2001: 147). When coffee prices dropped in 1847-49, many small property owners were forced to sell their land to pay off the debts they had incurred to finance the planting season, becoming wage labourers. The proportion of agricultural wage labourer in the economically active population rose from 25% in 1864 to 36% in 1892 reaching 40% in 1927 (Molina and Palmer 2009:65).

Rise to hegemony of the liberal oligarchic discourse

During this period, the liberal political leaders used the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary to de-politicize the masses. Placing liberalism as the new nodal point of their discursive formation, the liberals re-articulated the floating signifiers *poverty*, *equality* and *democracy*. They argued that Costa Rica’s generalized poverty during the colonial period had led to the emergence of an egalitarian, peaceful and democratic society in Costa Rica. Therefore, generalized poverty was framed as a unifying and positive concept (Jimenez Matarrita 2008). The solution to this generalized poverty (underdevelopment) was the promotion of agro-export development model based on the product in which Costa Rica had the greatest competitive advantage - coffee. Liberals argued that once the country became fully integrated into the international capitalist system, Costa Rica would be lifted out of its state of generalized poverty, automatically making everyone better off. Thus the role of the state was to promote the coffee industry, build the infrastructure necessary for the

import/export businesses, promote education, and establish the rule of law necessary for the proper working of the capitalist system. Another necessary ingredient was the attraction of foreign capital and investors to build the needed physical infrastructure and provide the expertise to promote the import/export sector. Good levels of health and sanitation were also perceived as necessary factors for attracting foreign investors. Both liberals and conservative political leaders held the dominant liberal economic view and gave priority to these factors.

While the notion of generalized poverty created the image of Costa Rica as a classless egalitarian society, the notion of ethnic homogeneity sought to reduce racial tension. The liberal discourse downplayed racial divisions, arguing that all Costa Ricans were white - neglecting the fact that there was a significant portion of blacks, mulattos and indigenous people. They sought to prevent racial tension by encouraging everyone to identify themselves first as Costa Ricans and only secondarily in racial, class-based, or regional based terms stressing the Costa Rican “us” versus the Central American “other”. This discourse had an impact on the interaction between the elite and the masses as both the elites and the masses had to play within the rules defined by the liberal oligarchic discourse. The Costa Rican political leaders used the existing notions of interdependence and egalitarianism to create equivalential chains between the demands of the masses and the demands of the elites, arguing that they all shared a common objective – to avoid falling into the cycles of violence prevalent in the rest of the region. They argued that since Costa Rica was an ethnically homogenous and socially egalitarian society, all demands were equally important. The political leaders created ad hoc state institutions to address particularistic demands differentially – thus preventing potential populist ruptures.

As Costa Rican society became more diversified, the Costa Rican state organized certain workers and professions to regulate key trades and protect wider societal interests (Booth 1999:432). Between 1830 and 1865, the Costa Rican state created mandatory guilds of miners, drovers, port and dockworkers, and boatmen. The government also chartered guilds for medical

practitioners and lawyers in 1850s. During periods in which the economy suffered from drops in coffee prices, mutual aid societies proliferated. The Costa Rican municipal governments sought to address demands as they arose and also settled disputes between rural workers and their employers. The workers perceived the municipal government as fair intermediaries as they were able to obtain their demands more often than not.

Meanwhile, the Costa Rican elites continued to consolidate their economic power by controlling the commercial aspects of coffee production – i.e. financing, processing, and marketing. During this period, Costa Rican coffee barons dominated politics, largely excluding the general public. The lack of active political participation amongst the masses was as common as it was in the rest of the region. Throughout much of the 19th Century, literacy and property ownership requirements as well as the exclusion of women barred all but 10% of the population from voting. Most elections were indirect. Those eligible voted in the first round of elections to choose electors (usually from the coffee aristocracy), who in turn would choose officeholders. Liberal and conservative factions struggled for power, often manipulating electoral results or conducting coups. From 1824 to 1899, the average Costa Rican presidency lasted only 2.4 years and 37% of the presidents resigned before completing their terms, with one fifth deposed by coup d'état. However, despite this turnover, there were no civil wars or broader instability in the regime.

The fact that conservative and liberal factions plotted coups against each other shows the limits of theories that explain Costa Rica's exceptionalism based on a democratic political culture and Habermas's models of consensual politics. Conflict and power struggles were as central to Costa Rican politics as they are in any liberal democratic political system. What made Costa Rica exceptional was that these political struggles did not escalate into civil wars as they did in the rest of the region because neither faction could mobilize different sectors of society outside of the elite. Respecting the external political frontiers, neither faction portrayed their opponents as an "existential" threat to gather support from specific sectors of the population. Both liberal

and conservative political leaders appreciated the strong power that the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary had on structuring social relations between classes in a way that de-politicized them. This guaranteed the conservative and liberal elites a privileged position in society without having to resort to the coercive measures used in the rest of the region. They thus conducted their power struggles without mobilizing the masses. In turn, the masses were left at the margins of politics – mostly oblivious to the details of the power struggles between the conservatives and the liberals.

A member of the military, General Tomas Guardia, wanted to put an end to the conservative and liberal power struggles and create a counter-hegemonic movement that would integrate the masses into the political system. To this end, Tomas Guardia agreed to join the liberal plotters of the 1870 Coup.

Factors leading to the 1870 Coup

During the 1860s, the main political cleavage was between the Montealegre clan led by liberals educated in the United Kingdom and with coffee based commercial interests in San Jose, and the conservative faction led by the Iglesias and the Tinoco clans who had been educated in Guatemala and were landowners based in Cartago. The Church sided with Tinoco clan as did some newly emerging commercialists, lawyers and young intellectuals. The two main leaders of the conservative faction were Julio Volio and Francisco Maria Iglesia, both nephews of the Costa Rican Catholic Church bishop Anselmo Llorente. The *Montealegristas* and the *Tinoquistas* disagreed over the role of the Church in public education, the types of infrastructure projects that were necessary and the location of these projects, the elimination of certain monopolies, decentralization of power to the municipalities, and the imposition of controls over the budget. By the 1860s, the liberals started to see the necessity of a profound educational reform to spread liberal values amongst the masses throughout the country. Although liberals wanted to retain cordial relations with the Catholic Church, they wanted to eliminate their monopoly on public education, leading to a natural point of conflict.

In 1868 the conservative candidate Jesus Jimenez became president for the second time. Tensions between the conservatives from Cartago and liberal factions from San Jose were mounting. According to the liberal factions, the policies passed by Jimenez favoured the Cartago elite. One of the most important policies was Jimenez's decision to build a costly road connecting San Jose to the port in Limon instead of the port in Puntarenas. The road to Limon would pass through Cartago and would benefit the coffee business of the Cartago based families (Molina 1994). Costa Rica did not have the means to build another road to Puntarenas. Rumours were spreading of a potential coup. The 21st of May 1869, Jimenez handed his resignation to Congress stating that he could not govern under those circumstances. As Jimenez had planned, the Jimenista-controlled Congress rejected his resignation. Jimenez then declared that in order to stop the instability caused by the liberals he had to suspend the constitutional order and exile the people disturbing the peace - Joaquin Fernandez Oreamuno, Bruno Carranza, Leon Fernandez, Juan Felix, Francisco Maria Iglesia and the Generals Maximo Blanco and Salazar. Two of his three secretaries of state resigned – the third was the president's own brother Agapito. When Francisco Montealegre and other opponents of Jimenez heard that Eusebio Figueroa, Minister of War, Justice and Gobernacion and Fomento had resigned, they set up a meeting to plan a coup. According to the memoirs of Tomas Guardia's brother, Victor Guardia, the conspirators included: a) relatives of those exiled by Jimenez; b) members of the San Jose based liberal elite who viewed Jimenez's policies as hurting their economic interests; c) congressmen opposed to Jimenez's authoritarian actions; and d) military officials who objected Jimenez's removal of General Blanco and Salazar. Their removal triggered the purging of officials from San Jose and their replacement with officials from Cartago (Molina 1994). Amongst the military officials were General Tomas Guardia and General Prospero Fernandez. Their plan consisted in taking control of the military barracks in San Jose, Heredia, Cartago and Alajuela and then demanding Jimenez to step down.

On April 27th 1870, General Tomas Guardia, General Prospero Fernandez, and a group of other men attacked the main military barrack in San Jose

where most of the ammunition was stored. Minutes after the troops stormed into the Cuartel de Artilleria, General Alejo Biscoubi was killed. Without their commanding leader, the rest of the soldiers surrendered (Molina 1994). Once in control of the Cuartel de Artilleria and most of the ammunition, Tomas Guardia demanded the surrender of the other military barracks. Further confrontations in Heredia, Alajuela and Cartago were avoided due to the mediation of relatives of the parties involved and the diplomatic skills of the French and Spanish ambassadors (Botey 2003: 286). Jimenez was forced to step down.

Under the leadership of Tomas Guardia, the military decided not to hand over power to Francisco Montealegre Fernandez as originally planned. Both Tomas Guardia and General Prospero Fernandez belonged to the group of intellectuals known as the *Grupo del Olimpo* who wanted to end the coffee barons' dominion over Costa Rican politics, strengthen the Costa Rican state and start a "Liberal Revolution". Without the backing of any faction of the military, Francisco Montealegre was forced to accept. On the 28th of April, the military set up a provisional government and designated Bruno Carranza as the interim president. On August 8th 1870, Bruno Carranza stepped down and Tomas Guardia became president. Bruno Carranza argued that the top priority of his interim presidency had been to re-establish national cohesion in order to instate a new constitutional order as quickly as possible as desired by the Costa Rican population:

The decree of April 28 [1870] was the first major act made while the noise of the weapons was still being heard [...] In it the fundamental rights of the citizens were recognized and it placed a limit on the absolute power delegated to me [...] From the day the decree was passed, to this day, in just over one hundred days, the actions of the dictatorial power have been limited to sustaining public order, and to pursue the Constitutional reorganization of the country, fulfilling the mandates of the people expressed in popular acts, which constitute for us a real plebiscite (Message to Congress by Bruno Carranza on delivered on August 8, 1870).

The *Olympians* argued that their revolution was fought to defend Costa Rica's civil liberties trampled over by Jimenez. Using a discourse applying the *logic of difference*, they framed their "Liberal Revolution" as a defence of Costa Rica's democratic institutional framework and its rule of law, as opposed to a

coup against Jimenez. According to them, their immediate priority was to reinstate the civil dimension of liberalism (individual liberties, freedom of speech, and the right to justice) present in Costa Rica since the post-independence period but weakened by the coffee barons during their power struggles. They stated that their next aim was to foster the political dimension of liberalism (expanding political participation and the freedom to advocate political alternatives as well as creating strong political parties). However, for the political dimension of liberalism to come about, it was first necessary to pass further liberal reforms. To do this it was necessary to constrain the power of the liberal and conservative elites.

The absence of *relations of antagonism* in the discourse used by the liberal revolutionaries can be seen in the following message delivered by Bruno Carranza to the Constitutional Assembly on August 8th, 1870:

And I am pleased to say that neither exile nor prison, nor persecution have been means employed by our Cabinet for the preservation of public order. The loyal and prudent conduct of the army, the good sense of Costa Ricans, and a set of moderate policies that prevented the population from feeling the full scope of power that the revolution had invested in the revolutionary government, have served to guarantee that this government has fully respected the purest Republican values (Message to the Constitutional Assembly delivered by Bruno Carranza on August 8, 1870).

Carranza wanted to highlight to all congressmen that the *Olympians* had not exiled, imprisoned or persecuted their opponents. He argued that “loyal and prudent conduct of the military”, the “good sense of the Costa Ricans” and his moderate policies allowed him to maintain Republican order without coercive measures. Through this discourse alluding to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, Carranza sought to diffuse tensions and re-establish a sense of stability and internal harmony.

The *Olympians* used two discursive strategies simultaneously. On the one hand, they wanted to re-establish a sense of stability and internal harmony to avoid a counter-revolution. On the other, they wanted to create a *crisis narrative* (Hay 2001) to justify their Liberal Revolution and their desired *paradigm shift*. We will now discuss this other strategy.

The framing of the 1870 Coup d'état as a dislocatory event

On March 27th 1870, Tomas Guardia issued the following Manifesto to justify the coup:

We are in insurrection. But the government we are fighting against is one based on usurpation and arbitrariness under the guise of legality. Insurrection in this case is the fulfilment of a duty, the military exercise of a supreme law. Fellow citizens! The people have been oppressed in their freedom and coerced in their public consciousness. We must restore popular sovereignty and the rule of law (Presidential Message delivered by Tomas Guardia to Congress on March 27, 1870).

Rather than presenting the revolt as a coup against the conservative president Jimenez by a liberal elite faction (as it had been originally), Guardia framed it as a revolt against a form of government, which had allowed political leaders to consistently violate the civil liberties of its citizens. The crisis Costa Rica faced was deeper than simply the authoritarian presidency of Jimenez - the fact that Jimenez was able to commit these transgressions was due to weakness in the existing political order, which allowed the elite to exert excessive influence over the state. He reiterated this *crisis narrative* in 1872:

The political situation was therefore distressing as evident by the great ease with which revolutions could be implemented, causing the institutions to be impaired due to the disregard of the rule of law, to progress and to the prestige that should surrounded public authority. Due to this bad situation, uncontrolled selfish interests led to frequent political and social upheavals. The people [...] whose education, improvement and prosperity should be the object of the legislator, the judge and the powerful, had become the victim of abandonment by some and of greed by others. [...] It was then that the nation had reached the limit of its development. [...] Growth was paralyzed, fertile land and qualified labour needed for industries, transportation facilities, everything was scarce; and this shortage, whose supply was difficult to provide, produced general unease. This discomfort brought mistrust, insecurity and posed a threat to the peace and stability of our institutions. The country in general began to decline noticeably (Presidential Message delivered by Tomas Guardia to Congress on May 1, 1872).

The crisis narrative developed by the *Olympians* argued that the 1870 coup was necessary to re-direct Costa Rica into its exceptional democratic institutional path. The weakness of the Costa Rican state had allowed the conservative and liberal coffee barons to promote their selfish economic interests at the expense of the masses. Guardia did not portray the masses as “oppressed” but as “abandoned”. He stated that the conservative and liberal elites were neglecting the valid demands of the masses for improving

the quality of their education and creating more economic prosperity. This situation was putting at risk Costa Rica's internal peace, the stability of its institutions, and its economic development. Under these circumstances, Tomas Guardia and the *Olympians* argued that it was necessary for them to retain power after the 1870 coup.

Guardia, in his first message to Congress on May 1870, framed the 27th of April 1870 coup as a unifying event by symbolically linking the coup to the "exceptionalist" collective identity:

Costa Rica has a homogenous population, consisting of owners in major or minor scales. Here we do not have those clashing interests that in other countries produce political and social upheavals. The principles proclaimed on April 27, 1870 reflect the general true interest of all, because they are geared towards the welfare of all, eliminating the privilege of the few, the closed circles of power, and factionalism. (Presidential Message delivered by Tomas Guardia to the Congressional Assembly on April 27, 1870).

By alluding to the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary, which portrayed Costa Ricans as a homogenous society with no clashing interests, Guardia was seeking to de-radicalize his opponents and incorporate the excluded sectors of society into a new political order. By "describing" Costa Rica as a homogenous, classless society without inherent tensions, he was seeking to remove possible cleavages that could be used to mobilize the population against his rule. He then contrasted Costa Rica with the rest of the region stating that Costa Rica's unique situation made it immune to the disruptions present in the rest of the region. The reference to Central America served as a reminder of what could happen if Costa Ricans fought against his dictatorship. Guardia's discursive strategy differed significantly from that adopted by the liberal dictators Zelaya in Nicaragua and Barrios in Guatemala who discursively exacerbated ethnic divisions and class conflict in order to mobilize sectors of society in support of their oppressive dictatorships.

The *Olympians* argued that their Liberal Revolution would lead Costa Rica towards a "real democracy". On October 28, 1870 an article entitled "The Enlightenment: Our Ideas" in the newspaper *El Comercio* described the pre-1870 dominion of the coffee oligarchs using the following language:

A closed political circle large or small is nothing other than the obvious denial of the inevitable social consensus in a modern democracy. The interests of a circle can never be those born out of a true democracy based on social consensus (El Comercio – October 28, 1870).

It is interesting to note that, although the *Olympians* argued that the elites' domination of Costa Rican politics was an impediment to "real democracy", the language they used did not portray them as a class posing an "existential threat" to the rest of society. The *Olympians* also warned against misinterpreting this as an attack on representative forms of democracy.

The problem is not that a few carry the voice of the many. They are always a few who govern the peoples of the world: France, Italy, England and America. But there is a huge difference if those few serve fraternally the interests of everyone or if they serve solely and exclusively their personal interests. Such a procedure is to put oneself at war with society. The evil is not that a man seeks personal advantage. The good citizen, the true Republican, the sincere democrat seeks his own good considering the social progress, creating harmony between his interests and the prosperity, honour and glory of his country (El Comercio – October 28, 1870).

The *Olympians* argued that the problem rested with the way that these elites in particular and the Costa Rican population in general had been conceptualizing their interests. "Sincere democrats" and "true republicans" should perceive their interests as being in harmony with those of the nation. The *Olympians* wanted to re-define the Costa Rican's conception of self-interests. They also wanted to create new types of leaders and new citizens. The liberal discourse placed "special interests", "selfish interests of profit" and "people with unfounded preoccupations" on the impact of the liberal reforms proposed by the *Olympians* as the "constitutive outside" of their discourse. However, they did not want to create class tension.

On the other hand, Guardia's opponents attacked him, arguing that the dictatorship he was imposing went against Costa Rica's democratic tradition. When Guardia replaced Bruno Carranza, he disbanded the Constitutional Assembly arguing that the political tensions were too high to write a new Constitution at the time. Guardia felt he needed more time to convince the population of the wisdom of his liberal project. The opposition wrote an article in the newspaper *El Comercio* de Costa Rica on December 25th, 1870 stating:

The President, General Guardia, seeks to impose order by prolonging an abnormal situation – a tyranny. He aspires to achieve peace by violating people's rights because he is ignoring their abilities [...] The political passions are not going to calm down, but rather they will intensify more and more [...] We live in a democratic society, the political forms of this society have to be precisely democratic. Ignoring this by oppressing this tendency is to have a mistaken conception of patriotism [...] (El Comercio – December 25, 1870).

Guardia's opponents also avoided using discourses that could create *relations of antagonism*. Their opponents did not portray him as an oppressor posing an "existential threat" to Costa Rica's society. They argued that his dictatorial *actions* were incompatible with Costa Rica's democratic nature. This difference had enormous repercussions on the way the opposition could be mobilized. While in the rest of Central America, framing the leader as an "existential threat" meant that the leader had to be killed and his political order destroyed, in Costa Rica the opposition argued that Guardia's dictatorial tendencies had to be checked. This did not exclude the possibility that members of the opposition may have had the desire to kill Guardia out of deep hatred. It only constrained them from acting upon it, as they knew they would have been severely punished (unlike what happened in the rest of the region). Killing Guardia would have been perceived as an illegitimate and unjustified action in a peaceful, democratic society. Just as the opposition was constrained by the *logic of articulation* derived from the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary, so was Guardia. He had to justify his dictatorial actions using the following language:

The administration that emerged from this change was an administration willing to make reforms, but powerless to execute them. Unfortunately, after a few days, protests appeared revealing an impatience and thoughtlessness that obstructed the ability [of this government] to make the real and fundamental reforms that the situation demanded in order to avoid national ruin. The country needed to change radically, not only the character of its out-dated political maneuvering, but also the laissez faire philosophy, and its political and economic isolation (Presidential Message to Congress delivered by Tomas Guardia on May 1, 1872).

Guardia argued that after the 1870 coup, his administration sought to make necessary changes but it was not able to do so due to the "impatience" and the "lack of reflection" displayed by his opponents. Guardia downplayed the level of opposition to his policies. He stated that his opponents disagreed with

the form, not the substance of his reforms. That was not factually true; as Guardia's reforms were meant to weaken the coffee oligarchs power vis-à-vis the state. However, the coffee barons could not present their opposition to Guardia in class-based or economic terms, as this would prevent them from gaining the support of other sectors. Guardia, on the other hand, justified his dictatorial actions by stating that they were necessary to make the radical economic and political changes needed to avoid the country's "ruin". Guardia stated:

We needed to establish peace and stability in the solid foundation of national opinion [...] constructing a decent and moral army that could become the true defender of the peace, the integrity and the honour of the nation. We needed a powerful engine of progressive elements to combat the inertia and to create a new industrial power – powerful enough to take our industry from the stagnation it had been for years. Thus, we needed to restore to the government the prestige through the means of justice, give life to the faltering industry, build a lasting peace, and create new wealth and new hopes through visible progress (Presidential Message delivered by Tomas Guardia to Congress on May 1, 1872).

In doing so, he framed the necessity of a dictatorship in the context of fostering internal peace and stability. Military involvement was necessary to bring back the prestige of the state authority that had been lost when the coffee oligarchs dominated politics. To have "lasting peace" and "progress" it was necessary to promote new industries, create more wealth and address the basic needs of the masses. Just like other liberal revolutionaries in the region, Guardia's linked the floating signifiers "order" and "progress" to military rule. He argued that the Costa Rican military would guarantee Costa Rica's "exceptionalist" democratic institutional development. As soon as Guardia stabilized his position, he started the process of strengthening Costa Rica's institutional framework through the creation of the 1871 Constitution, appointing a Constitutional Assembly on October 15th. He made the following speech on the occasion:

If to this situation so conducive to organizing this political society in peace, in calm and without hindrance, we add the consideration that you are here to lay down the fundamental law to the most docile people, perhaps the most sensible and peaceful in Spanish America; a truly free people because they know how to be slaves to the law; to an immanently moral people because they consider their work ethic – the strongest base morality – as a religion, you would agree with me that your mission is an easy task

of patriotism, of good faith and of good intentions (Presidential Message to the Constitutional Assembly delivered by Tomas Guardia on October 15, 1871).

By alluding to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, Guardia sought to de-politicize the process of writing a new Constitution. He stated that their task was to write the fundamental law for the most “docile”, “wise” and “peaceful” people in Spanish America. This discourse sought to structure the “appropriate” relation between the citizens and the state stating that the Costa Ricans “know how to be slaves of the law” making them “an immanently moral people” (Guardia 1871). Costa Ricans were depicted as hardworking people. According to Guardia, under these “atypical” circumstances, the task of writing a Constitution was an “easy” one. Guardia placed the emphasis on having solid institutions that were in keeping with their collective imaginary.

Work with independence, with justice and with ardour to give to this noble and beautiful nation social institutions that are appropriate to its tradition, its nature, its costumes and the aspirations of all Costa Ricans for our children to inherit; institutions that can lead this young and hopeful Republic to a peaceful, progressive and smooth path towards the high destinies that it justly aspires to achieve (Presidential Message delivered to the Congressional Assembly by Tomas Guardia on October 15, 1871).

Guardia’s discourse was seeking to legitimize the 1871 Constitution being written by the Constitutional Assembly by arguing that it was in keeping with Costa Rica’s exceptionalism. The Constitution was approved on November 7, 1871. Following the model of the United States Constitution, the 1871 Constitution was sufficiently lean so as not to directly interfere with the interest of the coffee oligarchs. Its flexibility allowed it to remain in place until after the 1948 Civil War when it was amended and was renamed the 1949 Constitution.

In 1872 Tomas Guardia was sworn into office for a four-year presidential term. In 1876, elections were held with only one candidate running for office – Aniceto Esquivel. However, two months after Esquivel’s electoral victory, Guardia conducted a silent coup. According to Botey (2003), Esquivel was not as malleable as Guardia had initially hoped and thus Guardia chose to stay in power. When he took over, Guardia changed the military structure to avoid

potential coups. He reduced the size of the military and removed any potentially disloyal men while improving the training of the remaining force. He linked his military restructuring with the Costa Rican founding fathers' decision to make education a top priority. He justified this move by saying that it would allow his administration to spend more on education and other public services. In his annual presidential message to Congress on May 16, 1879 Guardia stated:

It is remarkable indeed that it is greater (by more than 10%) the number of school teachers to soldiers in the military garrisons [...] This system also provided a surplus in the budget allowing us to devote more money to public education and all other branches of administration (Presidential Message delivered to the Congress by Tomas Guardia on May 16, 1879).

It is interesting to note that once Guardia had consolidated his position, he sought to reduce the power of the military. The political leaders in the rest of the region relied on the military to retain their power and thus the military grew in importance under their rule. Guardia relied on consensual discursive means as opposed to coercive military means to retain power. He sought to consolidate his position by portraying the 27th of April coup as a unifying event and by linking it to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. In his speech to Congress on the 9th of June 1878 he made the following argument:

The revolution of April 27, 1870 marked the end of a period. Since then, a small number of people started a new movement. Others have joined them in a collective effort to make the political, economic and social reforms that in other more developed countries have produced great disturbances and bloody ruins. This was avoided here, among other things due to the peculiarity of this people, who due to the more equitable distribution of property and due to their work ethic have acquired the practical notion of order and a certain positivist character that corrects the impressionability and lightness that has caused in other nations that the people fall under the spell of an eloquent orator, the illusory effect of a utopia or a reflection of the last decrepit ideas (Presidential Message to Congress delivered by Tomas Guardia on June 9, 1878).

Guardia argued that the confrontation experienced in other countries by liberal reforms was avoided in Costa Rica due to Costa Rica's exceptionalism. He also indirectly argues that this collective identity prevented Costa Ricans from falling prey to populist leaders. While the rest of Central America constructed their political systems around the “eloquent words of an orator”, and the “illusory effects of a utopia”, Costa Rican constructed theirs around institutions

and ideals. Tomas Guardia did not seek to build a cult around his persona as other Central American leaders did. Guardia states:

Even when I am gone, I, who have no further merit than merely to symbolize ideas and represent principles, and, while being true to my flag, have respected the beliefs of others - keeping my differences with them within the practical field of public administration [...] the right ideas and the true principles, when they have been properly understood and appreciated by the people, never die, even when the first person who proposed them dies. How unfortunate the country whose future depends on the transient life of a single man (Presidential Message to Congress delivered by Tomas Guardia on June 9, 1878).

To appreciate the difference between the Tomas Guardia's mode of political mobilization and that used by other Central American leaders, we can contrast it with how Guatemalan liberals framed their leader Justo Rufino Barrios:

I heard him (Barrios) say once that he felt within him the "plebeian soul" – so was the interest he had for the disinherited. Barrios infused himself into the soul of the country. His work was not superficial, neither of vain purpose. He was a creator. He gave the people the spirit it was missing and instead of putting bandages on their eyes, lit the path where they should walk to reach their destiny [...] Barrios did not turn off the torch of civilization that once it is lit by the sacred fire of the people's heart, there is no human force that can turn it off. Barrios did not let this fire be turned off and for this he was loved by his people. (Ramon Salazar 1895).

This is clearly a political model of mobilization using the logic of *relations of antagonism*. It can be defined as a populist form of identification taking Panizza's definition (2005). As Panizza explains, "whereas republican forms of identification allegedly emerge out of a rational identification with the universal institutions of the republic, populist identification is associated with an irrational, instinctive and spontaneous identification with a strong leader" (Panizza 2005:18). The narratives, myths and symbols constructed around the figure of Barrios indirectly indicated to the Guatemalan people what actions should be considered appropriate, legitimate and desirable for a Guatemalan leader. Barrios' qualities highlighted in these narratives were those of an astute military leader, while the qualities used to describe Tomas Guardia were those associated with his administrative skills. This is how liberal Guatemalans described their leader:

Never has our hero been more admirable than in those days of the revolution when the Eastern revolt threatened the gates of the capital and threatened to derail the work done on 71. It could be felt in the environment that we were on the eve of a major catastrophe. You could see the faces of the sad and scared neighbours, the vipers flashing with anger and hatred. The defeated whispered to each other that it was time for either their final victory or their supreme defeat. Barrios, fearless did not hesitate for a moment and did not stop to pick up the candles. On the contrary, he threw himself with all his force to expel the monks and clergy dispossessing them of their property and throwing punches in such a formidable style that even his enemies admired him while they fell injured in the sand to rise no more. This is how revolutions are made! (Ramon Salazar 1895)

As illustrated by the previous quote, through discourses applying *relations of antagonism*, the Guatemalan liberals placed the political frontier *within* Guatemalan society defining their revolution as an existential battle against “retrograde”, “barbaric” and “uncivilized” conservatives. While Costa Ricans liberals defined their revolution as an institutional transformation, the Guatemalans presented their revolution in zero-sum terms. This can also be seen by the type of logic of articulation used by Guatemalan liberals when speaking about their opponents:

You are the utterly vanquished. You are condemned and condemned without possibility of appeal. The spirit of the new times is now with us (Ramon Salazar 1895).

Instead, Guardia presented his opponents as adversaries. He argued that the opposition he received had been fruitful because it had helped make his policies more targeted and viable. Guardia stated:

The work has been painful. As every effort of progress, it has had moments of thrust and moments of resistance that have manifested themselves in transient disturbances which have, however, caused the effect of awakening certain moral forces that are necessary for reform, which otherwise would have remained inert and latent. The struggle between these two tendencies directed by opposing parties has been arduous and intense but not bloody. It has caused commotion in the realm of ideas; but at last, we have been able to reach solutions that are more precise and based on a better understanding of our problems (Speech entitled “Manifest to the Costa Rican people” delivered by Tomas Guardia on June 9, 1878).

Guardia stated that in liberal democratic systems political struggles and conflict were not only inevitable, but were actually positive. This idea is quite revolutionary for 1870s Latin America. This is clearly seen by contrasting

Guardia's discourse with the discourse used by the Guatemalan liberal supporters of General Barrios. The following is an excerpt describing one of the many failed attempts to assassinate the dictator Barrios:

In October 1877 a conspiracy was being plotted in this capital, which was meant to take place on October 2 1878. The conspiracy was to assassinate General Barrios and his ministers and to avenge themselves on their wives and family members in an unspeakable way for the wrong done to them – those alleged and those real. There was a Polish official, brave like all of his people. Young Rodas proud, full of ambition and aspiring nothing less than the presidency had surrounded himself with lawyers, priests, writers and a crowd of young strangers, all full of hatred in their breasts towards real FREEDOM. In all those hearts beats a hatred of LIBERTY. But Barrios uncovered the plan and relentlessly punished his opponents. O sacred freedom, much blood is spilled for the people who love you! (Ramon Salazar 1895).

As we can see from the above excerpt, the Guatemalan liberals defined their battles with the opposition in existential terms. General Barrios was framed as the sole provider of Guatemala's liberty and freedom. The liberals argued that in order to defend this sacred liberty, Barrios' enemies had to be killed. Alvaro Contreras, one of Barrios' fierce opponents wrote in his book entitled *To the Central American People* the following description of Barrios:

It is undeniable that he [Barrios] makes war against fanaticism and superstition that blinds people. But his desire for reform is not based only on the philosophy, the science and the discussion of Liberty. His war against fanaticism and superstition is one pursued with relentless force; one pursued with the aim of suppressing all the ideas that are contrary to his own, annihilating the men who represent these contrary ideas like the pagan Caesar against Christianity and the Catholic Inquisitors against Science and the Enlightenment (Alvaro Contreras: 1879).

This quote shows how his opponents portrayed Barrios – as a warrior against fanaticism and superstition but through the use of brute force. Alvaro Contreras compares Barrios with the Pagan Caesars and the Catholic Inquisitors. Barrios indeed had unchecked power. In Guatemala, the leader was viewed as having a blank slate to radically change the country at whatever cost, as he was perceived as embodying the Guatemalan state. Therefore, he could make reforms as he pleased. In fact, the Guatemalan liberals framed the Liberal Revolution of Barrios as a complete break from the past regime.

It is necessary [...] to destroy the old institutions that echo in all areas of the Republic. If men do not want this to happen; too bad for them. And indeed

there were those who were opposed and they fell victim due to their blindness. Such was the philosophy of the reform. And now the results - the facts. They are there for everyone to see. The earthquake of 71 destroyed the idol of the Conservative Party. What remains today of that man? A forgotten tomb for his family members to visit and nothing else (Ramon Salazar: 1895).

In Guatemala, the complete destruction of the conservative order was conceivable because it was equated with the previous dictator, Rafael Carrera, deposed by Barrios. Therefore, once this leader was dead a new order could emerge. Instead, in Costa Rica, the power and political relevance assigned to the leader was different. In sharp contrast, the positive perception that Costa Ricans had of their history and national identity made them want to retain as much continuity with the past as possible. This constrained the scope and extent of possible institutional change.

The political dynamics in Nicaragua also reflected a political system in which discourses using *relations of antagonism* were used to mobilize political support. This can be appreciated in the following quote in which the Nicaraguan liberal described when General Juan J Estrada took up arms against the Liberal Dictator Zelaya:

This ignominious proceeding on the part of General Estrada that falls so undeservedly on the Liberal Party obliges the latter to express energetically their profound indignation of his crime, a sing of the future blood of the Liberal Party, which will be shed on the alters of conservatism, a stigma of blood that has already gushed forth to the eternal shame of the conservatives' greed and their conscious. When the country had scarcely recovered from its past struggles in which it crowned itself with glory at Namisigile, when the blood of its veins was still running down the open wounds, it was asked to make a new and superhuman effort, and once more go forth to the battlefield to give, if necessary, its last drop of blood in defence of Order, Law and Liberty. The reactionary party, that party that hides behind the Cross of Christ, the dagger and poison of a Borgia, that Jesuit Legion that believes that the power of office is the patrimony reserved to them by Providence and who aspire to raise the throne of the privileged above the servile men of their country and thus enslaves them, has shouldered the rifle a hundred times and as many times has put it down in bitter disappointment resulting from its ineptitude and unpopularity. (Secretary Tomas Enrique in book entitled The Revolution of Nicaragua and the United States published 1910).

This discourse used by the Nicaraguan liberals shows how the supporters of Zelaya created an internal political frontier dividing Nicaraguan society into

two irreconcilable antagonistic camps. The members of the Liberal Party portrayed the conservatives as the “reactionary party”, “a poison of a Borgia” who “enslaves” the “servile men of their country”. To understand the mandate the Nicaraguan liberal dictator was perceived as having, and the type of relation he sought to develop with the Nicaraguan population, it is interesting to read a propaganda book written by the Nicaraguan liberals in 1906. The book entitled *Jose Santos Zelaya: President of Nicaragua* was given as a gift from the Nicaraguan Delegation to Washington DC to the president of the United States. The book starts:

The intellectuality of the Spanish American people should be measured only by their representative men. In those countries still but imperfectly developed, where the different ethnical elements have not been mixed to such an extent as to produce a typical racial standard, the men who rise above all others as the most perfect product of such peculiar traits, do actually represent, by reason of their superior intelligence, all the latent energies of the people to whom they belong (Nicaraguan Delegation to Washington Jose Santos Zelaya 1906:5).

While the Costa Rican liberals emphasized the racial homogeneity of their population and elevated the masses, the Nicaraguan liberals highlighted the racial inferiority of the Nicaraguan population. Only a few Nicaraguans were worthy of being considered “civilized”. The backwardness of the vast majority of the Nicaraguans justified the need for a strong leader. The Nicaraguan liberals argued that Zelaya was the right person to lead the country. The book continues:

Such men possess the characteristics inherent to men of action, being both impulsive as well as persistent in their efforts, bold in their concepts, patient to mature and firm to realize their plans. They feel they have a mission to fulfil, and while they are not deaf to the advice of others. In their natural inclination to do good, they leave their name and the memory of their deeds forever linked to that of the period of greater activity in favour of a social era along new lines, though to attain this end, the very foundation of that society might have to be shaken (Zelaya 1906: 5-6).

In sharp contrast to the Costa Rican institutional model of governance, the Nicaraguan liberals proposed a caudillista model led by an “impulsive”, “persistent” and “bold” leader. This leader was expected to listen to the advice of others (meaning their inner circle of advisors). The demands of the Nicaraguan population were not even considered as relevant as they claimed that the caudillo knew what was best for the uneducated masses based on his

“natural inclination to do good”. According to this account, the leader’s “inclination to do good” served as a sufficient guarantee that he would govern wisely. The leader had a mandate to “shake the very foundation of that society” to accomplish his mission. The book continues:

It is the temperament that makes the man, and such men have a triple mission in life, which is to fight, to organise and to civilize, a mighty task requiring both firmness of purpose and strength of character. To that class of men of destiny, who leave the stamp of their personality and their deeds in the history of the people, belongs General Jose Santos, the leader of the Liberal Party and President of Nicaragua (Zelaya 1906: 6).

While the Costa Rican liberals argued that it was the president’s mission to ensure peace and prosperity for all Costa Ricans, the Nicaraguans argued that Zelaya’s mission was “to fight, to organise and to civilize” (Zelaya 1906:6). They referred to Jose Santos first as the leader of the Liberal Party and then the President of Nicaragua. In Costa Rica, the presidents always presented themselves as the presidents of all Costa Ricans, not mentioning their political party.

While Zelaya was ousted from power in 1909,²⁵ Guardia ruled until his health no longer permitted it. Upon his death, Costa Rica remained politically stable. One of his closest advisors and leading member of the Grupo del Olimpo, General Prospero Fernandez, became president of Costa Rica in 1882. General Fernandez maintained the same reformist policies as Guardia. He only sought to change one aspect of the prior paradigm, gradually eliminating the link between the 1870 coup and the liberal reforms to make the liberal reforms be perceived as more in keeping with the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary by erasing references to the 1870 coup. Prospero started to portray the liberal reforms as the result of a process of “tranquil evolution”. This is seen in the following newspaper excerpt from the *El Ciudadano*:

The policy that guides the men who are building the future of Costa Rica today is the product of the patriotic evolution that has taken place during the past three years. No revolution, not even the most prestigious, nor the most popular, nor the most just would have given these results. Revolutionary governments [...] can never develop a program. The

²⁵ The United States’ interests in the inter-oceanic canal being planned in Nicaragua led to them to establish a protectorate in the country until 1933 in order to guarantee political stability.

political commitments, ambitious and hatred that are aroused during revolutions obstruct them. The blessings of Liberty, of the rule of law, of progress can only be conquered under the shelter of peace and through calm evolution (El Ciudadano: October 1882).

This is significantly different from the way that other liberal revolutionaries framed their regimes in the region. Liberal and conservative dictators in Central America framed their governments as a continuation of the armed revolution. The same *logic of articulation* used in the battlefield was transferred to the administrative offices. Instead, the Costa Rican liberal leaders presented their political project as the model most compatible with their atypical colonial demographic, socio-economic, and cultural heritage. It argued that the liberal oligarchic model gradually evolved out of its idyllic colonial experience. Emphasizing the naturalness of Costa Rica's liberal model had two desired results. First, it implied the passivity of all social actors in the creation of this institutional framework, encouraging the Costa Rican population to accept it without questioning if the model favoured one group over another. Second, it gave the model its legitimacy by arguing that it was the only one that fit Costa Rica's unique history and its "exceptional" national identity. Linked to any inevitability argument is a de-politization process. The liberal political leaders succeeded in constructing a sense of national unity by drawing from the positive national self-image created by the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. They kept the masses subdued by addressing their demands through institutional means and linking their particularistic demands (for better education, healthcare, hygiene, security) differentially into their expanding hegemonic discourse.

Strategies by the *Olympians* to disseminate their liberal discourse

The *Grupo del Olimpo* knew that controlling education was the most effective means of spreading their hegemonic ideology. By the mid-1880s, the *Olympians* believed they no longer needed the support of the Catholic Church to legitimize their rule. The *Olympians* passed a series of anti-clerical laws geared at removing the monopoly that the Catholic Church had on education. This led to the closing of the University of Santo Tomas and limiting university education to one single university, with one single faculty - the faculty of Law -

which was needed to train the future political elites with liberal views (Fischel 1992). The Educational Reform of 1885 provided free and mandatory education so as to spread the liberal hegemonic model throughout all sectors of society and all regions of the country. As President Prospero Fernandez stated in his annual message to Congress on the 10th of August 1882:

A need that is felt in the country and that must be satisfied for building an unshakable foundation for the Republic is to infuse within the spirit of all citizens the habit of Republican practices, and love and respect for its institutions (Presidential Message delivered by Prospero Fernandez to the Congress on August 10 1882).

To spread these civic ideas of love and respect for institutions, the liberals founded the newspaper *El Ciudadano*, first printed on July 30th 1880. In its first edition, it argued that Costa Rica's democracy was not fully developed due to the apathy of the uneducated people. It argued:

Today all Costa Ricans agree that the ills of the country have their origins mainly in the apathy of its inexperienced children (El Ciudadano: July 30, 1880).

The *Olympians* also wrote civic books such as the one entitled *Librito de los Deberes* written by Juan F. Ferraz published in 1889 to create "new citizens". In this book, Ferraz argued that for Costa Rica to achieve "absolute peace" it was necessary for the population to understand not only their rights, but also their duties. Their duties were the following:

To respect at all costs and above everything else the Law, which represents the will of the people, to accept the verdict of the Courts that are responsible for the justice of the people, of your justice and defend your rights and to obey the authorities that execute and that comply with the law. This is the most holy, the most sublime duty of every citizen. By doing this there will be peace and progress in the country (Juan F. Ferraz 1889:5).

The liberals highlighted the necessity that both citizens and their leaders had to strictly abide by the rule of law. Appealing to the religious devoutness of the Costa Rican population, abiding to the rule of law was equated to following the holy commandments. More specifically, Ferraz stated that their duties were the following:

It is our duty to obey the Law, to submit ourselves to Judicial Decrees and to respect the legally constituted authority, to educate our family abiding by the national plan, to contribute to the public administration, to join the

military if the integrity of our country is at risk and to maintain order and peace (Juan F. Ferraz 1889:5).

To highlight the supremacy of the rule of law, Ferraz stated that Socrates and Jesus Christ accepted their death sentences so the law would be respected. He then stated:

And we cannot emphasize enough that without submission to the law, there is no liberty nor freedom, without duties there is only debauchery. A life without law leads to savagery. Only wild beasts use brutal force to obtain what they want (Juan F. Ferraz 1889:15).

He argues that only the uncivilized disrespect the law and, by extension, that only the uncivilized commit revolutionary acts:

It is clear that if an unruly mob wants to attack the legitimate Authority, they can do it because their numbers make them strong. But considering that the Authority represents the collective will of the nation, people must understand that submission is necessary, appropriate and fair. Otherwise, social order is lost and once social order is lost, all of us forgo our rights and place ourselves outside the law (Juan F. Ferraz 1889:15-16).

This typical liberal discourse clearly delimited the types of political actions that were to be considered illegitimate and unacceptable in Costa Rica such as mass protests or revolts. Instead, the appropriate behaviour for the model citizen was to be submissive and respectful of the established order. The book concluded by stating that all Costa Ricans, whether ignorant or educated, rich or poor must contribute to society:

Each citizen, the wise or the ignorant, the rich or the poor, the young or the elderly must do something right for his society to which he owes his civil existence. Everything revolves around the relationship between the individual and the state. Everyone must recognize with good will his situation and the position that he has to fulfil and the situation and the position that the other has [...] We must make of our own family a small model of social governance. That is what we must regard as the highest point of our aspirations. Love and respect are the two axes of the family. (Ferraz 1889:22).

The liberal discourse sought to dissolve the perception of differences between the rich and the poor, and between the ignorant and the educated by making all Costa Ricans members of a single family. In order to teach citizens the values they had to emulate, they created a mythical figure – Juan Santamaria.

The *Juan Santamaria* Myth

Juan Santamaria was an 18-year-old boy who allegedly fought in the Battle of Rivas in 1856 against the American aggressor William Walker. Walker was an American lawyer, journalist, and adventurer who organized private military expeditions into Latin America with the intention of establishing English-speaking colonies under his personal control. This was a common practice during this period known as filibustering. When the Nicaraguan liberal political leaders Francisco Castellano Sanabria and Maximo Jerez Telleria of the *Partido Democratico* heard of Walker's mercenary army, they contacted Walker to request his help in overthrowing the conservative dictator Fruto Chamorro Perez. Upon his arrival to Nicaragua, Castellano made Walker the general of the liberal forces. Under Walker's leadership, the liberals defeated the conservatives, but instead of handing over power to the liberals as he had previously agreed with Castellano and Jerez, Walker declared himself president of Nicaragua in 1856 and subsequently sought to annex Costa Rica.

In April 1856, he invaded Costa Rica through Rivas. The Costa Rican President Juan Rafael Mora and his brother-in-law General Jose Maria Cañas led an army to Rivas and succeeded in forcing Walker's army to retreat back to Nicaragua. The newspaper articles of the government newspaper *Boletin Oficial* from April 11 to May 30 1856 presented the Battle of Rivas as a one battle within the larger Central American war against Walker, portraying President Mora and General Cañas as the war's heroes. On May 3rd, 1856, the President wrote the following newspaper article in the *Boletin Oficial*:

Thank you Generals and Officers of the Army because through the triumphs of Santa Rosa, Rivas and Sarapiquí you have endowed Costa Rica with the brightest pages of her history. Thank you because you have earned your glory not by fighting your own brothers, but rather by fighting in a Holy War against the aggressors who had invaded Central America (Boletin Oficial – May 3, 1856).

The President made the military leaders the heroes of the "Holy War" against the invaders of Central America. Mora highlights the fact that the mobilization of Costa Ricans army was justified because it was not to fight against other Costa Ricans, but to fight against an external threat. After the battles on Costa Rican soil, Mora ordered the Costa Rican army to disarm. Many

soldiers were infected by a cholera outbreak in the region. Mora argued that the cholera outbreak and the torrential rains made it impossible for the Costa Rican army to cross over to Nicaragua to defeat Walker. Mora stated in the same article:

There is no dishonour to stop fighting due to the crushing climate. We can retreat into our territory with serenity and with great pride knowing that we have left our enemy exhausted, with no prestige, no resources, better prepared to flee than to mount a real battle. If the formal agreements made with our Guatemalan, Salvadorian and Honduran allies are respected, they will undertake the simple task of expelling the bandit that still harasses the Nicaraguan people (Boletín Oficial – May 3, 1856).

Once the threat to Costa Rica was over, President Mora was not willing to sacrifice any more Costa Rican lives for the Central American cause. The newspapers reported the fighting between Walker and the Central American forces, but did not mobilize the Costa Ricans to fight against Walker. On May 1 1857, Walker surrendered under the pressure of the Central American army and was repatriated by the United States Navy Commander Charles Henry Davis.

In 1860, Walker returned to the region, invited this time by British colonists in Roatan in the Bay Islands who did not want the Honduran government to assert control over them. They asked Walker to help them establish an English-speaking government over the islands. When Walker disembarked in the port city of Trujillo, he fell into the custody of the Commander Nowell Salmos of the British Royal Navy. The British government controlled the neighbouring regions of British Honduras (now Belize) and the Mosquito Coast (now part of Nicaragua). They had a strategic and economic interest in the construction of an inter-oceanic canal through Central America and considered Walker a threat. Rather than returning Walker to the United States, Salmon delivered Walker to the Honduran authorities. On September 12, 1860 the Honduran authorities executed Walker.

In 1885 the *Olympians* reinterpreted the 1856 Battle of Rivas, eliminating the Central American dimension. As Palmer and Molina note, the birth of the Juan Santamaria myth coincided with Justo Rufino Barrios's declaration of his

intentions to recreate a Central American Union on February 28 1885 by force if necessary. Palmer and Molina argue that the *Grupo del Olimpo* created the myth of Juan Santamaria to mobilize the Costa Rican people in the event they would need to call for an army to fight a defensive war. A few days after Rufino's announcement, the *Grupo del Olimpo* published an article in the *Diario de Costa Rica* entitled "An Anonymous Hero". This article stated that: "When a party of filibusters tried to take over our territory (in 1856), the heroic valour of the sons of this soil manifested itself. The name of Juan Santamaria comes to the forefront" (quoted by Palmer 1993). According to this newspaper article, Juan Santamaria's feat consisted in burning down the wooden house where Walker and his troops were hiding while planning their attack. Juan Santamaria died soon after accomplishing his mission. However, his action forced the invaders out of hiding, in turn triggering their retreat back to Nicaragua after being outnumbered by the Costa Rican army. The *Olympians* claimed that the Battle of Rivas had been Costa Rica's second "war of Independence".

They created this new hero – the courageous foot soldier. Juan Santamaria had not been mentioned in any of the articles of the *Boletín Oficial* or by accounts given by the Battle of Rivas veterans. The *Olympians* downplayed the roles played by President Mora and General Cañas. As Rafael Angel Mendez (2007), David Diaz (2008), and Juan Rafael Quesada (2010) have argued, the *Olympians* reinterpreted the Battle of Rivas to fit their liberal ideology. Palmer and Molina state that between 1885 and 1895 the *Olympians* solved the problem of the nation's 'imagined origins' by creating the myth of Juan Santamaria as a prototypical patriotic hero, whom the lower classes were encouraged to emulate.

In looking at the example of the *Juan Santamaria* myth, it is interesting to note the fact that "exceptionalist" collective imaginary influenced the type of hero the *Olympians* selected. They chose a poor foot soldier as opposed to a military commander to highlight the peaceful nature of the Costa Rican population. The *Olympians* were not just seeking to mobilize the Costa Ricans for a possible war against the invading forces of Barrios, they were also

creating new political identities. Through the *Juan Santamaria* myth, they could highlight the virtues that the new citizens should have - obedience, patriotism, humility, and self-sacrifice. The *Olympians* moved the celebration of Juan Santamaria from April 11th (when the Battle of Rivas was fought) to the 15th of September (the date when Costa Rica was granted Independence from Spain), further unifying his myth with the broader “exceptionalist” collective imaginary and removing the broader Central American dimension.

Juan Santamaria is the only Costa Rican to have a named national holiday. Although Costa Ricans celebrate his heroic actions every year, most do not know how William Walker died. Juan Santamaria continues to be praised by Costa Rican political leaders across the ideological spectrum as model to be followed. Alongside the Juan Santamaria myth, the *Olympians* created another myth we will now discuss.

The 7th of November 1889 as the “birthdate of Costa Rica’s democracy” myth

During the 7th of November 1889 presidential elections, the handpicked successor of President Bernardo Soto Alfaro (1885-1889), Ascension Esquivel Ibarra, ran against the conservative candidate Jose Rodriguez Zeledon of the Partido Constitucional Democratico. The main supporter of Jose Rodriguez Zeledon was the Costa Rican Catholic Church, who felt threatened by the liberal reformers’ “civic” educational reforms. Although the Catholic Church had not been made a “constitutive outside” of the liberal discourse as in the rest of Central America, the Church undoubtedly had lost power during the liberal reform period. Soon after the voting polls were closed, President Bernardo Soto declared Esquivel the winner. The opposition denounced the results as electoral fraud and the Costa Rican Catholic Church helped organize mass protests. After several days of these protests, Soto agreed to step down and placed Carlos Duran in as interim president until Jose Rodriguez took power. Accepting their defeat, the *Olympians* then framed their acceptance of the 1889 electoral results as proof that, under *Olympian* rule, Costa Rica’s democracy had been consolidated. They argued

that this was the first election in the county's history in which the Costa Rican people had actively mobilized in favour of a candidate and the government had respected their sacred right of suffrage.

The conservatives also adopted this interpretation of the 7th of November 1889. The *Partido Constitucional Democratico* created a newspaper entitled the *7 de Noviembre 1889* to commemorate this event. On its first issue on the 7th of November 1890, they praised Bernardo Soto's "democratic" decision to step down. They stated the 7th of November represented a victory for all Costa Ricans. The front-page article stated:

The 7th of November 1889 will go down as one of the greatest days of our history. We do not say this guided by passions because it gave us our victory over our political opponents, or because we think we are superior to those who we defeated. It is memorable because unnecessary bloodshed was avoided – a war of brother against brother was averted [...] It is memorable because it was the day that citizens rightfully stood up to demand that their suffrage rights be respected, the right that has been so often abused not by dictators (as in other Central American countries) but by individuals who have put in places of power political leaders who have not been lawfully elected by the people (November 7 edition on July 1890).

Instead of using this date to mobilize support for Jose Rodriguez Zeledon, the conservatives chose to adopt the liberal interpretation of it as a unifying factor. They framed their differences with the liberals as political differences amongst individuals rather than as a battle against an "enemy" as conservatives in Central America did. Subsequently, Costa Rican political leaders across the ideological divide have used this myth at various points of its history to reinforce a sense of internal social cohesion and reduce political tensions.

The conservatives also sought to mobilize the Costa Rican masses through institutional means. They used the 7th of November newspaper to spread their ideas. The front-page article of the 7th of November 1890 stated:

Education is an essential factor for progress. We want this publication [...] to reach out to everyone – from the artisan in the small workshop to the artist in the great workshops. We are all interested in reading, in getting instructed, in fulfilling our desire of making our country a nation of progress whose history is composed of a collection of works done by all of us for the good name of our country, for the advancement of our children, and for the maintenance of the place of pride our nation has reached because of the deeds of the past citizens whom we must always remember with respect and veneration. [...] The farmer, the peasant, the woodcutter, the

transporter all will find support in the weak hands of those writing these pages in order to defend their rights not granted to them because of their ignorance. They will find in us a helping hand because they, like every citizen, have rights that must not be abused and must be respected as those of all men. They are the first to change the hoe and machete for the gun when it comes to defending the independence of our country, they enrich our markets with cereals and fresh fruit from our fertile land [...] (November 7 newspaper – July 1890).

Just like the liberals, the conservatives also sought to integrate the demands of all sectors of Costa Rican society into a single national narrative. Unlike their Nicaraguan and Guatemalan counterparts, they placed the emphasis on the peoples' demands and not the vision of their leader. Both conservatives and liberals argued that ignorance was the greatest challenge faced by the Costa Rican masses. But this ignorance was not the result of their racial inferiority. Knowledge could be brought to these people by devoting more government resources to education. Both liberals and conservatives placed the masses as central figures in their discourses arguing that, without their valuable work, the Costa Rican family would have no food to subsist on. They also compared them to Juan Santamaría by stating that if necessary the broader masses would be the first to fight to defend the autonomy of the country against a foreign threat. This discourse structured relations between citizens and the state and amongst the different political factions during the liberal hegemonic period until the 1930s. Therefore, the main ideological division between the conservatives and the liberals was on the role that the Costa Rican Catholic Church should play in politics.

Conclusion

The post-independence political history of Latin America was shaped by intense hegemonic battles between conservatives and liberals leading to long and devastating civil wars, some of which spilled over into international wars. A puzzle that has remained unsatisfactorily answered by the existing literature regarding Costa Rica's transition to democracy is why the political conflicts between the liberal and conservative factions did not lead to civil wars in Costa Rica as they did in the rest of the region. This chapter searches for the answer to this puzzle by analysing the discursive context present during the post-independence period. It argues that, contrary to the dominant view that

Costa Ricans had a “blank slate” during the post-independence period since they had not developed well-defined institutions during the colonial period, they had an extremely effective discursive institution – the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. Ever since the late 1500s, the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary defined Costa Ricans as innately democratic, consensual, peaceful, egalitarian, and ethnically homogenous (Cruz 2000, 2005). Throughout the colonial period, Costa Rican political leaders discursively reinforced the social antagonism that defined the Costa Rican “us” versus the Central American “enemy” in order to convince the Spanish Crown that Costa Rica should be granted greater economic and political autonomy from Nicaragua (Acuña Ortega: 1995). They reinforced these social antagonisms through the letters sent to the Spanish Crown by the Costa Rican governors, through coordinative discourse amongst the political elite, and through communicative discourses with the populations. Throughout the 1700s, the Costa Rican elite viewed the Guatemalan businessmen (not other Costa Rican businessmen) as their main rivals since the Spanish Crown allowed the Guatemalans to have a monopoly over the production of tobacco (Calderon Hernandez 2003: 220). This frustrated the economic aspirations of the Costa Rican elites. It also pushed the political frontier to the margins of Costa Rican society, placing the Central American “authoritarian, violent, hierarchical and predominantly indigenous” order as the “constitutive outside” of the Costa Rican discourse.

During the post-independence period, Costa Rican liberals were able to consolidate their power, avoid civil wars, and foster gradual and reformist democratic development because they were able to create a stable hegemonic model. They were able to do this by appropriating the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary and re-articulating the elements of meaning derived from it (homogeneity, peace, equality and democracy) into their own chain of signification placing liberalism as the new nodal point. They weakened and displaced the antagonistic polarity between the conservatives and liberals as well as between the elites and the masses by retaining the *external* political frontier derived from the colonial “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. The fact that the liberals succeeded in making their political project

become hegemonic meant that when conservatives came to power, they did not make significant institutional changes, but rather only addressed other demands, further expanding the differential political system. More importantly, it meant that Costa Rica's liberal order did not undermine democratic development as happened in the rest of the region. Costa Rican liberals were able to reconcile the inherent tensions between liberalism and democracy by re-articulating them within the confines of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary.

In sharp contrast with the Costa Rican experience, other Central American liberals and conservatives placed the political frontier *within* their societies, portraying each other as the main obstacles to the realization of their interests. When liberals were in power, conservatives sought to create equivalential chains with the masses to overthrow liberal regimes and vice-versa. They were able to do so because of the frustration of the masses due to the multiplicity of unfulfilled demands by the state. Both the conservative and the liberal leaders, once in power, rewarded the people who had supported their rise to power through patronage. This meant that certain sectors of society and areas of the country were openly favoured, while others were openly punished. Under these circumstances, it was easy to mobilize "oppressed" heterogeneous sectors of society against a common enemy. Anti-status quo political leaders could transform particular demands into *political* demands creating new "revolutionary" political agents. This internal conflict often spilled to other equally divided neighbouring societies. It was common in Central America for both liberals and conservatives to create equivalential chains with their Central American counterparts encouraging the invasion of foreign forces into their own countries.

The sharp *internal* political frontier in other Central American countries dividing the social space around two antagonistic poles hindered the emergence of hegemonic orders in the rest of Central America. Despite prolonged periods in which their discourse dominated political space, neither liberals nor conservatives were able to establish a *national* project. The groups excluded by the ruling block were continuously challenging the socio-

economic and political order highlighting the contingency of the dominating discourse. The myths created by the Central American political elites were antagonizing myths. They were meant to create unity amongst various sectors of society against an internal enemy, which in turn fuelled a constant cycle of political crisis and revolutionary institutional change.

In contrast, the Costa Rican political elites were able to conceal the contingency of their discourses by creating a *unifying* hegemonic myth. By re-articulating the elements of meaning derived from the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, Costa Rican political leaders succeeded in integrating diverse sectors of society into a “one nation” project. The Central American example shows the validity of the PSDT’s notion of social antagonisms as discursively constructed by political leaders in their effort to mobilize heterogeneous sectors of society. As PSDT states, one of the most powerful motivations for mobilization is the belief that one’s identity is being threatened.

As Howarth (2000) explains social antagonisms are seen to occur when:

the presence of another prevents me from being totally myself... This ‘blockage’ of identity is a mutual experience for both the antagonizing force and the force that is being antagonized. Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence for myself. But nor is the force that antagonizes me such a presence: its objective being is a symbol of my non-being, and in this way, it is overflowed by a plurality of meanings, which prevent it being fixed as a full positivity (Howarth 2000: 10).

The contrast between the Costa Rican and the Central American liberal – conservative power struggles shows social antagonisms are not fixed by a class essence and that there is no fundamental social agency or political project that determines processes of historical change in a *priori* fashion. In all Central American countries, elites fought over economic resources and socio-political power with liberals dominating politics in the region for significant periods of time. However, these conflicts were dealt with in very different fashions. One of the main differences was the prevalent *logic of articulation*. The different *logics of articulation* structured social relations in particular ways, making certain actions legitimate while precluding others. It also made possible certain forms of political mobilization.

The success of the Costa Rican political leaders' discursive strategies meant that by 1889 Costa Ricans were made to believe they were living under an "exceptional" democracy. The same view was held by foreign visitors such as the Swiss scholar Paul Biolley who wrote the book *Costa Rica and her Future* published in 1889. After highlighting Costa Rica's exceptional adherence to the rule of law, Biolley wrote:

Much is said in Europe, it is true of the instability of the governments and the insecurity of affairs in Spanish American republics. This is an erroneous idea as far as Costa Rica is concerned. The country has hardly known revolutions. It is wisely governed today. Its financial condition is prosperous, and the state of civilization at which it has arrived places it beyond any retrogression. [...] The aspect of the cities, the character of the inhabitants, the condition of public instruction, the government's administrative wisdom, and the development of commerce are a proof of it (Biolley 1889:91).

After praising Costa Rica's sound public policies, Biolley stated:

The forward march, but the march of wisdom without struggle, without the clashing of ideas – the march to the conquest of wealth and prosperity – this is what characterizes as a whole the work of the Costa Rican government. The few traditional abuses, momentary errors, vices which have not yet entirely disappeared, have but secondary importance to the impartial observer who, comparing the present with the past, can thus foresee a happy future (Biolley 1889:38).

These external evaluations by foreigners helped reinforce the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. Costa Rican political leaders understood that it was in everyone's interests to maintain that reputation in order to attract qualified European immigrants and foreign financing as well as encourage foreigners to set up businesses in the country. The following chapter explores how the liberals used the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary to deal with the dislocatory effects of World War I and the Great Depression.

Chapter 3

The liberal oligarchic response to the dislocatory events 1900-1940

This chapter analyses the impact of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary in shaping political dynamics during the first four decades of the 20th Century. Up until the 1930s, political actors articulated their political projects retaining the external political frontier set by the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. Liberal oligarchic leaders belonging to the *Grupo del Olimpo* expanded their base of consent by differentially incorporating the “democratic” demands made by labour movements, peasant associations, and anti-imperialist movements through institutional and legislative means, thus disarticulating potential political alliances between these groups. In doing so, they prevented the emergence of *relations of antagonism* prevalent in the rest of Central America during this period.

Following the dislocation of the liberal oligarchic hegemony triggered by the socio-economic impact of the Great Depression, a group of law students, workers, and radical intellectuals founded the Costa Rica Communist Party in 1931. The CRCP members were the first to shift the dominant external political frontier inwards by introducing for the first time in the country’s history an irreconcilable negativity into its social relations. Seeking to radically change Costa Rica’s discursive field, they argued that the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary was a bourgeoisie lie and sought to replace its elements of meaning (homogeneity, equality, democracy, peace) with Marxist elements of meaning (class struggle, oppression, and inequality). Failing to garner political support with this strategy and shadowing the 1936 Soviet shift away from the United Front strategy towards a Popular Front strategy, the CRCP leaders changed tactics. By 1936 they started to develop a new myth – the *comunismo a la tica* myth - incorporating elements of meaning of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary into their traditional Marxist discourse. Despite the gradual evolution of the CRCP discourse, two inherent tensions remained. The first tension revolved around the CRCP leaders’ desire to remain faithful to Soviet directives and Marxist doctrine, while simultaneously

seeking to make their communist project work within Costa Rica's national discursive and institutional context. The second tension revolved around the choice of tactics and strategies, with the party shifting from non-institutional tactics of mobilization to parliamentary tactics, while always working to construct a new communist political identity for a future revolution. There was in effect a division of labour within the CRCP. The CRCP members elected to Congress tailored their coordinative discourse to their congressional audience in order to have a chance of winning support for their proposals. CRCP Congressmen indeed triggered a shift in the national ideational context placing the social question at the centre of political debates. The liberal oligarchic presidents responded by further pursuing reformist institutional change. On the other hand, the Communist newspaper *Trabajo* retained the radical Marxist discourse to indoctrinate the masses for a future socialist revolution. This chapter analyses how the *Olympian* presidents Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1928-1932), Ricardo Jimenez (1932-1936) and Leon Cortes (1936-1940) responded to the rising communist threat.

The primary materials analysed in the chapter come from selected articles of the Communist newspaper *Trabajo* from 1931-1940, key speeches by the CRCP leader Manuel Mora, the two most famous *Olympian* presidents in the 1900s Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1928-1932), and Ricardo Jimenez (1932-1936) as well as selected articles from the liberal oligarchic press *La Tribuna* and *Diario de Costa Rica*. The background information comes from historical books by Costa Rican academics, biographies and memoirs written by the communist leaders Manuel Mora and Jaime Cerdas.

The chapter is divided in three sections. Section one shows how the liberal oligarchic administrations of Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1906-1910) and Ricardo Jimenez (1910-1914) absorbed the previous reformist movements – the *Radicales del 1900* and the *Partido Reformista* during the 1920s through institutional means. Section two analyses the unique way in which the Costa Rican *Olympian* presidents Gonzalez Viquez (1928-1932) and Jimenez (1932-1936) addressed the “communist threat” relative to their Central American counterparts. Instead of exiling or executing its leaders, outlawing

the party, and banning their literature as the Central American dictators Hernandez Martinez, Ubico, and Somoza did, the Costa Rican leaders pursued two types of tactics – co-opting strategies and combative measures. They sought to de-radicalize the Communist Party by incorporating it into the electoral system. Simultaneously, they encouraged anti-communist ideological campaigns conducted by the Catholic Church, liberal oligarchic intellectuals and the coffee oligarchs. Section three analyses the emergence of the *comunismo a la tica* myth. Borrowing insights from Carstensen's model of incremental ideational change (2009) it explores how the communist leaders were able to integrate elements of meaning of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary with traditional Marxist elements despite their inherent contradictions.

Liberal oligarchic response to the anti-liberal discourses (1900-1930)

In the early 1900s, a group of intellectuals including professor Joaquin Garcia Monge, Jose Maria Zeledon, Omar Dengo, Roberto Brenes Mesen and Carmen Lyra formed the *Radicales del 1900*. These intellectuals denounced the persistence of poverty, electoral fraud and the growing influence of American companies in the region. They were initially influenced by anarchist and socialist ideas circulating Latin America at the time but were gradually de-radicalized. The liberal oligarchic presidents Ascencio Esquivel (1902-1906) and Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1906-1910) responded to their demands by passing reformist laws geared at expanding access to primary education, creating vocational training centres, building infrastructure projects, improving health-care facilities, improving working conditions and regulating wage disputes. In 1910, Gonzalez Viquez passed laws to improve the sanitation system, to construct the railway road to the Pacific, and to build the National Library in order to create jobs. He also reinforced municipal services to address particularistic demands. To address the democratic deficit, Gonzalez Viquez passed the 1908-1909 electoral reforms with the support of the opposing liberal oligarchic party, the *Partido Republicano*, which controlled Congress at the time. The liberal oligarchs also co-opted the leaders of the *Radicales del 1900* by offering them high-ranking positions in the most prestigious educational centres and in their administrations (Molina 2005).

The *Radicales del 1900* gradually became convinced that the social question and the democratic deficit were best addressed through reformist policies within the liberal oligarchic institutional framework.

During his first administration, the Ricardo Jimenez (1910-1914) sought to address the demands made by the *Radicales del 1900* regarding the country's democratic deficit. In 1913, Congress approved an electoral reform that eliminated the electoral-college system, opening the way for direct presidential elections (Molina 2007:48). Alfredo Gonzalez Flores, the subsequent president (1914-1917), focused on the social question. World War I had triggered a great socio-economic crisis as England and Germany were the main importers of Costa Rican coffee. Gonzalez Flores argued that greater state intervention was needed to address the crisis. He founded a National State Bank to compete with private banks by lending money to small businesses at lower interest rates, instituted a property tax, and proposed a more progressive income tax. He tried to create a "paradigm shift" (Hay 2001) away from the liberal oligarchic order towards a social democratic state. However, he failed to garner enough political support for what were portrayed by his opponents as too radical and unnecessary policy changes. The liberals argued that the crisis was the result of temporary external incidents and not an indication that the liberal socio-economic model had to be replaced. Gonzalez Flores was toppled by a coup in 1917. After the 1917 coup, the Minister of War, Jose Federico Tinoco Granados, retained power arguing that the severe socio-economic crisis required a dictatorship to preserve order. A broad coalition including progressive and conservatives, *Radicales del 1900*, students, workers and the newly formed *Partido Reformista* finally succeeded in overthrowing the Tinoco dictatorship in August 1919. The liberal oligarchic hegemonic order was re-established without bloodshed.

In 1923, Jorge Volio founded the *Partido Reformista*, which was the first political party to place the social question at the centre of political debates. Until the 1920s poverty was not a central argument in political debates (Sojo 2010, De la Cruz 2009 and Viales and Fallas 2009). The liberal oligarchic re-articulation of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary had framed poverty as

a general condition. Because the liberals framed poverty as an integrative condition uniting Costa Rican society, poverty was not used as a rationale for social mobilization (Sojo 2010: 56). As Ronny Viales and Carlos Fallas (2009) argue, by claiming that Costa Rica was an egalitarian and homogenous society and by claiming that everyone was poor, they were indirectly saying that no one was poor as poverty is a relative concept (Viales and Fallas 2009:13). Costa Rica's poverty had been discursively constructed as the key to its greatest virtue – its democratic nature.

Going against the liberal oligarchic interpretation, Volio sought to make poverty a political issue. Volio developed his Christian democratic ideology while studying in the Catholic University of Lovaine - one of the most active centres of discussion of the social question at the time (Miranda Guitierrez 2008: 77). The *Partido Reformista's* platform included greater municipal autonomy, agrarian reform, formation of cooperatives, the creation of more programs to fight illiteracy, malnutrition and endemic diseases, the foundation of a National University and a more just system of taxation (Trejos 2008:199).

Volio became the presidential candidate of the *Partido Reformista* during the 1924 presidential elections. He was competing against the conservative candidate Alberto Echandi and former president Jimenez. During the 1924 presidential elections, none of the candidates reached the majority necessary to win the presidency. Congress had to decide between the two candidates with the most votes – Jimenez and Echandi. Jimenez convinced Volio to form an alliance with him in exchange for taking on board the *Partido Reformista's* public health and labour protection policy proposals, granting the *Partido Reformista* three key cabinet positions, and creating an institution in charge of overseeing the protection of workers' rights with regards to work-related accidents and sicknesses (Orlando Salazar Mora and Jorge Mario Salazar Mora 2010:78). With Volio's support, Jimenez became president (1924-1928) for the second time.

The *Partido Reformista* was soon disbanded. Most party members disapproved of Volio's alliance with Jimenez as they said this would only

serve to co-opt their reformist movement – as indeed happened. In his second administration, Jimenez continued to pursue reformist measures – one of the most important being the creation of the National Insurance Bank – the forerunner of today's National Insurance Institute (Miranda Guitierrez 2008:80). He also continued to address concerns regarding the democratic deficit in Costa Rica by passing further electoral reforms. In 1925, a new electoral law was passed that made voting secret.

In 1928, Cleto Gonzalez Viquez was re-elected for a second term. His second administration was shaped by the impact of the Great Depression on Costa Rica's economy and the emergence of the Costa Rican Communist Party. The Great Depression had devastating effects on Costa Rica's economy as it did in the rest of the region. By 1929, the United States was the main importer of Costa Rica's coffee and bananas, buying 71% of Costa Rica's total exports. After the 1929 US stock market crash, banana exports and the price of coffee dropped drastically, devastating the Costa Rican economy. From 1929 to 1935 banana exports halved, going from 6 million to 3 million bunches per year. Although the volume of coffee exports bounced back after a sharp drop, the international price of coffee dropped by more than half its original price from 1928 to 1932 and it remained low until 1935. From 1929 to 1932, the value of Costa Rican exports fell from 18 million to 8 million dollars and that of imports fell from 20 million to 5 million dollars (Molina and Palmer 2005:3). Since 75% of Costa Rican state revenue came from import and export taxes, Costa Rica suffered a big fiscal deficit from 1929 until 1936 (Botey Sobrado 2009:63). In 1931, there was a 60% reduction in commercial sales. The drop in sales, coupled with the lack of available credit, forced many small industries to shut down. This not only increased unemployment and pushed down wages, but also reduced the already limited supply of basic goods. The lack of industrial or agricultural diversification meant that Costa Rica had to import even basic goods and food supplies, making them excessively expensive for the poor (Lynn 2007:201).

The big coffee processors, exporters, and financiers transferred their losses to the small producers by charging them more for processing their coffee or by

delaying their payment for the coffee they purchased from them (Yashar 1997:64). Under these circumstances, many small landowners lost their lands to banks or the big coffee barons financiers when they were not able to repay their mortgages. This started a gradual process of proletarianization (though significantly smaller than that experienced by South American countries during the early 20th Century). Most of these small farmers joined the ranks of the unemployed or the underpaid. According to the 1932 Census of the Unemployed, 8,863 out of a 152,263 work force were unemployed. To contextualise this number, it is interesting to compare it to the results of the 1927 Census of the Unemployed, which estimated 1,447 people unemployed (Hernandez 2009:12). (The numbers are particularly low, as the population did not reach half a million at the time and most people were peasants not calculated by these numbers).

In keeping with the *transformist* logic, the Gonzalez Viquez administration responded to the growing demands of the recently organized urban workers unions and the pressure from reformist politicians by creating new institutions. In 1928 the *Secretaria de Estado de los Despachos de Trabajo y Prevision Social* was created to defuse the growing social tension between workers and capital (Hernandez 2009:11). This office was assigned the task to create a labour code and to supervise the application of all the labour laws previously passed. The *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* and the *Servicio Nacional de Electricidad* were also created. Paternalistic charity associations managed by the private sector sprung up throughout the country.

As the economic situation deteriorated, unemployment continued to rise. This was highest amongst urban workers in small industries located in the capital, and former employees of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) in Limon – the Atlantic costal area. Instead of firing government employees, the government reduced their salaries. The sector that suffered most from these wage reductions were teachers and low ranking bureaucrats. The “new proletariat”, the UFCO banana enclave workers, and the teachers were the social sectors that proved most receptive to communist ideas circulating Latin America.

Emergence of the Costa Rican Communist Party

A group of law students from the Escuela de Derecho led by Manuel Mora, Jaime Cerdas, Ricardo Coto, Gonzalo Monter and a member of the 1900 radical intellectuals, Carmen Lyra,²⁶ founded a Marxist think-tank called *Accion Revolucionaria de Cultura Obrera* in 1929. They were joined by a group of workers including Gonzalo Montero Berry and Carlos Marin Obando. Together they founded the Costa Rican Communist Party CRCP on June 16, 1931. This group was frustrated by the fact that, despite the severe socio-economic crisis triggered by the Great Depression (which according to them proved the inherent faults of the capitalist development), no one was questioning the socio-economic and political model. Deeply disillusioned with the previous reformist movements, they were convinced that the only way of solving the Costa Rican crisis was through revolutionary means.

In 1931, they founded the newspaper *Trabajo* to diffuse their counter-hegemonic discourse. They argued that Costa Rica was not the exceptional, homogenous, egalitarian, democratic society that the liberal oligarchs claimed. While they accepted the liberal oligarchic interpretation of the colonial period, they offered a Marxist interpretation of its history following Costa Rica's insertion into the international capitalist system during the 1830s (Botey 2009). They stated Costa Rica's insertion into the capitalist system through the coffee-based export development model unleashed the inevitable process of creating two distinct antagonistic blocks within society – the workers and landless peasants versus the coffee oligarchs, the financiers, and foreign investors. With the state faithfully serving the interest of the capitalists, capitalism's greed had destroyed the colonial egalitarian, peaceful, homogenous, and democratic society. They argued that only communism could make Costa Rica become a truly egalitarian and democratic society (Botey 2009:273).

²⁶ Molina (2005) argues that Carmen Lyra was the only Radical del 1900 to join the communist party because she was the only member who had been neglected by the liberal oligarchs due to her gender. Despite being a brilliant woman, the Olympians did not give her a significant position in their administrations.

Re-articulation of the *Juan Santamaria* Myth

In order to make their communist discourse more appealing to the Costa Rican population, the CRCP members sought to link their political project to the most popular myth - the *Juan Santamaria* myth – in the process re-articulating this myth. In the article entitled “Juan Santamaria and today’s filibusters” in the *Trabajo* edition of the 5th of September 1931, they created equivalential links between Cleto Gonzalez Viquez’s policies, the previous liberal oligarchic administrations’ policies and the actions committed by William Walker:

What constructive work of freedom to Costa Rica can we offer in memory of the soldiers who died defending our Independence? Is it perhaps the giving away of one fourth of our territory to the United Fruit Company and Golfo Dulce Costa Rican Land Company? Is it getting Costa Rican indebted to carry out expensive infrastructure at the cost of the wellbeing of its people? Is it giving control of the Atlantic Railroad and the Port of Limon to the UFCO? The fate of Costa Rica is today in the hands of filibusters a thousand times worse than those of 56. Their heirs of the great act of the heroic soldiers have not preserved the Independence that he died defending. The craving for wealth of some and the ignorance and indifference of the majority have destroyed the freedom he helped win for us with the sacrifice of his life. Walker and the troop of freebooters who followed him tried to enslave Central America. Juan Santamaria, one of the most humble soldiers of the Costa Rican troops, whom their bosses maybe judged only good for playing the drums, became one of the most powerful forces acting against that odious threat. Something as insignificant as a wood stick with a rag soaked in alcohol became an instrument of liberation. (Trabajo – September 5, 1931).

Juan Santamaria was no longer portrayed as a submissive figure selflessly accepting the commands of his superiors, but rather as a revolutionary agent. They highlight the fact that he had used a rudimentary weapon to show that anyone could fight. Creating equivalential chains between Walker and the capitalist class, this newspaper article argued that Costa Rica’s liberty was once again threatened by the greed of the imperialist powers (US companies operating in Costa Rica), the capitalist elite, and the ignorance of the multitudes. It was the mission of the workers to follow the example of Juan Santamaria and regain Costa Rica’s liberty by fighting the capitalist oppressors and the “capitalist puppets” dominating the Costa Rican state. Through this new interpretation, they sought to legitimize anti-institutional channels of political mobilization.

Political mobilization through a discourse using the *logic of equivalence*

The CRCP leaders argued that the isolated union strikes during the first two decades of the 20th century had been limited by the particularistic nature of their demands. Although the shoemakers, the carpenters, banana enclave workers, and railroad workers had obtained their specific demands, they had failed to see the big picture. These isolated strikes led to reformist actions by the government, which only served to de-politicize the masses. The CRCP sought to create equivalential chains amongst these disparate groups. An example of this is seen in the article “Only through mass protests and general strikes can the proletariat protest the violent reduction in their wages” in the March 10th 1935 edition of *Trabajo*:

The drivers have been the first to object to the change in the exchange rate. As soon as the exchange rate changed, the costs of gasoline increased. The drivers union [...] has raised a complaint to the Secreteria de Hacienda and seems ready to strike to demand the lowering of the cost of gasoline. But the drivers are only focusing on one aspect – the most visible to them. [...] They are worried about the raise in cents of the cost of gasoline, without noticing that their cost of living has increased by 25%, which means that the driver, the carpenter, the government employee, and all those who depend on their salaries to survive, are having a REAL reduction in their purchasing power. We are witnessing the sharpening of a collective misery for the masses that has existed since the 1929 crisis. How are we going to fight? Doing what the drivers are doing focusing on our individual issues. No! [...] We believe that the demand to “lower the price of gasoline” is not enough. We are certain that to succeed we need to place the problem in its right dimension and to create a united front to fight for all the demands of our class [...] We must use the unsurpassable weapon of the proletariat, which is the general strike. The Communist Party will begin immediately to mobilize the exploited masses around the demands of an immediate increase in salaries, a reduction in the cost of living, a control on speculative moves by sales people who are taking advantage of scarcity, and a control on the exchange rate (Trabajo - March 10, 1935).

Using the *logic of equivalence*, the CRCP leaders sought to create unity amongst heterogeneous social groups by linking their specific demands equivalentially vis-à-vis a common enemy – “the capitalist state”. They sought to create a new political identity – “the oppressed proletariat” - by transforming these specific demands into “popular demands”²⁷. By doing so, they were seeking to constitute the “people” as a potential historical actor. The CRCP

²⁷ Laclau defines popular demands as “a plurality of demands which, through their equivalential articulation, constitute a broader social subjectivity”. (Laclau 2005:74)

leaders realized that the creation of this new political identity would require an intense discursive campaign. They conducted this campaign alongside other tactics.

Foiled kidnap attempt of President Cleto Gonzalez Viquez by CRCP leaders

During the first years, the CRCP leaders argued that only radical actions could bring real results. In fact, one of the first plans made by the founding members of the party was to kidnap the president. They wanted to keep him hostage in the National Theatre until he signed a list of pro-worker decrees including unemployment benefits.²⁸ The kidnapping attempt was foiled when one of the communists told the police about this plan. Gonzales Viquez chose not to imprison the potential kidnappers or confront them publicly. One of the plotters was Jaime Cerdas a founding member of the CRCP. In his memoirs, Cerdas recounts a meeting he had with the president one month after the foiled kidnap attempt. Cerdas went to ask the president to send to Congress a petition to allow the CRCP to participate in the 1932 congressional elections. According to Cerdas, the president asked him: “Why do you want to participate in elections when you wanted to kidnap me?” Cerdas writes that he was initially shocked that the president knew about the plan, but he then admitted it. According to Jaime Cerdas’ account, the president then said:

Look, my friend, we were discussing this issue in the government because we knew from the beginning about your plot. And I want to tell you this so you understand in what type of country you are living. There were two sides. One side that argued that we should catch you red-handed, and another one, headed by me, that argued against that. I said: “Let’s stop this. These are well-intentioned sincere young men. They are hot-headed men who want to fix this, only by the wrong means. We can stop the plot. Let’s leave them alone. Why should we ruin the lives of these young men?” (Cerdas 1993:58).

Through this type of non-antagonistic discourse president Gonzalez Viquez sought to de-radicalize the young CRCP leader. The president knew that

²⁸ This group of communist later argued that foreign communists including Adolfo Branas Rosas from Asturias and Gerardo Zuniga Montufar former coronel from the Chilean army were the ones that had convinced them to do this – in a typical attempt to blame foreigners for radical views.

imprisoning the communists would have only served to create more hostility towards his administration and potentially could have been used by the CRCP to mobilize people. He portrays the CRCP plotters as “sincere, well intentioned, hot-headed” young men who “want to fix this, only through a mistaken path”. Through these words, the president wanted to show Cerdas that he understood the frustrations of the CRCP leaders. He argued that while he agreed that the current situation was unacceptable, he disagreed with the means proposed by the CRCP. He reinforced this message in various public speeches. By reassuring the people that he was aware of their plight and by creating ad hoc institutions to address specific demands, the president sought to reduce the ability of the CRCP to mobilize people. Gonzalez Viquez also wanted to integrate the CRCP into Costa Rica’s institutional system. He agreed to send the petition to Congress as Cerdas requested.

However, on the 7th of October 1931, Congress voted against allowing the CRCP from participating in the 1932 elections by 18 votes against and 14 in favour. The rationale given by Congress was the following: 1) the CRCP did not have a presidential candidate; 2) it wanted to change the social organization which meant changing the Constitution and thus it was an unconstitutional party; and 3) it was violent and radical (Merino del Rio 1996: 32). *La Gaceta* of July 1st, 1931, argued that the CRCP was banned because of its “international tendencies that were adverse to two main axis of our legal and political system – private property and the sovereignty of the State” (quoted by Vladimir Cruz 1980:28). However, the fact that 14 Congressmen out of 32 voted in favour of the CRCP’s participation in the elections is remarkable when we compare this result with the coercive suppression and illegalization of communist parties in the rest of Central America. Many liberal oligarchs including former president and member of the *Grupo del Olimpo* Ricardo Jimenez (1910-1914 and 1924-1928) and the owner of the *Diario de Costa Rica* newspaper Otilio Ulate conducted a very active campaign in favour of allowing the CRCP to participate in the elections. In the *Diario de Costa Rica* edition of October 8th 1931, Jiménez stated:

If the Constitution guarantees (the communists) the liberty of expression, if they can write their propaganda, why can they not

participate in elections? We will not be promoting a revolution by allowing them to participate. On the contrary, we should not create political martyrs because sentimentalism can lead the people to support those they see as victims (Diario de Costa Rica – October 8, 1931).

Jimenez argued that it was essential to channel all political forces through institutional means to prevent them from becoming more radical and posing a real threat to the system. Communism had to be fought through reason and not with bullets, as creating martyrs would only make communism grow stronger. Jimenez hoped to co-opt the communists as he had done with the reformist movement.

During the 1931-1937 period, the CRCP wanted to avoid being co-opted at all costs. In the first edition of *Trabajo* published on July 14, 1931, they justified their desire to participate in the 1932 municipal and congressional elections by stating that it was a necessary evil and not an end goal. They argued the CRCP knew they would never achieve power through the ballot box. They chose to go to elections in order to use the propaganda surrounding the electoral process, as well as potential congressional seats to create a political social consciousness amongst the masses and prepare them for the eventual revolution (Merino del Rio 1996: 31).

The public support for Ricardo Jimenez's reformist views were evident by the presidential results of the February 14, 1932 elections. Jimenez's newly formed *Partido Republicano Independiente* - an offshoot of the *Partido Republicano* - received 46.7% of the votes. Manuel Quesada of the *Union Republicana* received 29.1%, Carlos Maria Jimenez of the Republican Party 22.8% and Max Koberg Boleni of the *Partido Nacionalista* 1.4% of the votes. Voter turnout was 64.2%. Ricardo Jimenez's *Independent National Republican Party* also won control of Congress.

Ricardo Jimenez administration (May 1932- May 1936)

During his administration, Jimenez pursued a dual strategy of de-radicalizing the communists by integrating them into the political system and making reformist institutional changes, while at the same time encouraging the anti-

communist campaign conducted by liberal oligarchic intellectuals, coffee oligarchs and the Costa Rican Catholic Church. During his third administration, the *Oficina Tecnica del Trabajo* was founded with the mandate of regulating labour disputes and assisting in the negotiation of conflicts. The *Instituto de la Defensa del Café* was created to regulate the price that coffee processors and exporters would buy the coffee fruit at from small farmers, which was the biggest source of tension between small farmers and coffee barons. His administration sought to appease the landless peasants by giving away 100,000 hectares of public land. It also sought to end the sporadic strikes by forcing companies to make concessions to workers such as a minimum wage and respecting the 8-hour workdays for morning workers and 6 hours for night workers.

Costa Rican Communist Party's strikes

On May 28th 1932, the communists organized a meeting to examine two projects being discussed in Congress – one on minimum wage and another on unemployment benefits. Approximately 1000 people attended the meeting. The police imprisoned dozens of communist agitators and fined the organizers Manuel Mora, Jaime Cerdas and Luis Carballo. Jimenez personally ordered the immediate release of the prisoners.

On May 22, 1933, the communists organized another strike of the unemployed. The Jimenez administration responded by exiling foreign communist activists including the Spaniard Adolfo Brana - one of the founders of the CRCP. The Venezuelan Romulo Betancourt managed to escape and thus avoided deportation. Jimenez blamed these foreigners for radicalizing the young Costa Rican communists in an attempt to co-opt the young Costa Rican communist leaders by not blaming them.

Jimenez argued that the inclusion of the CRCP into the political system would have a positive impact on Costa Rica's democratic development by de-radicalizing them. He then sought to absorb the workers' demands through institutional means. Jimenez was one of the political leaders who lobbied the most to convince Congress and the general public of the wisdom of allowing

the CRCP to participate in elections, and was instrumental in allowing the communists to participate in the December 1932 municipal elections, with the only condition placed on them being that they change their name. They agreed to change it to the Workers and Farmers Party WFP (Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos). That same day in the *Trabajo* newspaper, they reassured their followers that the only thing changing was their name. (This dissertation will continue using CRCP for the sake of simplicity.)

In the December 1932 municipal elections, the CRCP won two seats for the San Jose municipality - Brana and Guillermo Fernandez. In the February 11, 1934, congressional elections, it won two congressional seats (Manuel Mora Valverde and Efrain Jimenez Guerrero). It also won more seats in the municipality of San Jose. Jimenez subsequently started to shift his discourse leftwards to appeal to potential communist sympathisers. The reaction of the CRCP to this strategy can be seen in the following article of the May 5th, 1935 edition of *Trabajo*:

In the presidential message delivered to Congress the first of May we find a sensational message that has made much commotion. The president said: "The Costa Rican administrations have been applying for a long time socialist measures." Those measures, as we will discuss do not deserve that name. But it is interesting that a Manchestarian liberal like the current president Jimenez would proclaim the socialist nature of certain policies adopted by the Costa Rican state. Four or five years ago neither the president nor any other member of the capitalist state would have dared to say this in Costa Rica, but today when the socialist ideas have entered the bone and marrow of the Costa Rican masses, today when the wisest and more conscious sectors of the proletariat fights under the socialist flag, the president has opted for a strategy [...] to cover with the prestigious banner of socialism the discredited bourgeois politics (Trabajo – May 5, 1935).

The CRCP were concerned that Jimenez would once again co-opt leftist movements by "covering with the prestigious banner of socialism the discredited bourgeois politics" (Trabajo May 5 1935). The CRCP warned their followers not to fall into that trap.

The 1934 "Banana Strike" (*Huelga Bananera*) in the Atlantic region against the United Fruit Company

From August to September 1934, the CRCP helped organize the most violent strike in the history of Costa Rica – the *Huelga Bananera* - directed against the United Fruit Company (UFCO), not the government. The banana workers were demanding higher wages, to be paid in cash as opposed to stamps that could only be used in the UFCO's stores, better working conditions (including sufficient medical supplies on site to deal with common problems such as poisonous snake bites and better hygiene), better housing and better overall living conditions.

The government was initially divided over how to respond. Labour Secretary Herrera argued in favour of a negotiated settlement to ensure social peace. Another faction led by Foreign Minister Raul Guardian stated that the communist threat was too high and that an anti-communist coalition was needed. He formed the Anti-Communist League that lobbied in favour of sending the Costa Rican army to suppress the communist-led movement (Miller 1996: 61). Jimenez objected to this course of action. Instead, he positioned himself as a neutral negotiator between the UFCO and the banana workers. He forced the UFCO to sign a new contract, which included all the demands of the banana workers. The UFCO signed the contract and then sought to break it, as had been its common practice before. The communists organized the strikers again and ordered their followers to escalate the violence. They started putting dynamite under the bridges used by the UFCO to take the banana crop to the ports. To these violent acts, Jimenez responded by ordering the imprisonment of those committing them, but at the same time, he forced the UFCO to respect the agreement.

The CRCP immediately started advertising the strike as a communist victory. In the *Trabajo* articles of that period they stated that its success was due to the following: a) the determination of the communist activists organized by Carlos Fallas; b) the ceaseless efforts by Manuel Mora to convince Congress and the President to act in the favour of the banana workers; and c) their mass propaganda to convince the general public of the legitimacy of their demands. Indeed, the attention devoted by the communist and the liberal oligarchic press to the *Huelga Bananera* highlighting the misery of the banana

workers in the Atlantic region allowed the CRCP to show the contingency of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. The exceptionalist collective imaginary had neglected this region and instead had focused on the Central Valley only. During several months the *Huelga Bananera* became the most discussed topic amongst political actors and Costa Rican newspapers. A growing consensus emerged that more active state intervention was needed to address the social question and avert future strikes.

CRCP strategies during the Jimenez administration

The CRCP adopted a dual strategy as explained by an article written on the May 5, 1935 edition of *Trabajo*:

The PC does not deny the importance of legislative action to lower the cost of living [...] But our party does not forget the lessons learnt from the international experience of class struggle. A social revolution is only obtained through direct mass actions, through strikes and using weapons [...] The parliamentary route is less reliable. (Trabajo - May 5 1935)

While the CRCP leaders chose the legislative path to convince other Congressmen to change specific laws, they incited general strikes to mobilize popular support for their counter-hegemonic project. The May 26, 1935 article of *Trabajo*:

The workers already know that pleadings and appeals to fearful good heart cannot achieve anything. We need to respond to the rising cost of living with more strikes. In San Jose, in the short space of a week, unions have conducted three strikes. There is a general agitation of workers of all trades. This working-class consciousness is taking shape in the capital and it will probably extend to the country [...]. These strikes arose spontaneously, isolated from each other, without a common direction that unifies them. This is due to a more visible failure of the labour movement in Costa Rica - the absence of unions in the country in all industries organized on the basis of revolutionary syndicalism (Trabajo - May 26, 1935).

Unions were carrying out strikes, but these unions had not created equivalential chains with each other. The communists argued that it was necessary to create a unified labour movement headed by the CRCP. They sought to unite the *Confederación de Obreros*, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores*, the *Federación Obrera*, the *Sociedad de Ebanistas y Carpinteros* and other small trade unions into a single trade union called the

Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica CTCR. Only by creating a united front could these individual associations form a counter-hegemonic block. In the same article, the CRCP stated:

What are the practices common in this area? The pro-worker leaders became Congressmen on the shoulders of hope and faith of the workers to lose their revolutionary impetus as soon as they came in contact with the blandishments of the bourgeois factions. Fernandistas, Reformistas, [...] agreed to make concessions to the bourgeois parliamentary groups. Our members have broken that unfair tradition. In Congress, they have continued to act as before they entered it (Trabajo - May 26, 1935).

The communists fought against the attempts being made by the liberals to co-opt them. They argued that their movement would not follow the path taken by the previous reformist movements, which had been absorbed by the hegemonic order. Up until 1937, the communists continued to believe that forming an alliance with reformist sectors of Costa Rican society was to commit treason to their cause. They argued that their goal was not limited to making changes to the political system but starting a radical social revolution. On March 29, 1936, an article of *Trabajo* stated:

For the Marxist revolution means transforming the foundations of social life, for which it is considered essential to purify the mentality of the masses of their false consciousness and instead infuse them with real cultural action. We have said a thousand times that we pursue a social revolution and not simply a political revolution (Trabajo - March 29, 1936).

The communist leaders argued that in order for their social revolution to succeed, the CRCP had to participate in the liberal political system, but without forgetting its Marxist goal. For the 1936 presidential elections, the communists nominated Carlos Luis Saenz as their candidate. In his acceptance speech reproduced in a January 12, 1936 article of *Trabajo* he stated:

I understand the honour and responsibility that the CRCP has granted me. Without doubt or hesitation I accept it because I am convinced of the historical mission of the world proletariat- the revolutionary introduction of the socialist, classless society, in other words the transformation of social structure in accordance with Marxist doctrine. [...]. I have never been a traitor to my class [...] I've never been an instrument of the bourgeois democracy. I have never been corrupted by its gold (Trabajo - January 12, 1936).

Saenz vehemently argued that he would not be co-opted by the “bourgeois democracy” or “corrupted” by its gold as the previous reformist leaders had been.

1936 Presidential Elections

Carlos Luis Saenz was running against the staunch anti-communist conservative oligarchic candidate Leon Cortes and the more progressive liberal oligarchic candidate Octavio Beeche. Both Cortes and Beeche’s campaigns argued that the communists posed a grave threat to Costa Rica’s democracy. Communism was an extremist ideology incompatible with the moderate and consensual Costa Rican nature. The CRCP responded with arguments such as the one used in the article of *Trabajo* newspaper on July 7th, 1935:

Communist doctrines are not exotic in Costa Rica as they are not in any country where the capitalist regime plunders and murders the producing masses [...] What is the doctrine that operates in the bourgeoisie system that is contrary to communism? Bourgeois liberalism. And this ideology is natively Costa Rican? Did a Costa Rican from Limon or San Jose come up with this doctrine? Unquestionably, not. (Trabajo - July 7, 1935)

The CRCP party leaders attacked the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary equating Costa Rica with all capitalist oppressive regimes. They then sought to show the contingency of the liberal oligarchic hegemonic discourse arguing that it was as “alien” to Costa Rica as any doctrine. This *crisis narrative* was not widely accepted as is evident by the results of the 1936 presidential elections.

Leon Cortes administration (May 1936- May 1940)

On February 9 1936, Leon Cortes won the presidential elections receiving 60.2% of the votes. Octavio Beeche of the *Partido Nacional* came in a distant second with 34.5% of the votes. The communist came last with only 5.5% of the votes. Voter turnout was estimated at 68.8%. Cortes’ party also won the Congressional majority. The *Beechistas* and the communists argued that the

Cortesistas had committed fraud.²⁹ However, neither one sought to mobilize their supporters to challenge the electoral results. To their poor electoral results the communist leaders responded the following way as shown in the article on the *Trabajo* edition on March 29, 1936:

The petty bourgeois mentality that cannot distinguish between the political and the social see these past elections as a disaster for the communists. [...] However, we know that the fundamental thing is not the political. We believe that we are conducting a revolution even if we have not obtained political power because we are intellectually preparing the masses for a future decisive action [...] We know the masses have not responded to the extent we had wanted. We must correct our past mistakes and change our methods to continue advancing with more efficiency. Gaining political power is thus not for us the revolution, but rather a way of pursuing the revolution. The Russian Revolution is still in progress. They are building the bases for the new culture. [...] But it is a culture that is real because it is based on the economic wellbeing of the masses and not of the few as in the capitalist system (Trabajo - March 29, 1936).

The CRCP argued that their real goal was not merely to obtain political power but to incite a *social* revolution. After the 1936 elections, they acknowledged that to do so they needed to develop a new narrative that was not perceived as incompatible with the Costa Rican sense of national identity. They therefore developed the *comunismo a la tica* myth.

Emergence of the *comunismo a la tica* myth

The first time Manuel Mora used the term “Costa Rican communism”, which was later coined *comunismo a la tica*, was right after the 1936 presidential elections. Mora stated:

We Costa Ricans need what we can call a Costa Rican communism: that is a Communist Party that can interpret the national reality and adjust their slogans and methods of struggle to this reality. From now on our goal will be to build a “comunismo a la tica” in that sense. Anyone who opposes the realization of this strategy is not a true Costa Rican Communist (quoted by Merino 1996:58).

²⁹ According to Ivan Molina, the fact that Jimenez made voting mandatory during the 1936 presidential and parliamentary elections corrected the inflated percentage received by the communists in previous elections due to low voter turnouts. The Catholic Church also conducted an extremely active anti-communist, pro-voting campaign which proved very successful to counter the traditional political apathy.

The CRCP shifted strategy away from attacking the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary to trying to redefine it. To do this they had to re-articulate the most influential myth amongst the masses, the *Juan Santamaria* myth. This can be seen in the April 19, 1936 edition of *Trabajo* entitled “The people and their traditions”:

*The Costa Rican people have their heroic traditions including the 1856 War and the sacrifice of Juan Santa Maria. But up to now these have been dead traditions - things of the past disconnected from historical processes with consequences in our present. **The 1856 war was one of the most brilliant anti-imperialist and anti-slave wars known in the continent's history. But we are used to seeing the 1856 war as a simple defeat of the invading yanquis [...]** This cannot go on like this because history is already preparing something else. Today Costa Rica has a progressive movement capable of interpreting these historic processes and capable of giving the 1856 war its real meaning. That movement is the Communist Party.[...] **The 1856 war is our war. We are the authentic heirs of its anti-imperialist tradition. The soldier, Juan is our best symbol.** Costa Rica has good traditions and it would be the new generation's fault if these traditions cease to nourish the minds of the Costa Rican people (Trabajo - April 19, 1936).*

The CRCP re-articulated the 1856 war myth in a different way than in 1931. Instead of comparing Walker with the existing government to show the lack of liberty that the Costa Ricans endured, they adopted the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary's perception of Costa Rica as having “good traditions” worthy of being defended. They then presented themselves as the most qualified political actors to protect this tradition. The February 20th, 1937 edition of *Trabajo* stated:

This raises for us all lovers of democracy and especially the Costa Rican Communist Party, which is the most effective and the most active defender of our democracy, the urgency of putting as our first priority the affirmation and the expansion of democracy [...] For this end, it is essential to give economic content to our democracy in order to include the masses in our political deliberations. Only through active participation of the masses will our democratic regime flourish (Trabajo - February 20, 1937).

We see a shift in the relative weight attributed to the elements of meaning of their discursive formation. They now placed *democracy* as opposed to *class struggle* as the most important element. They then sought to redefine the concept of democracy by changing its liberal interpretation to a Marxist one. They stated that only a socialist regime that could increase socio-economic

equality could make Costa Rica truly democratic (Merino 1996: 51). They argued that there was no contradiction between democracy and socialism as the liberal oligarchic discourse claimed, but rather that socialism was the key to democracy. Mora stated:

Socialism is not the enemy of liberty or democracy. On the contrary, socialism is a realistic defender of democracy. But I ask, are liberty, equality and fraternity tangible realities within liberal society? Undoubtedly no. Until the postulates of liberal democracy have no economic content, they will have no life (in pamphlet entitled Three Speeches made in Defense of Democracy by Manuel Mora printed 1937).

They also sought to counter the attack made by their opponents that communism was incompatible with Costa Rica's national identity. In the same speech Mora states:

I declare that if I believed that the fulfilment of the principles of the doctrine I uphold threatened in any way our country's freedom or the essence of our human personality, I would be the most fierce opponent of socialism. I feel burning in my soul, like fire flowing through my veins, the ideals of liberty and democracy. And I think it is because I am a Costa Rican, an authentic Costa Rican, because in my veins flows the blood of the old Costa Ricans, who fought and sacrificed themselves in order to build the institutions we have today. That is why I will fight with all my might to defend Costa Rica's democracy without thereby contradicting my ideas or my temper [...] And back to the topic of the newly consolidated regime in the Soviet Union - if the leaders of that country were trying to maintain a dictatorship, for the sake of keeping power - we Socialists, at least I can speak for myself - I would call them traitors to the socialist cause (Mora 1937: 7).

Mora combined elements of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary with Marxist elements. While stating that he felt "running through his veins" the democratic institutional tradition of Costa Rica's liberal founding fathers, he then placed the Soviet Union as the model to be followed. He sought to hide the inherent contradiction between Marxist discourse and the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary by re-interpreting the meaning of democracy. An article in the November 28, 1936 edition of *Trabajo*, praises the new constitution in the Soviet Union. The article states:

Stalin declared: "This is the most democratic Constitution of the world." Stalin said that the principal purpose of the new constitution was the elimination of dictatorial forms of power and to give the people direct

influence and participation in public administration and political power as well as to re-establish freedom of press, speech and suffrage. Stalin said "Our new socialist democratic constitution is the most valuable asset in the fight against fascism. It will serve as an inspiration for all the people fighting against fascism and trying to maintain democracy (Trabajo - November 28, 1936).

Therefore, their definition of *democracy* was an idealized interpretation of the Stalinist Soviet Union - not the liberal interpretation. This distinction was made abundantly clear in the newspaper *Trabajo*. When talking about the new Constitution in the Soviet Union, Mora stated in the December 5th, 1936 edition of *Trabajo*: "upon these (Soviet) bases it is possible to promote true liberty and true individualism".

This proves that the current dominant view that argues that after 1936 the CRCP became a "fervent defender of Costa Rica's democracy" (Quesada 2008, Molina 2007, Cerdas 1995) needs to be qualified. The definition of democracy that the CRCP fervently defended was a Soviet democracy not a liberal oligarchic one. This is seen in the article of *Trabajo* dated December 12, 1936:

Is Marxism exotic to Costa Rica? Marxism is universal and it responds to the necessities of a determined stage of human history. Society is a living organism that evolves according to its own laws. Marx discovered laws that are true to Costa Rica as well. [...] (You can) build tall walls around our borders, isolate Costa Rica from the rest of the world, blind-fold everyone and cover the ears of all Costa Ricans. Despite of all that, the self-employed will continue to disappear, the small properties will disappear as big property owners swallow them and the anarchy of capitalist production will continue bringing ruin to the country (Trabajo - December 12, 1936).

Therefore, despite the shift in relative weight of the elements of meaning within its discursive formation, the communists still retained a Marxist conception of democracy. Mora downplayed the Marxist's elements during his congressional speeches. The adoption of the *comunismo a la tica* discourse was well received by the broader Congress. Indeed, Mora's Congressional speeches started to create an ideational shift in Costa Rica's politics. This can be seen in the following excerpt of the December 19th, 1936 edition of *Trabajo*:

These sincere words by our Secretary General (Manuel Mora) were received with great sympathy by a group of Congressmen and by intellectuals. We know that they influenced in some way the motion presented by the Congressman Carlos Maria Jimenez. The motion requested that a Commission be formed to elaborate a list of social laws. Carlos Maria Jimenez argued that he was convinced that the only way of obtaining social peace was by providing social justice to the masses. The motion was approved unanimously which reveals a new orientation in the Congress that we hope proves real (Trabajo - December 19, 1936).

Costa Rica's national ideational shift was triggered by the *transformist* response to the demands raised by the CRCP and by the progressive liberals' reformist inclinations. Regarding this ideational shift, the *Trabajo* article on December 19th, 1936 states:

The program outlined by Deputy Carlos Maria Jimenez has an outspoken leftist flavour. Many of his points are part of our party platform and other communist ones fit well. This goes to prove that our program and the general direction of our movement are in tune with the national reality. The first point, the compulsory social insurance, as raised by the Congressman Jimenez Ortiz has our support (Trabajo – December 19 1936).

The CRCP no longer presented itself as a revolutionary movement. They sought to prove that their political project was in tune with Costa Rica's "exceptionalism". Mora did not specify the distinction between the CRCP's conception of democracy and the liberal oligarchic one during his congressional speeches so as to increase the probability that the CRCP's proposals would be accepted. This change in strategy proved to be effective, and the CRCP congressmen did in fact influence national political debates. Carlos Maria Jimenez's proposal of the creation of compulsory social insurance set the stage for Congress's later approval of Calderon Guardia's proposal to create the National Social Security system in 1942.

CRCP strategic shift after the Soviet shift to the Popular Front Strategy 1936

Mora took a three-month trip in January 1937 to Panama, Mexico and the United States to meet with other Latin American communist party leaders. Upon his return on March 27, 1937, Mora officially announced the adoption of the Popular Front Strategy. On January 30, 1937, Mora wrote in the *Trabajo*:

No compromise? The history of Bolshevism before and after the October Revolution is full of instances of agreements and commitments with other parties, including the bourgeois parties. To wage a war to overthrow the international bourgeoisie, an extremely difficult, complex and lengthy war and to beforehand give up the possibility of taking advantage of the divisions between the bourgeois to create possible allies (just temporary alliances) is absolutely ridiculous [...]. To obtain victory over a more powerful opponent is only possible by using all the forces at our disposal including taking advantage of the disagreements between our enemies [...] He who does not understand this does not understand a word of Marxism or scientific socialism [...] The question is how to apply this tactic without lowering the general level of class awareness and revolutionary spirit needed for a proletariat victory. It should be noted that the victory of the Bolsheviks demanded the application of tactics, agreements, and commitments [...] not only before, but also even after the October Revolution of 1917 (Trabajo - January 30, 1937).

This shows how, despite Mora's claims that the CRCP did not follow Soviet directives, the CRCP leaders shifted strategies in accordance with Soviet policies. The CRCP argued that in order to pursue the Popular Front strategy without losing the revolutionary fervour of the masses, the CRCP leaders had to intensify their Marxist indoctrination by offering courses. They offered the following courses as advertised in the May 1937 editions of *Trabajo*:

"Course in General History of Socialism and social struggles" A. Ferreto. "The ABC of Communism" Rodolfo Guzman "Theme 1 Outline of social classes in Costa Rica - bourgeoisie and proletariat. Workers and artisans. Farmers and landowners." Lesson 4 .. "Uneven development of capitalism. Features of imperialism." Lesson 11 "Introduction to the political program and purpose of the CRCP". "The current struggle at the international level of the various political groups. The Popular Front Strategy" (Trabajo - May 1937).

Therefore, the CRCP sought to prepare the Costa Rican "proletariat" for a future Marxist revolution. Their desire to adhere to Soviet directives was also evident when the Soviets signed the Non Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany on August 23, 1939. The CRCP supported the Soviet decision arguing that the war was an "imperialist" battle that should be contained at all costs. They pursued a strong anti-war stand. Soon after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1942, the CRCP immediately became pro-war arguing that fascism posed an "existential threat" to the world and that all freedom-loving people had to unite to defend their way of life.

The Leon Cortes administration (1936-1940) and the “communist threat”

Cortes' opponents accused him of being a Nazi sympathizer. Although this was never confirmed, one thing was certain – he was a fierce anti-communist. During the 1938 congressional elections, Manuel Mora, Carlos Luis Saenz, Jaime Cerdas and Efrain Jimenez won congressional seats. Cortes decided to annul Saenz's victory. The CRCP leaders warned their followers that this was a provocation by the Leon Cortes administration to incite the communists to violence. The party leaders encouraged the communists not to give Cortes an excuse to make the CRCP illegal like all the other Central American leaders had done. Instead, they urged their followers to focus on preparing for the 1940 presidential elections.

By 1939 the communists acknowledged that the only way they could place themselves in a position of power was through an alliance with other progressive political actors. Jimenez had left the *Partido Republicano Independiente* to form a more progressive political party - the *Partido Republicano Ricardista*. The communists asked Jimenez to form an alliance with the CRCP. After initially agreeing to form the alliance, Jimenez subsequently declined. According to Molina's book *Ricardo Jimenez* (2009), Jimenez knew that his opponent Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia was too strong of a candidate for the *Democratic Alliance* to be able to defeat him. Calderon had the full backing of the main political party – the *Republican Party* - and the president's support. Jimenez felt too old to wage an effective electoral campaign against the young and charismatic Rafael Angel Calderon.

The CRCP announced the presidential candidacy of their party leader – Manuel Mora. During the 1940s electoral campaign, the CRCP consolidated their *comunismo a la tica* myth, emphasizing the elements of meaning derived from the “exceptionalist” myth while downplaying their pro-Soviet stance. This can be clearly seen in the 28th of January 1939 edition of *Trabajo* an article entitled “Costa Rican citizens of all social classes” stated:

It is the primary duty of all Costa Rican citizens to maintain and improve the honourable democratic traditions that we have inherited from our ancestors. During their time, they fought to provide our nation the highest human values of freedom and justice and to lead us towards economic and moral progress. It is now up to us to preserve and to protect those traditions against any threat whatever its source. We must occupy our rightful place in the struggle for the maintenance of human decency only compatible with the full exercise of freedom and the full enjoyment of Justice (Trabajo - January 28, 1939).

Therefore, during the 1940 presidential election, the CRCP presented themselves as the true defenders of Costa Rica's democratic traditions, consolidating the *comunismo a la tica* myth. The fact that former President Jimenez considered forming an alliance with the CRCP for the 1940s presidential election shows that other political leaders accepted the myth as well. Jimenez recognized the de-radicalizing power that this myth exerted on both the communists' sympathizers as well as their opponents. The next chapter explores how this myth was used by Mora to form an alliance with the Christian Democratic President Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia.

CONCLUSION

The "exceptionalist" collective imaginary shaped political dynamics during the first three decades of the 20th Century by facilitating the absorption of the demands of the *Radicales del 1900* and the members of the *Partido Reformista* into the expanding liberal oligarchic hegemony. This process led to further democratic institutional development. The dislocatory effect of the Great Depression encouraged a group of law students, workers and a former member of the *Radicales del 1900* to form the CRCP. They created the first political discourse in the country's history, directly challenging the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary and seeking to divide Costa Rican society into two irreconcilable antagonistic poles. Influenced by the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary, presidents Gonzalez Viquez and Jimenez adopted co-optive strategies to address the communist threat as opposed to the oppressive and ruthless strategies adopted by the Guatemalan dictator Jorge Ubico, the Salvadorean dictator Maximiliano Hernandez, the Honduran dictator Tiburcio Carias Andino, and Anastasio Somoza Garcia. Realizing that their typical Marxist *crisis narrative* would never be accepted by the Costa

Rican population due to its incompatibility with the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, the CRCP decided to include elements of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary into their Marxist narrative. They thus developed the *comunismo a la tica* myth. With this new strategy, the CRCP leaders were able to increase the influence of the communist discourse. Manuel Mora’s congressional speeches encouraged a national ideational shift. By the late 1930s, the limits of the liberal oligarchic regime were widely recognized and the liberal oligarchs were not able to re-establish their hegemony, with their liberal discourse becoming one of the many battling for hegemony. The next chapter explores how the hegemonic battles fought during the 1940s created the discursive condition of possibility of the 1948 Civil War.

There have been transplanted to our country certain doctrines that are clearly repugnant to the ideology of Costa Ricans and their religious faith [...] besides being a mortal threat to our traditions of order, peace and harmony, the communists are other great opportunists whose central aim is to establish leftist dictatorships throughout the world.
Social Democrata newspaper
12th of April 1947

Chapter 4

The discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 Civil War

The dislocation of the liberal oligarchic order during the 1930s encouraged the proliferation of new political actors battling for hegemony. During the 1940s, the two most influential new political actors were the Christian Democratic *Generación de los años 40* led by President Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia (1940-1944), and the Social Democratic coalition (composed of an intellectual arm led by Professor Roberto Brenes Mesen and Rodrigo Facio under the *Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales (Centristas)*, and a political arm led by Jose Figueres under the *Acción Demócrata/Partido Social Demócrata*). The hegemonic battles fought between these two new political actors, the communists, the conservatives, and the progressive liberals were influenced by the sweeping changes in the international ideational context as a result of World War II followed by the Cold War.

This chapter traces the emergence of the conditions of possibility for the 1948 Civil War in a society that prided itself for being “exceptional” for its peaceful, egalitarian, homogenous and innately democratic nature. It argues that the mounting opposition to the Calderon Guardia (1940-1944) and Teodoro Picado (1944-1948) administrations due to allegations of electoral fraud, corruption, nepotism and mismanagement, as well as the growing influence of the CRCP in Costa Rican politics and the polarizing effect of the international ideational context during World War II and the Cold War enabled the Social Democratic revolutionaries to transform peaceful citizens into revolutionary agents. This transformation was greatly helped along by the *crisis narrative*, which argued that the *Caldero-comunista* regime was threatening Costa Rica’s “exceptional” democratic national identity.

The chapter is divided in four sections. Section one traces the downfall of Calderon Guardia (1940-1944) from his winning the presidential elections with the biggest margin in Costa Rica's history (84.5% of the votes) and being portrayed as "the greatest reformer in Costa Rica's history" by his followers to his being presented as a "despotic dictator" or a "puppet of the communists" by his opponents. Section two explores the strategies used by the social democrats to promote their counter-hegemonic discourse. Section three discusses how the social democrats exacerbated political tensions during the Teodoro Picado administration to create the discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 Civil War. Section four concludes by highlighting key events in the 1948 civil war and the peace negotiations.

The primary data analysed comes from speeches of the main political leaders: President Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia (1940-1944), President Teodoro Picado (1944-1948), the communist leader Manuel Mora, and the social democratic leader Jose Figueres. The author has surveyed the 1940-1948 issues of the Christian Democratic newspaper *La Tribuna*, the social democratic newspaper *Accion Democrata/ Social Democrata*, the communist newspaper *Trabajo* and the progressive liberal oligarchic newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica* and has chosen a selection of excerpts for analysis. This chapter builds on a wide selection of historical works from the 1940s including the biographies and memoirs of key political actors as well as interviews of the 1948 Civil War veterans made by other academics.

Calderon Guardia administration 1940-1944

On February 11, 1940, Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia, the presidential candidate of the *Independent National Republican Party*, defeated Manuel Mora of the communist *Workers and Peasants' Block* and Virgilio Salazar of the *Confraternidad Guanacasteca* by the greatest margin in Costa Rica's history - winning 84.5% of the votes while Mora received 9.8% and Salazar 5.7%. Calderon received the full support of the coffee oligarchy, the Catholic Church, a significant portion of the urban popular sector, as well as that of the overwhelmingly Catholic (anti-communist) peasants, the outgoing president

Cortes, and the propaganda machinery of the *Independent National Republican Party*. During his campaign, Calderon did not present a clear, detailed policy program - as was common at the time - with Costa Ricans conditioned to voting for the candidate and not a specific policy platform (Diaz 2009). Calderon's campaign focused on his personal attributes as a religious, philanthropic, humanitarian doctor who understood the needs of the poor, and yet was also a member of the liberal oligarchic class. He was a direct descendant of General Tomas Guardia who ruled Costa Rica from 1872 - 1882 and son of Senator Rafael Angel Calderon Munoz (Diaz 2009). In his presidential inauguration speech delivered to Congress the 8th of May, 1940 Calderon Guardia stated:

The coffee industry, which has served as the base of our economic structure since Independence, is today in severe crisis due to the wars in Europe. Conscious of the central role that the coffee industry plays in our country, my government will devote itself to helping this industry. This will be the first task at hand for my administration. Soon I will present a proposal addressing its most urgent problems. I am sure that with the collaboration of small farmers, producers and exporters, the situation of the industry will greatly improve (Calderon Guardia presidential message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1940).

He interpreted the existing economic crisis not as a sign that the development model had to be reassessed but as evidence that greater government intervention was needed to assist the dominant coffee industry. The Calderon administration eliminated export taxes and reduced municipal taxes (which led to the increase in the already high fiscal deficit). It also guaranteed a minimum price of 30 colones per one and a half bushels of exported coffee to compensate for the drop in international coffee prices. His administration sought to address the demands of the peasants by granting them ownership of uncultivated lands, as well as economic and technical assistance for coffee production. Along with this, his government promised the poor rural credit plans to buy their plots of land and to finance their houses. Calderon portrayed his administration as a continuation of Costa Rica's "exceptional" democratic traditions.

To consolidate and perfect the regime that Costa Rica has lived since it developed its own identity in front of the international community has

always been the supreme aspiration of our nation. Moulding my own spirit with the heat of these desires, I will never depart from that political road traced with austerity by the patricians who preceded me in the exercise of power. Thus, my government will be highly respectful of the glorious civic patrimony, which makes Costa Rican people so legitimately proud (Calderon Guardia presidential message to the Constitutional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1940).

The most significant difference between his administration and the liberal oligarchic ones before him was the role he wanted to grant to the Catholic Church in Costa Rican politics. Calderon stated:

The Costa Rican Catholic Church and the government should work in harmony. I will put all my efforts into achieving this goal, because I am convinced of the positive influence that religious teachings has on cultural progress and in raising the ethical standards of our people. My administration will make sure the Catholic Church has no impediments in pursuing their noble duties. I am sure the church will provide my government with its valuable collaboration so that Costa Rica proceeds in the path of true progress (Calderon Calderon presidential message to Congressional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1940).

The Christian democratic discourse placed Catholic social reformism as the nodal point of its discursive formation, seeking to use Catholicism as a legitimatising and unifying force. They wanted the Costa Rican Catholic Church to play the social structuring effect that it had played during the colonial period. To highlight this, one of first actions of Calderon as president was to counteract the Liberal Laws of 1884, which secularized schools, cemeteries, and forced religious orders to withdraw from Costa Rica. He also opened a national university (the University of Costa Rica), absent in Costa Rica since 1888 when liberal oligarchic president Bernardo Soto Alfaro closed the national university of Santo Tomas, run by the Catholic Church, as part of a campaign to modernize public education and reduce the influence of the Catholic Church.

Calderon argued that Catholic social reformism was the best way to counter the communist threat. The devoutness of the Costa Rican peasants meant that Catholic ideology could serve as a bulwark to prevent this from happening. Alluding to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, Calderon argued that Costa Rica did not have class differences. He stated that the

relevant difference was between the men who suffered and the men whose duty it was to alleviate that suffering. To avoid the emergence of class divisions, Calderon advocated greater state intervention in solving the social question. He believed that the root of the social problem was to be found in the low wages received by the workers (artisans, public employees and rural plantation labourers), which made it extremely difficult for them to confront sicknesses, invalidity, unemployment and old age. He viewed it as the duty of the state to address this unjust situation by setting a minimum wage and regulating capital and labour relations. He also believed that the state should protect the citizens' right to have employment, social security, decent working conditions and the opportunity to get higher education (Saenz 1995: 39). Calderon proposed establishing a new regime of social justice based on three fundamental reforms: the creation of a national social security system; the addition of Social Guarantees to the 1871 Constitution; and the creation of a Labour Code.

National Social Security System (Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social)

In 1940, Calderon sent his friend, Guillermo Padilla Castro, to Chile to study its social security program.³⁰ Upon his return from Chile, Padilla Castro gave Calderon a draft of the national social security program, which Calderon subsequently presented to Congress on July 1941. In his Congressional speech, Calderon framed the social security program as the natural continuation of the progressive social policies dating back to the creation of the *Junta de Proteccion Social* in 1845, the modernization of the San Juan de Dios hospital by Carlos Duran Cartin in 1874, the creation of *Subsecretaria de Higiene y Salud Publica* passed during the Julio Acosta administration by executive decree on the 12th of July 1922, the law on *Proteccion de la Salud Publica* passed on the 12th of March 1923 which served as the first sanitary code of the country, and the creation of the *Secretaria de Salubridad Publica y Proteccion Social* in 1928 under the Jimenez administration (Jaramillo Antillon 2004: 52). The main difference between Calderon's approach to social protection and the liberal oligarchic one was that Calderon argued that

³⁰ Chile and Uruguay were amongst the first countries in Latin America to adopt social-welfare legislation.

social protection should not be perceived as an act of charity, but rather as a basic human right mandated by the state. In doing so, he set the tone for how these policies would be perceived by subsequent administrations. He further warned that without progressive social policies such as the creation of a national social security system, Costa Rica's "exceptional" social cohesion and peace were at risk.

Congress rejected the first proposal of the national social security program, arguing that urban and rural employers would consider the additional cost of funding the program completely inopportune due to the already precarious economic situation, and that employees would perceive their share of the cost as a salary reduction at a moment in which their purchasing power was decreasing due to rising inflation.

With regards to the reforms of the state's medical system, established doctors opposed the potential reduction in their income and organized a general strike. Younger doctors did not join the strike, as they believed that working for the *Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social* would be a good way of establishing a clientele and earning a modest salary (Salazar Alfaro 2008). To put an end to the doctor's strike, the Christian democrats agreed to reassess the terms of eligibility for coverage by the state plans. The original project stipulated that social security would be obligatory for the following groups: all blue-collar workers earning a salary of less than 300 colones per month (US \$54.00 at the 1941 rate of exchange); all privately employed white-collar workers whose salaries did not exceed 400 colones per month (\$71.40); and all public employees, regardless of salaries (Rosenberg 1981: 285). As a compromise solution, Congress set a salary limit of 300 colones per month for all categories of workers.

As a result of these changes, the 1941 social security law established a parallel health-care market in Costa Rica. Those workers who could least afford social protection were obliged by law to contribute a fixed monthly portion of their incomes, while those who could most afford to finance a public health-care program were given the option of not contributing at all

(Rosenberg 1981: 287). Calderon also had to sacrifice his notion of universal coverage by eliminating coverage for part-time workers, which meant agricultural workers did not qualify, a clause that was inserted due to the influential coffee barons' lobbying efforts. Therefore, the actual coverage of the national social security system became quite limited. Congress also objected to making the new institution completely autonomous from the government, proposing instead the formation of a commission composed of the manager of the *Banco de Seguros*, the manager of the *Banco Nacional* and a representative of the executive, which would jointly be responsible for managing the funds. A separate board would be composed of two representatives of the government, two representatives chosen by a group of employers, two representatives chosen by employees and one doctor. Calderon agreed to this watered-down version of his national social security system hoping that once the institution was created, future administrations could expand it and correct its deficiencies. Congress approved the new proposal in 1941. Calderon asked Padilla Castro to write the enabling legislation, allowing the program to become operational by executive decree (Rosenberg 1981: 291), which Padilla and a few of his law students did without consulting any organized group or the beneficiaries. In November 1942, Congress approved the *Ley Constitutiva de la Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social CCSS*. The CCSS would administer the pension fund that would guarantee retirement benefits to workers based on life-long compulsory contributions by government, employers, and employees to the trust fund.

Only at this late stage did Calderon start a "communicative" (Schmidt 2008, 2012) campaign to convince the Costa Rican people of the necessity of the national social security program and how it would work. A newly formed think tank - the *Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales (Centro)* - criticized his administration's closed and paternalistic policy-making style (Rosenberg 1981). This think-tank had been founded in 1940 by a group of university students under the leadership of Professor Roberto Brenes Mesen. According to the memoirs of one of its founding members, Alberto Cañas (2006), these young intellectuals were eager to contribute to the formulation and implementation of Calderon Guardia's policies as the *Radicales del 1900*

had done during liberal oligarchic administrations. However, Calderon neglected the *Centristas* and placed his friends and family members in advisory positions. As a result the *Centristas* criticized the Calderon administration's policy-making process. They stated that his administration was not conducting the rigorous "scientific" analysis of Costa Rica's reality needed to develop appropriate policies, but rather was formulating policies based on maximizing political capital (Cruz 2005:132). They stated that the national social security program had many flaws because Padilla had merely imposed the Chilean program on Costa Rica's different socio-economic context.

The *Centristas* founded a magazine called *Surco* where they wrote academic articles covering a wide range of socio-economic and political topics. According to the *Centristas*, their research proved that Costa Rica needed to re-assess its liberal socio-economic and political model. The liberal policies pursued by the founding fathers were no longer adequate and proved obsolete relative to the changing international ideational context. They challenged the liberal definition of democracy, which equated democracy with elections, and instead proposed a participatory democracy. In addition, they challenged the agro-export development model based exclusively on coffee and banana exports. They argued that Costa Rica's society should not be based on liberal principles of individualism and self-reliance, but instead on social democratic principles of communitarianism and co-operativism. They further argued that it was necessary to diversify Costa Rican exports to include other products such as rice, sugar, cattle, and fishery instead of only focusing on coffee and banana exports, suggesting the creation of cooperatives to help small and medium-sized producers. While acknowledging the central role that agriculture played in Costa Rica's economy, they argued that the Great Depression had proven the limits of a development model based solely on exports and thus they suggested a gradual transition towards an import-substitution-industrialisation model similar to that being adopted elsewhere in South America. Acknowledging that it would be harder in Costa Rica due to its small economies of scale and its lack of an industrial base, they stated that the government had to play a very

active role subsidizing the nascent small and medium sized businesses. The *Centristas* portrayed themselves as technocratic intellectuals instead of as politicians, becoming amongst the most vocal critics of the Calderon Guardia administration.

Calderon also alienated another key group – the *Cortesistas*. As soon as Calderon became president, he replaced government officials who had served under President Leon Cortes (1936-1940) with Christian democratic members of the 40's *generation* and former members of the *Partido Reformista* such as Jorge Volio. Calderon then directly challenged Cortes by supporting Teodoro Picado's presidential bid to the Constitutional Congress instead of backing Cortes' brother - Otto Cortes (Soto Harrison 1995). During the 1940s presidential campaign, Leon Cortes had given his support to Calderon with the tacit understanding that Calderon would then help Cortes get re-elected in 1944. However, Calderon chose to support Picado instead as he believed Picado would be a better advocate of Calderon's progressive reforms. With Calderon's backing, Picado won by a vote of 19-9 affirming Calderonista control over the PRN. After this affront, Leon Cortes broke away from the *Republican Party* and founded the *Democratic Party* in 1941.

Calderon committed another strategic mistake during World War II. Immediately before the United States joined the Allies in World War II, Calderon made a state visit to the United States. According to his wife at the time, Ivone Clydes, President Roosevelt requested Costa Rica's help in ensuring the safety of the Panama Canal, to which Calderon agreed. As soon as the United States declared war on the Axis powers, Rafael Angel did the same (Villegas Hoffmeister 1990). In January 1942, the US State Department, with the help of British and Latin American officials, started to compile a registry of Nazi-Fascists living in Latin America. Local governments were encouraged to confiscate the properties and businesses of fascist sympathizers and send them to US based prisons (Longley 1997:34). According to Longley, the American and British governments pressured the Calderon administration to work with US authorities to expose Costa Rican-based Nazi-Fascists. In 1942, the Legislative Assembly passed Law N 79,

which supplemented existing statutes and permitted the president to revoke citizenship of native-born Costa Ricans and naturalized citizens who had adopted fascist doctrines (Longley 1997: 34). By the end of the war, the Costa Rican government had placed more than two hundred German and Italian descents in internment camps in the United States and confiscated their properties (Longley 1997:34).

World War II triggered a socio-economic crisis in Costa Rica. The closure of the European markets led to shortages of basic food products, gasoline, automobile tires, cement, and steel, depressing the economy and escalating the national debt. The *Centristas* and the *Cortesistas* severely criticized the government's response to the crisis. Corruption scandals emerged involving government-sponsored construction projects that had been assigned to construction companies belonging to Calderon Guardia's friends and family members without a proper tender process.

In 1942 Jose Figueres, a marginal political figure in Leon Cortes's new political party, gave a speech on national radio accusing Calderon of incompetence, corruption and mismanagement. He argued that Calderon's policies were geared at increasing his popularity amongst the masses and not at addressing their real needs. Figueres stated:

What the government ignores is that from government decrees we cannot make tortillas. The peasants in my farm have no shoes, no clean sheets, no milk for their children, but they have a social insurance that guarantees them a pension when they grow old. Gentlemen in the government let's finish this comedy: let's guarantee them a good funeral and let them starve (Figueres radio speech - transcript found in web site "El Espiritu del 48" www.elespiritudel48.org).

Adopting the *Centrista* position, he argued that Calderon's failure to adequately analyse the existing socio-economic situation led him to pass reforms such as the national social security system without addressing other more pressing needs. According to Figueres, the social question could not be solved by addressing the symptoms (e.g. health care); but rather the causes, which he argued were the limits of the liberal oligarchic socio-economic

model. In the same radio speech, Figueres argued that Calderon's corrupt practices, nepotism, and mismanagement had proven that he was inadequate to rule the country. Figueres argued that the best thing Calderon could do was to resign. As he was saying these words, government officials stormed the radio station from which he was speaking, and abruptly interrupted and imprisoned him. Costa Ricans who had been listening to Figueres speech were outraged by the government's violation of his freedom of speech.

According to the CRCP leader Mora, when he heard of Figueres' imprisonment he rushed to Calderon's office to request his immediate release. Calderon told Mora that he was merely following orders and that if Mora swore secrecy, he would reveal to him a state secret. When Mora did so, Calderon told him that Figueres's imprisonment had been ordered by the military attaché to the United States embassy in Costa Rica, Coronel Andino. The military attaché had shown Calderon proof that Figueres had economic relations with the Germans and that he was a potential Nazi collaborator. It is difficult to assess the accuracy of Mora's story, as Calderon never confirmed it. What is certain is that Figueres' exile had tremendous repercussions on Costa Rica's history. Not only was his arrest and exile publicly condemned because it violated Costa Rica's traditional respect for freedom of speech, but more importantly it was during this period that Figueres started plotting an armed insurrection against Calderon. In Mexico, Figueres met other Latin American political exiles plotting to overthrow the oppressive, personalistic dictatorships of Somoza in Nicaragua, Tiburcio Carias in Honduras, Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez in El Salvador, Jorge Ubico in Guatemala, and Trujillo in Dominican Republic. This group of dissidents formed the Caribbean Legion. Figueres' exile and Calderon's policy against Costa Rica's German descendants during World War II allowed Figueres to create equivalential chains between Calderon and the other Latin American dictators arguing that he was also violating civil and political liberties. Figueres created a new political identity for himself – that of a political martyr of an oppressive “authoritarian” regime. In Costa Rica, Calderon's opponents used Figueres' exile as a rallying point to mobilize the opposition.

Alliance between Calderon Guardia and Manuel Mora

In 1942, a group of conservative oligarchic bankers led by Jorge Hine, the General Manager of the Bank of Costa Rica, were considering a coup d'état against Calderon. According to Mora, he was invited by these men to Hine's house to request the CRCP's support in the coup. Because Calderon was popular amongst the masses due to his progressive policies, the conservative oligarchs needed Mora to mobilize popular support for the coup. Instead of helping the conservatives overthrow the president, Mora approached Calderon the following day warning him about the plot and offering him an alliance. According to Mora's narrative, he offered the communist party's support because he feared that, if the coup succeeded, the conservatives would place a counter-reformist government in power. According to Calderon's official narrative, he accepted Mora's offer out of deep respect for the CRCP leader, whom he had grown to admire when they were both Congressmen. His official stance also stated that Mora's political platform at the time was not substantially different from the Christian democratic one. The truth is that Calderon acknowledged that he had no other choice but to form an alliance with the Communists despite knowing that the opposition would heavily criticize this alliance. Without the CRCP's support he could face a coup in the near future.

Immediately after meeting with Mora, Calderon contacted Monsignor Victor Sanabria to ask for his help in winning popular support for this alliance. Understanding the president's weak political situation, he agreed to help, only requesting that the CRCP change its name. Mora agreed to rename the party – rebranding it *Vanguardia Popular*. The day after, Monsignor Sanabria wrote a now famous article in the *Diario de Costa Rica* in which he stated that there was no impediment for a devout Catholic to support the alliance between Calderon Guardia and Manuel Mora. The same day the communist newspaper *Trabajo* announced the alliance reassuring communist party members that despite changing its name, the party would not change its ideology. They explained to their readers that this alliance was in keeping with the Soviet war alliance with the Anglo-American forces against the fascists.

Calderon used the international ideational context and the *comunismo a la tica* myth to justify the alliance. He substituted communism with fascism as the new *constitutive outside* of his discursive formation. The Christian democrats reinforced the *comunismo a la tica* myth arguing that “*The Partido Vanguardia Popular is not a communist party. It is a **national** party*” (La Tribuna - 24 December 1943).

To this, Calderon’s opponents responded:

The awkward disorienting lie made by the president is evidence of the irresponsibility of Calderon before the Communist problem. As it serves his immediate political interests, he does not hesitate to declare, as he is a phenomenal opportunist, that by a simple change of name, the Marxist ideology has disappeared in the country; and that the order from Moscow have ceased to arrive; the Soviet aspirations no longer exists, in a word, that the country can now breathe easy because the Stalinist conspiracy to take over the world and destroy our free institutions have been cancelled by the new hypocritical christening to suite the circumstances. The leader, who dares to do such a thing, is responsible, without exaggeration, of the great crime of endangering the democratic institutions of our country for a covert and treacherous attack (Diario de Costa Rica - December 25, 1943).

Despite the opposition to his alliance with the communists by other political leaders, Calderon believed he had no other choice. He chose to maintain a very loose alliance. According to the terms of the agreement, each party would run independently during congressional elections and Calderon would not give the CRCP members ministerial or advisory positions in his administration (Contreras and Cerdas 1988). Despite this, the opposition coined the alliance the *Caldero-comunista regime* and claimed that Calderon was following orders from Mora.

Social Guarantees and Labour Code

Calderon’s next reforms were the addition of the “Social Guarantees” to the 1871 Constitution and the creation of a Labour Code to codify existing laws. On May 1st, 1942 Calderon and Mora held a joint parade commemorating International Workers Day in order to gather popular support for these policies. Calderon learnt from his previous mistake of not focusing on his *communicative discourse* (Schmidt 2012) before launching the national social

security program - this time he wanted to gain popular support for his reforms to help Calderonista and communist Congressmen persuade Congress to pass their proposals.

During the May Day parade, Calderon announced his intention of petitioning Congress to approve the addition of a set of Social Guarantees (similar to the United States Bill of Rights) to be added to the Constitution. On May 1942, Calderon gave the following speech to Congress:

The stability and internal peace of the nation depends on the successful development and functioning of the institutions that regulate the activities of social groups that are placed in opposing positions, but not necessarily irreconcilable ones [...] We have been inspired by the need to give a modern sense to our Constitution because of the un-debatable fact that Costa Rica cannot stay behind the evolutionary rhythm swaying the world today; without this, however, implying that we are changing the fundamental precepts that have served as a base for our democratic stability. Precisely, we believe that in order to guarantee the continuity of our democratic institutions, we must prevent situations that may put in jeopardy the noble fraternity of the Costa Ricans (Calderon Guardia's presidential message to Congress delivered on May 1 1942).

Thus, Calderon framed the Social Guarantees as the best way to guarantee Costa Rica's "exceptional" democratic and peaceful society. On May 16, 1942 Congress started discussing the Labour Code, which would grant workers the right to form cooperatives, bargain collectively in labour disputes, and create labour courts. It would also regulate working conditions and establish minimum wages. To convince Congress of the necessity of the Labour Code he argued:

The discussion we will have today on the Labour Code is one of the most important ones in our national history. By proposing the Labour Code, I am contributing to solidify the peace and tranquillity that we all wish for our small nation. With absolute certainty I believe that there is no reason why a good Costa Rican should feel threatened by the clear, humane and simple laws we are proposing. They are the result of a long and careful study of our national reality. They aim to bring harmony to the legitimate interest of the different social classes that compose our nation [...] The Labour Code aspires to bring legal solutions to the day-to-day conflicts between owners of capital and workers. The Labour Code will do justice without losing sight that both labourers and owners of capital are collaborators in the extremely important task of developing our national resources for the good of our nation (Message of President Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia's to the

Congressional Assembly introducing the reform project of the Constitution by adding the chapter on Social Guarantees delivered on May 1, 1942).

Once again, Calderon justified the necessity of the Labour Code by linking it to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. However, Calderon’s opponents framed the Labour Code and Social Guarantees as a communist policy. They argued that this legislation was proof that the communists were dictating government policy. Calderon kept insisting that the Labour Code was based on Christian Democratic principles and that its end goal was precisely preventing class conflict:

Our social work does not seek to bring war within our society, but rather peace. It is not a threatening sword, but an olive branch. Not in vain have I insisted that it is not the product of sectarian exotic doctrines, but rather the crystallization of the Catholic Church’s doctrines – paradigm of moderation and prudence (Calderon Guardia’s speech delivered in Alajuela on the 29th of August 1943).

After more than a year and a half of heated political debates, the Constitutional Guarantees were passed in June 23, 1943 and the Labour Code on August 23, 1943.

1944 Presidential Elections

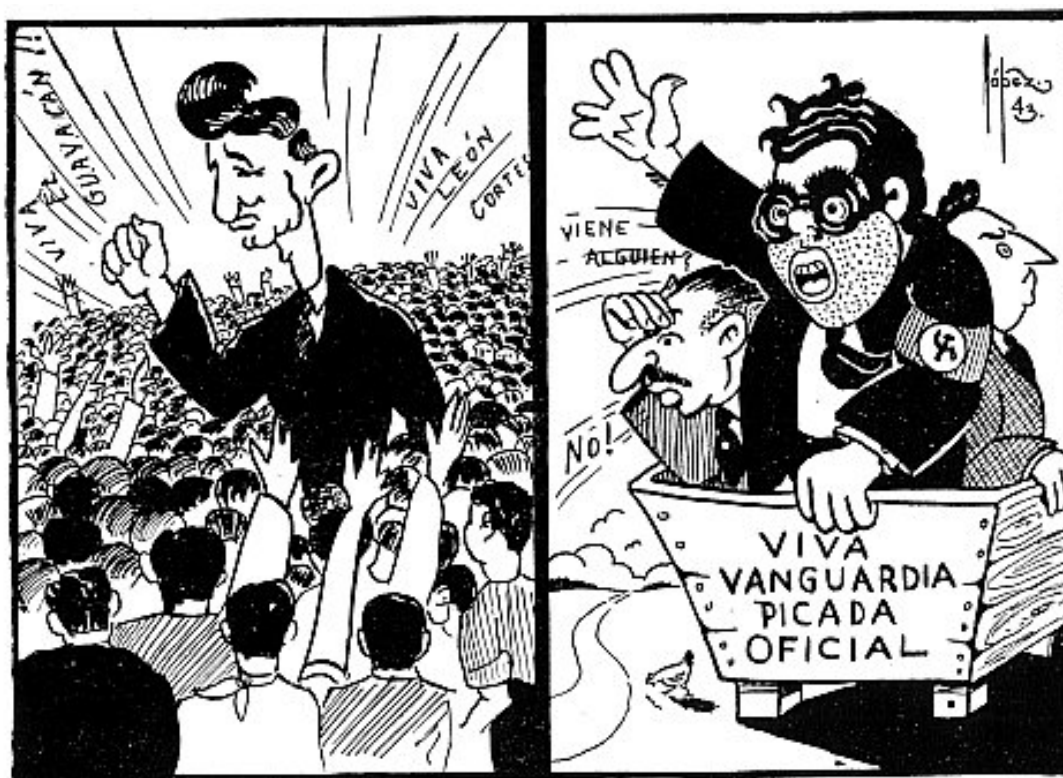
Since Costa Rican law forbade consecutive presidential re-election, Calderon Guardia chose Picado³¹ as his successor for the 1944 elections while he planned his own bid for re-election in 1948. As president of the Costa Rican Congress, Picado had proven to be instrumental in the passing of the laws establishing the national social security system, the national university, the Labour Code and the Constitutional amendments mentioned above. During this period, he had established a very close relationship with Calderon.

Former president Leon Cortes created a loose coalition amongst the most important sectors of the opposition – the conservative coffee barons,

³¹ Picado was a well-respected lawyer, intellectual, and politician. He was Secretary of Education under the last Ricardo Jimenez administration (1932-1936) and then became the dean of the Escuela de Derecho – School of Law. During this period he taught, and wrote several books regarding the history of education in Costa Rica, which are still considered amongst the best books written in the subject.

progressive liberal oligarchs, and the *Centristas*. The only thing uniting this ideologically and socially heterogeneous alliance was their animosity towards the *Caldero-comunista* regime (Creedman 1971: 180). Since Picado knew that the alliance with the communists had allowed the opposition to garner anti-government support, Picado sought to break this alliance. Picado held several meetings with Cortes in an attempt to seek a new alliance with him and his faction. However, Picado did not receive the backing of the *Republican Party* to shift alliances due to the animosity between the *Calderonistas* and the *Cortesistas*, obliging him to retain the alliance with the communists. The Christian Democratic and Communist alliance was known as the *Bloque de la Victoria* alliance.

The following image shows a caricature of Picado, Calderon and Mora used by the opposition during their pro-Cortes electoral campaigns:



This caricature contrasted the popularity of opposition's presidential candidate Leon Cortes on the left with that of the *Bloque de la Victoria Alliance*, which the caricature renamed the *Vanguardia Picada* on the right (webpage El

Espíritu del 48). The caricature placed Manuel Mora as the central figure to show the communists' predominance in the alliance (hence the fictitious change of name of the political party). Through this caricature we can see how the opposition sought to place all the possible negative attributes to the *Bloque de la Victoria* – including placing a Nazi armband on the communist party leader Manuel Mora. To highlight the image that Mora dominated the alliance, the caricature depicts Picado on the left and Calderón Guardia on the right passively contemplating the empty field, while Mora gets agitated by the absence of supporters.

The absence of supporters was not factually true. Due to the progressive policies passed by the Calderón administration, the Christian democrats had significant support amongst the masses. In fact, on February 13, 1944, Picado running under the *Bloque de la Victoria* defeated the opposition coalition led by Cortés under the *Partido Democrata*. Picado allegedly won by a 2:1 margin receiving 75.1% of the votes. As was the norm, electoral fraud was committed and the opposition denounced it. However, according to Fabrique Lehoucq and Ivan Molina's research, even adjusting for electoral fraud, the *Bloque de la Victoria* had enough support to win the 1944 elections (Lehoucq and Molina 2002:190, Lehoucq 2007:5).

Emergence of the *Partido Social Democrata* as a counter-hegemonic movement

Upon his return from exile during the Picado administration, Figueres formed an alliance with the *Centristas* based on their shared animosity towards Calderón and their social democratic ideology. During the electoral campaign, the *Centristas* had supported Cortés's Democratic Party. Soon after the opposition's electoral defeat, the *Centristas* broke away from the *Partido Democrata* and joined Figueres to form the *Acción Democrata* party, which then became the *Partido Social Democrata* in 1945. This party founded the *Acción Democrata* newspaper, which later was re-named the *El Social Democrata* newspaper. While the *Centristas*, under the intellectual guidance of Rodrigo Facio, developed the ideological base of this counter-hegemonic movement, José Figueres focused on developing pragmatic strategies for

establishing the “Second Republic”. While on the one hand Figueres sought to convince the Costa Rican population of the necessity of substituting the liberal oligarchic socio-economic and political order with a social democratic one through democratic institutional means, he also kept in touch with the Caribbean Legion to prepare an armed insurrection if necessary.

The *Accion Democrata* party leaders portrayed themselves as a generation of young technocrats who had grown tired of the “politiqueria” of traditional politicians with their empty promises aimed at increasing political capital, the continuous use of electoral fraud, nepotism, widespread corruption, administrative mismanagement, a lack of “scientific” planning in policy, the maintenance of the liberal economic and political model despite its obvious limitations, and the persistent levels of poverty and ignorance of the masses - which they pointed out, not only undermined fundamental values of social justice but also prevented Costa Rica from escaping its state of economic underdevelopment (Gonzalez Garcia 2007: 9). They warned Costa Ricans about the grave threat that the rise of totalitarian and authoritarian theories and practices in Europe were posing to democracies throughout the world. They portrayed themselves as “centrists” - going against Stalin’s communism as well as Hitler, Mussolini and Franco’s fascism. They stated that they were against “pure socialism” as well as “savage capitalism” (Gonzalez Garcia 2007:9). On the first edition of the *Accion Democrata* newspaper, the *Centristas* stated:

Accion Democrata is with the righteous and progressive capitalism that works by creating wealth and social welfare; which treats its workers fairly, as human beings. It is against the communist demagogues preaching class struggle. It is against the professional promoters of general strikes and disputes; against the despotic government. Accion Democrata is against the capitalist that send their millions abroad. It is against the hard and greedy employer who treats his workers like beasts, against capitalists who hide their income defrauding the tax authorities. Accion Democrata does not accept the intellectual dictatorship of communist radicals and their servants, who seek to pigeonhole everyone in a school or in a cult - liberal, socialist, reactionary to extend approval or global excommunication. Accion Democrata does not want a capitalist, communist, liberal or conservative, radical or reactionary Costa Rica. It struggles for a free, civilized and prosperous Costa Rica (Accion Democrata - February 26, 1944).

The social democrats claimed that rather than following blindly an ideology, they were pragmatically choosing their policies based on “scientific” evidence of what was best for the country – although they were clearly ideological themselves. They placed radical ideologies (communist and reactionary) as well as “corrupt politicians” and “greedy capitalists” as the *constitutive outside* of their discursive formation. They claimed that their only agenda was to establish a “free, civilized and prosperous” Costa Rica. While they agreed with the liberals that capitalism was the best model to promote economic development in Costa Rica, they argued that its excesses had to be tamed through more active government intervention. They also believed that the state had to play a more active role in social policy, as it was its duty to guarantee high levels of human development. The social democrats were also against the excessive political and economic concentration of power in the Central Valley to the detriment of the rest of the country and thus proposed strengthening municipal and local governments. They recognized that Costa Rica was primarily a peasant rural-based society whose competitive advantage relied on agro-exports. However, they argued that it was necessary to diversify its exports to include rice, cattle and fishery. They argued that it should be the state’s role to incentivize and subsidize small nascent industries in order to reduce the excessive dependency on exports and imports, and concluded that the poor socio-economic conditions and the deteriorating political situation proved the limits of the existing liberal oligarchic order. They argued that it was necessary and urgent to substitute this model with a social democratic one leading to a “Second Republic”.

Strategies used by the social democrats to promote the social democratic “Second Republic”

To justify the need to transform Costa Rica’s liberal socio-economic and political framework, the social democrats had to create a credible *crisis narrative*. As Hay (2001) argues, in liberal capitalist democracies, a paradigm shift is unlikely to occur in the absence of a widely disseminated and accepted *crisis narrative* (Hay 2001:202). “Objective” socio-economic limitations are *necessary* but *insufficient* conditions for a paradigm shift to occur. Hay further argues:

Their 'success' as narratives generally resides in their ability to provide a simplified account sufficiently flexible to 'narrate' a great variety of symptoms while unambiguously apportioning the blame. [...] crisis narratives must make sense to individuals of their experience of the crisis (whether direct or mediated); they must also be sufficiently general and simple to identify clear paths of responsibility and an unambiguous sense of the response that *must* be made if catastrophe is to be averted (Hay 2001:204).

Jose Figueres, the social democratic political leader, intuitively understood this. The social democrats unambiguously apportioned the blame on *Caldero-comunista* regime. They argued that this regime had led Costa Rica towards a state of "moral and political chaos", which was making "Costa Rica's democracy agonize" (*Accion Democrata* newspaper article written by Salvador Lara on March 11, 1944). At the same time, Figueres knew that, for the social democratic project to be perceived as feasible and desirable by the Costa Rican population, he had to present his project as a continuation of Costa Rica's exceptionalism. He therefore had to play a balancing act. On the one hand, he claimed that a radical break from the previous liberal oligarchic order was necessary, as it had degenerated during the *Caldero-comunista* regime. At the same time, he sought to present the social democrats as the best defenders of Costa Rica's "exceptional" democratic tradition. According to the social democrats' *crisis narrative*, the *Caldero-comunista* regime had taken Costa Rica away from its "exceptional" democratic path. Only by establishing a social democratic Second Republic could the country be led back onto it. To reconcile this tension between continuity and change, the *Centrista* intellectuals Rodrigo Facio and Carlos Monge Alfaro developed a concept they coined "innovative continuity". Figueres's speech delivered on March 17, 1945 during the founding ceremony of the *Partido Social Democrata* summarizes this dual strategy of proposing change within continuity:

Our baptismal name is 'the Social Democrats' and our motto is: "We will found the Second Republic". Faithful to those principles, we prepare ourselves to fight for a future conquest, while maintaining and perfecting the conquests made by our predecessors.

On February 1944, the First Republic of Costa Rica died. We want to conquer with our strength the Second Republic, because we cannot live without free institutions that give shape to our democratic life. As we say in Costa Rica: "Borrón y cuenta nueva" (Let's start from scratch). This is the meaning of the Second Republic. Costa Rica wants to be born again with a physiology in keeping with our present times. We will allow Costa Rica to be born again, gathering our strength from the horrors we are witnessing in order to faithfully march towards the future. If we are men of dignity we must return the blow that has been given to our country by those irresponsible men. Our grandfathers of 1856 did it, our fathers of 1918 as well, now our children and grandchildren expect us to do it too. From our strong roots deeply engrained in our glorious past, a new bud is being born that will be able to produce, for the good of the country, a new trunk, a new flower with new fruits (Figueres speech delivered on March 17, 1945 during the founding ceremony of the Partido Social Democrata).

Comparing the 1944 elections with William Walker's invasion of Costa Rica in 1856 and the Federico Tinoco dictatorship (1917-1919), Figueres argued that, just as the Costa Ricans had risen up to defend Costa Rica's democracy then, they now had the obligation to rise up against the new threat. According to this interpretation of the existing situation, the "fraudulent victory" of the *Bloque de la Victoria* had given Costa Rica's democracy a "fatal blow". The front-page article of the first edition of the *Accion Democrata* newspaper argued that the "tragic" results of the 1944 election made evident the need for a new political party capable of mobilizing Costa Ricans to "defend" their democracy. The article stated:

During the last years Costa Rica has fallen under the hands of a group of political gangsters of the worst type. Our nation has had to endure all the worst social evils including fraud, intimidation, violence, crime and torment. The time has come for the good citizens to form a permanent political party willing to do what it takes to rid this country of this evil.

To join Accion Democrata is not to subjugate oneself to a superior will to the detriment of one's individual will. On the contrary, it is to partake in the democratic exercise that all citizens have the right to partake. In the Assembly of the Accion Democrata, individual ideas will find the most adequate and powerful means to make themselves heard. Costa Ricans, join Accion Democrata. Do not let OTHERS take a hold of the destiny of our nation. Participate in the democratic process. Let your voice be heard! Join an association that can make your ideas, your advice, your initiatives become a reality (Accion Democrata - February 26, 1944).

The social democrats were advocating a re-interpretation of the appropriate role and responsibility of citizens in the democratic process. They argued that

the limited definition of democracy provided by the liberal oligarchic discourse - which had a confined definition of democracy as an electoral process - induced a sense of general political apathy amongst Costa Ricans. The population had been led to believe that their only contribution to the democratic process was limited to voting every four years for a presidential candidate. To make matters worse, the existing political parties did not provide them with a clear set of policy proposals to choose from, instead predicating their campaigns on the personality and reputation of the presidential candidates. Citizens were encouraged to believe that once they had voted, their political participation was over. This limited conception of their political obligations had encouraged the population to condone electoral fraud and other abuses. In this narrative, political apathy and a lack of accountability had allowed the *Caldero-comunista* regime to lead the country towards a state of socio-economic and political crisis. The *Caldero-comunista* regime was allowed to commit electoral fraud, violate the citizens' freedom of speech (exiling critics including Figueres himself), disregard property rights (confiscating lands of German descendants), and commit acts of corruption and nepotism without being held accountable by the Costa Rican population. To stop this, Costa Ricans had to enter a new phase in their democratization process. Citizens had to demand their right to participate in all levels of the democratic process including the formulation of policies. They should no longer passively accept the will of "others". They claimed that the *Accion Democrata/Partido Social Democrata* would provide them the vehicle to achieve this. The structure of the *Accion Democrata* would also be democratic. An article entitled "To the Costa Rican People" on the 11th of March 1944 edition of the *Accion Democrata* newspaper stated:

If we want to fight to restore our democracy, we must join Accion Democrata, taking into account that this is a party that does not have an owner, nor pre-established leaders, but it does have a concrete platform. Its only aim is to defeat the corrupt politicians, defeat them with the truth, in order to give our country the worthy and responsible statesmen it deserves (Accion Democrata - March 11, 1944).

As opposed to the liberal oligarchic parties in which a small group of leaders made all the decisions behind closed doors, the social democrats argued that

their party would integrate all the “honest” and “responsible” Costa Ricans seeking to “re-instate Costa Rica’s democracy”. Their counter-hegemonic movement was thus aimed at incorporating previously neglected actors into the political process. With regards to the social question, they stated:

The most profound and permanent problems of every human community are those related to the welfare of the masses. To those we must dedicate our special attention, but always bearing in mind that we should not destroy the privilege of some to build it for others. Justice is the unshakable foundation for the stability and the happiness of all social classes. This is ignored by the radicals, especially the communists. (Accion Democrata-March 11, 1944).

They argued that the focus of the *Accion Democrata* party would be to address the social question - not by instigating a class struggle as the “radical communists” were doing, but rather by creating policies geared at fostering social justice. They further argued that to address the root cause of the social question, it was necessary to make a critical revision of Costa Rica’s values. This would lead to the “destruction of myths and the formulation of a real national culture at the service of real people” (Centro’s publication “*Respuesta a Ideario Costarricense*” (1943) Vol 1 145-62 quoted by Cruz 2005). These “old myths” the social democrats sought to destroy were the underlying assumptions of liberalism. Facio argued in an article entitled “Authority and Liberty” published in the *Surco* magazine Vol 1, No 1, that:

The fundamental error of liberalism lies in the belief that economic relations are natural and therefore inalterable. (This erroneous belief accounts for) the economy’s untouchable status; and for the abdication of the state’s responsibility to press for social reforms that would make the system of production perform in accordance with contemporary ethical demands of justice (quoted by Cruz 2005:133).

According to the social democrats, the myth that “economic relations are natural and therefore inalterable” had prevented Costa Ricans from questioning the appropriateness and effectiveness of the liberal socio-economic and political model. According to Facio, liberalism committed two fundamental errors: a) it neglected the economic foundations of freedom; and b) it limited the participation of the citizens in the democratic process to elections (Cruz 2005:134). Costa Ricans needed to re-assess their economic

development model and expand the definition of democracy. According to the social democrats, a rigorous scientific analysis of Costa Rica's situation proved that a substantial change was necessary not only in individual policies but also in the way Costa Ricans perceived themselves and their history. As Consuelo Cruz states:

The Centre's leading lights worked from the premise that Costa Rica did indeed possess a unique collective soul. But they also claimed that the characteristics of this soul would have to be discerned through a cool investigation of the nation's history. On their view, much like an archaeological expedition might lead to the discovery of an ancient civilization's remains, a level headed incursion into the nation's past could be expected to reveal its "real" institutional foundations. Absent a precise knowledge of these characteristics and foundations, they further argued, innovative continuity with Costa Rica's venerable tradition was impossible (Cruz 2005: 132).

According to the *Centristas*, the key to Costa Rican exceptionalism did not lie on their sense of self-reliance (that evolved out of their experience of self-government during the colonial period), or their sense of individualism and a frontier mentality (that evolved out of the abundance of land since the colonial period), as liberals argued, but rather on their sense of community and cooperation (that evolved out of the need for the creole elite to work alongside the peasants to produce their daily substance).

They further argued that flaws in the liberal framework were preventing Costa Rica from achieving its full democratic potential. To commemorate Costa Rica's independence in 1944, they wrote the following article entitled "Costa Rica must be Independent":

The Costa Rican people have a deep sense of equality, democracy, social peace, but they have also developed a sense of indifference that has served to allow injustices. After 123 years of separation from our mother Spain, we have still not achieved our full Independence. The people of Costa Rica have been ready to live under a full democracy. Since the colonial period it has been developing and cultivating a democratic way of life. But we are living under economic slavery to foreign capital because of our irresponsible politicians, we are caught up in a coffee based economy to the detriment of our economic development and of the happiness of the masses, living without our full freedom due to the betrayal of the degenerate politicians. Today we are seeing the culmination of a process of gradual decomposition initiated since the end of the century (Accion Democrata - September 16, 1944).

Including elements of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary in their *crisis narrative*, the social democrats asserted that Costa Ricans indeed possessed a “profound feeling of equality, democracy and social cohesion”; however, they also had gradually developed “a sense of indifference”. Their “indifference” was preventing them from achieving their “full independence”. Costa Ricans were not achieving their democratic potential due to their “economic slavery” - their “subjugation” to foreign capital, their excessive dependence on the coffee industry at the expense of the economic well being of the people, and their lack of liberty due to “degenerate politicians”. What was needed was a shift away from their traditional liberal oligarchic individualist conception of society, and its flawed socio-economic model towards a “modern” socialist conception of society and a more diversified and sustainable socio-economic model. They proposed an end to the domination of the coffee industry in Costa Rica’s economy. They wanted the state to incentivize alternative export products, promote new industries (following South America’s import substitution industrialisation policies), and re-negotiate contracts with multinational companies including the United Fruit Company.

To illustrate with a concrete example how Costa Rica could regain its historic “democratic destiny”, social harmony and internal peace, the social democrats presented the following case study of a farm in Costa Rica in which social democratic principles had been put into practice. In an article entitled: “An interesting case study in our agricultural capitalism”, Emilio Valverde, wrote an account of his visit to Jose Figueres’ farm in San Cristobal:

The specificity of San Cristobal is that it is a lucrative and privately owned business, but with its primary concern to provide the wellbeing of its workers. A peaceful adaptation of our agricultural capitalism to the technical necessities and to the concern of social justice that is presently shaking the foundation’s of the world [...] Jose Figueres has not hid his earnings in the United States, Germany or in national banks. He has not built magnificent residences for himself neither in the capital nor in his farms. Instead, he spends it on improving the standard of living of his employees and making them directly interested in making the farm prosperous. This method can create a true cooperative spirit, while ownership remains legally under the hands of an individual owner. That spirit of identification with the company

that makes owners feel responsible and makes them feel that they can benefit directly from their common work, is precisely what makes San Cristobal a unique case in Costa Rica - there is a general feeling of friendly cooperation and trust (Accion Democrata - April 7th, 1944).

Through this article, the social democrats were highlighting their traditional ideas of inter-class cooperation and benevolent capitalism based on social justice, which, they argued, would lead to a “pacific adaptation of agro-capitalism”. Also, they were starting to create the image of Jose Figueres as a socially conscious and successful administrator capable of translating the experience he had gained in managing his farm San Cristobal to administering the nation. Using strategies defined as “populist interventions” (Panizza 2009), they presented Figueres as a “political outsider” (i.e. not corrupt, self-interested or oblivious of the plight of the masses). They claimed that Figueres had the successful business qualifications needed to lead Costa Rica out of its deep socio-economic crisis caused by self-interested petty politicians and argued that neither Figueres nor any other leader of *Accion Democrata* would transform their new party into an old-style personalistic party.

The Christian democratic “crisis narrative” under the Picado administration

President Teodoro Picado responded to the social democratic *crisis narrative* by developing his own. Instead of interpreting the current crisis as an indication of the need for a *paradigm shift*, Picado argued that the current crisis was due to the broader global economic crisis and to the country’s historic fiscal problems that pre-dated the Calderon administration. Those external factors had constrained the Calderon government. Lowering the expectations of what his administration could accomplish due to those external constraints, in his inaugural speech Picado stated:

My administration will not be one of brilliant achievements due to the fact that the existing circumstances place us in an iron cage that we must accept with resigned modesty. Thus, we must limit ourselves to the things we can do effectively (President Teodoro Picado message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1944).

He stated that his administration's first task would be to address the fiscal crisis. Picado argued that the Calderon Guardia administration had inherited the fiscal problem from previous administrations dating back to World War I. The deficit had not grown due to government corruption as the *Centristas* claimed, but rather due to the lack of adequate fiscal controls and inefficiencies in the system. To address this problem Picado passed the *Ley Organica del Presupuesto*, which created the *Oficina del Presupuesto*, the *Contraloria Central de la Republica* and the *Tesoreria Nacional*. Picado argued that taxes had to be raised. He was able to get Congressional approval for an income tax and a property tax by linking the taxes to a raise in the salaries of teachers, something Costa Ricans broadly agreed on given the importance they had historically given to education (Formoso Herrera 2007: 6).

Picado also argued that electoral fraud had been regularly committed due to weakness in the existing electoral system. In his inaugural speech delivered to Congress on May 1944:

We will promote a new Electoral Code [...] The project proposal will be written by a commission integrated by representatives of three political parties that participated in the last elections. The aim of the reform is that the right of suffrage comes with the maximum guarantees for all Costa Ricans (President Teodoro Picado message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1944).

Picado sought to reduce the political tensions that had been exacerbated by the social democrats by incorporating the opposition in the formulation of a new Electoral Code. He proposed an Electoral Reform that sought to strengthen the authority of the Grand Electoral Council (an institution created in 1925 to supervise the organization of electoral contests), which he renamed the National Electoral Tribunal. The NET was meant to eliminate the president's previous discretionary authority in electoral matters as well as his ability to manipulate his powers of appointment and of adjudication (Lehoucq 1999). According to Picado's Electoral Code, the NET would consist of three members and three alternates selected one by the executive, one by the legislative, and one by the judicial branches of government. The NET's role

would determine the composition of provincial electoral juntas, settle claims regarding the implementation of the Electoral Code and, most importantly, to issue a provisional verdict on the results of the elections, which then would be accepted or rejected by an extraordinary session of Congress on March 1st (three weeks after election day). In order to ensure that the ruling party did not have an unfair advantage, Picado's electoral reform stated that representatives of all registered parties would be able to play a role in every aspect of the electoral process. Parties would be able to supervise the registration of voters, the printing of ballots, and certify the initial tally of votes conducted at each polling station. The absentee balloting system would be eliminated and a new Electoral Registry would be created in order to prevent citizens from voting more than once. Photo identification cards would be required to vote (Lehoucq 1999, 2002).

Congress approved the Electoral Reform right before the mid-term elections. Picado announced that the new electoral reforms could not be applied to the mid term parliamentary elections, because the government did not have enough time to implement the reforms. The opposition protested the delay, forcing Picado to agree to an extraordinary session of parliament devoted to discussing a motion promoted by opposition parliamentarians Fernando Lara and Eladio Trejos. On December 11, 1945, parliament approved the *Minimum Guarantees for the Electoral Process*. These included: a reorganization of the Grand Electoral Council, integrating it with delegates of the three branches of government; a guarantee that all political parties could supervise the voting stations throughout the country; a restriction of absentee balloting; and the right of electoral supervisors to ask the *Juntas Receptoras de Votos* for proof of their declared electoral results as soon as they finished the count (Formoso Herrera 2007:9). These were the new laws put in place for the mid-term parliamentary elections held on February 10, 1946.

During the 1946 mid-term election, Picado's party suffered a great loss relative to the last elections, though they still retained the majority in Congress. The results were the following: the Independent National Republican Party won 50.5% of the votes; the Democratic Party 41.5%;

People's Vanguard Party 5.4% and the Republican Party 1%. The INRP won 11 seats, the main opposition party DP received 10 seats and the communist party PVP won only 1 seat (Nohlen 2005). The opposition nevertheless argued that electoral fraud has been committed.

In late 1946, former president Calderon announced his intention to run in the 1948 presidential elections. He maintained the alliance with the communists although relations between the two parties had deteriorated under the Picado administration due in part to the Cold War and also to Picado's rejection of communism even in its *comunismo a la tica* variant. The opposition created a loose, ideologically diversified coalition composed of the conservative coffee barons, progressive liberal oligarchs and social democrats known as the *Union Nacional* coalition. During the presidential candidate nominations, Otilio Ulate, the progressive liberal oligarchic owner of the newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica*, overwhelmingly defeated Jose Figueres of the *Partido Social Democrata*. According to Perez Delgado, only 5% of the population supported the *Partido Social Democrata* at the time (Perez Delgado 1998:35).

After this defeat, Figueres realized the social democrats would not be able to establish their "Second Republic" through democratic means as they had failed to convince the population that a social democratic paradigm shift was necessary. In response, Figueres sought to induce the *paradigm shift* through revolutionary means. He contacted members of the Caribbean Legion to seek their support in an armed insurrection. According to Alberto Beto Lorenzo, a close friend of Jose Figueres whom he had met during his exile in Mexico, the Caribbean Legion told Figueres that his insurrection would be easily crushed by the government if it did not have mass support (Delgado 1998). Figueres sought to mobilize mass support by increasing popular animosity towards the *Caldero-comunista* regime and destabilizing Costa Rica's political order. He created "shock brigades" ordering them to conduct acts of terrorism throughout the country. These shock brigades were composed mainly of men who had been directly impacted by Calderon Guardia's World War II policies as family members of people who had been targeted by the government as nazi-fascist collaborators.

One of the most notorious acts committed by the shock brigades to stir public unrest was the placing of a bomb in Mora's car while Mora was visiting Carmen Lyra, another founding member of the CRCP. The bomb exploded before Mora left Lyra's house. In retaliation to the *Figuerista* shock brigades, the communists formed their own. Street clashes between these two bands produced levels of violence that Costa Rica had never experienced before.

Failed attempted coup: the *Alma Tica*

On the 24th of June 1946, a group of men led by the founder of the *Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales*, Roberto Brenes Mesen, attempted a coup. Their plan was for a group of armed men to meet outside the radio station *Alma Tica* where Brenes would give an incendiary speech on the radio calling for Costa Ricans to rebel against the *Caldero-communista* regime. The armed men would then launch their insurrection hoping other Costa Ricans would join in. The Picado administration had been warned about the uprising and intervened before Brenes gave his speech, storming the station and arresting the armed insurgents (Aranda 1984). According to another one of the coup plotters, Edgar Cardona, Picado immediately went to personally release the prisoners. Picado allegedly stated:

No, no! In Costa Rica we can speak and solve anything! Why do we have to have coups? Oh no, you get out of here right away (Perez Delgado 1998: 30)

Not wanting an escalation of the tensions, Picado released the prisoners without charging them. According to Cardona, Figueres, who had not been part of the *Alma Tica* plot, visited him the day after. Figueres told him about his contacts with the Caribbean Legion and asked him to join them, to which Cardona agreed. Figueres knew that for the insurrection to succeed, his faction needed to continue to exacerbate the political tension, and therefore sought to mobilize the masses through general strikes and other means and to wait for an opportune moment to seize power.

The General Strike known as the *Huelga de los Brazos Caidos* (Fallen Arms)

On July 19th, 1947, the opposition staged a general strike called *Huelga de Brazos Caidos* (Fallen Arms), which consisted of a generalized closure of banks, supermarkets, and clothing stores to demand greater guarantees of electoral transparency in the 1948 elections. While the opposition newspapers *Diario de Costa Rica* and the *Social Democrata* framed the strike as a battle between “pro-democratic forces” demanding “the sanctity of suffrage” against a “corrupt authoritarian regime”, the Christian Democratic newspaper *La Tribuna* and the communist *Trabajo* framed it as a “reactionary counter-reform movement” protesting the new income and property taxes introduced by the Picado administration. While the workers belonging to the Catholic Rerum Novarum CCTRN supported the strike, those belonging to the communist CTRC supported the government. Street clashes took place and political tensions further escalated.

After the second week of the strike, Picado agreed to allow the opposition’s presidential candidate for the 1948 elections, Otilio Ulate, to determine the composition of the new Electoral Tribunal as a way of guaranteeing that the Picado administration would not influence the Electoral Tribunal. The strike came to an end when all parties agreed to recognize the Tribunal’s supervisory authority and its final judgment on the coming elections (Cruz 2005:130).

Picado was willing to make this highly unusual concession in order to de-radicalize and de-mobilize the opposition by eliminating a major source of unity amongst the enemies of the *Caldero-comunista* regime – allegations of electoral fraud. Alluding to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary Picado pleaded with all political actors to avoid further conflict:

Because Costa Ricans are by habit peaceful and rational, they have been able to make their country prosper despite their scarce resources. I have thus made it my task to advocate peacefulness. The leaders of the opposition will have to follow suit. After all, disorder is not in their interest either, since the Costa Rican people, by tradition, repudiated violence and

prefer to follow the channels of legality (Picado speech quoted by Cruz 2005:130.)

Despite Picado's plea to respect Costa Rica's "peaceful" and "rational" nature, the social democrats had no intention of de-escalating tensions. They needed to maintain the perception that Costa Rica was under a state of political and moral crisis to create an anti-government movement. To do this they exaggerated the influence of the communists in the Picado administration regardless of the fact that there was an increasing rift in the *Caldero-comunista* alliance in part due to the emergence of the Cold War and also due to Picado's distrust of the communists. Picado was once again talking to Leon Cortes about a potential alliance between the Christian democrats and the conservatives. These negotiations were abruptly interrupted by Leon Cortes's sudden death caused by a heart attack. During this period, the communist paper *Trabajo* also continuously criticized the Picado administration, further demonstrating the growing rift in the *Caldero-comunista* alliance. Despite this, the social democrats framed the Picado administration as "communist puppets". They disseminated their *crisis narrative* through articles like the one entitled "The Tactic of Terror and the Communist Party" in the 13th of Diciembre 1947 Edition of *El Social Democrata*:

The conjuncture of the Second World War was used by the Costa Rican comrades to assert their influence over the government of Calderon Guardia and start their gradual work of disintegrating the democratic institutions of our country. We counter their tactic of contempt of mankind, typical of all totalitarian systems, with ours of sincere respect for freedom. More specifically, our work has been devoted to uncovering the workings and backstage manipulations of our communists, whose ideology turns out to be the acceptance of Soviet dogmatism and the outright rejection of the social truths of the Costa Rican case because their ears can only listen to the words of the Soviets (El Social Democrata – December 13, 1947).

The Social Democrats argued that the *comunismo a la tica* was a lie. The Costa Rican communists were not different from other communist parties and the *Caldero-comunista* regime was leading Costa Rica into militarism, anarchy and corruption. An article entitled "Forward" in the December 13th 1947 edition of *El Social Democrata* stated:

The disaster in which we have been living for the past several years because of the Caldero-comunista regime have made many want to return to the old Costa Rica. While Calderon, Mora and his followers try to keep the country sunk in a mix of militarism, lawlessness and corruption, many are nostalgic of the Costa Rica of the great liberals Don Cleto and Don Ricardo. We do not want to stay as we are or go back. We want to go forward. The liberals gave our country a physiognomy reflective of the ideas of the last century. These are now anachronistic. They had many virtues but also many flaws. They grew accustomed to politics dominated by a few economically powerful families, to candidates chosen behind closed doors by elite groups, and to great elasticity with regards to the way the electoral process was conducted. All these defects that stayed with us when the great liberals passed away, produced the gradual decay of the Costa Rican democracy that allowed Costa Rica to fall into the hands of the irresponsible men currently ruling our country (El Social Democrata – December 13, 1947).

The social democrats argued that although the great *Olympians*, president Cleto Gonzalez Viquez and Ricardo Jimenez, had made important contributions to Costa Rica's democratic development, their liberal oligarchic model was now obsolete. The social democrats criticized Ulate for looking backwards instead of looking forward, framing this criticism around his wanting to re-establish the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order. The social democrats continued to reinforce their *crisis narrative*, through articles such as the one entitled "Our Independence":

The regime that came to power in 1940 in Costa Rica enthroned a system of governance similar to those in Nicaragua and Honduras. Our government became significantly militarized and one by one all human and democratic values were marched upon. The electoral fiction has served to fool and humiliate the Costa Ricans. Irresponsibility, demagoguery and the absence of moral scruples, makes the men of this regime feel owners of the public treasury. This scheme has led to moral decay. The communist Black Jacks have filled our streets with violence [...] We are entering a new phase in our history [...] We are coming to the final stage, in which the people of Costa Rica will show the world their victory against tyranny, and prove that we are ready to build an educated, civilized and just Republic. The political phenomenon we are witnessing now is the organization of popular forces, which march on their own because they find their strength within, outside the influence of politicians. The Social Democratic Party believes that the duty of politicians is to delineate the outlines of a new Republic in order not to betray the popular will (The Social Democrat – September 15, 1947).

They argued that the *Caldero-comunista* regime had shattered Costa Rica's exceptionalism. By creating equivalential chains between the Calderon and

Picado administrations and the Nicaraguan and Honduran dictatorial regimes under Somoza and Carias, they shifted the external political frontier created by the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary inwards. The *Caldero-comunistas* were portrayed as an existential threat “trampling one by one on all humane and democratic values”. The social democrats claimed that the regime had used the façade of elections to “deceive” the Costa Ricans. Their “irresponsibility”, “demagoguery” and “lack of morals” had allowed them to treat public funds as their own. The regime had led to a state of moral decadence and violence. According to their narrative, Costa Rica was entering a “new phase in its history”. A new popular movement was emerging, a movement of national consciousness outside of traditional politics. This was the Partido Social Demócrata. Instead of seeking to impose the agenda of its leaders, the task of this new political party was merely “to help trace the contours of the new republic so as not to betray the popular will”. With this *crisis narrative*, the social democrats were seeking to create a counter-hegemonic movement mobilizing formerly excluded sectors of society into the democratic process. They claimed that the social democratic intellectuals were not seeking to inflict a new order but rather were acting upon the “unspoken” demands of the people.

As the 1948 presidential elections approached, they challenged the *comunismo a la tica* myth and argued that Calderon had allowed the communists to take over his administration:

(Calderon Guardia) based on the lie that the communist party just by eliminating the word communism from its party's name has ceased to be communist, has allowed them to become part of the governing coalition alongside the established plutocratic oligarchy. He has created the Juntas de Abastos, agencies which in theory were meant to address the food shortages and has allowed the communists to run them. That way the comrades gain a central position to indoctrinate the masses. [...] He has allowed them to form Shock Brigades, communists street-fighting units that completely disregard the Republican and orderly life of Costa Ricans. He created the National Social Security system and allowed the communists to control it directly or indirectly. Mora is the real boss (The Social Democrat - May 11, 1947).

The social democrats countered the Christian democratic narrative that portrayed Calderon Guardia as the most progressive reformer in the country's

history, arguing that Calderon had tainted these worthy institutions by allowing the communists to run them and had allowed the communist shock brigades to disturb the country's peaceful tradition. They continuously claimed that the *Caldero-comunista* regime had led Costa Rica away from its peaceful, moderate, and innately democratic nature. They mocked the "unholy alliance" between the Christian democrats, the Costa Rica Communist Party with the blessing of the Costa Rican Catholic Church with images like the one below:



Once again they portrayed the communist leader, Manuel Mora, as the dominant central figure. They sought to highlight the contradictions within the communist discourse by showing that, although Mora is dressed as a priest, he is taking towards the altar the typical Marxist symbols. On the left, Calderon Guardia, and on the right, Teodoro Picado, are portrayed as Mora's altar boys. Through visual images like this one and political speeches, they sought to reinforce the image that the Christian democrats were following

orders from the communists, and therefore their policies were communist inspired. To counter the social democratic narrative, Calderon Guardia repeatedly argued:

I am not an extremist, as my bitterest enemies want the simple people to perceive me. I am a moderate man of deep democratic convictions. The reforms that I have proposed are not extremists, they are meant to provide greater justice to the working class without affecting the basic interests of capital [...] I pray to the divine Providence that He does not forsake our beloved country and that He gives all of us the wisdom necessary to exit this terrible fight and lead us back on the path of democracy, justice and peace. (La Tribuna – February 8, 1948).

Calderon pleaded once again with the social democrats to de-escalate tensions and to solve their differences through “democratic”, “just” and “peaceful” means. The leader of the opposition Otilio Ulate also sought to reduce political tensions. As he stated in a speech as presidential candidate transcribed in the *Diario de Costa Rica* on February 1, 1948:

Since the beginning of our campaign, we have made it clear that we want to defend the institutional order, that we want peace for all Costa Ricans, and safety in their homes. We have been giving copious evidence that despite the bad intentions of our adversaries, who have claimed that we are disturbing the peace, we have proven that despite provocations and aggressions to some of our colleagues, we have always sought to maintain peace to allow the elections to go undisturbed (Diario de Costa Rica – February 1, 1948).

The Calderonistas were not differentiating between the Ulatistas and the Figueristas within the opposition and thus were accusing all members of the National Unity coalition of disturbing the peace. However, throughout the campaign period, Ulate had continuously sought to convince his followers not to antagonize their opponents. Despite the attempts made by Ulate, Picado and Calderon to defuse the political tension, the social democratic *crisis narrative* and the continuous street clashes between the social democratic and the communist shock brigades meant that the Costa Ricans went to the voting stations on February 8th 1948 believing they were living under the most socio-politically polarized period in Costa Rica’s history.

1948 Presidential Elections

The newly established Electoral Tribunal granted Ulate victory over Calderon. According to the Electoral Tribunal official results posted on February 28th, 1948, the Union Nacional received 54,931 votes against 44,438 votes for the Republican/Vanguardia party. However, the *Calderonista*-dominated Congress viewed these results as fraudulent.³² On March 1st, Congress annulled the 1948 presidential elections stating that the fact that the opposition controlled both the newly established Electoral Tribunal, as well as the Electoral Registry had allowed their supporters to commit fraud. They argued that thousands of their party members had not been allowed to vote due to confusion associated with their electoral identification cards or the fact that they did not receive them in time to vote.

After the annulment of the presidential elections, *Ulatistas*, *Calderonistas*, communists, and the Costa Rican Catholic Church leaders began to search for a consensual solution - as was the norm after contested elections. The two main leaders of the opposition – Otilio Ulate (progressive liberal oligarchs) and Jorge Hine (conservative liberal oligarchs) were close to reaching a

³² These results are indeed dubious. As Ivan Molina's studies indicate, these numbers meant that while in the 1944 elections 83.81% of the population eligible to vote had participated in the elections, in 1948 only 57.66% did, despite the fact that voting was made mandatory only in 1948. The fact that almost 75,000 people had decided not to vote in one of the most contested election in Costa Rica's history is very odd. The stakes of the elections were extremely high. A victory by the *Union Nacional* could mean the elimination of the progressive reforms made by Rafael Angel Calderon during his first presidency (1940-1944). Therefore, the degree of political mobilization both in favour and against Calderon had been extremely high. A high turn out rate was to be expected in the 1948 elections. Yet, according to the official figures this had not been the case. The other suspicious fact was that the reduction of voters came precisely from the provinces in which Calderon had won by an overwhelming majority in the 1940 elections and his handpicked successor Teodoro Picado in the 1944 elections. Puntarenas had a 20,72% reduction, Limon 20,47% and Guanacaste of 9,18%, while the provinces dominated by the opposition – Alajuela, Heredia and Cartago – had no significant reductions. The *Calderonistas* believed that this reduction was due to the majority of their supporters not receiving the recently required documentation for voting (cedula) by the date of the elections and thus not being able to vote. The *Calderonista's* argued that this was due to the fact that the opposition had elected the president of the Electoral Registry, which was in charge of emitting the necessary identification for voting. The Electoral Registry was also in charge of overseeing the electoral registry and of guaranteeing the sanctity of suffrage. The opposition had also handpicked the three heads of the newly formed Electoral Tribunal.

compromise solution with president Picado and the Christian democratic presidential candidate, Calderon Guardia. In keeping with the traditional Costa Rican compromise (*transacción*), they were seeking a neutral political figure to rule Costa Rica for two years after which new elections would be held.

The social democratic *Figueristas* were the only ones not interested in finding a consensual solution. Instead, Figueres took advantage of the political crisis created by the presidential elections to launch an armed insurrection. Figueres contacted General Juan Rodriguez Garcia, the leader of the Caribbean Legion in Guatemala, stating that the annulment of the elections was proof that Calderon was seeking to establish a dictatorship with the help of the communists. He argued that the Costa Rican masses were mobilizing against the government due to their indignation at the arbitrary annulment of the elections. Figueres promised the Caribbean Legion that after a revolutionary victory, he would help them overthrow the remaining dictatorships in Latin America, arguing that Costa Rica would serve as an ideal base for the Caribbean Legion's subsequent attack on the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza. The rebels' victory in Costa Rica and Nicaragua would reinforce anti-dictatorial movements throughout Latin America. The Caribbean Legion agreed to help Figueres under those conditions.

With the backing of the Caribbean Legion, Figueres summoned the six men who had been in charge of the "shock brigades" to his farm in San Cristobal. The men were Max Cortes (former president Leon Cortes' nephew), Edgar Cardona (one of the participants of the failed 1946 coup attempt), Alberto Lorenzo (who had met Figueres during his exile in Mexico) as well as his close friends Jose Santos Delocre, Victor Alberto Quiros, and Roberto Figuls. Figueres informed them of his plan to smuggle the Caribbean Legion's armaments, high-ranking officials, and mercenaries into the country (Vargas Ortega 2010:181). The day after, they executed his plan. On March 12, 1948, the social democratic rebels took over the airport of San Cristobal close to Jose Figueres's farm *La Lucha* and hijacked two commercial TACA planes. Figueres ordered Macho Nuñez and Otto Escalante to fly to Guatemala to

meet General Rodriguez's contact and bring back the weapons. During that period Guatemala was under the progressive presidency of Arevalo and therefore the Caribbean Legion exiles had sought refuge there.

When Picado was informed that rebels had taken over the airport of San Cristobal, he chose not to crush the insurrection, fearing that an aggressive response would further inflame the situation. He did not know that armaments and mercenaries were being brought from Guatemala and erroneously believed a consensual solution could still be found. He asked the United States and Mexican ambassadors and the Monsignor Victor Sanabria for help in negotiating with the rebels. The United States wanted to stop the insurrection and stated they would not recognize a *de facto* government. At the same time, they did not want to provide military assistance to the Picado government fearing that the communists would subsequently take over. They also feared the prospect that a Costa Rican civil war could spill over to the rest of Central America dividing Costa Rica and Guatemala with reformist governments (if the insurgents won) against Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador with authoritarian dictatorial regimes. The United States ambassador to Costa Rica, Nathaniel Davis, worked with Picado to find a consensual solution to the crisis (Longely 1997).

However, the delayed response of the Picado administration to the uprising allowed the rebels to receive indispensable armament and manpower from Guatemala without which their armed insurrection would not have been possible. Once they had secured these, the social democrats started a discursive campaign geared at mobilizing and unifying the different sectors of the opposition belonging to ideologically and socio-economically diverse sectors of Costa Rican society. In order to transform "innately peaceful" citizens into revolutionaries, the social democrats framed the annulment of the 1948 presidential elections as Guardia's attempt to impose a *Caldero-comunista* dictatorship. They divided political space into two irreconcilable antagonistic forces, arguing that the dictatorial *Caldero-comunista* regime was oppressing the innately democratic, anti-communist, law-abiding, liberty seeking Costa Rican population. In doing so, they created a common cause -

the defence of the sanctity of the vote – obscuring their underlying intention of founding a Second Republic even to their own followers until the end of the Civil War (Vargas Ortega 2010). They called their army the *National Liberation Army* to portray the revolutionaries as pro-democratic freedom fighters. They framed their armed insurrection as a pro-Ulate movement encouraging the government to call them “Ulatistas”, despite the fact that Figueres had no intention of handing over power to Ulate.

The social democrats knew that in order to mobilize the greatest number of people they had to stir anti-communist sentiment. Without the perceived communist “existential” threat to Costa Rica’s “exceptional” national identity, it would have been impossible for Figueres to mobilize the opposition as Ulate was doing everything in his power to avoid the conflict from escalating. When the civil war started, Ulate fled to the Palacio Arzobispal where he stayed for most of the war period. The only request Ulate made to his followers was to “boycott the corrupt government” by staging a general strike. In the March 26th, 1948 edition of his newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica*, Ulated posted the following announcement:

BULLETIN OF THE REVOLUTION: CIVIL RESISTANCE

We must immediately enhance civil resistance. The indifferent people, who denature this revolution by going to the theatres, shopping for non-essentials, who open businesses or are doing other irresponsible things, are betraying our cause. Merchants, you have a duty to close down your stores. Help us now. The country demands it (Diario de Costa Rica - March 26, 1948).

This was clearly not a call to arms, but only a call for passive resistance. The only party actively mobilizing their supporters to fight the rebels was the CRCP. To mobilize the communists, Mora claimed that a victory of the revolutionaries would lead to a reactionary government that would not only reverse the progressive policies passed during the *Caldero-comunista* regime (national social security, Labour Code, and the “Social Guarantees” amendment to the 1871 Constitution), but would also outlaw the CRCP, exile its leaders, persecute its followers and prohibit communist propaganda. Therefore, the social democratic *Figueristas* and the communists were the

two groups doing most of the physical and ideological fighting during the civil war, with individual *Calderonistas* and *Ulatistas* joining the communists and social democrats respectively. For all practical purposes, the military remained uninvolved in the civil war (Cruz 2005:131).

Reading the government newspaper *La Tribuna* editions from the February 8th, 1948 presidential elections to when the civil war ended in April 19, 1948, it is evident that the Picado administration continuously sought to avoid the escalation of the conflict at every stage. The front page of *La Tribuna* on the 16th of March 1948 reproduces the president's speech the previous day in an article entitled "With all rigour we will impose the necessary measures to return peace in our nation". President Picado stated:

The seditious outbreak in our country, that you are aware of, requires a vigorous action from the government to return us to our traditional peace now altered by a group of bad Costa Ricans assisted by numerous foreign mercenary adventurers (La Tribuna - March 16, 1948).

Rather than mobilizing the masses against the "bad Costa Ricans" assisted by foreign mercenaries, Picado reassured the population that the government would do everything in its power to quickly end the conflict. Because Picado did not want to mobilize the population against the rebels, he did not seek to establish a rigid antagonistic internal political frontier framing the social democratic revolutionaries as "enemies" posing an "existential threat". His priority was to contain the conflict. In another article in the same newspaper, they refer to Jose Figueres as "The Catalan" while others called him "the crazy man" alluding to the belief that a "real" and "sane" Costa Rican would not launch an armed insurrection.

The fact that Picado's response was very limited can also be seen in the 21st of March 1948 newspaper article on *La Tribuna*. The article states:

The measures taken by the government were limited to cutting the outlets to Figueres. The operations of the colonels Lopez Roig and Duran have been successful. They forced Figueres to flee his farm and we know that his group is retreating southward, while he wanted to go north to San Jose. [...] The operation not only forced Figueres to call for backup, it also forced

him to seek refuge elsewhere. His farm has been in the hands of the government for many days. We could not wish for a better situation (La Tribuna - March 21, 1948).

As the article states, Picado had ordered a small “Mobile Unit” to survey the situation. This mobile unit was composed of 65 men who had been originally sent by the United States to Costa Rica to defend the Public Road Administration Villa Mills while it was building the Interamerican highway. Picado ordered the mobile unit to take-over Figueres’ farm and confiscate the weapons of the insurgents. According to the article in *La Tribuna* quoted above, the Picado administration stated that without Figueres’ farm as a base, the rebel forces would be easily defeated. These newspaper articles served to reassure the Costa Rican population that the president was in control of the situation, and confirm to the citizens that no further action was needed on their behalf.

In the meanwhile, the communists had mobilized a group of banana workers from the Atlantic region under the command of Carlos Fallas. This group known as *La Columna de los Linieros del Pacífico* was composed of men who had fought during the 1934 Banana Strike against the United Fruit Company in Limon. According to communist veterans, most of these men were Guatemalans or Nicaraguans who had been working for the UFCO (Delgado 1998). Picado did not order the military to provide the communists with the necessary armaments, technical, or logistical support. Coronel Enrique Alvarado, the head of the *Cuartel Bellavista* and person in charge of distributing weapons confirmed the government’s lack of support for the communist insurgents, as government officials and military leaders feared that a communist victory could lead to a communist regime (Delgado 1998: 270).

Most opposition and *Calderonista* veterans also expressed their anti-communist sentiment. It was common knowledge that Rene Picado, the president’s brother, was also boycotting the communists. Rumours spread that Ulate had promised Rene Picado to make him Minister of Security in his new administration in exchange for his help. This rumour was never

confirmed and was quite unlikely given the fact that Ulate was not actively fighting or involved in the conflict.

As several historians have pointed out, and as a reading of the *La Tribuna* editions of the period confirm, neither Calderon nor Picado sought to mobilize the *Calderonistas* until April 13th, 1948. Before this date, they simply requested the help of Costa Ricans to contain the conflict. According to Mora, on the 12th of April he went to Calderon's house pleading him to mobilize his supporters to help the communist fighters. Mora asked Calderon to go with him to Tres Rios, where a base had been set up by the communists to plan their attack. According to Mora, Calderon asked:

"Are you taking me prisoner?" I (Mora) replied: "No doctor, my party simply asks for your collaboration. Our enemies can thwart all our past efforts if he sees we are fighting alone. We have worked together so far and it is necessary that we continue to do so till the end." The doctor came with me. He passed by a barracks close by the Escalante area and then we went to Tres Rios. We established our base, as we had agreed, in the house of Don Ramon Cespedes and we immediately started to deliberate (Delgado 1998: 231).

Therefore, it was not until one month after Figueres launched his armed insurrection that Calderon agreed to join Mora's counter-attack. That day, Calderon gave the first speech mobilizing his party. The day after, *La Tribuna* posted on its front page a speech given by Jorge Volio (founder of the *Partido Reformista* in 1923, and one of Calderon Guardia's closest advisors):

If we could resolve this with words, we would talk at length, but this time we cannot solve it this way. We cannot allow the beautiful democratic edifice that we have built come tumbling down (La Tribuna - April 13, 1948).

The way Jorge Volio phrased his call for arms reflected his acknowledgement that Costa Ricans preferred consensual solutions. He argued that if they could solve the crisis through words, they would have. Yet he warned that this time words were not enough - the democratic foundations of the country were at stake.

Cease-fire agreement

While the Figueristas and the Communists fought in the countryside, Picado, Ulate and Monsignor Sanabria were negotiating the terms of a cease-fire. Picado proposed having an interim president acceptable to all parties who would govern for two years after which new elections would be held. The interim government would be composed of an equal number of ministers from the warring factions. He proposed Doctor Julio Cesar Ovarés, a well-respected dermatologist as a potential candidate. Ulate agreed, and they informed Mora of these terms. Mora had realized that, without government backing, the communists had no chance of defeating the Caribbean Legion-backed rebels and so agreed to the cease-fire. Monsignor Sanabria offered to personally take Otilio Ulate's letter to Figueres. Max Cortes recounts the meeting between Monsignor Sanabria and Figueres:

Monsignor explained that he bore a letter written by Otilio Ulate to Figueres. Ulate wanted to reach a settlement and for that he would renounce his presidential aspirations and allow Dr Ovarés to govern. He requested Don Pepe to return the weapons to Guatemala and the tractors to Villa Mills. They were sending one hundred free passes for the rebels to go to Panama (Delgado 1998:184).

Figueres rejected the terms of the cease-fire. He would not stop fighting until he placed himself in a position to establish the social democratic Second Republic. Meanwhile, Somoza was getting ready to invade Costa Rica to prevent the victory of the Caribbean Legion-backed rebels and their subsequent attack on Nicaragua while Figueres was preparing to invade Cartago, Limón and then San José. Upon hearing of Somoza's plan to invade, Picado chose to surrender to prevent further bloodshed. The communist leaders argued that Picado was surrendering prematurely as the rebels had not won any decisive victories. However, when Picado told Mora that Somoza was going to invade Costa Rica, Mora agreed to surrender. Mora requested a secret meeting with José Figueres. They met in the Alto de Ochomogo. Mora told Figueres that the communists would surrender under the following conditions: a) that Figueres guaranteed that the progressive social policies passed under the Calderón and Picado administrations would be kept; b) that the lives and properties of the

communistas and *Calderonistas* would be respected; and c) that the CRCP would not be outlawed. He then offered Figueres his support for defeating Somoza if he invaded Costa Rica. Figueres guaranteed Mora that the social democratic “Second Republic” would not only maintain, but would actually improve the institutions created under the previous administrations. He also promised to respect the lives and properties of the defeated (a promise he did not keep). Somoza’s invasion was averted as by April 24, 1948 the civil war was over.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the 1948 civil war was not the *inevitable* result of rising class tensions triggered by the socio-economic crisis due to the impact of World War II - as was the consensual view up until the 1980s. It was also not the result of growing opposition to Calderon amongst the dominant classes due his progressive policies (national social security system, Labour Code, and constitutional Social Guarantees), allegations of corruption, nepotism, his rift with Leon Cortes, or his alliance with the communists as has been widely assumed. Indeed, Lehoucq (1991), Rosenberg (1981), Cruz (2005) have criticized the assumption that the dominant classes opposed Calderon because his policies harmed their economic interests by highlighting that Calderon passed many policies that protected the economic interests of the dominant classes such as tax exemptions and subsidies. The national social security system did not incite much opposition to the government amongst the coffee oligarchs as they were able to exclude the seasonal workers that compromised the bulk of their workforce. The progressive liberal oligarchs and the social democrats actually supported a good deal of Calderon Guardia’s progressive policies - they only criticized his paternalistic policy-making process and his manipulation of these reforms for political ends. While there was indeed growing opposition to Calderon Guardia due to allegations of corruption, nepotism, administrative mismanagement and his alliance with the communists, all political actors except for the social democrats wanted to channel their opposition to Calderon Guardia through institutional means. While the other leaders of the opposition portrayed Guardia and Mora as “adversaries”, the social democrats were the only ones

portraying them as “enemies”.

Although during the 1940s there was indeed rising class tension, growing opposition to Calderon Guardia, and an electoral breakdown following the annulment of the 1948 presidential elections, these were at best *necessary* but *insufficient* conditions for the war. It is a fact that there was only one political group wanting to fight a civil war – the social democrats. While all other political actors were desperately working to find a consensual solution to the 1948 electoral crisis to avoid a civil war, and were anxiously trying to contain the crisis once Figueres had launched his armed insurrection, the social democrats were the only ones wanting to fight. Their motivation was not class-based, nor was it geared at defending the sanctity of the vote (as they claimed to gain the support of the Ulatistas - the biggest group of the opposition). It was also not mainly based on Figueres’ desire to avenge his exile during the Calderon Guardia administration as other Costa Rican historians have argued (Diaz 2009). Although there is no doubt that Figueres hated Calderon, he could have murdered him if revenge was his main motivation. The main reason why Figueres launched his armed insurrection was because he viewed it as the only way he could found a social democratic Second Republic.

Throughout the 1940s, the social democrats had failed to garner enough political support for their idea of founding a Second Republic. The Costa Rican population had rejected what they perceived as “radical” change and did not like the social democrats’ antagonistic rhetoric. In fact, the Social Democratic Party won only 6,500 votes in the 1948 legislative elections. It remained a minor player within the opposition coalition formed between the conservative coffee barons and the progressive liberal oligarchs to run against the Caldero-communista *Bloque de la Victoria* coalition during the 1948 presidential elections. Due to their political weakness, the social democrats decided that the only way they could induce their *paradigm shift* was through an armed insurrection. They knew that they had to find an appropriate justification for an act that would be viewed as violating Costa Rica’s “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. They took advantage of the political

crisis created by the annulment of the 1948 elections to mobilize support for their insurrection.

This chapter has shown that it is crucial to analyse the discursive dimension of the 1948 civil war. To understand the discursive condition of possibility for the 1948 civil war it is necessary to explore: 1) the changing international ideational environment that made possible both the alliance between Calderon Guardia and the CRCP during World War II and its subsequent transformation into a great liability during the emergence of the Cold War, as well as the existence of anti-dictatorial Latin American movements such as the Caribbean Legion – without whose support Figueres could not have launched a successful insurrection; 2) the belief held by most political leaders that the CRCP could shift strategies away from the *comunismo a la tica* strategy towards a confrontational strategy if circumstances changed (i.e. the CRCP became more powerful); and 3) the existence of a counter-hegemonic movement – the social democrats - willing to consider the use of force to impose their Second Republic. Without these three factors, the 1948 political crisis could have been resolved through consensual means.

Therefore, the 1948 Civil War was not the result of “objectively” antagonistic socio-economic and political interests and personal vendettas, as the current dominant view states. The social democrats discursively created these social antagonisms and exacerbated political tensions in order to wage their counter-hegemonic battle. Through a counter-hegemonic movement, the social democrats sought to incorporate previously excluded sectors of society into Costa Rica’s democratic process – starting with the *Centristas* and extending it to all other citizens. They wanted Costa Rica to shift towards a participatory democracy with political parties based on clearly defined and “scientifically based” political projects as opposed to personalistic political parties (i.e. built around a charismatic leader). They sought to induce a shift in the Costa Rican value system away from privileging the liberal principles of individualism and self-reliance, and towards social democratic principles of communitarianism and cooperativism. They also wanted to replace the exclusively coffee and banana based development model with a more

diversified agro-export model and gradually transition towards an import-substitution-industrialization model. This would eliminate the economic predominance of the coffee oligarchs and allow new agricultural sectors and new industries to develop and prosper.

The social democrats hoped that their military victory would guarantee them political success. They assumed that after winning the war, they could found their Second Republic. The next chapter explores the difficulties encountered by the social democrats in the process of creating the social democratic Second Republic.

The war of National Liberation was a disagreeable and primitive way for opening the door for the foundation of the Second Republic. (Social Democratic leader Jose Figueres - Act 2 of Constitutional debate held on the 16th of January 1949)

If the people had been called to the revolution telling them that they were fighting for the establishment of the Second Republic, for the nationalization of the banks and for the 10% tax on capital, our people would not have fought. The people fought for Otilio Ulate to become the President – for the sanctity of suffrage. The Costa Rican revolution was fought to restore constitutional normality. (Conservative liberal oligarchic leader, Otton Acosta, during the Constitutional Assembly debate held on January 16, 1949)

Chapter 5

Institutional Development during the immediate Post Civil War Period (April 1948 – November 1949)

This chapter analyses Costa Rica's institutional development during the immediate post civil war period - from the signing of the peace treaty on the 19th of April 1948 to the end of the social democratic Junta rule on the 8th of November 1949. It analyses the 183 *Acts of the 1949 Constitutional Assembly* and reviews articles from the progressive liberal newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica* as well as the conservative liberal oligarchic newspaper *La Nacion*. This chapter explores: 1) the subjective and discursive nature of the moment of institutional *crisis* following Costa Rica's civil war; 2) how notions of *continuity* and *change* were discursively constructed by the different crisis narratives elaborated by the political leaders in their attempt to convince the Costa Rican population of the appropriateness, feasibility and desirability of their political projects; and 3) the role of Costa Rica's "exceptionalist" collective imaginary in a) influencing the extent, scope and pace of institutional change ensuring a *transformist* model of institutional change in Costa Rica despite the civil war, b) shaping the different political actors conception of their interests, and c) informing their strategic calculations thereby "circumscribing and delimiting the realm of the politically possible" (Hay 2001:202).

During the post civil war period, the different political groups within the victorious opposition coalition – the *Figuerista* social democrats, the *Ulatista* progressive liberals and the conservative liberal oligarchs - developed their own *crisis narrative* to explain the causes of the 1948 civil war. Based on their interpretation of the civil war, they sought to justify their own political projects. The social democrats initially believed that their military victory granted them the right to create a *Second Republic*. They wanted to form a new constitutional order based on social democratic principles. To convince the Costa Rican population of the necessity of this institutional change, the social democrats developed a *crisis narrative* that portrayed the civil war as a marking the end of the so-called First Republic. On the opposite end of the spectrum of institutional change, the conservative oligarchs sought to interpret the civil war as a confirmation of the wisdom of returning to the liberal oligarchic order (1880-1940) after the failed *Caldero-comunista* experiment during the Calderon Guardia and Teodoro Picado administrations (1940-1948). Proposing a middle ground between these two approaches, the *Ulatista* progressive liberals agreed with the liberal oligarchic view that no *paradigm shift* (Hay 2001) was required, thus rejecting the social democrats' idea of a *Second Republic*. However, they acknowledged that significant reforms had to be made to the liberal oligarchic model.

By focusing exclusively on the period between the signing of the civil war peace treaty to the end of the social democratic Junta rule, we find that during the immediate post civil war period it was far from certain which of these political projects would succeed in the long term and which model of institutional change would be adopted. This goes against the dominant interpretation of Costa Rica's post civil war institutional development, which argues that the social democrats' military victory enabled them to impose their socio-economic political system (Naranjo Chacon 2010, Molina and Palmer 2009, Cruz 2005, Isbester 2010). The dominant view assumes that the social democrats' military success naturally translated into the party's political success by under-analysing the period under study.

This chapter argues that social democrats military success did not guarantee their political success. In fact, even after victoriously marching into San Jose, the social democrats remained a marginal political force as was evident by their dismal results in the December 8, 1948 Constitutional Assembly elections when they received only 7.6% of the popular votes versus 74.2% of the votes received by the *Ulatista* progressive liberal *Partido Union Nacional* and the 12.9% received by the conservative liberal oligarchic *Partido Constitucional*. Similarly, in the October 4th, 1949 parliamentary elections the Social Democrats received only 6.6% of the votes versus 71.7% for the *National Union Party* and 15.7% for the *Constitutional Party*. The degree of support the social democratic revolutionaries received during the war was limited to their claim that they were fighting to defend the sanctity of the vote (Molina and Palmer 2007, Vargas Ortega 2010). As discussed in the previous chapter, they had framed their armed insurrection as a revolt against the arbitrary annulment of the 1948 presidential victory of Otilio Ulate, the candidate of the opposition coalition, by the *Calderonista*-dominated Congress under the pretence that there had been electoral fraud. Therefore, the backing that the social democrats received from the opposition block during the war did not at all reflect support for a social democratic *Second Republic* (Molina and Palmer 2007: 113). Instead, all other members of the opposition block supported the establishment of an Otilio Ulate administration.

Therefore, despite their military victory, the social democrats were actually in a weak political position. Due to their political weakness and to the *transformist* nature of Costa Rica's political system, they were forced to negotiate with Ulate to exercise power (despite the fact that Ulate had not participated in the war). Paradoxically, the social democratic military success and their Junta rule placed the social democrats in a vulnerable political position because it enabled their opponents to portray their actions as incompatible with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary (their armed insurrection, their military rule and their support to the Caribbean Legion clashed with the peace-loving, democratic and consensual Costa Rican nature). Their idea of installing a Second Republic was portrayed as too radical for Costa Rica's *transformist* tradition.

This placed the social democrats in a unique position relative to other victorious Latin American revolutionary leaders. They had to shift their initial political strategies and adjust them in such a way as to be perceived as respecting Costa Rica's "exceptionalist" tradition in order to gain legitimacy and popular support. Therefore, they had to accept their humiliating electoral defeat in the December 1948 Constitutional Assembly elections, as well as the Constitutional Assembly's rejection of their Constitutional Proposal known as the 1949 Constitutional Project. The social democrats were forced to settle for an amended version of the liberal 1871 Constitution in line with the *transformist* model of political change. They also voluntarily handed power to Otilio Ulate after 18 months of Junta Rule instead of the two years envisioned by the Ulate-Figueroes Pact. The social democrats were also forced to abandon their project of actively assisting the Caribbean Legion revolutionaries in overthrowing dictatorships in other Latin American countries. In order to prove their commitment to regional peace and to neutralize the perception that they were incompatible with the "exceptionalist" tradition, the social democrats committed an unprecedented act. Instead of trying to use the military power to impose their will (as all other victorious Latin American revolutionary leaders did), they abolished the military. This was a way of portraying themselves as the ones responsible for making Costa Rica a truly exceptional country. The social democrats also shifted their discourse towards a more conciliatory tone vis-à-vis the conservatives and the liberals. They sought to present their views as in keeping with the progressive liberal oligarchs' position and also sought to appeal to former *Calderonista* supporters. This meant that the only losers of the civil war were the communist party members (Rovira 1988). The social democrats chose to outlaw the CRCP a) to counteract the accusations made by the conservative liberal oligarchs that their policies were communist, b) to reassure the United States government of their anti-communist inclination, c) to gain the support of leftist voters as they became the only leftist political party, d) to increase the hegemonic appeal of their discourse by placing a widely rejected political group as the *constitutive outside* of their discursive formation, and e) and to

eliminate the internal political frontier re-establishing the external political frontier needed to create a new myth of unity.

Because the social democrats were in a very weak political position during the immediate post civil war period, it is incorrect to say that their military success shaped Costa Rica's institutional development. Instead, this chapter argues that Costa Rica's institutional development was shaped by the intense ideational battle between the social democrats, the conservative oligarchs and the *Ulatista* progressive liberals. These three political groups in turn based their institutional reforms on past reforms made by the *Caldero-comunista* regime (1940-1948) as well as those made by the previous liberal oligarchic regime (1880-1940). Therefore, despite the civil war, Costa Rica's institutional development followed a very gradual process of *reformist* change. This was due to the strong ideational path dependency exerted by the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. Its *transformist* logic of articulation limited the scope, pace and the extent of institutional change during the period under study and ensured that what could have been a foundational moment in Costa Rica's history remained a significant, yet *transformist* moment.

This chapter is divided in four sections. Section one discusses the negotiations following the cessation of the armed conflict. It also explores the difficulties the social democrats encountered in legitimating their Junta Rule due in large part to the perceived incompatibility between their actions (starting an armed insurrection, ruling through a Junta and supporting the Caribbean Legion) and the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. It shows how the social democrats had to change their approach from arguing that their military victory justified their political power (thus attempting to impose radical change), to showing their commitment to peace and consensual politics and by highlighting the continuity between the social democratic project and the previous liberal oligarchic model.

Section two discusses the policies passed by the Junta during the first six months of its rule and their implications. It discusses the negative reception that the most radical reforms (the nationalization of the banking system and

the 10% wealth tax) received from the population and shows how only the policies perceived as in keeping with the “exceptionalist” tradition (e.g. reformist policies seeking to improve the provision of basic services by the state, extending suffrage rights to women, abolishing the military) were positively received.

Section three reviews the 183 Acts of the Constitutional Assembly. It discusses the overwhelming rejection of the social democratic Constitutional Proposal by the Constitutional delegates and their decision to use the 1871 Constitution as the base for the new constitution. It shows how the battles between the social democrats, the conservative liberal oligarchs and the progressive liberals led to reformist changes to the 1871 constitution. The only changes that were adopted were those perceived as making the liberal political system more efficient, preventing administrative mismanagement, eliminating the possibility of nepotism and corruption, reducing the power of the executive and increasing the power of Congress, guaranteeing the sanctity of the vote by creating a new institution to oversee all electoral aspects the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones*, extending suffrage rights to women, eliminating the military, and improving the provision of basic social services by the state. All the changes proposed by the *Figueristas* dealing with increasing the role of the state in the economy were categorically rejected, as were their attempts to move Costa Rica’s political system gradually away from a presidential system towards a parliamentary system. The amendments proposed by the *Figueristas* that were passed were only put through after the conservative liberal oligarchs modified them. The conservative liberal oligarchs would include clauses such as possible exceptions to the articles (such as eliminating the right to strike of people working in the agricultural sector claiming that this sector was of vital importance to the nation) as well as minimizing the content on the chapter on autonomous institutions to allow for this concept to be changed by Congress in the future.

Throughout the constitutional debates, the delegates emphasized the elements of continuity between the amendments they were proposing and the

spirit of the 1871 Constitution. After their Constitutional Proposal was rejected, even the social democratic delegates started to emphasise elements of continuity between their proposal and the 1871 constitution. In the concluding remarks made by the delegates when they voted for the approval of the 1949 Constitution at the 178th session of the Constitutional Assembly (Act 178 of the Constitutional Assembly held the 31st of October 1949), the vast majority of the delegates showed their pleasure at producing a constitution that was in keeping with the Costa Rican “exceptionalist” tradition and in keeping with the spirit of the 1871 Constitution. Only the social democratic delegates expressed their frustration and disappointment for not being able to create a more progressive constitution.

Section four concludes that this chapter shows the crucial role that the Costa Rican “exceptionalist” collective imaginary had on Costa Rica’s post civil war institutional development. This chapter also shows how political actors constantly modified their ideas and discourses in an attempt to be perceived as being in keeping with the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. In this process the different political actors also sought to reinterpret the meaning of the collective imaginary. This fluid and unstable conception of ideas and discourses is in keeping with Martin Carstensen’s (2009) work on the role of ideas in institutional development. Carstensen argues that most theories about ideas in politics implicitly conceptualize ideas as relatively stable entities that act as a catalyst for political change in times of crisis. In these theories political change is usually brought on by the full and sudden replacement of old ideas with new ones. This chapter supports Carstensen’s view. It argues that Costa Rica’s post civil war period shows how institutional change was not brought about by a sudden replacement of one paradigm by another after the war. Instead, it was the result of gradual yet constant and incremental changes made by liberal oligarchic administrations (1880-1930s) and Christian democratic administrations (1940-1948) following the *transformist* nature of Costa Rica’s political system. After the war, Costa Rica continued its process of reformist institutional transformation. This process led to the gradual rise of the social democratic hegemony during the late

1950s and beginning of the 1960s. We will now explore how this process of institutional change began during the immediate post civil war period.

End of the Civil War

On the 19th of April 1948, the *Calderonista* President Teodoro Picado (1944-1948) and the representative of the social democratic revolutionaries, priest Benjamin Nuñez, signed the Mexican Embassy Pact ending the 1948 Civil War. Teodoro Picado nominated his second vice-president Santos Leon Herrera as the interim president.³³ Calderon Guardia, Teodoro Picado and Manuel Mora went into exile.³⁴ During this period, Calderon started to plot a counter-revolution from Nicaragua, but neither Picado nor Mora supported his counter-reform attempts in December 1948 and again in December 1955.³⁵

During the days immediately following the peace agreement, the social democratic revolutionary leaders believed that they could retain power for themselves, instead of handing it over to president elect Otilio Ulate (as the rest of the opposition and the Costa Rican population expected). The social democrats wanted to take advantage of their victory to create a social democratic Second Republic. Since they had not been able to garner significant political support during the 1940s for their Second Republic, they sought to impose one through a revolutionary junta. The social democrats sought to justify their decision not to hand over power to president elect Ulate by claiming that Ulate had lost the legitimacy needed to rule because instead of fighting during the Civil War “in defence of Costa Rica’s democracy”, he had been hiding in the Palacio Arzobispal (Vargas Ortega 2010: 233). This

³³ Picado had not accepted the first conditions set by the revolutionaries, which stated that Picado should hand over power to a revolutionary triumvirate Jose Figueres, Alberto Marten, and Gonzalo Facio. Picado categorically objected to this point, as he did not want to break the constitutional order and did not want to hand over power to the social democratic revolutionaries, but rather to the *Ulatista* progressive liberal oligarchs.

³⁴ The social democratic narrative states that these leaders left out of their own will claiming that Calderon Guardia was the last leader to exile his opponents. The social democratic narrative is clearly false.

³⁵ As Rovira (1988) states, the communist movement remained a marginal decentralized force until the 1970s when they reorganized as an anti-imperialist force seeking to block the contract the Costa Rican government was negotiating with ALCOA an American multinational (Rovira 1988: 13).

narrative was widely rejected by other political leaders and the Costa Rican population. The *Diario de Costa Rica* newspaper was filled with open letters to Jose Figueres written by members of the opposition requesting him to hand over power to Otilio Ulate immediately. For example, on the 29th of April 1948 edition of the *Diario de Costa Rica*, J.E. Piza wrote:

You [Figueres] ask us to have faith in you during this period of crisis. I now ask you to GIVE US REASON TO HAVE FAITH IN YOU. Today more than ever the Costa Rica people urgently need to be certain that there will be no further impediments to the full respect of their popular will as expressed during the February 8, 1948 elections. It is your voice the one capable of giving Costa Ricans that hope and that certainty. Go to a radio station and tell the Costa Ricans that the elections that granted victory to Don Otilio Ulate Blanco will be respected in all of its aspects, and the faith you ask us to have in you will be immediately granted to you (Diario de Costa Rica – April 28, 1948 signed by J.E. Piza. Capital letters in original.).

With popular pressure mounting, the social democrats realized that they had to publicly acknowledge Ulate's legitimate claim to the presidency and that they had to show a more conciliatory approach by accepting the terms established by the *Pacto de la Embajada de Mexico*. This pact placed the Vice President of Teodoro Picado, Santos Leon Herrera, as the head of a transitional government. The social democrats initially thought of refusing the transitional government, as they wanted to argue that a revolutionary junta was needed to stabilize the political situation. If the political situation started to stabilize under Leon Herrera's transitional government, it would be harder to justify the need for a revolutionary junta. However, they were forced to accept the transitional government. Three days after Santos Leon Herrera took over power, Figueres wrote in the *Diario de Costa Rica*:

*At the request of the diplomatic corps, our Army has allowed the organization of a provisional government for a few days in order to avoid the war from spreading to San Jose. The press has been misinformed and has wrongly created a sense of ambiguity that does not exist. The same organization who achieved victory during the war will shortly assume total control of the country. This force will ensure a **rapid national reorganization** and a **restoration to normality**. Then it will execute the great plans of **constructing the Second Republic** (Diario de Costa Rica-April 22, 1948).*

Through this newspaper article, the social democrats sought to explain to the

Costa Rican population that the transitional government of Santos Leon Herrera was necessary only to allow the social democrats time to organize their Junta rule. This quote shows the balancing act that the social democrats had to make. On the one hand, they wanted to convince the population that Costa Rica was in a critical turning point requiring a Second Republic, while at the same time they wanted to reassure them that Costa Rica would soon return to its traditional institutional order. During the civil war, only Figueres and his closest advisors knew the end goal of the revolution was to create of a Second Republic (Vargas Ortega 2010: 247). Interviews, biographies and autobiographies of opposition civil war veterans confirm that they were fighting to defend the sanctity of the vote, as Figueres himself had claimed when mobilizing the opposition.

Right after the civil war ended, the social democrats started building their discursive case for the Second Republic by reinterpreting the meaning of the civil war. As Padre Nuñez, one of the leaders of the social democratic revolution, stated in one of his speeches regarding the civil war:

*It was a struggle that had to lead to the **liquidation** of a political system, which had **struck fiercely** against citizens in almost every corner of the country and had shamelessly violated their electoral freedom. But that fight was also a struggle to **liquidate**, an economic system that had exploited its people and robbed them of their legitimate hopes for a better wellbeing. Because this struggle represented the **tormented soul** of Costa Rica, the Revolutionary Movement acquired a mystique and an unstoppable force that, from the beginning, assured it God's favour, the support of the people and the final victory. Jose Figueres, the visionary leader of the National Liberation War, in his "Second Proclamation of Santa Maria de Dota", pointed out that these heroic deeds not only had a civic goal but also a grander goal with a greater historical depth, the struggle for improving the welfare of the greatest number (Speech entitled "Los Molinos de Dios Proclama Patriótica por la Defensa Heroica de la Democracia" delivered by Padre Nuñez on March 6, 1948 by radio.) (My emphasis.)*

The social democrats wanted a complete rupture with the past socio-political and economic order. According to their narrative, it was necessary to "liquidate" the previous political system soiled by electoral fraud and corruption, and the unjust and failed economic development model. They presented Costa Rican society as "a tormented soul" arguing that the "Eight

Year regime” (the Calderon and Picado administrations 1940-1948) had led Costa Rica away from its “exceptionalist” path. Alluding to the key central figure of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, the Costa Rican peasant, Nuñez states:

This struggle is directed against all the errors of a regime that the people had been repudiating for years and that it had now decided to liquidate definitively. In this cause we find the honest and determined soul of Costa Rican peasant who had been humiliated far too long by the oligarchs or the incendiary communists. (Speech delivered by Padre Nuñez on March 6, 1948)

At this point, the social democratic narrative created a political frontier that placed the “oligarchs” and “the incendiary communists” as the opponents. Portraying the “oligarchs” as the *constitutive outside* proved to be a bad strategy as it created animosity amongst influential people, without accomplishing its intended goal of mobilizing the masses. Costa Ricans rejected class based political frontiers. The social democratic narrative presenting Costa Rican society as possessing a “tormented soul” was also not well received by the Costa Rican population.

When the social democrats announced that they would install a Junta Rule in order to found a Second Republic, the liberal oligarchic newspapers started circulating articles stating that Figueres was violating Costa Rica’s democratic tradition. The liberal oligarchic narrative highlighted the incompatibility between the social democratic actions of imposing a military junta rule and the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. To these accusations, Figueres argued in an article written April 23, 1948 in *La Prensa*:

We regret that certain situations imposed by circumstances have created the impression among some citizens that we seek to establish a military dictatorship in Costa Rica. Nothing more alien to the temperament and inclinations of the men who have led the liberation movement. We believe that we interpreted the national feeling when we went to war and now again we are respecting this national feeling by making sure that the qualities of discipline, sacrifice and continued effort remain now that we return to peace... without the contamination of abusive military practices, which are in conflict with the norms, desires and traditions of Costa Ricans (La Prensa - April 23, 1948).

The social democrats soon realized that to convince the Costa Rican population that a Junta rule was necessary, they had to develop a myth that re-interpreted the 1948 civil war. This consisted in portraying the rebels as a liberating force fighting for Costa Rica's democracy. However, the conservative oligarchs developed their own narrative. They portrayed the *Figueristas* actions (starting a civil war and establishing a revolutionary Junta) as incompatible with Costa Rica's democratic tradition. In order to justify the fact that they had started the civil war, the social democrats argued that they acted in self-defence. They argued that the *Calderonistas* had committed an act of war when they arbitrarily annulled the 1948 presidential elections. This act of war had been preceded by eight years of *Calderonista* and communist violations of Costa Rica's democratic tradition - abnormal circumstances, which in turn forced the social democrats to take abnormal measures. The Costa Rican population wanted to return to the normal institutional order as quickly as possible. To this the social democrats responded:

We need to warn the public against the impatience naturally causes by these abnormal situation. The Army has not completed its work. We first need to consolidate the civil and political order that will allow us to return in due time to the institutional order that we all love so much (article on the Diario de Costa Rica newspaper on April 24, 1948).

Figueres feared that the Costa Rican population's demand of a return to institutional order with Otilio Ulate as their president would destroy the social democrat's chances of building a Second Republic. Through open letters written in the *Diario de Costa Rica* newspaper to Figueres during this period, we can see how the members of the opposition were linking Figueres's credibility with his respect for the 1948 elections. For example, Ramon Arroyo Blanco wrote the following open letter in the 29th of April, 1948 edition of *Diario de Costa Rica*:

When you asked us to join you, you said: THE POPULAR WILL OF THE COSTA RICANS HAS ALREADY BEEN EXPRESSED IN THE FEBRUARY ELECTIONS. THAT POPULAR WILL MUST BE RESPECTED. I do not want to believe that you are now seeking to establish a military or civil dictatorship (Diario de Costa Rica – April 29, 1948). (Capital letters in the original.)

Ramon Arroyo Blanco went on to say that establishing a “military or civil dictatorship” could not be farther from what they had fought for. He recounted his brother’s death in the battlefield and declared that his brother had not sacrificed his life to substitute one dictatorship for another.

As tensions mounted between the *Figueristas* and the *Ulatista* progressive liberals over who had the legitimate right to rule, Professor Emma Gamboa, don Luis Uribe, don Edmundo Montealegre and doctor Fernando Pinto organized a committee to look for a solution. On April 26, 1948 they sent a proposal to Otilio Ulate and Jose Figueres. Their proposal confirmed the right of the social democrats to rule through a revolutionary Junta, but reduced the functions of the Junta to the confirmation of Ulate’s right to become president, the dissolution of the Congress, and the calling for the election of a new Constitutional Assembly to amend the 1871 Constitution. After doing this, the Junta would hand power over to Ulate. Figueres would then become Head of the Cabinet and would be allowed to choose his own portfolio. Under an Ulate administration, the social democrats would work with Ulate to pass their proposed policies.

Clearly this outcome was not acceptable to the social democrats, as it would guarantee a return to the liberal oligarchic order. While Ulate responded favourably to the proposal, Figueres did not. Emma Gamboa and other political leaders organized a demonstration to force the revolutionaries to hand power directly to Ulate. Figueres instead met with Ulate to find a compromise solution. On April 30, 1948, Figueres and Ulate signed the Ulate - Figueres Pact that stated that the social democrats would rule through a revolutionary Junta for 18 months and could then request a six-month extension to the Constitutional Assembly. The Junta would rule without a Congress for the first six months and could issue decrees. The judicial system would remain intact in order to act as a check to the Junta’s authority. After the first six months of Junta Rule, elections would be held for a Constitutional Assembly that would vote on either amending the 1871 constitution or creating a new constitution based on social democratic principles. Once the Junta rule period was over, Otilio Ulate would start his

administration, which would last 4 years (Longley 1997: 87). The social democrats sought to use the Ulate-Figueres Pact to legitimatise their rule, creating the following narrative around this pact:

Public opinion was agitated. This was a very dangerous time because the clashes between us benefitted the defeated. As saviour of the time, emerged the figure of a young bright, wealthy businessman, who excelled in his culture and patriotism: the Lawyer Jaime Solera Bennett. Jaime suggested that Ulate and I meet at his house so that, with the interests of the republic in our hearts, we would reach an agreement. On April 30th, 1948, don Otilio and I stayed late at night pondering until the early morning of May the 1st for what could be the best solution. While outsiders were trying to create divisions between us, inside Jaime's house we were seeking a solution assisted by the patriotism of Jaime, the civility of Ulate and my devotion to our Fatherland. At dawn, on the first of May 1948, eighty-two years after the surrender of William Walker and inspired by the greatness of Juan Rafael Mora, we reached an agreement. Actually in my spirit there never existed a disagreement with Otilio. I never wanted to stay in power as have other Latin American victorious revolutionary leaders (Act N 2 of Constitutional Assembly January 16, 1949).

This narrative sought to place the opponents of the social democrats as the ones disrupting Costa Rica's peace by creating intrigues between Figueres and Ulate. The narrative stated that, on the contrary, Figueres and Ulate were both working together to find the best solution for the country. It sought to connect the Ulate-Figueres Pact with the defeat of William Walker during the 1856 National War alluding to a key event in Costa Rica's history. From that day forward, Figueres denied the fact that he had originally intended to take over power disregarding Ulate's right to rule. Since this Pact was the only thing that could legitimatise the social democratic junta rule in the eyes of the Costa Rican population, the social democratic narrative framed this pact the following way:

The pact Ulate-Figueres thus has enormous legal and ethical authority. It constitutes the cornerstone of the reconstruction of our democracy, hence the irrefutable virtues of the statements included in this document. This Pact must be taken as an indivisible whole, which reflects the will and the honour of those who belong to the Costa Rican community (Act N 2 of Constitutional Assembly January 16, 1949).

The social democratic narrative argued that the Ulate-Figueres Pact represented the will of the majority of Costa Ricans as witnessed by the

popular support of Ulate during the 1948 presidential elections and the popular support received by the Figuerista revolutionaries during the civil war. Acknowledging the widespread support that Ulate had amongst the Costa Rican population, their narrative sought to create equivalential chains between Ulate and Figueres, often referring to these two political figures as inseparable heroes in a common struggle to defend Costa Rica's democracy, despite the fact that Ulate and Figueres did not share the same vision of Costa Rica's institutional development. Figueres then sought to legitimize the Junta by asking Ulate to form part of it, which Ulate refused. Ulate also did not allow anyone belonging to his party to join the Junta so his party would not be associated with any of the decrees passed by the Junta.

The conservative oligarchs interpreted the Ulate-Figueres Pact quite differently. They argued that through this pact Otilio Ulate was helping the social democrats violate Costa Rica's national sovereignty. According to the liberal oligarchic narrative, there was no legitimate justification for a revolutionary Junta during this particular historical period. One of the main conservative oligarchs Arturo Volio Jimenez stated:

I acknowledge the wisdom, the political tact, the spirit of sacrifice that guided Mr. Ulate to accept this compromise, but I do not understand who gave Ulate the right to compromise the country's national sovereignty for 18 months, a decision that should have been taken only by the Costa Rican population. Fortunately, Ulate had the wisdom to add to the Pact the obligation that after six months the Junta would convene elections to choose representatives for the Constitutional Assembly. This was the lighthouse, the light of hope for the nation, since we all know that once a Constitutional Assembly meets the country regains its national sovereignty since it represents the will of the people allowing the opinions of different sectors of the public opinion to be expressed (Act N 25 of the Constitutional Assembly on February 28, 1949).

Despite the opposition by the conservatives, the progressive liberals reluctantly accepted the Ulate-Figueres Pact and the Junta Rule. Everyone wanted to end this period of uncertainty and they realized Figueres was not going to back down.

Junta Period

On the 8th of May 1948, the self-proclaimed *Junta for the Foundation of the Second Republic* had its opening session. During the first six months, the Junta ruled without legislative oversight. The Junta was composed of eleven men coming from a variety of professions including business, law and education. The first decrees they issued were meant to weaken their opposition. The social democrats banned the communist party, closed the communist newspaper *Trabajo*, started shutting down communist labour unions, exiled *Calderonista* and communist party leaders, and created the *Tribunal de Sanciones* to investigate cases of alleged corruption and abuse of power by *Calderonista* government officials during the Calderon and Picado administrations (1940-1948) (Rodriguez Vega 2006: 248).

On June 19, 1948, six weeks after taking power, Jose Figueres announced the nationalization of the banking system. The Junta justified the Decree 70 arguing:

Considering that within the organization of a modern economy, all agricultural, industrial and commercial activities depend on bank credit, the allocation of which determines the progress or stagnation of the country. 2) That an economic activity of such importance should be in public hands since it represents, by its own nature, a public function. 3) That the private banks lend not only the shareholder's own funds but also mobilizes the country's savings, in the form of deposits from the public. 4) That it is unfair that the high profits of the bank, guaranteed by the state and the social order, be earned by their shareholders, who represent a minimal portion of the capital mobilized. Rather, these profits should become national savings and their investment should be directed by the state. Therefore, the Junta decrees: Private banking is nationalized. Only the state will be allowed to mobilize, through its own institutions, the deposits of the public. 2) The shares of the Banco de Costa Rica, Banco Anglo Costarricense and the Banco Credito Agricola de Cartago are expropriated for reasons of public convenience. The state, through its Ministry of Economy, will take the banks over immediately. The form and condition for payment of the shares will be regulated afterwards. 3) The Ministry of Economics will provisionally keep the present form of organization of the banks and it will appoint their boards of directors and managers (quoted by Gonzalez Vega and Mesalles 1988:2).

The Junta sought to present the nationalization of the banking system as a "technical necessity" in order to develop Costa Rica's economy. They argued that the banking nationalization was needed in order to do the following: 1)

diversify the country's productive structure by selectively allocating funds to priority sectors (which traditionally did not receive credit from the private banks because the private banks preferred to invest in more secure and profitable enterprises such as coffee exports and import of fine goods such as whisky); 2) to increase access to subsidized credit for large segments of population including new entrepreneurs leading to the "democratization of credit"; and 3) to reduce the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the conservative liberal oligarchs and thus make Costa Rica's society more egalitarian as the "exceptionalist" myth claimed. They stated that the "state-owned banks will serve the interests of all sectors of the economy, the weak and the powerful, without distinction due to wealth, position or influence" and that "in the hands of the state, banking will always be managed with the aim of maximizing social welfare" (Gonzalez Vega and Mesales 1988:4). Therefore, they sought to justify the nationalization of the banking system through values in keeping with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary.

This announcement shocked the Costa Rican population - particularly the conservative oligarchs, who exercised a monopoly over the banking system. They perceived this move as an attempt to take economic and political power away from them and to modify the country's economic policies and productive structure to the advantage of their adversaries. They started an intense anti-Junta campaign through *La Nacion* newspaper arguing that the social democratic *Figueristas* were actually Soviet communists in disguise. To these accusations, the social democrats responded:

A policy that is meant to foment precisely that which communism combats, which is private property, cannot possibly be Soviet. The nationalization of credit is neither communist, nor does it combat private property in the best sense of private property, nor does it hinder private initiative but rather incentivizes it. By nationalizing credit, private investments will gradually be incentivized so that whomever wants to produce something will have secure credit at low interests rates (quoted by Rovira Mas 2000: 43).

The conservatives never accepted this argument. However, the progressive liberals including Ulate argued that although the measure had been passed in a drastic undemocratic way (which they did not approve), the nationalization

of the banking system could potentially be beneficial to the country's economy. They wanted to make sure that the bank shareholders would be adequately compensated and that the banking system would be professionally managed.

Another Junta policy that outraged the conservatives was the 10% tax on domestic and private capital valued at more than 50,000 colones (equivalent of 9,000 US\$ at the time). The Junta justified this tax as the only way of raising the revenue necessary to rebuild the public infrastructure destroyed during the war and to re-establish basic social services. The Junta instituted the Office of Direct Taxation to oversee tax collection, as previous taxes had never been properly collected. They also nationalized electric companies and created the *Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad* declaring it an autonomous institution. They also declared the *Consejo Nacional de Produccion* and the *Oficina del Café* (which was previously named the *Instituto de Defensa del Café*) autonomous institutions (Rovira 2000: 47-53). They argued that these crucial institutions had to be independent from the executive to prevent practices of nepotism, corruption and administrative mismanagement that had been common during the Calderon Guardia and Picado administrations. Under the aura of "non-political technical expertise" they sought to impose their permanent influence of Costa Rica's institutional development through placing *Figueristas* in key administrative positions in these autonomous institutions and ensuring that future administrations would not be able to remove them or dictate their policies.

During the first six months, the Junta increased Costa Rica's state bureaucracy significantly. The Junta also raised the salaries of the public employees and established a minimum wage for coffee and sugar workers (which had not been done during Calderon Guardia's period because of the opposition of the oligarchy). The conservatives were emphatically protesting all of these decrees (Rodriguez Vega, 2006: 249). Their narrative argued that:

If people had been told that the revolution was to establish the Second Republic, to nationalize the banking system, and to impose the 10% tax on capital, no one would have fought. The people fought for Otilio Ulate to become President, and to defend the sanctity of suffrage. The revolution took place in Costa Rica to restore constitutional normality (Conservative delegate Otton Acosta during the Constitutional Assembly debate held on January 16, 1949).

The Junta also renegotiated the United Fruit Company's tax contract, increasing state revenue up to 1.5 million dollars a year. The social democratic policies initially worried the United States ambassador to Costa Rica, Nathaniel Davis, as well as the State Department. However, the social democrats were very tactful and conciliatory when negotiating with the United Fruit Company. As Longely (1997) argues, the social democrats were very astute in offsetting much of the criticism of economic nationalism raised by the liberals by portraying themselves as staunch anti-communists and presenting themselves "as an alternative to the authoritarian governments on whom the US relied to maintain order in Latin America" (Longely 1997:92). Their success in this endeavour can be verified by the report written by the United States Embassy in Costa Rica entitled "the First Hundred Days of the Junta" which equated the social democratic reforms to the *New Deal* and the *Fair Deal*.

The United States' main concern with the Junta became the assistance that the Junta was giving to the Caribbean Legion. As discussed in the previous chapter, when Figueres signed the Caribbean Pact in 1942 he swore that once the Costa Rican revolution had succeeded, the Costa Rican revolutionaries would assist the other members of the Caribbean Legion in overthrowing oppressive dictatorships throughout Latin America starting with the *Somozista* dictatorship. During the Junta period, Figueres was fulfilling his obligations by providing assistance to other exiles. The Junta hosted their troops in the artillery barracks and their leaders in their homes around the capital. An *Army of National Liberation of Nicaragua* under the command of Figueres and his friend, Rosendo Arguello Jr, was set up using the money and arms provided by the Guatemalan president Arevalo. According to

Longley (1997), no direct confrontation occurred because Somoza's spies managed to infiltrate this association through bribes. In July 1948, the movement suffered a set back when Nicaraguan officials captured an important leader of the exiles, Edelberto Torres. In the meanwhile the United States officials continued to pressure Figueres and the Caribbean Legion members to stop their plots, fearing that the communists would exploit any regime changes in Latin American countries. Many people in the US State Department started to see Figueres as a threat to regional stability. However, Figueres managed to reassure the United States Ambassador to Costa Rica and other officials in Washington that he was a firmly pro-American and presented his anti-communist credentials - his banning of the communist party, closing down of the communist press and shutting down communist labour unions. By the end of September 1948, the social democratic diplomats promised Washington that no Caribbean Legion activities would originate from their country (Longley 1997: 94).

It was during this period that Figueres decided to take the unprecedented step of abolishing the military. This was meant to show the United States Figueres' commitment to regional peace. It also allowed Figueres to portray himself nationally and internationally as the true defender of Costa Rica's exceptional peaceful tradition and to counter the narrative created by his opponents that portrayed Figueres as a dictator who was violating Costa Rica's "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. The timing of this announcement was also crucial. Figueres announced the abolition of the military a week before the elections for the Constitutional Assembly. On the 1st of December 1948, Figueres conducted a public ceremony full of symbolism. Figueres broke a wall of the military barracks in the *Cuartel Bellavista* with a mallet symbolizing the end of Costa Rica's military spirit. In order to allude to the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary that argued that Costa Rica had more teachers than soldiers, Figueres gave the *Cuartel Bellavista* building to the Costa Rican Ministry of Culture for the creation of the *National Museum of Costa Rica*. This truly exceptional act allowed the social democrats to start the process of constructing the image of Jose Figueres as an exceptional figure. In the

December 3rd, 1948 edition of the *Diario de Costa Rica*, Luis Dobles Segreda wrote an article entitled “Figueres is a unique figure in America”. He stated:

While Latin American dictators rely on the army to combat civilian enemies, as in Venezuela and Peru, in our little democracy a man, the product of an armed revolution, dissolved the Army... He not only delivered the military headquarters to the Ministry of Culture to house a museum, he also transferred the entirety of the war budget to the Ministry of Education. If our country's continuous source of pride is to have more teachers than soldiers, he reinforces this by making the unproductive money previously used to buy weapons become productive by using it to improve the education and the culture of the Costa Rican population (Diario de Costa Rica - December 3, 1948).

This social democratic intellectual alluded to the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary contrasting Costa Rica to other Latin America countries. With the abolition of the military Costa Rica became truly an exceptional country, and Figueres became the exceptional figure responsible for making it happen. Now the previous military budget would be spent on improving Costa Rica's educational system and providing better social services to the people in keeping with Costa Rica's tradition of prioritizing education and social services over military spending. In the same article, Dobles Segreda states:

*It requires a deep loyalty to the republican principles to dissolve an army that could have been his source of strength, his unconditional support for any policies he wanted to pass and a docile executor of his orders. [...] It requires a strong and courageous commitment to defending this **exemplary democracy** [...]. The spirit of good has triumphed. **Don Jose Figueres, who was the first to fight for it, is now the first to guarantee its peace** (Diario de Costa Rica December 3, 1948) (my emphasis).*

As seen in this quote, the social democratic narrative sought to prove that the social democrats were the true defenders of Costa Rica's “exemplary democracy”. It was an attempt to close a deep contradiction within the *Figuerista* narrative. How could a man who had launched an armed insurrection be perceived as a legitimate defender of Costa Rica's exceptionalist tradition? By abolishing the military, the social democrats provided an answer.

The conservative oligarchic narrative tried to downplay this act arguing that Costa Rican never had a significant military. The social democrats responded to this narrative in the December 2, 1948 edition of the *Diario de Costa Rica* stating:

*They say that we have never had a quantitative or qualitatively important army and consequently that the ceremonies conducted only had symbolic splendour. For us, these acts have an enormous importance because they contribute in a decisive manner to strengthen the existence of civility in Costa Rica [...]. Its importance lies also in the fact that it is a measure done in **absolute coordination with the national sentiment**, which is deeply anti-militaristic and that hopes to achieve a **dignified place amongst the civilized nations**, not because of the nation's general, their barracks and military parades but for the nation's moral and spiritual values, for its schools and its **love of education, order, peace and labour** (Diario de Costa Rica - December 2 1948) (My emphasis).*

This quote encompasses all the elements of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary (the image of Costa Rica as a peaceful, democratic, consensual nation, which cherishes education, work, and order and, because of this, has a special place amongst the greatest nations). Drastically shifting strategies, the very instigators of the socio-political crisis of the 1940s who had formed shock brigades committing terrorist acts, and had launched the 1948 civil war with the aid of Latin American political exiles were now portraying themselves as peace-loving political leaders defending Costa Rica's exceptional democratic tradition. According to the social democrats, the proof of this claim lied in the fact that Figueres had abolished the military.

As various Costa Rican historians have pointed out, the abolition of the army also served a strategic military purpose as the military was composed of *Calderonista* supporters. Figueres feared that Calderon Guardia could mobilize them for a counter-revolution. The abolition of the army was not objected to by any sector of society (during the 101st Constitutional Assembly session, the article declaring the abolition of the military was welcomed by all the delegates). While Figueres disbanded the Costa Rican army, he created the National Guard composed of former social democratic revolutionaries and then built up his own military supplies. According to people working for Figueres on his farm *La Lucha*, Figueres kept the weapons that the

Guatemalan president Arevalo had lent to the Costa Rican revolutionaries hidden on his farm. When Arevalo had demanded his weapons back after the civil war was over, Figueres offered to pay \$340,000 for them (Longley 1997: 93). Arevalo refused the money, demanding the weapons. Figueres kept the weapons on his farm until 1979, when he gave them to the Nicaraguan Sandinista revolutionaries to help them overthrow the Somoza dynasty.

Constitutional Assembly Elections (December 8th, 1948)

Eight days after the abolition of the military, the Costa Ricans held the Constitutional Assembly elections. The *Partido Social Democrata* was humiliatingly defeated by the *Ulatista* progressive liberal party *Union Nacional*, which won 34 out of the 45 constitutional assembly seats, receiving 72.4% of the popular vote. The conservative party, the *Partido Constitucional*, secured 6 seats with 10.8% of the popular vote, while the social democrats obtained only 4 seats receiving only 7.6% of the popular vote. The *Confederacion Nacional* party won 2.9% of the votes securing 1 seat. (It must be noted that these elections had a very low turnout rate as the *Calderonistas* boycotted them and the Communist Party were banned from participating). Another three political parties participated - the Civic Action, the Popular Republican Movement and the Liberal Party but they received less than 1.0% of the popular votes and thus were not represented in the Congressional Assembly (Castro Vega 2007:90).

The four social democratic Constitutional Assembly delegates were former leaders of the *Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales* - Rodrigo Facio, Fernando Fournier Acuna, Rogelio Valverde Vega and the young leader of the Catholic labour union *Rerum Novarum*, Luis Alberto Monge (future president of Costa Rica 1982-1986 who was handpicked by Padre Benjamin Nunez).

The social democratic narrative sought to find a positive spin on their electoral defeat. They argued that although the social democratic candidates had been defeated, the Junta and Costa Rica's democracy had won because no

electoral fraud had been committed. It was indeed very unusual in a Latin American country for a victorious revolutionary group to allow itself to be defeated in an election that would determine the constitutional fate of the nation.

Calderon's Failed Counter-Revolution (December 10th, 1948)

Knowing that Figueres had abolished the military, and learning about the *Partido Social Democrata's* humiliating defeat in the Constitutional Assembly elections, Calderon decided to launch a counter-revolution. On December 10th, 1948 Calderon invaded the province of Guanacaste with the support of the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza (Longley 1997:92). The *Calderonista* uprising floundered as no mass uprising occurred as Calderon had hoped. The *Ulatistas* set aside their differences with the social democratic Junta and demonstrated a united front. Even the communists refused to assist Calderon because of Somoza's involvement in the counter-revolution. The United States pressured Somoza, Calderon Guardia and Figueres to stop the conflict. The counter-revolution was quickly over. Following this, the real battle for the *Figueristas* began – their battle to install a Second Republic.

Constitutional Assembly (January 1949 – November 1949)

On the 15th of January 1949, the Constitutional Assembly held its first session.³⁶ The day after, Figueres made the following introductory speech attempting once again to convince the other political leaders that Costa Rica was currently facing a critical turning point that required a “paradigmatic shift” (Hay 2001) in its institutional development:

With the triumph of the Liberation Army, which was the triumph of a people struggling against a tyranny, the constitutional order was definitively

³⁶ Jose Maria Vargas Pacheco became the president of the Constitutional Assembly. He was considered a neutral and balanced leader in keeping with the Costa Rican consensual political tradition. He won the approval of all political parties and the Costa Rican press by allowing the different political leaders to express their quite radically contradictory views without allowing these tensions to disrupt the Constitutional Assembly. (Castro Vega 2007:160) This is also a testament of how the Costa Rican exceptionalist myth influenced the perception of interests and shaped the behavior of the different political actors. Despite their wide disagreements, all political parties and all political leaders sought to find consensual solutions.

broken. This constitutional order had been present only in appearance under the ousted regime. There was a legal vacuum [...] It was a simple fact that the popular sovereignty had no positive legal institutions through which to exercise that sovereignty in the form of a national government. [...] Under these circumstances the Junta entrusted the delicate task of preparing the draft constitution for the Second Republic to technical commission composed of men of recognized morality and social and legal competence (Act N 2 Constitutional Assembly January 16, 1949).

Thus, the social democratic narrative argued that the war broke the constitutional order that had been maintained only in appearance by the Calderon and Picado administrations. Due to this legal institutional void, the Junta had entrusted the task of writing a new constitution to a so-called technical committee. They argued that, after consulting with multiple stakeholders, this technical committee had developed a Constitutional Proposal that reflected the changing aspirations of the Costa Rican population as well as the existing international ideational environment. The social democrats argued that their constitutional proposal was ideologically neutral, as a technical committee had written it after an objective analysis of Costa Rica's situation. This concept of "technical" criteria was once again used by the social democrats to argue that, unlike under the Calderon and Picado administrations, the Junta administration was basing its decisions on "objective" studies as opposed to purely political and demagogic decisions. Within this technocratic shift there was also a generational shift away from the older liberal administrators towards the social democratic administrators formerly belonging to the *Centro*.

Regarding the Social Democratic Constitutional Proposal, Figueres further stated in his speech delivered on the 16th of January 1949 to the Constitutional Assembly:

Interpreting the legal and social aspiration of the Costa Rican population, we decided to replace the 1871 Constitution with its many reforms, by a new one, which could combine the essential principles of our political life with the modern intellectual thoughts that have been gradually accepted by other civilized nations [...] To provide the country with a Constitution that addresses a series of concerns that have been called "revolutionary" yet which are nothing more than a reflection of ideas of human progress - this has been the real work behind the founding a Second Republic. The common aspirations of

the people of Costa Rica of individual freedom, social justice and economic wellbeing for all, have to become crystallized in a national legal platform (Act N 2 of Constitutional Assembly January 16, 1949).

The social democrats insisted that their new constitution was not revolutionary as their opponents claimed. It simply reflected the progress made by other civilized nations to solve the social question. This new constitution would allow Costa Ricans to finally fulfil the dream of achieving *social justice* and *economic prosperity for all*, which had remained only an aspiration under the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order.

They argued that simply amending the 1871 Constitution - as the conservative and progressive liberals oligarchs wanted - would produce numerous internal contradictions. The constitution had to be a harmonious document in which every article reflected the underlying values that inspired the entire document. The conservatives and the liberals precisely wanted to avoid the inclusion of social democratic principles, having no desire to create a social democratic Second Republic. As the conservative delegate Zeledon Brenes stated on the 28th of January 1949:

I do not understand why there is so much talk about a Second Republic, when we should go back to the first Republic of our forefathers, who gave this nation its lustre and its shine abroad. As I have said in the press, we should endeavour to return to the first Republic, to our democratic tradition (Act 14 of Constitutional Assembly on January 28, 1949).

The Constitutional Assembly voted for the following procedure to decide on whether to use the social democratic Constitutional Project as a constitutional draft or to amend the 1871 Constitution. A sub-committee would be elected to present their recommendation to the Constitutional Assembly. This sub-committee would be composed of three liberals from the *Union Nacional*, one social democratic delegate of the *Partido Social Demócrata*, and one delegate of the *Partido Constitucional* to reflect the proportions of the Constitutional Assembly. The members would not be selected by their parties, but rather would be elected by the whole Constitutional Assembly. On the 1st of February, the Constitutional Assembly voted for the *Comision Dictaminadora*

sobre el Proyecto de Constitucion Politica. The composition was the following: *Partido Union Nacional*: Everardo Gomez, Luis Felipe Gonzalez Flores, and Miguel Brenes Gutierrez; *Partido Social Democrata*: Rogelio Valverde; and *Partido Constitucional*: Otton Acosta.

While this sub-committee worked on their recommendation, the Constitutional Assembly deliberated on the six-month extension of the Junta rule. On February 3rd, 1949, the Constitutional Assembly received a letter from Ulate arguing that the Constitutional Assembly should grant the extension to the Junta. In his letter Ulate states:

After all, before the outbreak of revolution of March last year I had proposed, that a citizen of relevant merits and who inspired confidence in all political groups should take over power for a term that would not exceed two years. During this period a Constitutional Assembly would be elected. I had proposed this to ensure the normal development of the political process and to prevent the civil war. If I came up with this proposal before the civil war, how can I now deny the right to exercise power under the same conditions and for the same period of time to another Costa Rican who toppled the oppressive regime, who has respected the sanctity of suffrage during the February 1948 elections and has convened this Constituent Assembly? I sometimes have discrepancies with the Junta. I have occasionally protested publicly against certain decrees or attitudes of some of its members. In the future, I may have other differences of opinion. These disagreements are inevitable and sometimes necessary in free societies. But I cannot take away my vote of confidence to a group of men who fought for the country and who have showed their service to it through their Junta rule (Letter from Otilio Ulate read to the Constitutional Assembly on February 3, 1949).

It is interesting to note that the rationale used by Ulate to ask the Constitutional Assembly to extend the Junta rule was not based on his approval for the Junta administration. Instead, Ulate argued that if he had been willing to grant the right to rule to a consensual candidate for a two-year period right after the contested 1948 Presidential elections to try to avoid the Civil War, he did not see the harm in allowing the Junta to rule for the equivalent amount of time. He presented the extension of the Junta rule as a practice in keeping with the consensual Costa Rican political tradition. Ulate was encouraging the Constitutional Assembly to grant the Junta a six-month extension to avoid further conflict with the social democrats.

This letter was not well received by the delegates. They argued emphatically that this act was an undue intromission by Ulate in the deliberations of the Constitutional Assembly. For several days after, the Constitutional Assembly debated the wisdom of granting the Junta the six-month extension now that a democratically elected Constitutional Assembly was in session. The conservative delegates Acosta, Arroyo and Gamboa ferociously attacked the Junta rule questioning the legitimacy of its very existence. In turn, the social democratic Facio Brenes mounted a defence to justify the legitimacy of the Junta rule. The debates centred on the meaning of the “revolution”. The conservatives argued that a distinction had to be made between an insurrection against a corrupt government and a revolution to overthrow a political system. According to Jimenez Ortiz’s constitutional assembly speech delivered the 22nd of February 1949:

Revolution from a political standpoint is an uprising against a government that has been unfaithful to the will of the people, i.e. that has deviated from the Constitutional rules. From a historical and social perspective, a revolution is a rupture of a legal order before the installation of a new order, revolutionizing the government structure and changing not only the political but also the social organization. Such was the case of the French Revolution, which was fought not just against a tyrannical government but also against a series of social injustice and against a form of organization and government that was considered inconvenient. But our revolution was not made in that regard. We were led or rather we went to the revolution to fight against the vices of a government that was disregarding the laws and cheating the system of government, but not against the system itself. That is why the Junta does not have the power to transform the financial, economic and political organization of the country (Act N 21 of Constitutional Assembly debate on February 22, 1949).

The vast majority of the Constitutional Assembly delegates agreed with Jimenez Ortiz’ interpretation of the Costa Rican revolution and his assessment that a Second Republic was not necessary. The liberals agreed, arguing that reformist policies could be pursued within the existing liberal oligarchic order. After several days of intense debate, the Constitutional Assembly agreed to grant the Junta the six-month extension but under the condition that the Junta would consult with the Constitutional Assembly before passing any further decrees. A small delegation was chosen to see if Figueres would agree to this. On the 7th of March 1949 on the 30th Session of

the Constitutional Assembly, the delegates who met with Figueres offered this summary of the meeting:

The commission found that Figueres had the strongest desire to maintain and strengthen the harmony between the Junta and the Assembly, and [...] to find a compromise solution, acceptable to all parties involved [...] Figueres stressed that he had no difficulty in accepting that the Assembly review the laws of paramount importance for the country, but that the Junta should determine which decrees constitute issues of "primary importance", as the Assembly could not possibly engage in a review of all the decrees issued by the Junta, as this would mean the transformation in its mandate. (Act N 30 of Constitutional Assembly on March 7 1949).

This shows how Figueres sought to appear consensual while still trying to retain control over which issues the Constitutional Assembly could debate. He carefully worded his reply to appear conciliatory to the members of the Constitutional Assembly who wrote daily articles in *La Nacion* attacking the Junta. The Constitutional delegates accepted this compromise solution in order to move forward with the most pressing task at hand - deciding whether to amend the 1871 Constitution or to adopt the 1949 social democratic constitutional proposal as the negotiating draft.

In the 38th Session of the Constitutional Assembly, the *Comision Especial encargada de dictaminar sobre el Proyecto de Constitucion Politica* had to present their recommendation to the Constitutional Assembly. Since the social democratic delegate could not agree with the recommendation of the majority, the delegates decided to write two separate statements entitled "The recommendation of the majority" and "The recommendation of the minority". The recommendation of the majority composed of Luis Felipe Gonzalez, Miguel Brenes Gutierrez and Oton Acosta stated:

*The project under study (Social Democratic proposal)..contains **extreme theories** that are **not, in our opinion, the expression of national sentiment**, nor do they represent the will of the majority of Costa Ricans whose will must be respected by this Assembly in the most faithful possible way. Therefore, we cannot form a judgment favourable to the project under study, as it is **alien to our Costa Rican traditions...***

*So if we want to encourage the country's to **return to a state of complete normality**, giving our national family the **harmony and concord** that it needs, thus fostering the rule of **tranquillity and peace**, we advise to*

restore the total force of the 1871 Constitution, and take the time to improve those aspects in which there is a consensus adding these reforms as amendment to the prestigious 1871 Constitutions, and writing these reforms in harmony with this Constitution (Act N 38 of the Constitutional Assembly on February 16, 1949).

Gonzalez, Brenes and Acosta further compared the 1871 Costa Rican Constitution with the United States Constitution, arguing that its flexibility had allowed it to make as many necessary amendments as the nation had seen fit. They argued that it was not possible to state that the 1871 Constitution or the United States Constitution had blocked the material progress of the two countries or had hindered their positive institutional development. They therefore suggested to the Constitutional Assembly the following:

We propose a Constituent Assembly to declare the basis of its deliberations the Constitution promulgated on December 7, 1871, with all amendments and incorporate by way of amendment, those reforms to be introduced formally and have the acceptance of this Assembly (Act 38 of Constitutional Assembly on February 16, 1949).

The statement by the minority faction of the Commission composed by Rogelio Valverde and Everardo Gomez³⁷ stated the following:

We believe that the social democratic constitutional project has not deviated in spirit from the 1871 Constitution, which, for over seventy years has governed our political life, but rather has limited itself to making the modifications looking at the Costa Rican's daily reality has taught us are necessary as well as those that are in accordance with the new ideological currents (Act 38 of Constitutional Assembly on February 16, 1949).

It is interesting to see how these delegates now sought to present the social democratic Constitutional Proposal as in keeping with the 1871 Constitution when Figueres had previously argued that Costa Rica had to start with a “clean slate”. These delegates sought to show how the chapters on individual rights and political rights only expanded and made more precise the vague concepts in the 1871 Constitution. The chapters on the judicial, the legislative and the executive only sought to rebalance the power of the executive and

³⁷ Although Everardo Gomez belonged to the progressive liberal party, he sided with the social democrats.

ensure that past practices of corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement would be averted. They then stated that:

An innovation of the social democratic project, at least in the form it is currently presented, is the chapter on the state's involvement in the economy. However, this actually establishes norms that the country has been already applying, giving them only constitutional support. [...] In general terms, it enables the state to direct its policies in a humanitarian sense. [...] The future laws will be responsible for giving concrete expression to these aspirations [...](Act 38 of Constitutional Assembly on February 16, 1949).

Therefore, these delegates sought to present the social democratic proposal's most controversial chapter – the one proposing an interventionist state in the economic sector, as a continuation of previous policies during the liberal oligarchic period. Although it was true that the state had been intervening more in the economy during the World Wars, this did not mean that the Costa Rican population was willing to grant the state control over the economy. (In fact, this whole section of the social democratic proposal was categorically rejected during the congressional sessions dealing with it.) These delegates further stated:

The chapter on "Labour rights" condenses the principles that have inspired our social legislation, as well as the commitments we have made by signing international conventions (Act 38 of Constitutional Assembly on February 16, 1949).

The social democratic delegates stated that their proposal on social legislation did not depart from the amendments passed under the Calderon administration. It only expanded these principles and gave them the institutional backing necessary to apply them fully. It is interesting to note that during the congressional session when they discussed this chapter, the social democratic delegates proposed a motion that the existing chapter should be voted as a whole with no individual amendments because they feared that the conservative delegates might use this opportunity to undo much of the legislation. Ironically, the social democrats were now defending Calderon's reforms.

The social democratic motion on voting for the whole chapter was rejected. Each article was analysed separately. Contrary to the social democrats' fears, the social legislation was not changed drastically by the Constitutional Assembly - despite attempts made by the conservative delegates Montealegre and Trejos. This shows that the social legislation passed by Calderon was not the major source of opposition to the *Caldero-comunista* regime as some scholars have argued.

During the following congressional assembly sessions, Baudrit Solera, Gonzalez Flores, and Esquivel Fernandez, the progressive liberal delegates, expressed their support for the view of the majority. On March 30th, 1949 on the 45th session Esquivel Fernandez argues:

*Those of us who long for Costa Rica to continue living their traditional existence of **peace, freedom and democracy**, those who **reject exotic experiments**, those of us who think we should not change certain fundamental concepts of the Costa Rican political ideology, support the Majority recommendation, because this view represents a defined ideological tendency, a respect for Costa Rican norms, that we think must endure. More than the letter of the Constitution of 1871, Costa Rican want to maintain the spirit of it (Act N 45 of the Congressional Assembly on March 30, 1949).*

The conservatives then accused the social democrats of being inconsistent. On one hand, they argued that it was necessary to have a new constitution, while at the same time they argued that their constitutional proposal incorporated almost all the chapters of the 1871 constitution. During the 47th session of the Constitutional Assembly, the social democratic delegate Fernando Fournier responded to these accusations:

Delegate Esquivel wants to confuse us saying that we have stated that the Constitution of 71 is bad and in the same breath we continue to claim that almost all of its provisions are included in the project. We are not contradicting ourselves. Both are true. The problem with the old Constitution is its poor distribution, which we try to correct as well as its grammatical errors. Most importantly, we try to correct its serious omissions. The social democratic project addresses these omissions by adding some chapters (Act N 47 of the Constitutional Assembly on April 4, 1949).

This shows the extremely hard balancing act that the social democrats had to do to claim that there was continuity between their project and the 1871 Constitution, while at the same time arguing for the urgency of adopting a new constitution based on social democratic principles. One of the best speeches by the social democrats explaining how elements of continuity coexisted with elements of change in the social democratic project was the one given by Rodrigo Facio on April 6th, 1949:

*It has argued that the social democratic project departs from the old traditions of Costa Rica, but no one, neither the Majority recommendation nor the various delegates who continuously repeat this argument, have explained which traditions they are referring to. I believe there are two kinds of traditions; those that are valuable and those that have proven to be dangerous. To the first set of traditions belong the values **of political freedom, Catholicism, religious tolerance, respect and promotion of small properties, individual liberty, respect for rule of law, the sense of equality and civility, and promotion of a peaceful life. The project does not conflict with any of these valuable principles that form the Costa Rican tradition. [...]** You could say that within this classification of our traditions we have been left out, **individualism**, one of the constants of our character, but no one can deny that **this closed individualism, has been harmful**, and this fact has opened the way for the notion of **collectivism** to increase in our society.. The Project **hosts the best national traditions; it solidifies them and strengthens them**. It also incorporates, as a mere option a trend towards state interventionism that the country has been testing for several years, by enacting frankly interventionist laws such as creation of State Banks, controlling the value of the currency, creating a national insurance company, the Labour Code, Social Security etc. This project however, **reacts against traditional vices that have prevailed in Costa Rica as the hypertrophied personalism that has led to an exaggerated presidentialism** that has proved very harmful. This Project therefore does not aim to destroy the work of our ancestors, but rather seeks to improve it by reconciling technical progress with democracy [...]* (Act 49 of Constitutional Assembly on April 6, 1949).

Following their “innovative continuity” strategy (first developed by Rodrigo Facio in the 1940s), the social democrats sought to present their proposal as in keeping with the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, while at the same time trying to change this collective imaginary to reflect their political project. They claimed that the social democratic project would retain the best Costa Rican traditions, while attacking a negative tradition – its excessive individualism. We see the beginnings of the social democrats’ attempt to shift the liberal oligarchic interpretation of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, which boasted about Costa Rica’s individualist nature, to the social

democratic version that emphasizes the collectivist nature of the Costa Ricans. This new interpretation did not become hegemonic until the 1960s.

The Constitutional Assembly held a general vote to decide which recommendation to accept. The social democratic proposal was overwhelmingly defeated – the 1871 Constitution would serve as a base for the new constitution. Figueres was so disappointed by their defeat that he called Ulate to tell him that the Junta was ready to hand over power to Ulate immediately. However, Ulate rejected the offer saying he did not want to rule without a constitution. The conservatives sought to convince Ulate that the 1871 Constitution could be quickly reinstated and later amended by the following legislative assembly. However, Ulate objected. He did not want his administration to be consumed by political battles over constitutional amendments and wanted to start his administration with a fully established institutional order. During this period, Ulate did not actively seek support for the amending of the 1871 Constitution, as he wanted to appear as a “neutral” president elect.

However, Ulate had been instrumental in convincing a group of conservative lawyers to form the Constitutional Party. As Jimenez Quesada stated during the 25th meeting of the Constitutional Assembly on the 28th of February 1949, Ulate personally convinced Manuel Francisco Jimenez Ortiz, Brenes Gutierrez and Victor Chavarria to join the Constitutional Party to provide their conservative views to the constitutional assembly. Due to the fact that this party was composed at the last minute, Ulate had to personally convince Figueres to allow the *Partido Constitucional* to participate in the 1948 Constitutional elections. Ulate wanted to have a balancing force within the Constitutional Assembly to counter-act the most radical proposals by the social democrats, but he did not want to be perceived as partisan.

Constitutional Amendments

Since there was a consensus that the excessive power of the executive had contributed to the 1940's political crisis, the social democrats were able to pass reforms creating three new institutions that reduced the previous powers

of the executive. The *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones*, first created under the Picado administration, was reinforced. This later became a fourth branch of Costa Rica's government. The *Direccion General del Servicio Civil* was created to appoint public servants in order to eliminate nepotistic practices and political persecution and to increase meritocracy. The *Controlaria General de la Republica* was created to check corrupt practices by high ranking government employees and to act against favoritism in the granting of state financed projects to private firms (Naranjo Chacon 2010:97). The municipal governments were also granted more autonomy.

Although the social democratic desire to shift Costa Rica towards a parliamentary system was strongly rejected, the social democrats succeeded in increasing the power of Congress vis-à-vis the executive. This change has been crucial for the social democrats, as they have controlled Congress since 1953. This has allowed them to continuously block any motions by the liberal oligarchs to dismantle the social democratic reforms – such as the nationalization of the banking system and the creation of autonomous institutions (Naranjo Chacon 2010: 97).

The liberals supported and proposed measures geared towards eliminating nepotism, reducing corruption and preventing administrative mismanagement, limiting the power of the executive, and increasing the power of Congress. The progressive liberals argued these amendments were necessary to make sure that Costa Rica would not suffer again from these issues as it had suffered under the *Caldero-comunista* regime. The conservatives tried to block some changes, arguing that the problems the Costa Rican political system faced were not due to deficiencies in the 1871 Constitution, but attributable to the particular individuals running the country (Calderon Guardia and Manuel Mora). They continuously argued that the 1871 Constitution had served its purpose extremely well in the past and should be kept as intact as possible. In some proposals the progressive liberals supported the conservatives and in some others they supported the social democrats.

In some amendments the conservatives, the progressive liberals and the social democrats all agreed without debate, such as the extension of suffrage rights to women, enabling the African Caribbean descendants born in Costa Rica become citizens, abolishing the military, strengthening the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones* to enable it to oversee all aspects of the electoral process, improving the educational system through the allocation of a fixed amount of the annual budget to education, and retaining the traditionally good relations between the Costa Rican Catholic Church and the Costa Rican state.

Therefore, as Rovira (2007) accurately concludes, the social democratic reforms that were accepted by the Constitutional Assembly were only those that modernized the capitalist state system, strengthened the democratic liberal oligarchic system and increased the relative autonomy of the state. The only socialist reformist policy passed was the introduction of autonomous institutions (Rovira 2007:62). The delegates also categorically rejected the social democratic proposal to include a preface referring to the 1948 Civil War. There was an overwhelming consensus that the civil war should not be mentioned at all in the constitution.

End of Junta Rule

On November 7th, 1949 the Junta handed over power to Ulate. Figueres decided not to use the six-month extension that the Constitutional Assembly had granted the Junta since there was such widespread opposition to the Junta. On April 3, 1949, the Minister of Public Safety Edgar Cardona seized the Bella Vista barracks and demanded the immediate installation of the Ulate administration. This event became known as the *Cardonazo*. Cardona, one of the seven rebels who had helped Figueres launch his armed insurrection, stated that Figueres had lied to him and to all Costa Ricans about his true intentions regarding his armed insurrection. He pressed Figueres to respect the will of the insurgents and the majority of Costa Ricans. Ulate did not support Cardona's action, as he did not want his administration to be

associated with a coup. Faced with mounting opposition, the social democratic leader acknowledged that ruling through the Junta was counter-productive. The longer the social democrats ruled through undemocratic means, the harder it would be for them to garner popular support for their Second Republic. Therefore, instead of handing over power to Otilio Ulate in May 1950 as originally agreed upon by the Ulate-Figueres Pact, the Junta announced it would hand it over on the 8th of November 1949.

The social democrats realized their energies were better spent building a new political party – the *Partido Liberacion Nacional* - than by constantly battling against the opposition. By renaming the *Partido Social Democrata*, the social democrats sought a new start. This new start required a re-writing of their role in Costa Rican history. It entailed overlooking certain facts such as: a) their role in destabilizing Costa Rica's political order through acts of terrorism and sabotage during the 1940s; b) their single-handed responsibility for starting the Civil War; c) their promise to support the Caribbean Legion's efforts to overthrow dictatorships throughout Latin America violating Costa Rica's traditional neutrality; and d) their refusal to hand over power to the legitimately elected president Ulate. Instead of focusing on these facts, they shifted public attention to a new narrative. The next chapter will trace the emergence of the *National Liberation* myth. It argues that only after this new myth of unity was widely accepted were the social democrats able to accomplish their dream of making their political project become hegemonic.

CONCLUSION

This period in Costa Rica's history is one of the best examples of the power of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary in influencing its political outcomes and shaping its institutional development. What could have been a foundational moment in Costa Rica's history remained a *transformist* one due to the ideational path dependence exerted by it. This shows the weakness of the dominant interpretation used by scholars analysing Costa Rica's democratic consolidation, which assumes that the social democratic military victory naturally led to the transition into the social democratic model. This

view is widely accepted by the best Costa Rican scholars including, amongst others, Mahoney 2001, Cruz 2005, Rovira Mas 2000, and Quesada 2008. It is a view that was originally created by the social democratic academics Alberto Canas, Rodrigo Facio, and Oscar Castro Vega during the late 1950s early 1960s when they started the process of re-interpreting the social democrats' role in history. Their success in spreading this myth has meant that even the most recent works by non social democrats seeking to disprove the social democratic myth (such as Molina and Palmer 2009) have kept this image of the 1948 civil war as naturally leading to the social democratic paradigm shift.

The influence of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary also meant that the immediate post civil war experience in Costa Rica was unique relative to other Latin American revolutionary experiences. While a military victory granted the victors the right to rule and impose foundational changes in other Latin American countries, the Costa Rican social democratic revolutionaries faced enormous difficulties in legitimatising their rule and saw their dream of founding a *Second Republic* frustrated. For example, while the October 1944 revolution in Guatemala legitimised the right to rule of the social democratic revolutionaries Juan Jose Arevalo (1944-1951) and Jacobo Arbenz (1951-1954), allowing them to impose radical changes (major land redistribution and nationalizations), the Costa Rican social democrats' actions were constrained. However, this also meant that while the Guatemalan revolution abruptly ended in 1954 with the CIA led coup that installed the oppressive right wing counter-revolutionary Castillo dictatorship, the Costa Rican social democrats eventually succeeded in transforming Costa Rica's institutional framework through gradual yet continuous reformist change. The unresolved socio-economic and political tensions in Guatemala led to a 36-year civil war. Instead, the transformist nature of Costa Rica's political system guaranteed Costa Rica's political stability and facilitated the eventual rise to hegemony of the social democratic discourse - as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Costa Rica has given the world a living example of purity and democratic strength.
(US Ambassador General Philip Flemings on July 31, 1953)

I pray to God that the battle that began in 1948 come to an end. The price we paid for our freedom was very high, but we did not fight for the freedom of some at the expense of others. Now we all want to work in peace. We need sanity, mutual forgiveness, peace and love.
(Jose Figueres's speech during the transfer of power to the newly elected president Mario Echandi on May 8, 1958)

Chapter 6

The discursive dimension of Costa Rica's democratic consolidation

The lack of popularity of the social democrats during the immediate post-civil war period has been overlooked by academics analysing Costa Rica's democratization process, with the academic consensus heavily influenced by the social democratic re-interpretation of its own role in this time period. This narrative argues that Jose Figueres became a national hero as a result of the social democrats' victory in the 1948 Civil War. It views the 1948 Civil War as a critical juncture (Collier and Collier 1991) in Costa Rica's history, after which the social democrats were able to create the institutional framework that enabled the consolidation of Costa Rica's democracy (Yashar 1997, Booth 1999). It highlights the reforms implemented in the 1949 Constitution particularly: a) the abolition of the army making it more difficult for dissenting forces to engineer coups; b) the creation of a fourth branch of government – the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones*, which has served to guarantee transparent, free and fair elections; c) the establishment of an extensive social state including a social security and public health system strengthening the state and making it become highly respected; and d) the development of a strong party system facilitating democratic governance as a key to Costa Rica's democratic consolidation (Ordonez, Padilla, Andrews, De Gennaro 2009, Isbester 2010, Seligson 2014). This chapter seeks to complement the findings of previous studies analysing Costa Rica's democratic consolidation by focusing on a dimension that remains under-appreciated. It argues that in order to understand how these factors came into being in the first place it is

important to analyse the discursive dimension. By doing so, we can begin to understand what factors encouraged political actors to take atypical decisions compared to the rest of the region during post-civil war situations. While the prevalence of discourses creating *relations of antagonism* in the rest of the region encouraged the continuation of conflict making the civil wars in Central America last decades (Guatemala civil war 1960-1996, Nicaraguan civil war 1979-1990, El Salvador civil war 1979-1992), the *transformist* logic of articulation used during the Ulate administration served to de-radicalize and de-mobilize the Costa Rican population.

The dominant view also argues that Costa Rica's democratic stabilization was due to the rise to hegemony of the *Partido Liberacion Nacional* during the 1950s, which led to a stable, bi-partisan, and predictable electoral system (Seligson 2014: 367). It argues that the hegemony of the social democratic model inspired by the ideas of John Keynes led to the emergence of a big middle class – a strong democratic stabilizing force (Ordonez, Padilla, Andres and De Gennaro 2009). The dominance of this model from 1949 to the 1980s meant that regardless of which political party came to power, the state continued to invest in human resources, in the creation of social infrastructure, in the promotion of private investment and in the expansion of the market. The development of the welfare state was also a fundamental factor leading to Costa Rica's democratic success. Some scholars have focused on the quality of these public policies as the main source of Costa Rica's democratic stability (Lehoucq 2010), while others have shown how the success of the social democratic institutional order throughout the 1949-1980 period created the high level of regime support that enabled Costa Rica to remain democratically stable despite the severe socio-economic crisis triggered by the 1980s debt crisis (Booth and Seligson 1999). Most scholars such as Seligson (2014) highlight the crucial role played by Jose Figueres in the consolidation of Costa Rica's democracy. Seligson states:

First, he abolished the Costa Rican military. Second, he did what no other successful leader of a coup in Latin America has ever done: he voluntarily turned the control of the government over to the victor of the annulled elections. By doing so he firmly established a respect for elections that

have grown in Costa Rica since the turn of the century. Third, the civil war largely delegitimized the Communist Party, and since that time, even after the elimination of the constitutional prohibition on Communist candidates running for office, the voting strength of the Communist Party has not exceeded 3% of the total presidential vote. Fourth, Figueres ushered in with him a group of social reformers who, though in many ways merely expanded on programs begun by Calderon, sought to spur economic development and social progress without resorting to outright socialist schemes (Seligson 2014: 367).

The current academic consensus views *Don Pepe* (as Jose Figueres became known in Costa Rica) as the “founder of Costa Rica’s modern democracy” and the social democratic institutional framework as the main source of its political stability. Most of these accounts fast-forward from the end of the civil war to the 1953 presidential elections won by Figueres, assuming that the social democrats’ military success naturally translated into their political success leading to the rise of the social democratic hegemony.

This chapter disputes this widely held view by focusing on a period of Costa Rica’s history that remains under-analysed by scholars exploring Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation – the Otilio Ulate administration (1949-1953). While this period has recently received the attention of Costa Rican historians under the guidance of Ivan Molina, their findings have not yet been incorporated into the dominant political scientists’ explanations of Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation. This chapter argues that Ulate played a crucial role in creating the discursive condition of possibility for Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation. He contributed to the emergence of the social democratic hegemony and to the institutional framework widely attributed to have facilitated Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation. Ulate’s critical role has been neglected due to the dominance of the social democratic narrative, which has downplayed Ulate’s contribution in order to highlight Figueres’ contribution. By focusing on the Ulate administration, the crucial importance that the discursive dimension had on Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation becomes evident. Without the predominance of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary and its *transformist* logic of articulation, the post-civil war period could have been politically unstable and violent. Some incidents such as the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones*’ rejection of the Partido Union Nacional’s

registration for the 1953 presidential elections could have re-sparked civil unrest, with the wounds left amongst the citizens from the death of approximately 2000 family members and friends still very fresh. Yet no such unrest happened.

This chapter explores how the influence of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary encouraged all major political leaders during the post-civil war period to erase the *internal* political frontier that had divided Costa Rican society into two antagonistic blocs. Using discourses applying the *logic of difference*, the main political leaders in Costa Rica sought to reconstruct the perception that Costa Rica was a homogenous, harmonious, and peace-loving society seeking to once again integrate the particular demands of disparate social sectors into an expanding hegemonic order. These political leaders sought to recreate the strong external political frontier uniting Costa Ricans against external destabilizing influences – a possible invasion from Somoza. The abolition of the CRCP by Jose Figueres allowed the Ulate administration and the social democrats to argue that the “existential threat” to Costa Rica had been eliminated. The fact that political leaders succeeded in pushing the political frontier to the margins of society is one of the crucial factors assisting Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation after the 1948 Civil War.

The chapter is divided in three sections. Section one shows how the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary influenced the political decisions of the most important political actors during the Ulate administration (1949-1953) and the 1953 presidential campaign. It argues that this period set the discursive condition of possibility for the emergence of the social democratic hegemony. Section two focuses on the first Figueres administration (1953-1958), exploring the factors that contributed to his victory. Section three concludes by tracing the rise of the social democratic hegemony.

The data analysed comes from the Constitutional Assembly debates, the newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica*, and key political speeches by President

Otilio Ulate (1949-1953), Monsignor Victor Sanabria and President Jose Figueres (1953-1958).

Transition to Constitutional Order

Due to continuous popular pressure to put an end to the Junta rule, Figueres decided to hand over power to Ulate on November 8, 1949 without taking advantage of the six-month extension that had been granted by the Constitutional Assembly after weeks of intense debate. During the last sessions of the Constitutional Assembly, the conservative liberal oligarchic delegates tried to overturn the decrees passed by the Junta through decree-laws (a right granted by Otilio Ulate through the Ulate-Figueres Pact with no democratic foundation). The Junta had nationalized the banking system and had created autonomous institutions including the *Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad* (ICE) responsible for the development of electric and telecommunication infrastructure, and the *Consejo Nacional de Produccion* (CNP) whose mission was to stabilize agricultural prices in the domestic market, stimulate production through price subsidies and act as an intermediary between farmers and consumers (Mesa-Lago 2000:406). To counter the attack made by the conservative delegates, the social democratic delegates argued that the Constitutional Assembly had no right to overturn these decrees. The mandate of the Constitutional Assembly was limited to drafting a new constitution. They argued that the only legitimate body to address the fate of the banking system and the autonomous institutions was the Congress under the Otilio Ulate administration that would soon come into session. The conservatives argued that the fact that *Figuerista* Boards of Directors headed these autonomous institutions was already limiting the mandate of the Otilio Ulate administration and the next Congress, equating their autonomy with unaccountability. The conservatives further demanded that Ulate be given the right to appoint the heads of these autonomous institutions. This was unacceptable to Figueres and the current heads of the autonomous institutions. The Director of the Banco Anglo Costarricense, Fernando Barrenechea, wrote the following article on the *Diario de Costa Rica* on the 27th of October 1949:

I think the step taken by the constituents can have grave consequences because it can deeply harm the autonomous institutions, which should be administered abiding by technical criteria and be a-political. This institutional innovation will serve as the foundation of the stability of our modern democracy (Diario de Costa Rica – October 27, 1949).

Ulate knew that the “apolitical” and “technical” character of the board of directors of the autonomous institutions meant that *Figuerista* heads would control these institutions regardless of who governed. This would make it difficult for other administrations to reverse the social democratic reforms. However, Ulate feared that this crisis could escalate into another civil war. Figueres had already proven the extent he was willing to go for his political project. Ulate tried to defuse the politically charged situation through radio speeches and articles in the *Diario de Costa Rica* warning Costa Ricans against the negative consequences of allowing oneself to be blinded by passion and intransigence – an attitude that could only lead to violence. Ulate was able to convince the conservative delegates that the most appropriate institution to deal with this issue was the Congress under his administration. He repeatedly argued that it was in everyone’s interest to re-establish social harmony and democratic institutional order as smoothly and quickly as possible. He portrayed himself as a centrist moderator who was going to reunite the Costa Ricans after their family feud. The *Partido Union Nacional* presented Ulate as:

[Ulate] will be the bridge between the traditional and the impatient revolutionary Costa Rica, which without a defined orientation, tries to overcome the shortcomings of a social organization that took a century to build (Diario de Costa Rica – November 8, 1949).

Accusing the social democrats of trying to change a social organization that had been successfully evolving for the past century through inappropriate revolutionary means, the progressive liberals portrayed Ulate as a president who would lead Costa Rica back to its traditional reformist path as defined by their “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. To de-escalate political tensions, the progressive liberals and Costa Rican Catholic Church leaders gave radio speeches and wrote articles in the *Diario de Costa Rica* requesting that the conservative coffee barons and the social democrats allow a prompt and

peaceful transition to institutional rule. For example, a progressive liberal, Jose J. Chacon, wrote on November 8, 1949:

Let's not put obstacles to Ulate's work of national reconstruction. The time has come for everyone, absolutely everyone, to make some sacrifices, even to sacrifice our sense of revenge, for the sake of the common good. We must sacrifice our ambitions for the sublime hope of re-establishing national peace [...] With just laws, impartial Tribunals of Justice, worthy congressmen, respectful and zealous officials fulfilling their duties, and with deep faith we can finally delight in our peace [...] Cowardice and parsimony are enemies of peace (Diario de Costa Rica – November 8, 1949).

Just like Chacon, hundreds of other political leaders, teachers, businessmen, and lawyers wrote articles in the *Diario de Costa Rica* stating that everyone's priority should be to forget the horrors of the civil war, to control their political passions and to work together to return to Costa Rica's traditional institutional order. The head of the Costa Rican Catholic Church, Monsignor Victor Sanabria, a former ally of Calderon Guardia stated:

As head of the Costa Rican Catholic Church I am happy to see a return to constitutional life in an atmosphere of calm and optimism. Costa Rica enters an era of peace and progress. We must ask God to give all of us the ability to return to the old Costa Rica, the Costa Rica of order, work and faith. Let's pray that Don Otilio Ulate succeeds in being the president of all Costa Ricans. That he succeeds in merging the wills, the efforts and the aspirations of all to work in the economic and spiritual national reconstruction, without thinking that one man is capable of doing everything on his own (Diario de Costa Rica – November 9, 1949).

For Ulate's inauguration, some political leaders encouraged a group of women to set up a committee to decorate the capital with flowers and Costa Rican flags. This was a way of mobilizing the population in a peaceful and constructive way. The *Diario de Costa Rica* describes the mood this committee created on the capital on November 8, 1949:

Yesterday, within moments the capital city was embellished [...] with street ornaments decorating public buildings and private residences. Both the Committee of Ladies who organized the distribution of banners, and the tradesmen and the public in general were devoted entirely to the task of putting our national flag everywhere. In the early afternoon, San Jose was in full gala ready to celebrate enthusiastically the big day – the historical event that rightfully fills with joy every Costa Rican (Diario de Costa Rica – November 8, 1949).

During this transition, the social democrats had to play a balancing act. From one side, they wanted to be seen as sharing in the joy felt by Costa Ricans for the return to the constitutional order. On the other side, they wanted to reinforce their *crisis narrative* that institutional change was necessary. On inauguration day, the PSD wrote the following article in the *Diario de Costa Rica*:

An uplifting climate lifts the spirit of Costa Ricans to see occupy the presidency to the citizen they elected. But the joy that floods the souls of Costa Ricans should not end in fluttering enthusiasm. It is urgent for our nation to analyse its vital signs so we can commit ourselves to the responsible task of restoring our moral pulse, stabilizing the economy, and laying the necessary foundations for true social harmony, which means we must raise the standard of health and education of our people, build together and perform the necessary work to lead us once again to the path that will make us regain our prestigious position. If we do not form a collective national will to confront our problems, the optimism of the people will become disappointment, lack of faith, and civil indifference. If this happens, the politicians without scruples of the past will thrive once again (Diario de Costa Rica – November 8, 1949).

While the social democrats wanted to maintain the sense of urgency and the necessity for profound institutional change, Ulate sought to de-radicalize the Costa Ricans. One of the ways in which he did this was by co-opting the social democrats (potentially the most destabilising group) by adopting the social democratic narrative that portrayed the civil war as a democratizing action. He integrated elements of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary (that argued that Costa Rica was an innately democratic, homogenous and peace-loving country) with elements of the social democratic narrative that argued that the civil war had been a necessary action to protect Costa Rica’s democratic tradition. In his inaugural speech President Ulate stated:

Costa Rica cheerfully returns to its constitutional order and to its representative system of government after a joyous ending of the war - a war, which though foreign to our habits of peace, was imposed by us by necessity and was carried out in the service of our Democracy.

The Founding Junta of the Second Republic has made possible this exemplary act we are living today by transferring power from the clean hands of a government of revolutionary origin, which did not try to hold on to power, to another of judicial structure, with the express commitment of the first not to interfere in any way in the administration of the second

(Inaugural message delivered by President Otilio Ulate on November 10, 1949).

Through this speech Ulate was indirectly negotiating with the social democrats. He would adopt the social democratic interpretation of the 1948 Civil War, in exchange for the social democrats not to interfere in any way in his administration. Thus, Ulate sought to co-opt the social democrats as the liberals had done before during the 1900s-1920s with the *Radicales del 1900* and the *Volistas* of the *Partido Reformista*. Ulate feared that going against the social democratic narrative would only incentivise the social democrats to boycott his administration. Having learnt from Calderon's mistakes, he did not want to turn them into his enemies.

By praising Figueres for handing over power instead of keeping it - as most Latin American revolutionary victors would have done in his position, Ulate was seeking to create the perception that, despite the civil war, Costa Rica was still an exceptional country relative to its neighbours. Through his first presidential message, Ulate also indirectly stated that any interference from the social democrats in his administration could lead to the soiling of the good reputation that Ulate was helping build for Figueres.

Ulate adopted the social democratic interpretation of the civil war also because he believed that it would be the most suitable narrative for de-escalating political tension across the country. The fact that this narrative was more in keeping with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary than other narratives would make it easier for the Costa Ricans to come to terms with the 1948 Civil War and return to political stability. It would allow them to overcome the "identity crisis" induced by the civil war, as this narrative sought to reconcile the contradiction between their self-perception as a peace-loving, democratic, egalitarian and homogeneous society with their actions during the civil war by re-interpreting the war as a necessary pro-democratic movement.

Since Ulate wanted to re-establish the *external* political frontier that shaped Costa Rican politics until the 1930s-1940s, he did not want to place

Calderonistas or the communists as the “constitutive outside” or enemies of his discursive formation. In his inaugural speech, he did not even mention them. His message was the following: the civil war was over; a new era had begun. Ulate was going to be the president of *all* Costa Ricans. He repeatedly stated that only by re-establishing internal social cohesion could Costa Rica once again regain its position as an exceptional democracy admired by the international community. With regards to the Calderon and Picado administrations he stated in another presidential message:

What divides the current government from the one in place from 1940 to 1948 are not hatreds, but rather simply different policies and modes of governing. My administration has the greatest respect for the suffrage. In Public Finance we believe that the best manager is the one who saves, organizes and works rather than the one who overspends increasing the international debt and leading the country to fiscal insolvency, thus committing the country to new foreign debts (Presidential Message delivered by Otilio Ulate to Congress on May 1, 1952).

Therefore, Guardia and Picado were portrayed as “bad administrators” and as “violators of the sanctity of the vote” but not as “enemies” posing an existential threat to the country, as the social democratic crisis narrative had portrayed them during the 1940s to mobilize the opposition.

The Ulate administration also gave priority to addressing the social question, solving the fiscal crisis, and improving the existing socio-democratic institutional framework. In keeping with the *transformist* nature of Costa Rica’s political system, Ulate stated that he would pursue reformist policies avoiding radical change. He warned Costa Ricans that they would not see immediate results as his work consisted in establishing a solid base for long-term growth and prosperity. The only way of solving the social question was to address the root cause of poverty – the lack of productivity. The state had to play an active role in incentivizing agricultural diversification and promoting new industries. Ulate believed that the autonomous institutions created by the Junta could be key institutions to assist the government in this role - he stated that before creating, eliminating or changing existing institutions, he wanted to first see how they worked in practice. After studying the *Consejo Nacional de Produccion*, Ulate concluded that this institution could play a vital role in

promoting economic development. The conservative oligarchs had been trying to convince the Ulate administration and Congress that this institution was interfering with private initiative. Ulate responded that he had no intention of turning the state into a business owner, but rather of ensuring the state would play a positive role in promoting private initiative.

Ulate tried to seek a balance between the social democratic leftist policies and the conservative coffee oligarchs' rightist policies. Just like the social democrats, Ulate believed in the necessity of creating a mixed economy. Like the conservative coffee oligarchs, he also believed one of the state's top priorities should be to balance its budget and pay down its foreign debt. Ulate argued that by balancing the budget, paying down the foreign debt, stabilizing the colon, and consolidating the constitutional regime, Costa Ricans could attract much needed foreign investment. He argued that to achieve these goals it was necessary to create a new institution – the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica*. Congress approved this and in 1951 the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica* was founded. This was the only major institution created by Ulate.

To increase the taxes received from the United Fruit Company, Ulate negotiated directly with the US Bureau of Internal Revenues. The UFCO was paying 65% of its taxes to the US government and the rest to the Costa Rican government. Ulate negotiated with the US government for a greater proportion of the taxes to go to the Costa Rican government. Given the circumstances Costa Rica found itself in after the war, the US government agreed. Ulate also sought to decrease the dependency on coffee and banana exports by diversifying to fishing, cattle and other agricultural products as the *Centristas* had been proposing during the 1940s. Ulate agreed with the social democrats that this would not only help the Costa Rican economy but would also target the poorest areas of Costa Rica – Puntarenas, Guanacaste and Limon. These areas had been neglected during the liberal oligarchic hegemonic period.

Although Ulate believed fiscal discipline was indispensable, he stated that it did not mean that there had to be low government spending. He argued that

the state should invest heavily on setting the foundations for long-term growth. He stated: “we must eliminate the superfluous and spend all we can on the indispensable” (Otilio Ulate’s presidential message to Congress on May 1st 1950). This included building basic infrastructure, providing technical and financial support for new businesses, and reducing the risks of starting new enterprises. Just like all his predecessors, Ulate placed great emphasis on education and on disseminating democratic values, yet he argued that schools were not the only ones responsible for this. He argued that each and every government official from the most junior to the president had to teach the importance of democratic values through their example as creating democratic institutions was not enough. When talking about the new Electoral Laws he stated:

The institutions that the country has created to protect the sanctity of the vote are respectable, but they will not be effective if they rely on poor human material. The men who from now on will accept the responsibility of governing Costa Rica, will also have to commit themselves to conducting the public function with all the moral force needed to mould the newly created institutions. From the not too distant past, when Costa Rica had the absurd electoral law, which in Article 135 conferred the President of the Republic disciplinary jurisdiction over the National Election Council and all other agencies and operations connected with the electoral operations, that provided the executive the right to interpret any dubious part of the law, and to remove those who did not follow his criteria, to today, we have travelled a long way in the institutional route. But that is not all. To give these institutions a permanent real force, we must place men capable of sacrificing themselves to preserve these institutions (Presidential Message delivered by Ulate to Congress on May 1, 1950).

Ulate believed that the key to Costa Rica’s democratic success rested on a combination of improving the existing democratic institutions and reinforcing the “moral democratic force” (Ulate’s presidential message to Congress May 1, 1950). Just like all presidents before him and all those after him, Ulate understood the crucial importance of the discursive dimension of democracy. Setting high moral standards through speeches like the one above would make government officials be held accountable to those standards by the citizens.

Ulate acknowledged that he had been granted the task of governing during a particularly delicate period of Costa Rica's history. His responsibility consisted in eliminating the internal political frontier that had been created by the communists during the 1930s, and later used by the social democrats during the 1940s, to mobilize opposition to the *Caldero-comunista* regime and help transform citizens into soldiers.

To eliminate this internal political frontier, he had to address the worker-capitalist relations. Ulate argued that the social legislation passed under the *Caldero-comunista* regime had an underlying problem. According to him, due to the influence of the communists on the Calderon administration, this legislation had been based on the perception that there was an antagonistic relation between labour and capital. Without changing the substance of the social legislation, Ulate argued that it was crucial to change the underlying philosophy. Under his administration, the Ministerio de Trabajo y Pension would follow a "technical" and not "sectarian logic":

The task of the Ministry of Labour and Social Pension will become more bearable and efficient if it is uprooted from sectarian interests and political trends and it is transformed into a true centre for the application of social justice. This institution has to adhere strictly to technical considerations. [...] Only through this conciliatory function can we solve conflicts within an understanding between different social sectors. In the past, influential groups have had an interest in introducing and encouraging the seeds of discord (Presidential Message to Congress delivered by Otilio Ulate on May 1st, 1952).

With this new underlying philosophy, Ulate encouraged the labour unions to devote their energies in creating cooperatives instead of organizing strikes. In the same speech, Ulate stated:

Now the situation has changed and the government can confirm to this assembly that the communist sector is reduced to impotence, having disappeared as a political force, which is one of the most effective factors that the new system offers to the cause of democracy (Presidential message to Congress delivered by Ulate on May 1st, 1952).

Just like Figueres, Ulate also used the communists as the "constitutive outside" of his discursive formation. By arguing that the communist threat

was over, Ulate wanted to reinforce the perception that there was no longer an internal political frontier dividing Costa Rican society into two antagonistic poles. During his administration, former CRCP members helped organize several strikes to protest the rising cost of living. Ulate did not want to refer to them as a political group but rather as individuals with particular demands. He acknowledged that the economic situation was difficult, but quoted statistics showing the economy was improving. He argued that the best way to address the demands of the workers was through institutional means. Ulate viewed the *Consejo Nacional de Salarios* (created by the Junta's decree-law *N 832* to set minimum wages and settle labour disputes) as a crucial institution to address labour disputes. Another crucial institution to address the popular demands was the *Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social*. Ulate stated:

CCSS is the most appropriate vehicle to guarantee social security for all Costa Ricans. Despite the vices with which it was born, it managed to evolve. It is true that social security services have not been extended across the country and have not reached some areas that desperately need it. But this is due to problems of economic nature. We are currently studying new solutions that are more in keeping with the reality we are finding on the ground. The CCSS is the best institution to ensure appropriate medical attention to the particularly vulnerable working class. Therefore, it does not simply fulfil the state's duty to provide social justice; it also strengthens the state by avoiding the development of tendencies that can jeopardise its own existence. The government will seek to maintain and develop a comprehensive social security policy that is in keeping with the goals set by the United Nations (Presidential Message to Congress delivered by Otilio Ulate on May 1st, 1952).

Under his administration, he extended social security coverage and worked to improve the efficiency of the CCSS as well all other social institutions created by his predecessors. He also sought to increase the coordination between them by creating *comites de enlace* to create synergies. Another major concern for Ulate was to reinforce the perception that his administration was not politically motivated in its appointments or removals of people in these institutions. He decided to keep the heads of the autonomous institutions selected by the Junta. Through this example, he wanted to set the precedent that the executive should not interfere in the workings of the autonomous institutions. As the 1953 presidential elections approached, Ulate also wanted

to set the precedent of the executive's neutrality in presidential campaigns and elections. Ulate knew the 1953 presidential elections were crucial as they were the first elections after the 1948 Civil War. He did everything in his power to make sure that Costa Rica's democratic political stability was not threatened again.

1953 Electoral Campaign

By 1952 four political parties were preparing for the 1953 presidential elections: the *Figuerista Partido Liberacion Nacional*, the *Cortesista Partido Democrata*, the *Ulatista Partido Union Nacional* and the communist *Partido Progressista Independiente*. This was the first election in which the *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones* was completely autonomous from the other branches of government - the institution had become a fourth branch of government under the 1949 Constitution. The *Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones* accepted the registration of only two political parties for the 1953 elections: *Liberacion Nacional* and *Partido Democrata*. We will first present these two political parties and then explain why the other two were not allowed to register.

Partido Liberacion Nacional

On October 12, 1951 the social democrats officially founded the *Partido Liberacion Nacional (PLN)*. The social democrats decided to found a "new" political party in order to distance themselves from the unpopular *Partido Social Democrata*. They chose the name National Liberation to promote the view that their party had "liberated their nation" from the potential *Caldero-comunista* dictatorship and similarly chose Columbus Day for the first meeting of their party arguing that, just like Christopher Columbus had brought a new beginning to the continent, the PLN would bring a new beginning to Costa Rica. It was interesting to note that they did not choose any dates related to the civil war to be symbolic signifiers as they wanted to broaden their base of support. The social democrats presented themselves as a counter-hegemonic force seeking to integrate the previously excluded sectors of society including women, black Caribbean descendants living in the Atlantic region, peasants living outside the Central Valley, and former *Cortesistas*, *Calderonistas* and left-leaning groups. This was evident in their selection of

speakers during the founding ceremony of the PLN. For example, one of the guest speakers in their first party conference was the widow of Leon Cortes, who would serve both to attract female voters – allowed to vote for the first time in the country's history - as well as former *Cortesistas*. On the 8th of March 1952, Jose Figueres announced his presidential candidacy. No party convention was held to select a presidential candidate, as Jose Figueres was the undisputed leader of the PLN. The TSE approved their registration.

Partido Democrata

On June 2, 1952, the *Partido Democrata* announced the presidential candidacy of Fernando Castro Cervantes. This was the party founded by former president Leon Cortes and represented the most conservative oligarchs. Castro was the owner of one of the biggest cattle ranches in the country and was a very successful businessman. It was rumoured that he had amassed a great fortune due to his close connections with the United Fruit Company managers. Castro represented the conservative coffee oligarchs. He also sought to appeal to the former *Calderonistas* as well as the *Ulatistas*. However, his party's reactionary policies did not appeal to the progressive liberal Ulatistas or the progressive Christian democrats. By the 1950s, Costa Rica's ideational environment had shifted leftwards as a result of the hegemonic battles fought over the 1930s and 1940s.

Partido Union Nacional

On April 27, 1952 the *Partido Union Nacional* celebrated their convention in the National Stadium. Out of the 4117 delegates, 4056 voted for Mario Echandi as their presidential candidate. Echandi had been one of the most vocal opponents of the Junta rule so this was perceived as a direct affront to Jose Figueres (Ocontrillo 2004: 140). During the party's registration process, the TSE found some irregularities, with the result that this party was not able to present the adequate paper work in time to register for the 1953 elections. Mario Echandi accused Ulise Soto Mendez, the director of the Registro Civil, of violating his oath of neutrality and of being a *Figuerista*. Echandi demanded his resignation. The battle between Soto Mendez and Echandi went on for several weeks without Ulate intervening at all so as not to appear

to be favouring his own political party. On November 18, 1952, the TSE cleared Ulise Soto of any wrongdoing. On December 23, 1952 the TSE confirmed that the *Union Nacional* would not be able to participate in the 1953 presidential elections. The Costa Rican population appreciated Ulate's impartiality. The front page of the December 23, 1952 edition of the *Diario de Costa Rica* stated:

One of the greatest virtues achieved for our democracy now is that the government has no political bias (Diario de Costa Rica – December 23, 1952).

This incident is one more example of the high value that Costa Rican political leaders and its population have historically placed on the rule of law. It is truly rare to see the political party of an extremely popular sitting president not be granted the right to register for upcoming elections. It is even more unusual to see the sitting president not intervene in the matter at all. All of this is more extraordinary when we consider that it was the same political party that people had died defending during the 1948 Civil War being excluded from the subsequent elections. And yet, when the TSE denied it the right to register for one of the most important presidential elections in the country's history, the leaders of the NUP did not mobilize their supporters to protest this action. They only complained that this action was politically motivated and sought to remove the head of the Civil Registry. When they failed to do so, they accepted the verdict of the TSE, in turn helping to set the precedent of the independence of the TSE from the other branches of government and from political machinations. It was an action that proved to the population that the TSE had absolute control over all electoral matters.

The TSE also banned another political party from participating in the 1953 elections without this leading to mass mobilization – the *Independent Progressive Party*.

Partido Progresista Independiente

The former CRCP activists sought to register the *Partido Progresista Independiente* for the 1953 presidential elections. However, the TSE stated

that amongst the signatories of their petition, there were 900 known former members of the CRCP. Evoking Article 98 of the 1949 Constitution, which outlawed communist parties, the TSE did not accept their registration (Ocontrillo 2004: 140). The communists accepted the TSE's decision, as they knew they could not mobilize mass support to counter this decision.

1953 Presidential Campaign

During the months leading to the July 1953 elections, political, business and religious leaders gave speeches and wrote articles reminding Costa Ricans that it was in everyone's interests to maintain democratic stability. The *Diario de Costa Rica* was full of articles seeking to defuse political tensions such as the one below:

Remember that no one has the right to offend anyone because they do not share their opinion. Political passions are very dangerous because they obscure our understanding and do not allow us to see clearly that we are all brothers of the same heavenly Father (Diario de Costa Rica – July 26, 1953).

On July 26, 1953 Costa Rica held its first presidential election since the 1948 civil war. Figueres defeated Castro Cervantes obtaining 121,108 i.e. 64.7% of the total votes. Castro Cervantes received 65,625 votes i.e. 35.3% of the votes. Voter turnout was approximately 67.2% for the presidential elections and 67.5% in the parliamentary elections. The PLN won control over Congress, taking 30 seats, while the *Partido Demócrata* took 11, the Independent National Republican Party 3 seats and the *Unión Nacional* 1.

The social democratic newspaper articles written in the *Diario de Costa Rica* stated incorrectly that this was the greatest electoral victory in the country's history, purposely neglecting the fact that Calderon Guardia had won with 84.5% of the votes in the 1940 Presidential Elections. They also did not state the fact that the National Union Party, the Republican Party and the CRCP had not participated in these elections.

The attention of the Costa Rican public was focused on the transparency of the elections. These were the first elections in the country's history in which

no allegations of electoral fraud were made. Several articles in the *Diario de Costa Rica* praised Ulate for guaranteeing transparent, free and fair elections. For example, on the 29th of July 1953 edition of *Diario de Costa Rica*, Gonzalo Calderon wrote:

Otilio Ulate, you have also been a winner as you have supervised a presidential campaign that has proven the civic maturity reached by Costa Ricans when exercising their suffrage rights (Diario de Costa Rica – July 29, 1953).

After this election, it became common to praise the sitting president for overseeing transparent, free and fair elections. During the 1953 elections, this served to reinforce the perception that Costa Ricans would no longer tolerate electoral fraud. It also stressed the image that the 1953 elections had marked a turning point in the country's democratic evolution, which was also cemented by the comments from the defeated parties and candidates. The day after their defeat, the members of the *Partido Demócrata* placed the following message in the front page of the *Diario de Costa Rica*:

Fully aware of our responsibilities to the nation and to its institutions whose zealous guards we have been throughout the past electoral campaign and in keeping with our goal of maintaining peace and public tranquillity and acknowledging the fait accompli of the triumph achieved by Jose Figueres, we ask our supporters to demonstrate their high civility and adherence to democratic principles. We ask them to return to their normal activities without forgetting for one instance their constant concern for the fate of the Republic (Open letter signed by Fernando Castro Cervantes, Ricardo Castro Beeche, Antonio Pena transcribed in the Diario de Costa Rica – July 27, 1953).

Political leaders across the ideological spectrum praised the defeated Castro Cervantes for his democratic attitude. For example, on the July 28th 1953 edition of the *Diario de Costa Rica*, an article entitled, "Above all other interests, we have to place the interest of the Nation", stated:

With this noble attitude Castro Cervantes has given a new impetus to the perfectible and fruitful progress of our democracy and has offered his own contribution, despite the turbulent moments the country has faced, so that Costa Rica can once again cement in an unshakable way the good name it has earned on the eyes of the American people for its freedoms and for

the respect its leaders have displayed towards their civic responsibilities (Diario de Costa Rica – July 28, 1953).

The praising of the defeated for accepting their loss has also become another common characteristic in every presidential election since 1953, reducing the possibility that the defeated mobilize people against the verdict passed by the TSE. The lessons learnt in the 1948 presidential elections have guaranteed that the defeated parties accept their electoral defeat gracefully.

Jose Figueres Administration 1953-1958

Without the progressive liberal candidate, Echandi, running in the elections and without a *Calderonista* or communist candidate, Figueres easily defeated his only opponent – the conservative candidate - Castro Cervantes. Once Figueres became the legitimately elected president, the contradictions in the social democratic narrative that portrayed Figueres as a democratizing actor while seeking to justify his Junta rule could be glossed over. The discursive strategies known as populist interventions (Panizza 2009) that Figueres had been using since the end of the war could finally become effective. The social democrats were thus able to start building the myth of *Don Pepe* as the founder of Costa Rica's democracy. The following article in the *Diario de Costa Rica* article neatly summarizes the image the social democrats built of Figueres:

When the honest and virile people were mocked, and when for the second time they tried to silence their voices through force, an idealistic man emerged, the greatest revolutionary. His small figure, in the clouded fields of San Isidrio, El Empalme, El Tejar and elsewhere, appeared as a miraculous apparition, leading a handful of brave souls. He gave them council. He encouraged them; he prompted them to undertake the great campaign of liberation. During this period, a hero was born, not a vain and power-hungry politician, but rather a hero of an epic battle that was as pure and transparent as his own spirit and his own heart (Diario de Costa Rica – January 1953).

This narrative argued that when the Costa Rican honourable and “virile” population were denied for a second time their sacred right of suffrage by the *Caldero-comunista* regime, Jose Figueres appeared as a “miraculous apparition” leading the “brave souls”. Costa Ricans were described also

as manly – thus capable of using force when absolutely necessary. Using religious imagery, which compared Figueres' presence in the battlefield as a "miraculous apparition", this narrative sought to construct a mythical image of Figueres that would be appealing to the devoutly Catholic population. It portrayed Figueres as a guiding fatherly figure giving the "advice" and "strength" to the masses as opposed to portraying him as a military leader at odds with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. It then states:

The nation has showered him with honours. But these honours have failed to make him vain as happens to mediocre men. With exquisite seriousness, with astonishing calm, without a trace of political machinations, after completing his victorious deed, he thought of something large. He thought of reconstructing what others had destroyed. Without being a politician, he took the enormous responsibility to do what has always corresponded to politicians. He did not think of anything else but to give back to the badly hurt and ruined country, what once belonged to it: economic and spiritual freedoms (Diario de Costa Rica - January 1953).

Arguing that the military victory had translated into widespread popular support for Figueres, this myth claimed that despite people's request for Figueres to stay in power, his democratic nature encouraged him to hand over power to Ulate as soon as the political situation had stabilized. Adopting a typical populist intervention, it argued that Figueres was not a politician, but rather a deeply patriotic man whose only concern was to give Costa Rica its economic and spiritual freedoms. It neglected the fact that the Junta had faced widespread opposition from the population as it was viewed as an illegitimate body. In keeping with the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary, it described Figueres as a man possessing "exquisite serenity" and "absolute calm" - qualities that were perceived as desirable in a leader by the Costa Ricans. It argues that after the civil war had "destroyed" Costa Rica's democratic institutions, Figueres had thought of building what others had destroyed. Without being a politician, Figueres had understood his responsibility and he had heard the pleas of the masses requesting him to guide them in these difficult times. In keeping with the social democratic conception of a bottom-up democracy, this narrative stated that Figueres was merely addressing the democratic demands of the people.

The image below clearly illustrates how the social democrats wanted the Costa Ricans to perceive Figueres:



Instead of portraying him as a revolutionary leader gun in hand, Figueres is wearing civilian clothes and has a serene, fatherly look. With this new image of *Don Pepe* and with the legitimacy gained after the 1953 elections, Figueres could fully use the power of his charismatic personality to connect with different sectors of society. An article on the August 8th, 1953 edition of the *Diario de Costa Rica* entitled “Jose Figueres is a phenomenon” adequately presents this view:

Working alongside the peasants in his farm, he saw directly the problems that peasants faced and decided to organize a tiny benevolent state (in his farm) geared towards addressing the needs of the labourers. He built houses for them, and provided free milk for the children. In 1948, when the government tried to deny the passage of power to the legally elected president Otilio Ulate, Figueres led a group of students, office workers, labourers – many armed with 22 calibre revolvers. They triumphantly defeated the government forces. Afterwards, he personally assumed power for a year and a half until there were no stumbling blocks to give the presidency to Ulate (Diario de Costa Rica – August 8, 1953).

Adopting populist strategies, this myth argued that Figueres understood the needs of the masses because he had worked alongside them in his farm La Lucha, where Figueres had created an equivalent of a welfare state. It claims that when the government tried to deny Ulate his legitimate right to rule, Figueres headed a group of “students, office workers and peasants” not mentioning at all the Caribbean Legion. It is interesting to note that this narrative no longer places Calderon as the constitutive outside, but rather uses a more vague term – “the government” – as the enemy. This was done in part to avoid alienating potential former *Calderonista* voters. It also allowed them to eliminate the internal political frontier that they themselves had created in 1948. By arguing that the 1948 government was the enemy, they were stating that, with its dissolution, there was no longer an internal enemy. This interpretation of the civil war period remains the predominant interpretation of the 1948 civil war used not only by travel guides, but also by academics analysing Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation. Despite its historical inconsistencies, it has been widely adopted by Costa Rican political leaders because it serves to confirm their “exceptionalist” collective imaginary – thus presenting a positive image of Costa Rica to foreigner investors, political leaders, tourists and to the Costa Rican masses.

Figueres spread his image of a leader in touch with the needs of the peasants through his political speeches full of colloquial expressions, often referring to anecdotes from his farm La Lucha. In 1956 he published his book entitled *Cartas a Un Ciudadano* in which he stated that because he could not spend more time explaining his policies directly to the people due to his administrative commitments, he felt the need to write this book. As he states in his opening page, his book was addressed directly to the common citizen:

Dear Citizen: I'm thinking of you. Rarely you and I have a chance to meet. The president of the Republic has few opportunities to communicate privately with the common citizen. That is why some misunderstandings arise. It would be nice if you and I could talk (Figueres 1956: 1).

Following “populist strategies”, he sought to symbolically eliminate the distance between himself and the people by addressing them directly in this book. He also wrote other articles and books geared at more intellectual audiences. One of the best recompilation of his writings is the book *Writings of Jose Figueres: Politics, Economics and International Relations* published in (2000).

Another advantage Figueres had throughout his career was his ability to draw from the multiple political identities he created for himself as an anti-dictatorship revolutionary figure fighting for Costa Rica’s democracy (which enabled him to convince the Caribbean Legion to sponsor his revolution), as a non-politician or “the worst politician” as he described himself (which enabled him to connect with the common citizen), as a “farmer-socialist” experimenting in his farm *La Lucha* with socialist policies (which enabled him to argue that he understood the needs and demands the rural workers and the masses and allowed him to effectively communicate with them through colloquial language), as a rope manufacturer and entrepreneur who saw the difficulties of starting his own business in the liberal oligarchic model (which enabled him connect with the rising middle class entrepreneurs and new industrialists), as the son of a newly emigrated Catalan speaking Spanish couple with an American wife (which allowed him to empathize with the English speaking Afro-Caribbean descendants born in Costa Rica who had not been fully integrated into Costa Rica’s society), and as a staunch anti-communist (which helped him win the approval of the United States and reduced the animosity of the conservative liberal oligarchs).

An interesting thing to note about Figueres’ discursive strategies is that, although he used populist interventions, he did not want to develop a populist mode of identification in which he was perceived as being above Costa Rica’s institutional framework. This supports Panizza’s argument that the relationship between populist interventions and democracy “cannot be established in abstract terms but should be assessed in relation to the political context in which they emerge” (Panizza 2009). As Panizza states, “different varieties of populist interventions have context-dependent relations with

democratic institutions” and it is important to “make explicit their normative implications” (Panizza 2009: 3-4). Figueres had to work within the existing highly institutionalized democratic structures. His normative framework was influenced/delimited by the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. Instead of developing a populist mode of political identification (a la Castro and a la Chavez/Maduro to name a few examples), Figueres worked very hard to create a strong political party with a democratic organizational structure and strong grass-root bases throughout the country. By late 1952, the PLN had established itself in all of Costa Rica’s cantons as well as 82% of all the districts (English 1971:53, Yashar 1997:220). This permanent ideological political party was able to appeal to sectors of society previously excluded by the liberal oligarchic order. Its internal democratic practices gave political access to lower and upper middle class members as mid-ranking officials. It incorporated women by granting them the right to vote in 1949, having the first two female congresswomen in Costa Rica history, as well as its first female president (Laura Chinchilla 2010-2014). The PLN also had the first African Caribbean Costa Rican congressman in 1953.

The PLN also created permanent branches throughout the country making many people living in areas outside the Central Valley such as Puntarenas, Guanacaste, and Limon become politically active for the first time in their lives. The liberal oligarchic interpretation of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary had focused on the Central Valley (San Jose, Cartago, Alajuela and Heredia) at the expense of the rest of the country and had had a limited definition of democracy - electoral democracy. The PLN was able to cultivate support in rural areas through the expansion of the welfare programs first created by Calderon during the 1940s, which had not been able to reach certain areas of the country due to economic and technical limitations at the time (Yashar 1997:220).

Once Figueres was democratically elected (1953-1958), his administration was able to address particularistic demands differentially through the expanding welfare state and through integrating potentially antagonistic groups and avoiding populist ruptures. The *Figueristas* also benefitted from

the infrastructural progress brought by the autonomous institutions to the Costa Rican rural areas. When the ICE brought electricity, telephone lines, and water pipes for the first time to rural areas, their workers became heroes in these communities. Jorge Amador's sociological studies analysing the impact of the ICE on rural communities shows the life-changing transformation that the ICE brought to them. The rural peasants viewed the ICE as the institution that had brought them out of the "dark ages" into modernity. Since the people equated the ICE with the PLN, the party benefited from this transformation (Amador 1991). The PLN sought to reinforce this connection through images such as the one shown in the photograph below.



Photograph of Jose Figueres with ICE engineers.

The enormous growth of the Costa Rican state under the social democratic administrations was also possible due to the favourable international economic environment during the 1950s and 1960s. As Longley (1997) argues, the social democrats were able to play Cold War politics in their favour receiving substantial amounts of foreign aid from the United States through programs such as the Alliance for Progress. They capitalized on the fact that it was also in the United States' interests to display Costa Rica as proof of the success of the capitalist liberal democratic order.

When Figueres' opponents criticized the excessive expansion of the Keynesian welfare state, he portrayed his opponents the following way:

While our party is successfully struggling to perfect Costa Rica's democracy, removing it from the privileged halls and taking it directly to the people, there is a sector of the aristocracy who resents the fact that they can no longer act as Great Electors. They develop useless and insidious campaigns to attack us, misusing their freedom of speech to disorient and mislead the people.

All our efforts to raise the country from its slumber, to take it out of the painful category of underdeveloped nation, are opposed by the newspaper s of the oligarchs and politicians, who long to go back to the days when the government of the Republic was only a tool they could manipulate safely to conduct their business and meet their vanity (Speech made by Figueres 1954).

Figueres thus presented the social democratic political project as a counter-hegemonic force seeking to expand the concept of democracy by including previously marginalized sectors. His opponents were portrayed as "aristocrats" seeking to obstruct the full democratization of Costa Rica to defend their historic privileged positions. Yet it is important to highlight that these oligarchs were portrayed as *adversaries* not as enemies – as the social democrats had done with the communists during the 1940s. Figueres argued that the existential threat was now over - this meant that politics once again could be perceived as the interaction between different political adversaries with competing *legitimate* political projects. As the 1958 presidential elections approached, the social democrats reinforced the message that political

differences should not lead to hostility. In his presidential message to Congress on May 1956, Figueres stated:

There are still two more years before the next elections. There is no reason to initiate a premature political struggle. Let us strive to make the work of the TSE of registering new voters easier and let's avoid when possible agitations that can disturb the peace of our country. Our voters now enjoy full guarantees; our electoral mechanisms have been remarkably improved. The TSE is faultless; citizens have become each time more demanding making government officials more accountable, and the government is now being run by a political groups whose raison d'être has been the respect of the sacred right of suffrage [...] Costa Rica can rest assured that the purity of their suffrage will be guaranteed. We all have an obligation to ensure that this struggle is orderly, honest, peaceful and exemplary (Jose Figueres Presidential Message to Congress delivered on May 1, 1956).

Presenting an image of Costa Rica as a consolidated democracy, Figueres argued that political battles could be contained within the post-civil war institutional framework. Politicians were now being held accountable by the active participation of the citizens. The Figueres administration was portrayed as being run by a group of men who rose to power to guarantee the sacred right of suffrage and Costa Rica was portrayed as having once again returned to its “exceptional” peaceful and consensual democratic path.

During the electoral campaign leading to the February 1958 elections, all political leaders sought to reduce potential tensions. Just like in the 1953 elections, the 1958 elections were perceived as transparent, fair and free elections. On February 2, 1958 Mario Echandi of the National Unity Party won the presidential election obtaining 46.4% of the votes. The PLN candidate, Francisco Orlich, won 42.8% of the votes and a new political party, the National Independent party, won 10% of the votes. The PLN won the congressional elections obtaining 20 seats, while the Republican Party had 11 seats, the National Unity Party 10, the Independent Party 3, and the Revolutionary Civil Union party 1. Although they did not control Congress, they were by far the largest party. Costa Rican political leaders portrayed the 1958 presidential election as proof that Costa Rica's democracy had been consolidated. The peaceful electoral campaign, the respect of the sanctity of the vote guaranteed by the TSE, and the transfer of power from the

government to the opposition confirmed Costa Rica's democratic nature. The path to the rise of hegemony of the social democratic discourse had been cleared. We will now explore the rise of the social democratic hegemony.

Emergence of the new myth of Unity and the rise of the social democratic hegemony

While the military victory of the social democratic revolutionaries did not guarantee their hegemonic success, it did constitute the condition of possibility for it, as it created a dislocation in the existing political symbolic order. As Norval states, "political change involves a change in political identification, a change in the understanding of one's self and one's place in relation to others and to a set of wider practices" (quoted by Panizza and Miorelli 2012:6 from Norval 2006: 243-245). The civil war created the possibility for political change by creating a crisis of identity. Neither the liberal oligarchic discourse nor any other discourse available at the time could explain how a civil war had occurred in a society that had been defined as a peace-loving, egalitarian, homogenous, consensual and democratic due to its atypical colonial history, its unique socio-economic and political model, and its political culture. This identity crisis allowed the social democrats to start the process of re-defining the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary in accordance with their own political project. The first step in this was to create a new myth to give meaning to the social dislocation. As Buenfil Burgos explains, mythical discourses emerge "to offer a reorganizing principle when identities have been dislocated, thus concealing the contingent 'origins' of social institutions"(Buenfil Burgos 2000: 88). The social democrats used the 1948 civil war as a key articulatory episode to build a new imaginary horizon. They framed their armed insurrection as the *National Liberation War* and started constructing the image of Jose Figueres as the "defender" of Costa Rica's democracy and, by the 1960s, as the "founder" of Costa Rica's democracy (arguing that before 1948 Costa Rica was a proto-democracy). Through these myths, the social democrats succeeded in creating a new national unifying nodal point around which they could justify their alternative hegemonic project. As discussed in previous chapters, before the 1948 civil war the social democratic discourse had not been able to appeal to different

sectors of Costa Rican society. Through the emergence of the *National Liberation* myth, they had the vehicle to do it.

By 1958 the social democratic interpretation of the 1948 civil war had become widely accepted by all sectors of Costa Rican society. The civil war was portrayed as a pro-democratic movement, and the internal political frontiers became less rigid and less antagonistic. Figueres summarized this interpretation in a speech he delivered during the transfer of power:

After a war between brothers, when all have reached full freedom and the wide enjoyment of their rights as citizens, there is no reason for hatred to continue; even less for this hatred to be transmitted from one generation to the next. In its place, we must develop a system in which we can debate the normal discrepancies in our political views and have a free game of electoral forces. The parents who belonged to one side or the other during the war, and are now transmitting to their children their feelings of the Civil War are doing a bad thing.

Faults were committed by both sides, but enough blood has been spilled to wash away all sins. If we keep on feeding the feeling of hatred, it will be hard to avoid another violent outbreak. And that violent outbreak in turn would engender new hatreds (Speech made by outgoing president Figueres when handing over power to president elect Mario Echandi May 8, 1958).

Through this agonistic type of discursive logic, Figueres sought to recreate the image of Costa Rica as a “family”. He integrates elements of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary into the *National Liberation* myth by re-framing the civil war as a “war between family members” no longer as a battle to prevent a *Caldero-comunista* dictatorship as he had previously argued. This new interpretation allowed him to push the political frontier once again to the margins of Costa Rican society. Setting this external political frontier allowed Figueres to use the *National Liberation* myth as a new unifying myth. He persuaded the war veterans and the family members of the departed to let go of their hatred and think of the future. The fact that he integrated elements of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary made his narrative appear not only plausible, but also desirable to the Costa Rican population. Through this myth, they could explain to themselves and their children why an innately peaceful and democratic society had had a civil war. More importantly, it showed why civil unrest was no longer an acceptable mode of political

mobilization. The civil war had successfully consolidated Costa Rica's democracy, which meant that from now on political battles had to be understood as battles between "adversaries" not "enemies" (Norval 2000). The power that this myth had in de-radicalizing Costa Ricans made it appealing to all political actors regardless of the fact that they recognized the contingency of this narrative and its internal contradictions. As other political actors adopted it, starting with Otilio Ulate, the myth created the discursive condition of possibility for the social democrat's rise to hegemony. Once again it was possible to have a hegemonic discourse that could differentially integrate particular demands as the liberal oligarchic discourse had done during the 1880s-1930s.

Dislocation created by the 1948 Civil War

The dislocation created by the 1948 Civil War meant that the previous floating signifiers that had been temporarily fixed by the liberal oligarchic discourse - *democracy*, *equality/homogeneity*, *generalized poverty* and the appropriate role of the state - which had been articulated in relation to the nodal point liberalism - became detached from the chain of signification into which the liberal oligarchic discourse had fixed them. With this new political frontier, the social democrats created a new chain of signification redefining the nodal point – liberalism.

The most prominent social democratic intellectual, Rodrigo Facio, argued that liberalism had to be divided into two different elements: *political liberalism* and *economic liberalism*. According to Facio, retaining some elements of *political liberalism* was wise and necessary as those elements were the basic components of a democracy upon which the social democrats could build a more expanded version. However, *economic liberalism* had to be changed. *Economic liberalism* was corrupting *political liberalism's* goals of strengthening democracy as it led to society's selfish neglect for collective problems. The separation of *political liberalism* from *economic liberalism* was necessary to avoid placing the whole concept of *liberalism* in danger as had happened during the Calderon Guardia and Teodoro Picado administrations

(1940-1948). According to Facio's narrative, the Costa Rican communists had correctly pointed out the deficiencies of *economic liberalism* but were proposing the wrong remedy based on their flawed ideology. Marxist ideology would lead to the complete destruction of *political liberalism*. In order to defend *liberalism* from extreme foreign ideologies, social democrats proposed modifying the concept to include the economic dimension, and expanding its definition to include a participatory notion of democracy. Following the "innovative continuity" strategy, Facio developed the concept of "constructive liberalism" (a word the social democrats considered would be more appealing than their original term *economic socialism*). Facio elaborated this concept in his article entitled "Constructive liberalism is an evolutionary and humanist way of achieving social democracy" published in the Surco magazine edition of December 1942. In another article in the same magazine, he argued:

Therefore, we will have abandoned economic liberalism, but not destroying it with a totalitarian anti-capitalist model; rather by improving the capitalist system through a mixed regime of autonomous institutions and cooperatives, and through state assistance towards small companies helping them compete with the strong oligarchic ones and eliminating monopolies (Surco N 25 February 1945).

This re-articulation of *liberalism* also meant a redefinition of the role of the state. The Costa Rican state had to become more interventionist in order for the state to fulfil its function of defending the Costa Ricans' economic rights, not just their limited political rights – as the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order had done before them. The social democrats argued that it was necessary to build upon the positive attributes of Costa Rica's democratic tradition, but move the concept forward so that Costa Rica's political and economic system would be in keeping with the changing historical circumstances. This transition to a more active state did not encounter the ideological resistance found in other countries such as the United States, which have historically equated state intervention with loss of personal liberty. It was a much easier transition in Costa Rica due to the positive perception of state involvement for Costa Ricans, and to the *transformist* nature of the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order that had encouraged a significant amount of state intervention as discussed in the previous chapters.

The social democratic discourse built upon the liberal oligarchic interpretation of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary, but modified it:

We find ourselves in the mid twentieth century in a country with strong democratic traditions, generalized public education, a strong work ethic and a desire for peace. We owe these characteristics probably due to certain attributes of our people, our temperament, and the vision of our educators as past statisticians (Surco N 52 – February 1945).

While the liberal oligarchic explanation of Costa Rica’s “exceptionalism” emphasized atypical structural factors present during the colonial period, the social democratic discourse placed emphasis on political decisions taken by its political leaders. The liberal oligarchs had sought to minimize the role of the political leaders so as to argue that the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order had “naturally” evolved as a result of structural factors. This sense of “natural evolution” de-politicized the liberal oligarchic order and hid the contingency of its discursive formation. The social democrats instead wanted to expose the contingency of the liberal oligarchic discourse so as to form their counter-hegemonic order - the social democratic Second Republic.³⁸ However, after failing to create a sense of urgency by convincing the Costa Rican population of the need for a “complete rupture” (as Figueres did during the period leading to the 1948 civil war), the social democrats shifted their argument to one of necessary gradual modifications to the existing liberal oligarchic order.

Regarding the two most important political leaders of the liberal oligarchic period, Don Cleto Gonzalez Viquez, twice president of Costa Rica, (1906-1910 and 1928-1932) and Don Ricardo Jimenez Oreamuno, three times president of Costa Rica (1910-1914, 1924-1928 and 1932-1936), Figueres argued:

I feel the greatest esteem for our past visionary statesmen. But we have to recognize that they were waging a different battle than ours.

³⁸ The social democrats wanted to hide the contingency of their own discourse, stating that their political project was not ideologically based but rather based on scientific evidence.

They had to set the foundation for our democratic rights when it was still believe that it was not the state's obligation to provide social services to its citizens and guarantee the well-being of each individual (Jose Figueres in his book Cartas a un Ciudadano 1956).

While the liberal oligarchs' struggle had allowed Costa Rica to transition to democracy, it was now time for the social democrats to consolidate it by focusing on the economic dimension of democracy. The social democrats argued that with regards to economic development, Costa Rica was not "exceptional" relative to its Latin American neighbours:

In the world stage, Costa Rica appears as an "under-developed country" defined as a country with low national and household income, low wages, which has the majority of the population living in poverty and disconnected from the progress of the time. This classification alone may be of little importance, since a country is theoretically entitled to follow the path it wants if its people feel satisfied with what they have. But actually the people of Costa Rica are not satisfied. They love the peace and freedom that our political system has given them, but they feel the urge to improve economically, to be better educated, to become homeowners in the city or own their fertile plot of land in the country side, to increase the productivity of their harvest or have higher wages; to be able to feed the family without anxiety; to have health services within their reach when they are sick and a secure income in case of an emergency, to send their children to high school and university (Figueres 1956: 18).

The social democratic narrative argued that Costa Rican society could no longer passively accept its state of poverty, as it had done under the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order. Although Costa Rica did not have the extreme inequality that other Central American countries had, there was a significant portion of the population living in poverty:

Our greatest weakness is not the bad distribution of wealth (which is, to a certain extent unavoidable), but rather the lack of abundant wealth due to low levels of productivity leading to low GDP growth (Figueres 1956:67).

Figueres argued that to address the problem of poverty it was necessary to modify the economic development model. With the assistance of the state, new industries could be created to reduce the external dependence on basic goods. They argued that the devastating impact of this dependence on foreign goods had become clear during World War I and World War II. It was

not enough to address the social question through institutional reforms like the liberal oligarchs (1821-1930) and the *Calderonista* regime had done (1940-1948). Figueres stated:

The ills of our country cannot be remedied with only good intentions, nor exclusively with political policies. Social problems have an economic background. To end the misery we must produce wealth (Figueres 1956:67).

The social democratic narrative argued that the Partido Liberacion Nacional provided the most advanced answer to solving the *social question*. It argued that ideological tendencies seeking to address the *social question* could be divided into three groups:

- 1) *Those who simply highlight the evils of poverty and injustice without seeking plausible and productive remedies.*
- 2) *Those who are concerned with a fairer **distribution** of existing wealth without dealing with economic growth because they consider it to be outside the scope of the state and feel that the state's role must be solely to create institutions to correct social injustices [...] They have the merit of promoting labour laws, of creating taxes to cover public services, of guaranteeing higher minimum wages, social insurance and other measures to distribute the proceeds of the national work. Unfortunately, in Costa Rica such honourable developments have sometimes served as a smokescreen used by the communists to cloud graft and commit electoral fraud. The ones to blame for this are the leaders of democracy focused on political rights without focusing on economic ones, who either, out of routine or out of ignorance, do not understand the times we are living and allow opportunistic politicians to take charge (Figueres 1956:46).*

In the second category, the social democrats were referring to the *Caldero-comunist* regime's approach. Although they acknowledged the great progress made by the social reforms passed during the Calderon Guardia administration, they emphasized the limits of the Christian democratic approach. The Christian democrats, under the influence of the communists, had focused on the *distribution* rather than the *creation* of wealth. They further argued that it was deeply regrettable that the *Calderonistas* and the communists tainted their success in passing these social reforms in a context of committing electoral fraud, corruption, political demagoguery, and nepotism.

The social democrats proposed a third way that would include the economic dimension of democracy by focusing on the *production* of wealth. Regarding the proponents of the third approach, the social democrats argued:

3) And finally there are those who study the national economic situation scientifically, formulate development plans to increase production while simultaneously seeking to improve the distribution abiding by the criteria of social justice, both by raising minimum wages and by building new public schools and colleges, health care centres, improving social insurance and guaranteeing housing (Figueres 1956:46).

According to the social democratic narrative, this third approach would increase economic development while spreading social justice. Their argument can be summarized as follows: there cannot be distribution without production, and without justice, production does not lead to widespread economic growth. The social democrats sought to position themselves at the ideological centre, placing the liberal oligarchic discourse on the far right and the communist discourse on the far left. They then argued that *economic development* was a precondition for the achievement of true *liberty*. They sought to redefine the role of the state in the economy by arguing that most economic activity had a *social - public* function and that therefore it had to be regulated and assisted by the state. This narrative argued that:

In developed countries that have mixed economies from Sweden to Japan, whatever their political system might be, behind every business, large or small, there is a strong state supporting them. [...] We (Costa Ricans) still do not understand the proper interaction between the state and companies in the nation's economic progress. We still perceive the producer as someone merely seeking personal/company gains. In turn, the producers also perceive themselves this way. As important as their activities are for the public good, they are still viewed and called "private", as if it is possible to disconnect it from the overall interests of the nation. I repeat once again: we consider that business activities, regardless of their size, the goods they produce and the specific service they provide are all fulfilling a public function and therefore they need and deserve support from the state (Figueres 1956: 47).

By redefining what should be considered *public* (any economic activity that is necessarily linked to the general interest of the nation) and *private* (all family affairs that do not transcend the household unit), the social democratic

discourse was trying to redefine the relation between businesses vis-à-vis the national economy and state involvement vis-à-vis these businesses. They were also trying to re-define the perceptions of interests of the producers/entrepreneurs. Figueres argued:

The competent owners of industries and commerce [...] must realize that their activities are really social, not private, since they provide a good or service for everyone. Their perception of "government waste" must be re-assessed by analysing the effects of government spending within the context of the whole economy. [...] The notion that government positions are pursued for the purpose of self-enrichment has kept honest people from working in government. Public service instead should be perceived as the most important and honourable activity of all, since government provides an orientation for all of us to follow [...] They (capitalists) must also understand that their subordinates are not instruments to fulfil their personal ambitions, but rather partakers of a common activity due to a natural division of labour. That these people deserve equal respect as human beings of a single class and that they deserve to have living standards and cultural opportunities aligned to the general wealth of the country. They must realize that the world asks for their constructive and patient help in maintaining delicate relations in the economic sphere and that in return for their help they will not only get stability but also the great joy of feeling helpful (Presidential message by Jose Figueres delivered on March 22, 1957).

The social democrats sought to encourage the businessmen to look beyond mere profit and to see the social function that their business was fulfilling. They also sought to widen their concept of interest to include not just mere profit but the satisfaction of working towards the betterment of society. This discourse also sought to redefine labour-capital relations. The social democratic discourse stated:

Labour- management struggle in industrial countries would have been less harsh, if manufacturers had realized that the sales of their products increases as wages rise across the country, and if workers had understood that to raise the standard of living of the majority it is first necessary to become more productive. Labour relations have entered a new phase in the advanced nations. Modern employers struggle less against labourers and more against inefficient production methods. Union leaders focus less on organizing resistance movements and more on collaborating with others. There are fewer mass strikes and more round-table conference between managers and labour leaders, seeking common ways to raise production, consumption, wealth and justice. The democratic trade union movements have shown that they understand economic dynamics (Figueres 1956: 47).

Through this idealized characterization of Keynesian economy models, the social democrats argued that the interest of capital and labour were not necessarily irreconcilable, and that developed countries already acknowledged this. They argued that capital and labour had common enemies - lack of economic progress due to inefficiency, lack of productivity, and lack of adequate technology. To fight these common enemies, capital and labour had to cooperate.

The social democrats also argued that Costa Rica's democracy had evolved to a point that Costa Ricans had to focus not only on their rights, but also on their responsibilities. Figueres argued: "Our democracy has reached a level of maturity that obliges the citizens to shoulder their responsibilities" (*Figueres 1956: 3*). He argued that the communists had incorrectly focused only on demanding citizens' rights, neglecting that they also have responsibilities.

While the liberal oligarchic interpretation of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary had placed the rural worker as the key articulatory actor, the social democrats placed the middle class in this central position. According to an article published in *Diario de Costa Rica* on August 8, 1953:

His (Figueres') revolution was not a Marxist revolution. It was a middle class revolution. The middle class has taken over and the peasants have become middle class (Diario de Costa Rica – August 8, 1953).

The middle class was framed as the motor of social and economic development. The larger the middle class and the greater its purchasing power, the larger the internal market and thus the greater Costa Rica's economic growth. As the social democrats stated:

The aim we are now pursuing is for all social classes to fuse into a larger middle class that enjoys the comforts and cultural opportunities of our times thanks to technical improvements in economic production (Figueres quoted by Rodriguez 1998:99).

The middle class was used as a national unifying concept by including the working classes, peasants, as well as progressive sectors of upper class

(Rodriguez 1998: 99). Its purpose was to replace the liberal oligarchic conception of ethnic homogeneity, which had already been discredited by the Radicales del 1900, the communists, and other anti-liberal oligarchic discourses, with a new unifying concept - class homogeneity. The previously assumed *egalitarianism* was replaced with *equality of opportunity*. Costa Rica remained cast as a classless society, now not because of the old narrative of widespread poverty, but instead because everyone inclusively belonged to the middle class. The concept of ethnicity also expanded to include African Caribbean Costa Ricans.

As mentioned previously, the social democrats were the first to include the African Caribbean Costa Ricans into the political system. As an African Caribbean man stated:

When Jose Figueres began his presidential campaign, he visited the black communities and offered us hope. He proclaimed that everyone deserved the right to vote and that we were all equal. He said that the time had come for black children to receive quality education and quality opportunities. Figueres included for the first time the blacks and we felt part of the country (Diana Senior 2011:217).

In fact, the social democrats were the first to have an African Caribbean congressman, as well two female congresswomen. This historic turning point is emphasised during the November 2, 1953 congressional session:

Congressmen Ruben took the floor to state a historical fact. Yesterday two ladies adorned this Congress. For the first time in our history women have been elected to Congress. There is no doubt that democracy is increasingly being perfected. Also for the first time in our history a member of the coloured race has been elected to Congress. Members of the coloured race were brought to our soil to work under harsh conditions, in areas with inclement weather where our own workers did not want to live. They have offered the country their hard efforts, their energies and contributed as all other Costa Ricans to the achievement of the economic progress we now enjoy. Therefore, it was necessary to do justice to this race. It was about time for us to show them that in our country people have the same rights regardless of their skin colour – white, black, or yellow (Act of Congress on November 2, 1953).

Therefore, by re-articulating and stabilizing the floating signifiers *democracy*, *poverty*, *equality/homogeneity* and *state* around a new nodal point *constructive liberalism* (which was more appealing than social democracy), the social democrats created the new discursive structure needed to legitimize the interventionist/welfare state model. Following a *transformist* strategy, they appealed to the sectors previously excluded from the liberal oligarchic hegemonic order. To address the growing demands of the Costa Rican population, the social democrats expanded the Costa Rican state, leading to the bureaucratization of Costa Rica's democracy (indirectly serving as a source of patronage).

The PLN was the perfect vehicle to institutionalize the social democratic discourse. Indeed, the organizational power of the Partido Liberacion Nacional has been one of the greatest sources of strength for the social democratic discourse. During the rise to hegemony of the social democratic discourse (1960-1980), the PLN delegates occupied the highest positions in autonomous institutions including perhaps the most influential from an ideological point of view – the University of Costa Rica. Rodrigo Facio, the founder of the Centro and the most important social democratic intellectual, was the Dean of the University of Costa Rica from 1952 to 1961 when he died. During the period under study, most of the Deans of the University of Costa Rica were active members of the PLN. The PLN supporters were traditionally the leaders of the unions of the autonomous institutions and served as high-ranking officials in the banking sector. From the creation of the *Direccion Nacional de Desarrollo de la Comunidad* to the 1980s, the PLN controlled most of the Development Associations as well as the community organizers. The party's leaders were very actively involved in the cooperative sector and the state police was also influenced by the PLN, as its highest-ranking members were once members of the social democratic revolutionary armies. The PLN also dominated the media through the newspaper *La Republica*, which competed with the liberal oligarchic newspaper *La Nacion*. All of these factors facilitated the social democratic rise to hegemony during the late 1950s up until the 1980s.

Conclusion

Contrary to the consensual view, the social democratic rise to hegemony was not the natural result of their military victory. The social democrat's gradual rise to hegemony was facilitated by the following: a) the adoption of the *National Liberation* myth by the most important political actors during the immediate post-civil war period – particularly Otilio Ulate; b) Figueres's use of populist interventions that became effective only after the *National Liberation* myth had become widely accepted; c) the creation of the *Partido Liberacion Nacional* – the first party to integrate marginalized sectors of national unity directly into the political system; and d) the creation of the welfare state with autonomous institutions headed by *Figueristas*. The fact that most political leaders adopted the *National Liberation* myth and the predominance of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary facilitated the process of national reconciliation after the civil war.

Applying insights from Carstensen's (2009) model of ideational change allows us to explain how these two contradictory myths could co-exist. By incorporating elements of meaning from the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary into their re-interpretation of the 1948 civil war, the social democrats were able to create the *National Liberation* myth. They were able to hide the inherent contradictions between their actions in the civil war and the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary by framing their actions as a defence of Costa Rica's democracy. Both of these myths have served as crucial factors fostering Costa Rica's democratic political stability. The next chapter concludes this dissertation highlighting the lessons that can be drawn from the Costa Rican case study with regards democratic transitions and consolidations.

Chapter 7

Lessons to be Drawn from the Costa Rican case study

The persistence of façade democracies throughout much of Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, as well as the transformation of the “Arab Spring” hopes with the tumbling of the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan and Yemeni dictatorships into the “Islamist Winter” remind us of the extreme complexity behind processes of democratic transition and consolidation. Although one of the most important lessons we have learnt over the past decades is that democracy cannot emerge simply by imposing foreign discursive structures and replicating democratic institutional frameworks, it remains as crucial as ever for scholars to explore successful cases of democratic consolidations to extract some very broad lessons. Costa Rica is one of the few consolidated democracies in Latin America.

Alongside Uruguay and Chile, Costa Rica outperforms other Latin American nations with higher levels of economic growth and social spending, lower levels of poverty and inequality, more opportunities for human development and a great respect for public institutions. As Isbester (2010) states, these nations share some common characteristics. They are middle-income countries, have strong states with professional institutions, relatively competent and embedded bureaucracies, a strong party system that facilitates democratic governance, an executive that must work with Congress and widespread respect for the rule of law. Their states have invested heavily in human development and have actively intervened in the economy. They have had visionary political leaders. Costa Rica’s Jose Figueres can be compared to Uruguay’s Jose Batlle y Ordonez – both are still evoked to this day as powerful national myths (Isbester 2010:363). It is clear that the experiences of these countries cannot be replicated elsewhere as they also share highly specific characteristics. These three countries are comparatively small, with relatively homogenous ethnic populations and predominantly of the same faith. They have had long and proud traditions of democracy (despite some interruptions), and have developed dense civil societies, with social norms of trust and equality, and a democratic political culture based on the

notion of social justice (Isbester 2010: 364). How did the Costa Rican, Chilean and Uruguayan political leaders develop these strong institutions and these civic political cultures? Why haven't other Latin American countries followed their lead?

This dissertation focuses on one of these three exceptional cases – Costa Rica – and explores one under-analysed dimension of its democratization process – the discursive dimension. When analysing Costa Rica's democratization process, this dissertation agrees with the current academic consensus that views its “atypical” socio-economic structures during the post-Independence period as *necessary* but *insufficient* conditions for its democratic transition (Lehoucq 2012, Cruz 2005, Seligson 2014). Central American analysts have shown that Costa Rica's socio-economic conditions were not as “atypical” relative to its Central American neighbours as the *rural democracy* proponents have argued. The dissertation agrees with the *political crafting* argument that, to understand Costa Rica's “exceptionalism”, it is crucial to analyse the policy choices taken by political leaders during key moments in the country's history – its immediate post-independence period (1820s), the liberal reform period started during the 1870s, the dislocatory impact of the Great Depression (1930s), and the post 1948 civil war period. The policy choices made by these key political actors during these moments helped build the democratic institutional framework that then triggered path dependent tendencies.

This dissertation further builds on the *political crafting* propositions, arguing that it is crucial to understand *why* Costa Rican political leaders chose drastically different policy paths relative to their neighbours. To understand why Costa Rican political leaders chose to interpret and frame their socio-economic and political situations in ways that were conducive to democracy, while their Central American neighbours chose to interpret and frame them in ways that were conducive to authoritarian regimes, it is necessary to analyse a crucial institution that remains under-analysed by academics exploring Costa Rica's democratic success – the role played by its “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. This dissertation argues that the “exceptionalist”

collective imaginary is best conceived as one more institution shaping political outcomes. Throughout Costa Rica's history, it has influenced political outcomes by: a) impacting the way political actors have interpreted and framed their socio-economic and political context; b) influencing the perceptions of interests held by key political players and how they framed these interests to other political actors in their search for allies; c) delimiting the types of discourses and actions considered legitimate within historically specific national and international ideational contexts; d) defining what political outcomes were perceived as desirable or "necessary" depending on which "crisis narrative" succeeded in becoming hegemonic during critical periods; e) influencing the way political leaders presented themselves to the public by determining which attributes were considered desirable in a political leader; f) impacting the way political leaders responded to international factors; and g) structuring political dynamics by determining the possible modes of political mobilization during specific historical periods.

This dissertation traces the roots of Costa Rica's democratization back to its colonial period when the first governor of Costa Rica, Vazquez de Coronado, created a sense of proto-national identity that led to the emergence of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary. It supports Consuelo Cruz's view that a nation's sense of collective identity helps shape political outcomes (Cruz 2000, 2005). By creating a proto-national identity that portrayed Costa Rica as an "exceptionally" peaceful, consensual and egalitarian society, Vazquez de Coronado and the political leaders who followed him delimited the range of political actions considered acceptable, feasible and desirable. Building on Cruz's work, but taking a "thicker" definition of discourse, this dissertation argues that this sense of national identity served to constitute social relations enabling the discursive construction of certain types of political identities and precluding others. Breaking away from Cruz's "deliberative democracy" model of politics (also used by the proponents of the *political culture approach*), it adopts PSDT "adversarial model" of politics.

This dissertation argues that, while conflict remained central in Costa Rican politics, the hegemonic battles fought throughout its history have been

confined by the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary. This discursive institution shaped the hegemonic battles fought between the conservatives and the liberals during the post-independence period, influencing the country’s democratic institutional development. During the 1820s and 1830s, the group of intellectuals called the *Tertulias Patrióticas* was able to contain the inevitable tensions that broke out between the two competing factions by warning them not to follow the Central American path of violence and encouraging them to channel their conflict through the liberal democratic institutions they created. Therefore, paradoxically, Costa Rica’s democratic transition was facilitated by the fact that it was surrounded by violent, oppressive authoritarian regimes. This politico-discursive technique of using the threat of the “Central Americanization of Costa Rican politics” to weaken internal divisions has been used by political leaders throughout its history.

The “exceptionalist” collective imaginary also led to the predominance of *transformist* political projects. This in turn influenced the scope and pace of Costa Rica’s institutional development, favouring constant, gradual and reformist institutional change as opposed to revolutionary change. During the liberal oligarchic period, the predominance of the logic of *transformism* led to a “reformist” variant of liberalism as opposed to the “radical” variant present in Guatemala and El Salvador or the “aborted” variant present in Nicaragua and Honduras. Costa Rica’s democratic transition was facilitated by the ability of the liberal oligarchic leaders to disarticulate political alliances between potentially antagonistic groups by differentially incorporating the demands made by labour movements, peasant associations, and anti-imperialist movements through institutional and legislative means, thus preventing populist ruptures. This meant that, unlike the rest of Central America, the “Liberal Revolution” did not lead to authoritarian regimes, but rather served to further consolidate Costa Rica’s liberal democracy.

The fact that Costa Rican liberals had to integrate elements of meaning of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary in order to make their political discourses appealing to the Costa Rican population constrained their actions. The predominance of the *transformist* logic of articulation also shaped the types of

counter-hegemonic movements that emerged. During the late 1800s, while the Guatemalan liberal dictator Justo Ruffino and the Nicaraguan liberal dictator Jose Zelaya imposed authoritarian and coercive regimes, and liberal dictator Tomas Guardia pursued a counter-hegemonic movement that integrated previously excluded sectors into Costa Rica's political system, further consolidating its democratic institutions and expanding economic opportunities to previously marginalized sectors. His success in this endeavour enabled the *Olympians* to make their liberal oligarchic discourse the hegemonic one. The liberal oligarchic hegemony in turn ensured Costa Rican democratic political stability until the 1930s.

The dislocatory effect of the Great Depression encouraged a group of law students, workers, and radical intellectuals to found the Costa Rican Communist Party in 1931. This was the first political discourse creating a strong *internal* political frontier dividing Costa Rican society into two irreconcilable blocks. The vast majority of the Costa Rican population perceived the CRCP as an "existential threat" to Costa Rica's "exceptional" national identity. Yet the influence of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary shaped the strategies used by the Costa Rican political leaders Cleto Gonzalez Viquez (1928-1932) and Ricardo Jimenez (1932-1936) in reaction to this perceived threat. Instead of brutally repressing the communists as the other Central American leaders did at the time (Martinez Hernandez in El Salvador, Jorge Ubico in Guatemala, Somoza in Nicaragua, and Tiburcio Carias in Honduras), the Costa Rican political leaders sought to de-radicalize them by integrating them into the political system. This in turn encouraged the CRCP to shift their initial revolutionary strategies towards more conciliatory ones. This shift in strategy was also possible due to the changing international ideational environment (i.e. the 1936 Soviet shift towards a Popular Front strategy and the Soviet alliance with the Anglo-American forces). After their overwhelming electoral defeat in the 1936 presidential elections, the CRCP decided to create the *comunismo a la tica* myth to make their political project more appealing to the Costa Rican population by incorporating elements of the "exceptionalist" collective imaginary into their Marxist discourse. The contingency of this myth was evident by the fact that

the CRCP shifted strategies in accordance with Soviet strategic shifts and by the fact that the CRCP retained its Marxist goal of an eventual socialist revolution in Costa Rica. While working to create the conditions for an eventual socialist revolution, the CRCP sought to increase their influence by forming an alliance with the Christian democratic president Calderon Guardia.

Calderon's multiple strategic mistakes (breaking his alliance with former president Leon Cortes, alienating coffee oligarchs of German descent with his World War II policies, neglecting the *Centristas*, allowing corruption in all levels of his administration, using nepotistic practices, and violating his opponents' freedom of speech) had placed him in a weak political position. To avert a potential coup, Calderon agreed to form a loose alliance with the CRCP. At the same time, the dislocation of the liberal oligarchic hegemony had also encouraged the emergence of another political group battling for hegemony – the social democrats. The *Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales* intellectuals and the *Figueristas* created a social democratic counter-hegemonic movement. They sought to further expand the concept of democracy, shifting from an exclusively *electoral* conception of democracy to a *participatory* democracy. They also linked the concept of democracy to what they called *economic freedoms* (Rodrigo Facio 1940s). They proposed a gradual shift away from the primarily coffee and banana based agro-export development model to a more diversified export model, seeking to build the base for an eventual transition to an import-substitution-industrialisation model. Throughout the 1940s, the social democrats interpreted the socio-economic and political crisis triggered by the effects of World War II as evidence that a “paradigm shift” (Hay 2001) was necessary.

After failing to garner political support for their “Second Republic”, Figueres took advantage of the growing discontent amongst the people due to the deteriorating economic situation and the animosity felt by Costa Ricans towards the communists to create a crisis narrative that argued that the *Caldero-comunista* regime was leading Costa Rican into a state of political, economic and moral chaos. They framed the *Caldero-comunista* regime as “enemies” posing an “existential threat” to Costa Rica's “exceptionalist”

collective imaginary. Figueres also kept in contact with the members of the Caribbean Legion he met in exile, creating equivalential chains between Calderon Guardia, Somoza, Trujillo and Carias to convince the Caribbean Legion to help him overthrow the *Caldero-comunista* regime. Figueres then waited for an event that could help him rally support amongst the heterogeneous political groups forming the opposition (conservatives, liberals and social democrats). The annulment of the 1948 presidential elections by the *Calderonista*-dominated Congress that had granted the victory to the opposition candidate, Otilio Ulate, proved to be the perfect event to mobilize the opposition. Figueres argued that Calderon was seeking to impose a dictatorship with the help of the communists. Portraying the *Caldero-comunista* regime as an “existential threat” to Costa Rica’s “exceptional” national identity, Figueres was able to transform peace-loving citizens into revolutionary agents.

Upon winning the war, Jose Figueres erroneously believed that his military victory had granted him the right to found a social democratic “Second Republic”. However, the influence of the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary constrained the actions of Figueres, ensuring that what could have been a foundational moment in the country’s history remained a reformist one. Paradoxically, Figueres’ military victory placed him in a weak political position because it allowed its opponents to portray the social democrat’s actions as incompatible with Costa Rica’s “exceptional” national identity (starting a civil war and ruling through an illegitimate Junta were perceived as going against the “exceptionalist” national identity).

This dissertation disputes the consensual view that assumes that the victory of the social democrats during the civil war naturally translated into political success. It argues that the social democratic rise to hegemony was a complex and non-linear process that was possible only after the social democrats changed their initial political strategies and limited their goals. It explores three crucial factors that enabled the social democrats rise to hegemony. First, the social democrats were able to re-interpret the 1948 Civil War by creating the *National Liberation* myth, incorporating elements of

the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary into their narrative. Second, the fact that this myth became hegemonic was, in large part, because President Otilio Ulate (1949-1953) adopted it. Despite its historical inaccuracies, Ulate chose to adopt the *National Liberation* myth because he recognized the positive structuring power of this myth. Third, the *National Liberation* myth and the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary played crucial roles in suturing the dislocated order and ending the “identity crisis” caused by the civil war, which in turn transformed revolutionary agents back into peaceful citizens; thus facilitating Costa Rica’s democratic consolidation.

The post-civil war period in Costa Rica is an extremely interesting case study of how political leaders could de-radicalize political tensions through discursive strategies. The fact that all political leaders, regardless of their ideology, encouraged Costa Ricans to maintain their civil war grievances in the private realm made the reconciliation process remarkably smooth. This facilitated the elite settlement that took place amongst the conservatives, the liberals and the social democrats during the post-civil war period. In keeping with the *transformist* logic of articulation, the post-civil war institutional framework built upon the previous reformist ideas dating back to the *Radicales del 1900*, the *Partido Reformista*, president Alfredo Gonzales Flores (1914-1917), the reforms made by the great disciples of the *Grupo del Olimpio* – Presidents Cleto Gonzales Viquez (1906-1910 and 1928-1932) and Ricardo Jimenez (1910-1914, 1924-1928 and 1932-1936), and those made by Otilio Ulate (1949-1953). Following the logic of “innovative continuity” proposed by the social democrats during the 1940s, the institutional framework that emerged retained many elements of the liberal oligarchic socio-economic and political order. Building on its liberal democratic base, it expanded the concept of democracy to include continuous active citizen participation through non-personalistic political parties with internal democratic mechanisms. It translated the liberal oligarchic concept of equality that made poverty the unifying factor (i.e. if we are all poor, no one is poor) to the concept of *equality of opportunity*. The social democrats retained the sense of Costa Rica being a *classless society* arguing that Costa Ricans were all *middle class*. They then included all different sectors of society, in all different

regions of the country, and all different ethnicities and genders into this unifying “middle class” concept. Under the social democratic hegemony, political leaders succeeded in integrating growing demands differentially through institutional means, greatly expanding the state. The autonomous institutions they established facilitated the continuation of the social democratic hegemony. At the heart of the social democratic discourse, the party retained the liberal oligarchic conception that Costa Rica’s greatest strength was its internal unity and that it was the responsibility of everyone to discursively reinforce it.

Therefore, an analysis of Costa Rica’s democratization process focusing on the discursive dimension allows us to appreciate how certain logics of articulation help shape political dynamics. The predominance of discourses using the *logic of difference* has encouraged democratic practices and has stimulated the creation of inclusive institutions to differentially address heterogeneous demands. Costa Rica’s case study shows that weak internal political frontiers (opponents = adversaries) with strong external frontiers (Costa Rica as distinct from neighbours) leading to a strong sense of national identity and internal social cohesion are conducive to democratic practices. It also supports the view that while *agonistic* relations can be discursively transformed into *antagonistic* ones as the social democrats did during the period leading to the 1948 Civil War, they can equally be reversed to *agonistic* ones as happened during the immediate post civil war period.

With regards to the sequencing of the factors that led to Costa Rica’s democratization process, this case study argues that the first pre-requisite for Costa Rica’s democratic transition was the emergence of a sense of national identity (“exceptionalist” collective imaginary) developed by political leaders/intellectuals by combining their political projects with elements of the existing international and national ideational context. This “exceptionalist” collective imaginary encouraged political leaders to interpret their socio-economic contexts in ways that encouraged them to pursue policies conducive to democracy, which in turn created an inclusive institutional framework leading to a strong, legitimate, and respected state. The

interaction between these state institutions, the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary and the different political projects battling for hegemony created the discursive condition of possibility for Costa Rica’s democratization process. To promote their own political projects, intellectuals and political leaders created new myths by incorporating elements of this collective imaginary and gradually changing it. However, the actions of these political leaders were also constrained by these myths. Therefore, these myths exerted an ideational path dependency, which was hard to escape even after the 1948 Civil War. This dissertation builds on Dankwart Rustow’s argument that certain ingredients are indispensable to the genesis of democracy: a sense of national unity, ways of channelling inevitable political conflict, and a conscious adoption of democratic rules by both politicians and the electorate (Rustow 1970:361) by making the case that political myths and discursive structures play a crucial role in helping achieve these basic ingredients.

The Costa Rican case study also shows how contradictory myths can co-exist, much as the *National Liberation* myth and the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary did in Costa Rica, exposing the contingency of all discursive formations. It also highlights the link between hegemonic myths and the success or failure of populist interventions. While Jose Figueres used “populist interventions” (Panizza 2009) before the civil war and during the immediate post civil war period to attract popular support, these populist interventions were not greatly effective - as the electoral results in the 1949 elections for the Constitutional Assembly show. It was not until after the *National Liberation* myth became hegemonic that these “populist interventions” proved effective. The importance of a credible myth for the success of a political project is also evident by Rafael Angel Calderon’s political trajectory. From winning the 1940s presidential election with the largest margin in the country’s history and being perceived as the most progressive reformer in the country’s history, he descended to being portrayed as a puppet of the Costa Rican Communist Party and as posing a threat to Costa Rica’s exceptionalism. To understand why Calderon Guardia’s Christian democratic discourse failed to become hegemonic, we must consider the fact that his alliance with the communists created a

contradiction within his Christian democratic discourse, which his opponents capitalized on. Calderon's downfall also highlights the importance of communicative and coordinative discourses, disregarded by this president.

To conclude, we can state that the Costa Rica's case illustrates the importance of foundational myths in creating certain types of political identities and structuring socio-political relations in certain ways, the crucial role played by intellectuals in forming hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects, as well as the role of political myths in promoting certain forms of political mobilization that can either radicalize or de-radicalize opposition movements and thus encourage either revolutionary change or reformist democratic institutional development. It confirms the belief that, without a sense of national identity and a common vision of where a nation should be heading, as well as political myths and certain narratives that can serve to de-radicalize opposition movements, it is difficult for a country to transition to democracy. It is also crucial to create an institutional framework that can absorb the growing demands of distinct sectors of society differentially. This encourages political actors to transform potentially *antagonistic* relations into *agonistic* ones. Another crucial factor facilitating democratization processes is to allow counter-hegemonic movements to flourish, thus encouraging the continuous re-assessment of existing socio-economic and political models. This constant questioning of the model encourages gradual and reformist institutional change. Costa Rica's *transformist* model has allowed counter-hegemonic movements to develop freely.

Today, a counter-hegemonic movement is emerging in Costa Rica led by the new president Luis Guillermo Solís of the *Partido Acción Ciudadana*. His surprising victory in the 2014 elections confirmed the end of the bi-party political system – previously dominated by *Partido Liberación Nacional* and the *Partido Unidad Social Cristiana*. Interesting research questions for a future study include the following: Will the PAC intellectuals succeed in their political project of gradually shifting Costa Rica towards a “Third Republic” through their current strategy of “innovative continuity” which modifies elements of the social democratic hegemonic order and includes previously

excluded sectors of society such as gays, women, and atheists and which broadens the political agenda (for example, by making environmental sustainability not a development option, but rather one more obligation the state has vis-à-vis its citizens)? Will Luis Guillermo Solís succeed in his attempt to place himself in the national consciousness as the “real heir” of the *National Liberation* spirit through his current attempt of creating equivalential links between himself and José Figueres? How will the PAC intellectuals re-interpret the “exceptionalist” collective imaginary and the *National Liberation* myth? The period Costa Rica is living through today confirms that Costa Rican “exceptional” democratic evolution will continue to intrigue scholars for a while to come.

References

Acuña Ortega, Víctor Hugo (1994) "Historia del Vocabulario Político en Costa Rica: Estado, República, Nación y democracia (1821-1949)" in *Identidades nacionales y Estado Moderno en Centro América* edited by Taracena Arriolla, Arturo y Piel, Jean comps (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995) pp 63-74.

Acuña Ortega, Víctor Hugo and David Díaz Arias (2002) "Identidades nacionales en Centro América: bibliografía de los estudios historiográficos", in *Revista de Historia* (San José), No. 45 (enero-junio del 2002), pp. 267-283.

Acuña Ortega, Víctor Hugo (1994) "Nación y Clase Obrera en Centroamérica Durante la Época Liberal (1870-1930)" in *El paso del cometa. Estado, política social y culturas populares en Costa Rica (1800-1950)* edited by Iván Molina y Steven Palmer (editores), (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, Plumssock Mesoamerican Studies, 1994), pp 145-165.

Acuña Ortega, Víctor Hugo (2002) "La invención de la diferencia costarricense, 1810-1870" in *Revista de Historia* (San José-Heredia) No. 45 (enero-junio del 2002), pp. 191-228.

Aguillar Bulgarelli, Oscar (1974) *Costa Rica y sus Hechos Políticos de 1948* (San José: Costa Rica EDUCA).

Alvarenga Venutolo, Patricia "Comunidades y agentes del Estado en la construcción de formas cotidianas de negociación Costa Rica 1850-1914" *Revista de Historia* No 49-50 Enero-Dic 2004 pp 13-57/15.

Ameringer, Charles (1982) *Democracy in Costa Rica* (New York Praeger).

Barret Weber Laclau and Zizek *On Democracy and Populist Reason* Volume Five, Number One ISSN 1751-8229.

Bell, John Patrick (1971) *Crisis in Costa Rica: the 1948 Civil War* (Texas: University of Texas Press).

Berman, S. (2013) *Ideational Theorizing in the Social Sciences since "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State"* Governance Vol 26, Issue 2 pages 217-237 April 2013.

Berntzen, Einar (1993) *Democratic Consolidation in Central America: A Qualitative Comparative Approach* in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 14 No 3 Democratization in the Third World pp 589-604 Taylor and Francis Group.

Botey Sobrado, Ana María (2009) "Las representaciones sociales de la pobreza en la Costa Rica de la década de 1930" in *Pobreza e historia en Costa Rica: determinantes estructurales y representaciones sociales del siglo XVII a 1950* edited by Ronny J Viales Hurtado (San José: Editorial UCR) 273-296.

Booth, John (1999) *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy* (Colorado: Westview Press).

Booth, John, Christine J. Wade and Thomas W. Walker (2006) *Understanding Central America* (Colorado: Westview Press).

Booth, John (1999) "Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability" in *Democracy in Developing Countries Latin America Second Edition* edited by Larry Diamond, Jonathan Hartlyn, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers).

Buenfil Burgos, Rosa Nidia "The Mexican Revolutionary Mystique" in *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social change* ed. by David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press).

Busey, James (1962) *Notes on Costa Rica Democracy* (Colorado: University of Colorado Press).

BTI Costa Rica Country Report 2012

Calderon Hernandez, Manuel (2003) *De la Independencia a la Federacion (1821-1838)* in *Costa Rica desde las sociedades autoctonas hasta 1914* edited Ana Maria Botey Sobrado Catedra de Historia de las Instituciones de Costa Rica (San Jose: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica).

Canas, Alberto (2006) *Ochenta Anos no es Nada* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica).

Campbell, John and Pederson, Ove (2001) "Second Movement in Institutional Analysis" in *The Rise of Neoliberalism and Institutional Analysis* edited by John Campbell and Ove Pedersen (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Carstensen, Martin (2009) "Ideas are not as stable as political scientists want them to be – using discourse theory in ideational" research paper presented in Hojgaarden, Denmark for the Center for Comparison Welfare Studies.

Cerdas Cruz, Rodolgo (1998) *La Otra Cara del 48: Guerra Fria y movimiento Obrero en Costa Rica 1945-1952* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Cerdas Mora, Jaime (1993) *Memorias de Jaime Cerdas Mora: La Otra Vanguardia* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Castro Vega, Oscar (2007) *Fin de la Segunda Republica, Figueres y la Constituyente del 49* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Chacon Naranjo, Gustavo (2010) *Instituciones politico-economicas de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Chacón Hidalgo, Manuel (2000) "Del Estado a la República. Las monedas y la política de Costa Rica (1821-1850)" (San José: Banco Central de Costa Rica, Imprenta LIL, S. A), pp. 67-70.

Chacon Hidalgo, Manuel (2009) "Percepciones sociales e institucionales de la pobreza en Costa Rica colonial Siglos XVII y XVIII) in *Pobreza e historia en Costa Rica: Determinantes estructurales y Representaciones Sociales del Siglo XVII a 1950* edited by Ronny J Viales Hurtado (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica) pp 173-192.

Chan, Sylvia (2002) *Liberalism, Democracy and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Chaverri (1982) *Conquistadores y pobladores: Origenes historico-sociales de los Costarricenses* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Contreras, Gerardo and Jose Manuel Cerdas (1988) *Los Anos 40: Historia de una Política de Alianzas* (San Jose: Editorial Porvenir)

Cortes Zuniga, Castro (2003) *La invencion de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica).

Creedmen, Theodore (1971) *El Gran Cambio: De Leon Cortes a Calderon Guardia* (San Jose: Editorial de Costa Rica).

Cruz, Consuelo (2000) "Identity and Persuasion: How nations remember their pasts and make their futures" *World Politics* Vol 52 Number 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Cruz, Consuelo (2005) *Political Culture and Institutional Development in Costa Rica and Nicaragua* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

de la Cruz, Vladimir, "El Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Costa Rica". *Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos*. San José, No. 27 (septiembre-diciembre, 1980).

de la Cruz, Vladimir (2009) "Pobreza y lucha social en Costa Rica 1870-1930" in *Pobreza e historia en Costa Rica: determinantes estructurales y representaciones sociales del siglo XVII a 1950* edited by Ronny J Viales Hurtado (San Jose: Editorial UCR) (53-71).

Dengo, Maria Eugenia (2002) *Roberto Brenes Mesen* (San Jose: Editorial Estatal a Distancia).

Díaz Arias, David (2005) "La Invención de las Naciones en Centroamérica, 1821-1950", Boletín AFEHC N°15, publicado el 04 diciembre, available at http://afehc-historia-centroamericana.org/index.php?action=fi_aff&id=367

Diaz, David (2006) *Historia del 11 de Abril: Juan Santamaria entre el pasado y el presente (1915-2006)* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica).

Diaz, David (2007) *La fiesta de la independencia en Costa Rica 1821-1921* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica).

Diaz, David (2009) *Social Crises and Struggling Memories: Populism and Popular Mobilization: Violence and Memories of the Civil War in Costa Rica 1940-1948* PhD Dissertation presented to the Department of History of Indiana University.

Edelman, Marc (1992) *The Logic of the Latifundio: The Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press)

Fischel, Astrid (1990) *Consenso y Represion: una interpretacion socio-politica de la educacion costarricense* (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica).

Fischel, Astrid (1992) *El Uso Ingenioso de la Ideología en Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Formoso Herrera, Manuel (2007) *Teodoro Picado: Memorias* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Foster, Lynn (2007) *A Brief History of Central America* (New York: Checkmark Books).

Fumero Vargas, Ana Patricia *La Inaguracion del Monumento Naional: Fiestas y develizacion – Setiembre 1895 (Alajuela, Museo Historica Cultural Juans Santa Maria, 1998).*

Glynos Jason and David Howarth (2007) *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory* (New York: Routledge).

Guerra, Tomas (1997) *Jose Figueres y la Justicia Social* (San Jose: EDUCA).

Gudmundson, Lowell "Peasants, Farmer, Proletarian: Class Formation in a Smallholder Coffee Economy 1850-1950" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review Vol 69. No 2* (May 1989) pp 221-257.

Gudmundson, Lowell (2010) *Costa Rica antes del Café* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia)

Gofas, A and C. Hay (2010) "Varieties of Ideational Explanations" in *The Role of Ideas in Political Analysis: A Portrait of Contemporary Debates* edited by Gofas and Hay (London: Routledge) pp 13-55.

Gonzalez Vega, Claudio and Mesalles Luis (1988) "The Political Economy of Bank Nationalization: The Case of Costa Rica 1948-1988" in *Studies in Rural Finance Economics and Sociology Occasional Paper N 1464*

Hall, Peter "Preference Formation as Political Process: the case of monetary union in Europe" *Preferences and Situations: Points of Intersection between Historical and Rational Choice Institutionalism* edited by Ira Katznelson and Barry R Weingast (New York: Russels Sage Foundation (2005)

Harrison, Lawrence (1985) *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case* (Boston: Madison Books).

Hay, Colin (2001) "The Crises of Keynesianism and the Rise of Neoliberalism in Britain: An Ideational Institutional Approach" in *The Rise of Neoliberalism and Institutional Analysis* edited by John Campbell and Ove Pedersen (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Palgrave).

Howarth, David (2000) *Discourse* (Buckingham: Open University Press).

Howarth, David and Yannis Stavrakakis (2000) "Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis" in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change* edited by David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press) pp 1-23.

Howarth, David and Steven Griggs (2012) "Post-structuralist Policy Analysis: Discourse, Hegemony and Critical Explanation" in *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice* edited by Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis (North Carolina: Duke University Press).

Hernandez, Marielos Aguilar (2009) *Costa Rica en el siglo XX: luchas sociales y conquistas laborales* (San Jose: Universidad de Costa Rica).

Isbester, Katherine (2010) *The Paradox of Democracy in Latin America: Ten Country Studies of Division and Resilience* (Toronto: Toronto University Press).

Jaramillo Antillon, Juan (2003) *Historia y evolucion del Seguro Social de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Nacional de Salud y Social Seguridad).

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe (2001) *Second Edition: Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London and New York: Verso).

Laclau, Ernesto (2001) *Democracy and the Question of Power* Constellation Volumes 8 N. 1 Blackwell Publishers Ltd 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JK, UK and 350 Main Street Malden MA 02148 USA.

Laclau, Ernesto (2005) *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso).

Lehoucq, Fabrique (1991) "Class Conflict, Political Crisis and the Breakdown of Democratic Practices in Costa Rica: Reassessing the Origins of the 1948 Civil War" in *Journal of Latin American Studies* Vol 23 No.1 pp 37-60.

Lehoucq, Fabrique (1997) *Lucha electoral y sistema político en Costa Rica, 1948-1998* (Electoral Struggle and the Political System in Costa Rica) (San José: Editorial Porvenir).

Lehoucq, Fabrique (1998) *Instituciones democráticas y conflictos políticos en Costa Rica* (Democratic Institutions and Political Conflicts in Costa Rica) (San José: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional).

Lehoucq, Fabrique and Ivan Molina (1999) *Urnas de lo inesperado: Fraude electoral y lucha política en Costa Rica* (Iván Molina, coauthor) (Unexpected Ballots: Electoral Fraud and Political Struggle in Costa Rica) (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica).

Lehoucq, Fabrice and Ivan Molina (1999) "Political Competition and Electoral Fraud: A Latin American Case Study" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 30: 2 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 199-234.

Lehoucq, Fabrique and Ivan Molina (2006) *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica* Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Lehoucq, Fabrique (2012) *The Politics of Modern Central America: Civil War, Democratization, and Underdevelopment* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Longley, Kyle (1997) *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States during the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press).

Lowell Gudmundson (2001) *Coffee, Society and Power in Latin America* and (1986) *Costa Rica Before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of Export Boom* (Louisiana: Louisiana University Press).

Mahoney, James (2001) *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press).

Mahoney, James (2010) *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Mc Guire, James (2013) "Democracy, Agency and the Classification of Political Regimes" in *Reflections on Uneven Democracies: the Legacy of Guillermo O'Donnell* eds Daniel Brinks, Marcelo Leiras and Scott Mainwaring.

Mendez Alfaro, Rafael Angel (1993) "Juan Santamaria: una aproximacion al estudio del heroe: 1860-1915" PhD Dissertation for the History Department of the Universidad Nacional).

Mendez, Rafael Angel (2007) *Imagenes del Poder Juan Santamaria y el ascenso de la Nacion en Costa Rica (1860-1915)* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Miller, Eugene (1996) *A Holy Alliance? The church and the left in Costa Rica 1932-1948* (New York: M.E. Sharpe).

Miller, Eugene (1993) "Labour and Wartime Alliances in Costa Rica 1943-1948" in *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23:3 (Oct 1993) p 519.

Miranda Gutierrez, Guido and Carlos Zamora Zamora (2010) *La Construcción de la Seguridad Social* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Molina, Ivan (1990) "Espías visibles, sorpresas esperadas y tiros sin puntería. El golpe de Guardia de 1870". *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*. San José, 20: 1 (junio, 1994), pp. 153-168.

Molina, Iván and Steven Palmer (1992) *Héroes al Gusto y Libros de Moda. Sociedad y cambio cultural en Costa Rica (1750-1900)* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies).

Molina, Iván y Enríquez, Francisco (2000) "Cultura impresa e identidad nacional en Costa Rica, Nicaragua y El Salvador (1880-1899)". comps., *Fin de siglo XIX e identidad nacional en México y Centroamérica*. Alajuela, Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, pp. 223-246.

Molina Jiménez, Iván (2002) *Costarricense por dicha: Identidad nacional y cambio cultural* in *Costa Rica durante los siglos XIX y XX* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica) pp. 43-78.

Molina, Ivan and Steven Palmer (2002) *The History of Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica).

Molina, Ivan (2005) "Press, Electoral Propaganda and Communism in Costa Rica during the decade of 1930-1940" in *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodista* 2005 (San Jose: Escuela de Historia de la Universidad de Costa Rica) pp 407-423.

Molina, Ivan and Steven Palmer (2005) *Costa Rica del Siglo XX al XXI* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Molina, Ivan (2007) "Ricardo Jimenez Oreamuno y una Olvidada Tradicion de Reforma Electoral en Costa Rica" in *Memoria y Sociedad* (Bogota Colombia) 11 (23): 43-55/Julio-Diciembre 2007.

Molina, Iván (2007) "Ricardo Jiménez y los comunistas en la Costa Rica de la década de 1930". *Intercambio. Revista sobre Centroamérica y el Caribe*. (San José, 4: 5), pp. 71-100.

Molina Jimenez, Ivan (2010) *Costarricense por dicha* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica).

Molina Jimenez, Iván (2012) *Revolucionar el pasado: la historiografia costarricense del siglo XIX al XX* (San Jose: Editorial Univesidad Costa Rica).

Monge Alfaro, Carlos (1966) *Historia de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Trejos).

Mora Rodriguez, Arnoldo (1989) *Las Fuentes del Cristianismo Social en Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Nohlen, D (2005) *Elections in the Americas: A data handbook, Volume I*, p155

Norval, Aletta (2000) *Review Article: The things we do with Words – Contemporary Appraoches to the Analysis of Ideology* BJ Pol S 30 313-346 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Naranjo Chacon, Gustavo (2010) *Instituciones politico-economicas de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Norval, Aletta (2000) "Trajectories of future research in Discourse Theory" in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change* edited by David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press) pp 219-236.

Notten, Frank (2009) *La influencia de la Primera Guerra Mundial sobre las Economias Centroamericanas 1900-1929* (San Jose: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica).

Oconitrillo, Eduardo (2004) *Cien Anos de Política Costarricense 1902-2002: De Ascension Esquivel a Abel Pacheco* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Paige, Jeffrey (1997) *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

Palmer, Steven (1990) *A Liberal Discipline: Inventing Nations in Guatemala and Costa Rica 1870-1900* PhD Thesis University of Columbia.

Panizza, Francisco and Miorelli, Romina (2013) "Taking discourse seriously: discursive institutionalism and post-structuralist discourse theory" *Political Studies*, 61 (2). 301-318.

Panizza, Francisco (2005) "Introduction: populism and the mirror of democracy" In: Panizza, Francisco, (ed.) *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. (London: Verso).

Panizza, Francisco (2009) "What do we talk about when we talk about populism? Mas populista sera tu abuela!" prepared for the Conference "*Populism in the 21st Century*" organized by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars held on October 8, 2009 Washington DC.

Picado Gatjens, Miguel (2011) *La Iglesia Catolica de Costa Rica en la Historia Nacional: Desafios y respuestas* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Poppino, Rollie (1964) *International Communism in Latin America: A history of the movement 1917-1963* University of California (London: The free Press of Glencoe Collier MacMillan Ltd).

Quesada Camacho, Juan Rafael (2010) *Clarín Patriótico: la Guerra contra los filibusteros y la nacionalidad costarricense* (San Jose: Eduvision).

Quesada, Rodrigo (2008) *Ideas Economicas en Costa Rica 1850-2005* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Peeler, John (1985) *Latin American Democracies: Colombia, Costa Rica, Venezuela* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press).

Philp, George (2006) *Democracy in Latin America: Surviving Conflict and Crisis?* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Robinson, James and Daron Acemoglu (2012) *Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (London: Profile Books).

Rodriguez Vega, Eugenio (1979) *Apuntes para una sociologia Costarricense* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Rodriguez Vega, Eugenio (2000) *Escritos de Jose Figueres Ferrer: Política, Economía y Relaciones Internacionales* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Rodriguez Vega, Eugenio (2006) *Biografía de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica).

Rodriguez Vega, Eugenio (2011) *Surcos en el Tiempo: Primeros y Ultimos Ensayos* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Rojas Bolanos, Manuel (1986) *Lucha Social y Guerra Civil en Costa Rica 1940-1948* (San Jose Costa Rica: EDUCA).

Rosenberg, Mark (1981) "Social Reform in Costa Rica: Social Security and the Presidency of Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia" in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 61 N 2 pp 279-96.

Rosenberg, Mark (1983) *Las Luchas Sociales por el Seguro Social en Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica).

Rovira Jorge (1988) *Estado y Politica Economica en Costa Rica 1948-1970* (San Jose: Mas Editorial Porvenir).

Rustow A Dankwart "Transitions to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model" *Comparative Politics Vol 2 No 3 (April 1970)* 337-363.

Sala, Eric (2008) *El Modelo Pacifista de Costa Rica* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Editorial Hidalgo S.A).

Salas, Ady (1998) *Con Manuel [Mora]: Devolver al Pueblo su Fuerza* (Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica).

Salazar Mora, Orlando and Jorge Mario Salazar (2010) *Los Partidos Politicos en Costa Rica 1889-2010* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Salazar, Jorge Mario (1980) *Calderon Guardia* (San Jose: Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Salguero, Miguel (2006) *El Caudillo en su Lucha* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Seligson, Mitchell (2014) "Costa Rica" in *Latin America Politics and Development* edited by Howard Wiarda and Harvey Klein (Colorado: Westview).

Schmidt, Vivien (2012) "Discursive Institutionalism, Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings" in *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice* edited by Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis (London and Durham: Duke University Press) pp. 85-113.

Schmidt, Vivien (2008) "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse" in *Annual Review of Political Science Vol 11* pp 303-26.

Schmidt, Vivien (2010) "Taking Ideas Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth New Institutionalism" in *European Political Science Review Vol 2 (1)* pp 1-25.

Senior Angulo, Diana (2011) *Cuidadania Afrocostarricense: El Gran Escenario Comprendido entre 1927 y 1963*.

Soto Harrison, Fernando (1995) *Que Paso en los años 40* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Nacional a Distancia).

Smith, Peter (2005) *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Stone, Samuel (1974) "Aspects of Power Distribution in Costa Rica" in Dwight Heath ed. *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America*.

Torring, Jacob (1999) *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers)

Vargas Araya, Armando (2005) *La Via Costarricense: volver al future y reencontrar el camino de la prosperidad, la equidad y la dicha* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia)

Vargas Ortega, Mauricio (2010) *Para que la patria no sea el silencio: Memorias de Alberto Lorenzo Brenes Una historia intima de la Revolucion del 48* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Viales Hurtado, Ronny (2009) "El regimen liberal de bienestar y la institucionalizacion de la pobreza en Costa Rica 1870-1930" in *Pobreza e historia en Costa Rica: Determinantes estructurales y Representaciones Sociales del Siglo XVII a 1950* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica) pp 71-100.

Villegas Hoffmeister, Guillermo (1998) *La Guerra de Figueres: Cronica de ocho anos* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Villegas Hoffmeister, Guillermo (1990) *La Otra Cara de Calderon Guardia* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia).

Villegas Hoffmeister, Guillermo (1990 and 1998) *Testimonios del 48* Tomo 1 (San Jose: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica).

Wilson, Bruce (1998) *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics and Democracy* (London: Lynne Rienner)

Wiarda, Howard and Harvey Klein (2014) *Latin American Politics and Development: eight edition* (Colorado: Westview Press).

Worsham, Lynn, and Gary A. Olson. "Hegemony and the Future of Democracy: Ernesto Laclau's Political Philosophy." *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, Culture, and Politics* 19 (1999): 1–34.

Wucherpfenning, Julian and Franziska Deutsch (2009) *Modernization and Democracy: Theories and Evidence Revisited* Living Reviews in Democracy, Vol 1.

Yashar, Deborah (1997) *Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reacion in Costa Rica and Guatemala 1870-1950* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press).

Primary Books

Biolley, Paul (1889) *Costa Rica and her future* (Washington DC Judd and Detweiler Printers).

Contreras, Alvaro (1879) *A los Pueblos Centroamericanos* (Guatemala)

Juan F Ferraz (1889) *Librito de los Deberes* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Imprenta La Prensa Libre).

Salazar, Ramon (1895) Discurso pronunciado ante la tumba del General Justo Rufino Barrios el dia 2 de Abril 1895 por el delegado del Comité 2 de Abril 1895 (Guatemala: Tipografia Nacional Guatemala)

Nicaraguan Legation to Washington DC (1906) *Jose Santos Zelaya President of Nicaragua* gift given to the US government on July 26, 1906 (New York: York Printing Company 108 Park Row) F.J. Dassori Proprietor

Jose Santos Zelaya (1910) *The Revolution of Nicaragua and the United States* (Madrid: Calle del Barquillo)

Trejos, Jose Francisco (1939) *Origen y Desarrollo de la democracia en Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial Trejos).

Mora, Manuel (1937) *Tres discursos en defensa de la democracia* (San Jose: Talleres Tipograficos de La Tribuna).

Figueres, Jose (1956) *Cartas a un Ciudadano* (San Jose: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia second edition printed 2003).

Canas, Alberto (1955) *Los Ocho Anos* (San Jose: Editorial Costa Rica).

PRIMARY DATA

All the presidential messages to the Constitutional Assembly are digitally available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/mensajepresidencialcr/codimep-cr-siglo-xix/1876-1900>

President Jose Rafael de Gallegos acceptance speech delivered to the Constitutional Assmby on San Jose, March 9th 1833.

Letter by Jose Joaquin de Alvarado the Costa Rican Vicario eclesiastico dated the 7th of February 1835

Bruno Carranza message to the Constitutional Assembly delivered on August 8th, 1870

Tomas Guardia Manifesto written on March 27th 1870 regarding the Coup.

Tomas Guardia presidential speech April 27, 1870

Tomas Guardia Presidential Message to Constitutional Assembly delivered by on October 15, 1870.

Tomas Guardia Presidential message to Congress delivered by on May 1, 1872.

Tomas Guardia presidential message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on June 9 1878.

Tomas Guardia presidential message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on Congress May 16, 1879.

Prospero Fernandez presidential message delivered to the Constitutional Assembly on August 1, 1882.

Gonzalez Viquez presidential message delivered to the Constitutional Assembly on May 8, 1928.

Ricardo Jimenez Oreamuno presidential message delivered on May 8, 1932.

Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia Inaugural message delivered by to the Costa Rican Congress on May 8th, 1940.

Calderon Guardia presidential message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1940

Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia's Message to the Congressional Assembly introducing the reform project of the Constitution by adding the chapter on Social Guarantees delivered on May 1942

Figueres radio speech - transcript found in web site "The Spirit of 48"
www.lespiritudel48.org

Calderon Guardia's speech delivered in Alajuela on the 29th of August 1943 printed in La Tribuna newspaper August 30, 1943.

President Picado presidential message to the Congressional Assembly delivered on May 8, 1944

Padre Nunez speech entitled "Los Molinos de Dios Proclama Patriotica por la Defensa Heroica de la Democracia" delivered by on March 6, 1948 by radio transcribed in www.lespiritudel48.org

Letter from Otilio Ulate read to the Constitutional Assembly on February 3, 1949

Jose Figueres speech President handing over power to Mario Echandi after his victory in the 1958 presidential elections.

Ulate Presidential Message to the Constitutional Assembly delivered on May 1st 1952.

Ulate's letter for the 1949 Constitutional Assembly requesting an extension of the Junta Rule.

Ulate's presidential message to the Constitutional Assembly on May 1 1952.

Ulate's message to Congress on May 1st 1952.

Jose Figueres's Presidential message to the Constitutional Assembly delivered on May 1 1956.

Jose Figueres's speech when he was handing over power to president elect Mario Echandi on May 8, 1958.

Newspapers

All newspaper articles below are available digitally

http://www.sinabi.go.cr/biblioteca%20digital/periodicos/index.aspx#.U6l_VhaVjZs

Boletin Oficial May 3, 1856 N. 186 Ano III letter by President Juan Rafael Mora

El Comercio de Costa Rica - October 28, 1870.

El Comercio de Costa Rica - December 25, 1870.

El Ciudadano - July 30, 1880.

Boletin Oficial - May 3, 1856.

7 de Noviembre – November 7, 1890

Diario de Costa Rica - October 8, 1931

Trabajo - September 5, 1931.

Trabajo - March 10, 1935.

Trabajo May 5, 1935

Trabajo - March 29, 1936

Trabajo - January 12, 1936

Trabajo - July 7, 1935

Trabajo -March 29, 1936

Trabajo - April 19, 1936

Trabajo - November 28, 1936

Trabajo - December 12, 1936

Trabajo - December 19 1936

Trabajo January 30, 1937

Trabajo - February 20, 1937

Diario de Costa Rica - December 25, 1943

Accion Democrata - February 26, 1944

Accion Democrata - March 11, 1944

Accion Democrata - April 7th, 1944

Accion Democrata - September 16, 1944

El Social Democrata - March 17, 1945

Revista Surco N 52 Febrero 1945

El Social Democrata - May 11, 1947

El Social Democrata - September 15, 1947

El Social Democrata - December 13, 1947

Diario de Costa Rica- February 1, 1948

La Tribuna - February 8, 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - March 26, 1948

La Tribuna - March 16, 1948

La Tribuna - March 21, 1948

La Tribuna - April 13, 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - April 22, 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - July 20, 1948

La Prensa - April 23, 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - April 24, 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - December 2 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - December 3, 1948

Diario de Costa Rica - October 27, 1949

Diario de Costa Rica November 8, 1949

Diario de Costa Rica - November 8, 1949

Diario de Costa Rica November 9, 1949

Diario de Costa Rica - November 8, 1949

Diario de Costa Rica November 8 1949

Diario de Costa Rica - December 23, 1952

Diario de Costa Rica July 26, 1953

Diario de Costa Rica – July 27, 1953

Diario de Costa Rica - July 28, 1953

Diario de Costa Rica - July 29, 1953

Diario de Costa Rica – August 8, 1953

1949 Constitutional Assembly Acts

All the Constitutional Assembly Acts are digitally available:

<http://www.lespiritudel48.org>

Act N 2 of Constitutional Assembly January 16, 1949

Act 14 of Constitutional Assembly on January 28, 1949

Act N 21 of Constitutional Assembly debate on February 22, 1949

Act N 25 of the Constituional Assembly on February 28, 1949

Act N 30 of Constitutional Assembly on March 7 1949

Act N 38 of the Constitutional Assembly on February 16, 1949

Act N 45 of the Congressional Assembly on March 30, 1949

Act N 47 of the Constitutional Assembly on April 4, 1949