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Church State Relations: Religiopolitics in Chile and Uruguay in the 21st Century

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CHURCH STATE RELATIONS: RELIGIOPOLITICS IN CHILE AND URUGUAY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of Church-state relations in the last twenty years with special respect to Latin America, specifically in Chile and Uruguay. In my project, I will be looking at the presidential administrations of Chilean presidents Michelle Bachelet and Sebastian Piñera and Uruguayan president Tabaré Vázquez. I will use newspaper articles from *El Pais* (Uruguay) and *El Mercurio* (Chile) to examine whether political affiliation or country history determines the activism of the Catholic Church in these countries. I argue that country history has a greater influence on the role of the Catholic Church in a country's politics than the political affiliation of the current sitting president in Chile and Uruguay. In conclusion, this project attempts to examine the dynamics of the Catholic Church and the state in this sample.

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Introduction

It is impossible to take a Latin American studies class without talking about the Catholic Church. If you are learning about the colonial history of the region, the Church is especially present with the phrase "God, glory, and gold" tossed around as you learn how the Catholic Church was a driving force in the colonization and how it was a strong political power since the Spanish royalty were themselves supposed to be representatives of the Catholic Church. The Church inundates the history of the region, but also the literature. When I took a political theater in Latin America class, the Catholic Church was there too, but in a much more recent context than converting indigenous peoples, fueros, and vast Church lands. We read and studied plays and movies in Argentina, Mexico, and Chile, and more often than not, religion was mentioned in some way. And even more recently, the Catholic Church and Latin America have been thrust together in the headlines when Pope Francis, the first Latin American pope, was appointed.

I first became interested in the Southern Cone when I took Spanish classes at the University of Mississippi since I had two professors from Uruguay. From that moment, I wanted to study abroad in Uruguay. The interest led me to apply to a summer missions internship for a Protestant organization. With the hope of this internship, I began learning more about religion in the region, or the lack thereof in Uruguay with its commitment towards secularization. The presence of Covid-19 altered those plans to where I thought I would be in Chile and I began doing the same studying and learning about Catholicism in the region. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic ruined all those plans. Yet, the interest remained.

I became curious about the role of the Catholic Church in Latin America today, especially given the rise of Protestantism in the region where some would argue that the Global South as a whole is the new center of the Protestant Church as well as the global decline of religion. If an actor had a foundational role in an area, it couldn't just disappear could it? Additionally, I knew that the United States brings religion into political discourse frequently with personal religious agendas influencing political agendas. For instance, one of the reasons the abortion debate is such a debate is because of pushback from conservative religious sectors. Even though there is separation of church and state in the United States, religion is still a part of politics. Politicians use their faith to win voters and promise to advance religious agendas, particularly conservative evangelicals. While the United States has a different religious background than Latin America with a heritage of Protestantism, I wondered if there were similarities because even if church and state are legally and constitutionally separated, the line can be blurry.

These questions and thought processes led me to the topic of this paper: What is the political role of the Catholic Church in Latin America in the 21st century? Specifically, I examine the relationship between the Church and the state in Chile and Uruguay. I hypothesize that the political affiliation of the sitting president determines how active the Church is in political life.

The following chapters examine the context of relations between the Catholic Church and the modern state in Latin America, the relationships between Church and state in Chile and Uruguay, a brief context and overview of recent politicians in Chile and Uruguay, and a Church-state relations in the news in Chile and Uruguay.

Chapter One of this paper, "Church-State Relations in Latin America," deals with a brief, historic context of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state in Latin America, particularly during the modern, nation-building period as Latin American nations were considering what it meant to be a modern nation-state. It also lays out my methods, case selection, and hypothesis. I selected Chile and Uruguay to study since they have similar backgrounds/cultures, but different historical attitudes towards the Catholic Church with Chile being more traditionally Catholic and Uruguay having a strong tradition of secularism, at least in the modern period. More specifically, I examine the presidencies of Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Sebastián Piñera (Chile), and Tabaré Vázquez in order to consider the influences of political affiliation on presidential relationship with the Catholic Church. In this chapter, I examine the historical context of Church-state relations in the region, especially 1850 to present, as well as the importance of the Catholic Church as a transnational organization and institution.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, "The Catholic Church in Chile and Uruguay," I explain my case selection by laying out not only the similar political structures of Chile and Uruguay, but also the present demographic differences between the two countries. While the Catholic population has been decreasing in Chile, there are still far more Catholics in Chile than in Uruguay with Uruguay being one of a very few "minority Catholic" countries in Latin America. I also examine the specific histories of the relationships between the Catholic Church and Chile and the Catholic Church and Uruguay. While both countries technically separated Church and state around the same time—1917 in Uruguay and 1925 in Chile—the processes were different. The Chilean Catholic Church was more involved politically through political parties soon after the

process whereas the Uruguay's striving towards secularization emphasized a separation of the Church and the political process. Additionally, this chapter gives a brief overview of the selected presidents—Bachelet, Piñera, and Vázquez—to provide context for the present political scene since all were presidents within the last twenty years. Michelle Bachelet and Tabaré Vázquez were both center-leftists who did not identity as Catholic, Bachelet an agnostic and Vázquez a Freemason, where Sebastian Piñera was on the center-right and did identify as Catholic.

Chapter Three, "Church-State Relations in the News," contains the data analysis, including the methods and findings. I chose one Chilean paper, *El Mercurio,* and one Uruguayan paper, *El Pais*, to examine the statements by members of the Catholic clergy of each respective country during each presidential administration. From there, I sought to compare each president's presidential approval by the Catholic Church, what topics and issues the Church was the most involved in, and also decide whether political party or country history was ultimately more important in determining the power of the Catholic Church. I also specifically use the amount of time the Church mentions "dialogue" to determine its role in politics. Ultimately, the Chilean Catholic Church was more vocal about a wider variety of topics.

This research project seeks to examine the relationship between the Catholic Church and the government in Chile and Uruguay in the 21st century with a comparative analysis of not only the two countries but also different sides of the political spectrum.

Chapter One: Church-State Relations in Latin America

Introduction

Latin America is home to many of the world's Catholics—at least 425 million as of 2014—and Catholic institutions and traditions have been embedded in the past and present culture. Historical data suggests that at least 90 percent of Latin Americans were Catholic in the 20th century (Religion in Latin America 2014). While the role and importance of the Catholic Church in Latin America has evolved over the centuries, there are a few recent waves in the region that have interested me. Despite Pope Francis being the first-ever Latin American pope, there has been a rise in conversion to other spiritual practices like Pentecostalism, Protestantism, and Afro-Brazilian religions or agnosticism and atheism. Additionally, Latin America was hit by a "pink tide" at the turn of the century as leftist and progressive parties and politicians gained power, but in recent years that tide has begun to shift to the right again. It is assumed that conservative/right parties typically have a closer relationship with religious groups than their leftist counterparts. I will be investigating the existing state of Church-state relations between governments and the Catholic Church in these conditions.

I selected Chile and Uruguay as my cases because of their proximity as well as their differing histories and stances towards the Catholic Church. While Chile has traditionally been a more Catholic country, Uruguay is known for being more secular. Even though both Uruguay and Chile have legal separation of church and state, I am curious about how Catholicism might continue to influence their politics, such as through Catholic voter bases and lobbying by the Vatican and Catholic groups. Furthermore, I am curious about what

different recent presidential administrations' stances are towards the Catholic Church as well as whether the Church-state relationship is more reliant on the orientation of the president or the history of the Church in each respective country.

I hypothesize that Church-state relations are more dependent on the party and whether it is right or left. I expect the right-wing party to have more favor with the Catholic Church and a stronger relationship due to the right typically being more conservative, more traditional, and more Catholic. In contrast, the left has had a weaker connection with the Catholic Church. To test this, I selected presidents Michelle Bachelet of Chile, Sebastián Piñera of Chile, and Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay. Bachelet and Vázquez were both center-leftists, while Piñera is a member of the center-right. On the surface, the religious affiliations of both Bachelet and Vázquez support my hypothesis about the right and left since Bachelet is an agnostic and Vázquez is a Freemason while Piñera is a Catholic. As such, I expected Bachelet to have a closer relationship with the Catholic Church than Vázquez, but a more distant relationship than Piñera. While Bachelet and Vázquez may have similar ideologies, Bachelet most likely had a larger Catholic base as well as the influence of a legacy of Catholicism in the country.

Church-State Relations in Latin America

The separation of church and state has been an important issue in Latin America since at one point the Church was almost equivalent to the state. But the question does remain: Since the Catholic Church is still a powerful and influential institution, what does the relationship between the church and the state look like today? Even if they are technically separated, large portions of the population are still Catholic and that legacy still exists. While the relationship between the Church and Latin America has changed and

evolved over the last four hundred years, Latin America has largely been a very Catholic region with the religion leaving a permanent mark on its societies, from culture to politics.

The Catholic Church is "one of the longest-standing organizations in the 'Western' world" (Puntigliano 2021) and has operated as a unifier, even when there was not a strong attachment to Spain or later to individual nation-states. One scholar relates the Church's path as a reconstruction of the Roman Empire, taking lessons from the Roman Empire in its quest for a universal Christian empire (Puntigliano 2021). Frederick Shepherd views the Catholic Church as one of four important transnational actors in Latin America, along with transnational corporations, transnational drug networks, and human rights organizations (Shepherd 2021). Brian Smith also establishes the Catholic Church as a transnational organization with four key variables: "the graduated binding force and specificity of religious and moral norms; the hierarchical nature of authority flows across a layered administrative network; the diversified allegiance patterns among its membership; and the transnational support linkages among center and periphery units." He uses these to describe the Church's social and political development (Smith 1982). Andes and Young describe the Catholic Church as a legitimate, powerful, and well-organized transnational religious network that had been crossing borders long before the Second Vatican Council and Latin American Catholicism was already connected globally (Andes and Young 2016). As a transnational actor with its own center of power in the Vatican, it has a framework, a political agenda, and a base of support. While the Catholic Church isn't as powerful in Latin America as it was during colonization, it still has spheres of influence.

After 1850 as Latin America was beginning to modernize, industrialize, and consider what it meant to be a nation, Liberal governments sought to reduce the power of

the Church, and the Church and state developed an adversarial relationship. As Liberal governments wrestled for more power—control over education, eliminating Church privileges aka *fueros*, and expropriating Church properties—and became more secular, Catholics rallied. Bishops spoke against the liberal politicians reducing the Church's influence, writing pastoral letters describing how the separation of Church and state would negatively impact society. Additionally, local clergy did in fact hold rallies to discuss their roles in the changing society and to push back against the new legal and political direction. New political parties began to emerge as a result with the help of priests and clergy, including the Chilean Conservative Party that began in 1857. Some priests even ran as Conservative political candidates (Andes and Young 2016).

The separation of Church and state negatively impacted the Church financially. Losing the monopoly on education the Church had held during colonial times meant the Church also had less influence over shaping people from a young age. In response, popes began to take on more teaching authority after 1870. The 1870 Declaration of Papal Infallibility brought more consolidation under the pope. Around this time, Rome began to send out more European religious orders to Latin America to increase the region's ties to Rome. In 1899, the Latin American Plenary Council set new rules for the region, and there was a rise of overall "social Catholicism" (Andes and Young 2016).

Church discourse in the early 1900s involved the changing role of the Church in society and how it could adapt. The Church began to take on a new active role that would continue into the 1960s. Beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, Catholic labor unions, Catholic political groups, militant lay associations, and other Catholic social groups began to form. These groups attracted younger Catholics and increased Catholic activism,

challenging the governments, increasing Church-state conflict and tensions[1], and setting the stage for the Catholic activism of the 1960s (Andes and Young 2016).

There were three key developments that led to a higher rate of Catholic activism in the 1960s. The first was the reforms brought about by the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the Medellín Conference that took the Church in a more active, liberal direction (Andes and Young 2016). Four critical theological, ecclesial, and methodological priorities were decided at Medellín that reshaped and redefined what it meant to be the Church. First, bishops reestablished the relationship between this world and the kingdom of God. Second, it was decided that both society and the Church needed structural reform. Third, the bishops refocused their attention and commitment to the poor. Fourth, it acknowledged that the Church needed to follow through with its proclamations, acting on its commitments (Kelly 2021).

The second was both the rise and the fall of liberation theology (Andes and Young 2016). Liberation theology has a preferential option for the poor, meaning that God favors the poor. After the conference, clergy began to examine their roles and the problems in their areas (Kelly 2021). Notably, Father Rutilio Grande in El Salvador reminded those in his country that the Church "had a tradition of social doctrine and that because of this tradition, it was legitimate for the Church to weigh non concerns that were 'worldly'" (Kelly 2021, 1074).

The third is that the Latin American Church struggled with addressing human rights abuses, especially in the 1970s when there was a rise in dictatorial governments in the region. Sometimes the Church was an ally to the governments, but other times it would

[1] The Cristero War in Mexico (1926-1929) is one example.

ally with and support the victims of the violence from the state (Andes and Young 2016). Historically, the Catholic Church has had ties with antidemocratic elite, legitimating the rule in exchange for a protected and privileged status (Gill 1998).

However, in the 1960s, clergy became forces for change as they increasingly saw authoritarianism in conflict with the mission of the Church. When Christian Democrats—a Christian democratic party that had many values aligned with the Catholic Church—emerged in the 1960s, the Church was able to "shift its alliance from the Conservatives to a more reformist party while preserving credibility for its commitment to social action. The fact that Christian Democrat policy (e.g. agrarian reform) paralleled Church objectives made for harmonious relations between Church and state, and enhanced the image of the Church as a 'voice for the voiceless'" (Gill 1998, 147).

Today, the Latin American Catholic Church has a geopolitical vision for Latin America, has pushed regional integration, and has promoted "social and economic ideas linked to development and economic solidarity." Additionally, he says that there are two ways to identify the power of the Catholic Church: stagecraft/performance and ruling indirectly. Using this framework, Puntigliano (2021) identifies the concept of religiopolitics which examines how the Catholic Church operates politically through organization, actions, and political rhetoric. While the Catholic Church's power has declined, it still is a powerful force and retains hegemonic power (Hughes and das Dores Campos Machado 2016).

Gill (1998) argues that it is impossible to separate the Catholic Church from politics because they are looked up to. In Latin America, along with the military, the Church is estimated to be the entity or organization with the highest level of confidence among the

population. This does include Christian churches in general as Catholics leave the Church for other groups or evangelism, but the Catholic Church does have the most history in the region (Puntigliano 2021). Clergy are generally trusted and people look to them for guidance. Even if members of the clergy try to stay separate from politics and remain silent, that silence can be interpreted as a political position. Neutrality is as much of a political position as activism: "For religion and politics, whether the individual choice be neutrality or activism, the result is equally political: neutrality in effect commits one to work within the status quo; activism may require a commitment to change. Both are political positions" (Gill 1998, 2).

The Church's position as a moral leader means it must pass judgement on politics when considered from this point of view (Gill 1998). It has allied with other conservative religious sectors to promote its political and moral agenda, working to obstruct sex education in schools, prevent abortion and the free distribution of condoms and morning-after pills, and "block legal recognition of same-sex marriages and adoption by children of same-sex couples" (Hughes and das Dores Campos Machado 2016). The Catholic Church, along with other conservative religious groups, has mobilized to oppose some progressive policies through funding political lobbies, campaign contributions to conservative candidates, and the creation of conservative NGOs (Hughes and das Dores Campos Machado 2016).

Today, demographics are changing in Latin America. A previously very Catholic region, as of 2018, seven countries, including Uruguay, now have a majority of non-Catholics. Even Brazil, which has held most of the world's Catholics, is set to soon be a minority Catholic country. Despite the intentions of the Church at the 1968 Medellín

Conference, Latin Americans complain the Church today is out of touch with everyday struggles and criticize its failures to meet the demands of the poor (Protti 2022). This is in spite of the fact that Pope Francis has recently reemphasized the commitments of the Medellín Conference (Kelly 2021). Protti says, “The rise of liberation theology in the 1960s and '70s, a time when the Catholic Church in Latin America increasingly stressed its mission as one of social justice, in some cases drawing on Marxist ideas, failed to counter the appeal of Protestant faiths. Or, in the words of a now-legendary quip, variously attributed to Catholic and Protestant sources: "The Catholic Church opted for the poor and the poor opted for the Pentecostals”” (Protti 2022). However, Uruguayan priest Martín Lasarte believes that the liberation theology movement might be partially responsible for the movement away from Catholicism since it placed social and political issues above the religious experience, something that many are finding in Pentecostal churches.

While political changes and growing secularization are also cited as root causes of this shift, many Latin American Catholics are leaving the Catholic Church for Pentecostal churches or other religions in addition to joining the ranks of the unchurched. Pentecostalism’s popularity has been rising because not only do people feel like it brings a more personal and closer connection to God with its emphasis on direct contact with the Holy Spirit, but they also feel a stronger connection with church leaders and feel like the Pentecostal church helps their congregation and the poor more than the Catholic Church does. Pope Francis’s stance in the face of this change has been to attempt to coexist peacefully with the other faiths, meeting with Pentecostal and other evangelical leaders, and not being a strong proponent of missionary efforts aimed at conversion. In 2019, a Vatican synod about the Amazon region barely discussed the decrease in Catholics, but

instead focused on the region's environmental issues, which is an issue Pope Francis is fond of. The article also says that "the declining influence of Catholicism in Latin America has far-reaching and political consequences," citing the rising tide of Pentecostalism as a factor in the election of right-wing Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018 (Protti 2022).

Religion can be deeply intertwined in politics. It helps make up people's worldviews. But politics can also be intertwined in religion. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church decided it was necessary to take on a more active role in society and one of those avenues was politics, pivoting from solely addressing the immediate needs of the poor to examining the root causes of poverty. However, this activism has not stopped people from leaving the faith in search of a more personal connection with church leaders. Yet, as the largest and oldest religious organization in the region, even the Catholic Church's silence on a topic would send a message. Today, they exert influence in part by allying with other religious groups to fund conservative NGO's, conservative candidates, and conservative lobbyist groups.

Chapter Two: The Catholic Church in Chile and Uruguay

Case Selection

I selected Chilean presidents Michelle Bachelet and Sebastián Piñera of Chile, and Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay. While Chile has traditionally been Catholic, with a more powerful, active Church, Uruguay has been known to be more secular. While much of the region has been unstable, both countries have been stable, especially in recent years. While their political systems are similar, the countries' Catholic heritage and their response and attitude towards that heritage continue to shape their politics to this day.

From their mostly European descent population to their systems of government, Chile and Uruguay have many similarities. Both are bicameral multiparty representative democracies and while they do permit reelection, they do not permit immediate reelection. This is why both Bachelet and Piñera have been president twice but have alternated. Both countries have had relatively stable recent histories with few constitutions and coups. Both of their political party systems emerged in the 19th century (Tartakoff 2013). The re-democratization process in Chile and Uruguay, which had been previously under authoritarian regimes in the late 20th century, reshaped the relationship between religion and politics and contributed to the rise of leftist parties in the 1990s and the 2000s (Puntigliano 2021).

However, the two countries have stark differences in their religious demographics. Chile is considered a "majority Catholic" country with 64 percent of the population identifying as Catholic (as of 2014). In contrast, Uruguay is an outlier and the only country in the region with less than half the population identifying as Catholic (42 percent).

Uruguay also has the highest rate of people who are not affiliated with any religion (37 percent) while only 16 percent of Chile's population is unaffiliated. Additionally, there is a higher rate of adults leaving the Catholic faith in Uruguay than Chile, with a loss of 22 percent in Uruguay and 13 percent in Chile, respectively. However, numbers among Catholics are similar, with only a 1 percent difference in religious commitment—defined as praying daily, going to services weekly, and religion being an important part of their lives—and a 4 percent difference in the popularity of Pope Francis ("Religion in Latin America" 2014).

Church and State Relations in Chile

Chile has had a stronger Church-state relationship with a stronger Catholic population. Separation of church and state didn't happen in Chile until 1925 (Andes and Young 2016). In the 1800s, the state tried to control Church authority, and they fought over who had the authority to replace bishops. In exchange for the state selecting bishops, the Church gained privileges like Catholicism being the state religion starting in 1818. From Independence to the 1930s, the Chilean Church was similar to other Latin American churches. Starting in the 1940s, the Chilean Church became more concerned with the poor. Bishops began to instigate reforms that would hint at the reforms to come with Vatican II and the Medellín Conference. By the 1960s, the Chilean Church led the way for progressive Catholicism, with many Chilean Church leaders instrumental at the 1968 Medellín conference. This shift towards the preferential option for the poor partially came from the realization by Church officials that efforts to evangelize the poor weren't having the results they wanted. When the Catholic Church wasn't meeting their needs, the poor went to other

groups and religious organizations that did meet their needs, a trend that is still seen today (Gill 1998).

When the Christian Democrats emerged in the 1960s, the Church was able to "shift its alliance from the Conservatives to a more reformist party while preserving credibility for its commitment to social action" (Gill 1998, 147). Previously, the Church had relied on allying with Conservatives but it realized by the late 1950s that it could not solely depend on Conservatives after the Conservative Party had split a few times, first in 1938 to form the Falange Nacional Party and later to form the Christian Democrat party. Christian Democrat policies, such as agrarian reform and other social action, aligned with the Church's goals. This alignment meant that the relationship between church and state was harmonious and allowed that the Church was able to keep some credibility with the poor. After Medellín and Vatican II, the Church was concerned with caring for the poor and emphasizing humanitarian doctrine. This was also in part because the Church had to compete with rising Protestant and socialist movements in the country. For these reasons, the Church had a complicated relationship with socialist president Salvador Allende. The Church was anti-Marxist, but they could not denounce him without alienating the poor. Allende and the Church sought to peacefully coexist even as there were some tensions. However, when it came to Pinochet's repressive military regime, after initially welcoming the coup[2], the Church soon publicly denounced Pinochet's regime even as some members of the clergy faced persecution. His policies were hurting the working classes and the poor. Supporting Pinochet would have meant going back on everything they had been working

[2] There were two main reasons why some bishops initially welcomed the 1973 coup. First, there were tensions with Allende about education and Marxism. Second, the Church did not really think the military regime would last that long (Gill 1998).

for. When it came to Pinochet and losing the credibility they had with the poor, the Church chose the poor (Gill 1998).

Latin America's turn to the left began in the late 1990s, but there has been a recent turn towards the right, including Sebastián Piñera replacing a line of center-left presidents in 2010 (Niedzwiecki and Pribble 2017). Many observers were confused by the election of Michelle Bachelet, Chile's first woman president and an agnostic, divorced, socialist mother in one of Latin America's more conservative countries. Her election raised questions about the balance of power between the left and right, the woman's place in society, cultural changes in Chile, and the impact of women's rights and gender equality on politics.

In her first term, she was a member of the Concertación de Partidos for la Democracia, or the Coalition of Parties for Democracy (CPD). The Concertación was established in 1983 when Pinochet allowed for political parties again. It was made up of twenty-one parties, including Socialists, Radicals, and Christian Democrats (Passarelli 2011). The rise of the left in Chile differs from other rises of the left in other countries by its timing since it happened during the transition to democratic rule, its longevity, and "it does not represent an electoral victory of the left per se but of a coalition that incorporates, and has been led for most of this period, by a centrist, Catholic party" (Tobar 2007, 26). In 2006, Bachelet's party had links to Catholic social doctrine and maintained close relations with the Catholic hierarchy. This had an impact on the policies of the Concertación governments with feminist demands ignored (Tobar 2007). However, Bachelet seemed willing to push against Catholic opposition to enact policies to advance women's rights

and gender equality, but she had to do so cautiously within a center-left coalition opposed to change (Tobar 2007).

Michelle Bachelet was the last of a long line of center-right presidents, including Patricio Alwyn (1990-1994), Eduardo Frei (1994-2000), and Ricard Lagos (2000-2006). In 2010, Chile turned to the right for the first time since Pinochet with the election of Sebastián Piñera. Previously, the center-right was associated with Pinochet and Chile's authoritarian past. Among Chile's richest men, Piñera is a successful businessman, entrepreneur, and a former senator. He previously ran against Bachelet in 2005, but lost (Passarelli 2011). He campaigned on wanting to "rein in" Bachelet's reforms because conservatives were unhappy with them (*BBC News* 2017). In 2010, he ran as part of the center-right Renovación Nacional, or RN, party against Bachelet's Concertación. The RN had a history and platform of pro-business, middle-class, free market policies that was not very conservative in regards to social programs (Niedzwiecki and Pribble 2017).

In the 2010 campaign, Piñera ran on promises of modernization, economic liberalism and job creation, privatization, and he also had conservative approaches to social and economic proposals. Piñera defeated Eduardo Frei—Bachelet's desired successor, former president, and left-wing Concertación candidate—by a narrow margin in the runoff (51.6 to 48.4). The first round of elections demonstrated a fractured and divided left, which perhaps represented that people were not so much voting for the right, but voting against the left. While Bachelet was popular, apparently the center-left as a whole did not reap those benefits (Passarelli 2011). As president, Piñera did not blatantly get rid of Bachelet's policies, but he did have "policy drift." Additionally, he did expand some of her policies like maternity leave and the years of required schooling (Niedzwiecki and Pribble 2017).

An argument for Chile's rightward turn is a combination of "the debt crisis, the poor performance of social security institutions, the tenuous character of the region's democracies, the fragmentation of civil society, and the weakness of left parties" (Niedzwiecki and Pribble 2017). However, the strength of the left parties does limit what the right can do. Madariaga (2020) uses MARPOR[3] data from political party manifestos to show how Chile's political parties have changed from the end of Pinochet's dictatorship in 1989 to 2013. He finds that the ideologies have converged and the differences have been minor between the center-right and the center-left. Additionally, the center right has become more moderate than the left, with the left being more solidly left-wing. They explain this with the major losses of the right in the 1990s. They find that the two have been increasingly converging, except that the center right has more of an emphasis on law and order. Using the MARPOR data base, Madariaga and Kaltwasser (2020) find that the center right has been more reliant on morality issues for election than the center left, but it also shows that morality has been less of an issue for elections in recent years. The lack of presence of morality issues in the manifestos shows that neither the center right nor the center left have really tried to politicize moral issues. But they believe that "the reason for this probably lies in the fact that the parties of the coalitions have different positions on moral issues, and in consequence, with the aim of avoiding internal conflicts, the parties that belong to each of these coalitions prefer to be silent on this topic in their presidential platforms" (Madariaga and Cristobál Kaltwasser 2020). Niedzwiecki (2017) agrees that policy legacies dictate what policies are feasible and necessary. In Chile, this meant that the popularity of the center-left party meant that Piñera needed to cater to that base through

[3] MARPOR stands for "Manifesto Research on Political Representation" and is part of the Manifesto Project. Its data examines political manifestos.

social programs. All in all, the authors argue that Chile's right turn produced a combination of sticking to status quo, policy drift, and marginal expansion where the right has to be moderate due to the strength of the opposition party (Niedzwiecki and Pribble 2017).

Even though there has been political change in Chile, both Bachelet and Piñera were constrained by other factors. Bachelet was an agnostic socialist, but her party, *Concertación*, had its roots in Catholicism since the coalition included Christian democrats who had a history of working with the Church. On the other hand, even though Piñera is a Catholic conservative, he has been constrained by Bachelet's popularity. While they are on the respective left and right of the political spectrum, they are also centrist politicians with neither of them being radical or extreme. When these center-left and center-right positions are tempered by political legacies, perhaps there are even fewer actual differences that manifest themselves in policy and public image.

Church and State Relations in Uruguay

There is a wide academic consensus that Uruguay is secular, but the level of that secularism has been in constant debate, particularly in the last decade. Historically, the Catholic Church has had less weight and political relevance and influence in Uruguay than in other Latin American countries, with instead groups like the Freemasons, Jacobins, and anticlericalists being important in Uruguay's formation of a nation state (Scuro 2018). Some of those helping to form the modern, Uruguayan state were elites educated in France, a country that had already undergone the secularization process (Da Costa). "Modern Uruguay" refers to the consolidation of the state at the beginning of the 20th century. Most of the indigenous peoples had been eliminated, so Uruguay was made up of immigrants and there was an emphasis on egalitarianism and "we" (Da Costa 2020). As such,

Jacobinism helped form the new national identity by emphasizing collectivism and the privatization of religion. It was also part of the French Revolution. Da Costa says, "It was imbued with a will to gather the social body, to unify and eliminate all individual or collective factors that expressed diversity: no heterogeneous body should be left in the Republic" (Da Costa 2018, 514).

In 1919, the new Constitution of the Republic officially separated the Catholic Church from the State. Article Five of the constitution said "all religious cults are free in Uruguay" and "the State does not hold any religion" (Scuro). The "laicization" process, or the movement of Catholicism to private spaces, began in the second half of the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth to the dismay of the Church. The secularization process began with the state taking over what had previously been the role of the Church, such as cemeteries, the civil registry, marriage, and public education. Then religious symbols were removed from public spaces, and holidays were secularized. For instance, Christmas is now "Family Day" and Holy Week is now "Tourism Week." Then, even the names of cities and towns were secularized. The process finalized in the 1930s, pushing the Catholic Church to the private sphere (Nestor Da Costa 2020). Protestant churches supported this measure because it reduced the hegemonic power of the Church. For most of Uruguay's modern history, religion has mostly thrived in private spaces with Catholicism being somewhat stigmatized and regarded as anti-modern (Da Costa 2018).

The Catholic Church nearly disappeared from public life until the 1960s when it became to be more involved, influenced by the Medellín Conference and a widespread movement towards social concerns in the region (Da Costa 2018). In the 1970s, the Church gained more visibility because of the 1973 *coup d'etat* since they helped bring it about.

Catholicism began to take on more of a public role in Uruguay in the 1980s and early 1990s as more religions began to take up space like afro-Brazilian cults and Pentecostal churches. There is a public statue of lemanjá, an afro-Brazilian deity, in Montevideo and a widespread, public celebration of one of the holidays where thousands descend on Montevideo's beaches to celebrate. Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches began to take up space by occupying central buildings and utilizing radio and TV. The continued use of mass media into the 1990s also helped Catholics take up more space. Ultimately, more visibility of different religions in general helped reduce prejudice and anti-religious sentiment. While the Church lost institutional power, it still maintained some power at a social level (Da Costa 2018).

Scuro proposes that Uruguay has had "radical secularism" because of the strong privatization of religion and its "institutional marginalization" as well as an official critical position towards "hegemonic institutional religion," otherwise known as the Catholic Church. Regarding the privatization of religion, he quotes anthropologist Nicolás Guigou who says, "The privatization of religion in Uruguay—part of the effects of a radical process of secularization and secularization that took place from the middle and end of the 19th century to about the 1930s of the twentieth century—and the elaboration of a "Jacobin" civil religion, substitute and homogenizing, undoubtedly matrified the formation of the nation in question (Scuro, 2018, 45)." However, Scuro discusses the recent debates about secularism in Uruguay and whether the nation is moving towards de-privatization (Scuro 2018). Some events he mentions, which I also have found within the news articles for my newspaper study, includes the debate about religion and public space regarding statues of

the late pope, John Paul II, and the Virgin Mary, the Christmas with Jesus controversy, and the debate between the Church and the State regarding education.

Scuro believes that religion has become more important in the political life of Uruguayans and hypothesizes that the state is transitioning towards "positive secularism" where religion becomes more involved in the social life. There is ongoing debate over what secularism means and to what level the church and state need to be separated. Scuro says, "The question remains whether the dominant historical meanings of the concept of secularism as absolute neutrality and abstentionism on the part of the State in religious matters have borne good fruit and whether it can continue to bear it or not" (Scuro 2018). The debate about public versus private religion returned with debates over monuments and statues. While the statue of lemanjá was hardly subject to debate, a request by the Church for a statue of the Virgin Mary was rejected in 2017 and a cross honoring the first papal visit of John Paul II in 1987 was hotly contested. Another sign that things might be shifting in Uruguay is the mention of religion in *murgas*, or a musical theater group that offers social criticism during Carnival, in 2007 (Da Costa 2018). Regarding the Christmas with Jesus controversy in 2016, it was novel because Uruguayan Catholics had not really displayed their faith outside their homes and in public spaces before. The initiative was implemented by the Uruguayan cardinal, the second in the history of the Catholic Church. There was heated debate when Vázquez displayed the flag outside his private residence about whether or not he was jeopardizing secularity. He is a known Mason, but his wife and children are Catholics (Da Costa 2018).

Tabaré Vázquez, a member of the Frente Amplio party, was elected for the first time in 2004, the first left-wing victory after about a hundred years of conservative

dominance in Uruguay. Prior to his presidency, he was an oncologist and later mayor of Montevideo. During his presidency, two non-consecutive terms, he prioritized healthcare, banning indoor smoking, working towards universal healthcare, but also vetoing a law to decriminalize abortion. While legalizing abortion is seen as a form of healthcare in some circles, it is worth considering what influence his medical background had on his decision. During his career, he was named the Public Health Hero of the Americas by the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization (Green 2021). Vazquéz was president from 2005 to 2010 and 2015 to 2020, with José Mujica, also of the Frente Amplio party, being president between his terms. Vázquez was a Freemason, notably speaking at the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry of Uruguay on July 15, 2005, about the importance of secularism to democracy, but his wife was a Catholic (Scuro 2018). At that meeting, Vázquez said that secularism "is a framework of relationship in which citizens can understand each other from diversity but in equality. Secularism is a guarantee of respect for the fellow human being and citizenship in plurality. Or put another way: secularism is a factor of democracy" (Scuro 2018).

In the twenty-first century, Catholicism and religion still influence politics in Latin America. In Chile, Bachelet's party's ties to the Catholic Church influenced her policies and she had to be conscientious of both party politics and her voter base. However, on the other hand, Piñera, a conservative, had to be conscientious of Bachelet's policies due to the left's popularity. As a result, both individuals and their parties did not have that many actual differences. The strength of the opposition kept each of their hands tied to an extent. Even in Uruguay, a proudly secular country, religion is a part of an ongoing debate about the meaning of the separation of church and state. While the Uruguayan Catholic Church

may have less power than the Chilean Catholic Church, it is still present and part of the narrative.

Chapter Three: Church-State Relations in the News

Introduction

For this study, I used a comparative content analysis of newspapers. The newspapers I chose are *El Mercurio* for Chile and *El País* for Uruguay. *El Mercurio* is considered Chile's newspaper of record, and *El País* also has wide circulation in Uruguay. Both papers are local to the country, have wide readership, and have been in circulation for over a hundred years. Both were also accessible through the Access World News NewsBank database.

I used the key words [(*Bachelet* or *Pinera* or *Vazquez)* AND (*obispo* OR *papa* OR *catolica* OR *vaticano* OR *iglesia* OR *monseñor* OR *cardenal*) NOT *universidad*][4]. With each president, I only selected the dates of their presidential term. For instance, when I selected newspapers for Bachelet, I only selected newspapers from March 11, 2006, to March 11, 2010, and March 11, 2014, to March 11, 2018. Within this framework, I selected news articles for coding that had statements by the Catholic Church or those associated with the Catholic Church. I also ignored articles referring to Protestant churches. With the news articles ultimately selected, I first looked for data referring to obvious positive and negative statements by those associated with the Catholic Church towards each respective president. I also took note of which topics the Catholic Church spoke on publicly. I selected

[4] However, one disadvantage of searching the articles using *papa*, or the Spanish word for pope, is that many other results came up with different variations since it did not distinguish between accent mark or no accent mark. As a result, I had to sort through and eliminate articles with *papá* (as in dad), *Papá Noel* (as in Santa Claus), *papa* (as in potato), and *papa frita* (as in French fry).

and coded a total of 183 articles—eighty-eight for Bachelet, fifty for Piñera, and forty-five for Vázquez.

I counted the amount of articles speaking positively, negatively, or neutrally about each president. A positive statement was praise, a negative statement was derision, and a neutral statement was when the Church spoke of a president in neither positive nor derisive way[5]. I also counted the frequency with which different topics were mentioned (e.g. abortion, planning papal visits, consumerism, transportation, violence, etc.). These topics were later sorted into broader categories. For instance, references to abortion, the morning after pill, sexuality, and sexuality were grouped together in the "reproductive rights" category, and references to morality, dialogue, dictatorships, praying for political parties, presidential elections, and specific issues like La Araucanía and desiring a government chaplain were sorted into the "church-state relationship" category. This was an attempt to simplify the data interpretation process and account for country-specific issues to make analysis between presidents easier.

Presidential Approval

Presidential Approval, Table 1

Presidents	Negative Presidential Sentiment %	Positive Presidential Sentiment %	Neutral Presidential Sentiment %
Bachelet	2.27%	10.22%	17.05%
Piñera	1.96%	25.49%	25.49%
Vazquez	6.52%	26.09%	6.52%

These numbers in Table 1 were determined by the amount of negative, positive, or neutral sentiments in comparison to the total amount of articles selected for each president

[5] An example of a neutral statement is when a member of the clergy asked Bachelet's daughter if she was going to school.

that met the criteria. I hypothesized that Sebastián Piñera would have the highest approval rate from the Catholic Church since he is a conservative and a Catholic in a still predominantly Catholic country[6]. I attempted to account for media bias by choosing articles with quotes and statements from the Catholic Church, but I wonder if media bias did play a role in the wide disparity of positive presidential sentiment between Piñera and Bachelet. There was some obvious bias in that a few articles quoting representatives of the Church praising Piñera were quoting his relative, a Catholic bishop. There was one article where the bishop praised both politicians, but it might have been skewed. Overall, Bachelet had more articles and a larger sample than Piñera, 88 to 50.

However, I did expect Michelle Bachelet and Tabaré Vázquez to be similar since both are in the political left. It was unexpected that Vázquez appears to have a higher percentage of approval from the Catholic Church than Michelle Bachelet, especially since he is a center-left politician in a very secular country. However, within the articles from *El País*, abortion was one of the topics the Uruguayan Catholic Church spoke out about and Vázquez voted against its legalization. Additionally, while he is a Freemason, his wife is Catholic and they did participate in the "Christmas with Jesus" display from their balcony. Bachelet did receive positive words from Pope Francis however. He said:

Le tengo mucha estima y admiración, ella no es populista, ella es valiente y responsable en sus decisiones, dele mis saludos y bendiciones[7].

Additionally, some of Bachelet's positive feedback from the Catholic Church is similar to Vázquez in her first term. The Church would talk about how she said she was not going to legalize abortion and that they trusted her word. Unlike Vázquez and similar

[6] Sebastián Piñera is also related to the late Monsignor Bernardino Piñera, a Chilean bishop.
[7] I have great esteem and admiration for her, she is not a populist, she is brave and responsible in her decisions, give her my regards and blessings

to Piñera, the Church also praised her openness to dialogue with them. However, Bachelet did pass legislation for a morning after pill during her presidency and that was a controversial policy from the Church's perspective with many of the articles from her first term involving the Church speaking against the measure.

There is very little difference between the approval percentages of Piñera and Vázquez with Vázquez having a slightly higher percentage. This is surprising with the two men on different positions on the political spectrum, Piñera on the right and Vázquez on the left. Additionally, Piñera is a Catholic in a predominantly Catholic country. Vázquez was not. I expected Vázquez's approval to be more similar to Bachelet. However, the abortion debate was again significant in the news during his term and he vetoed its legalization. This policy move gained him approval by the Catholic Church. Despite the historical separation of Church and state in Uruguay, interestingly enough, Vázquez actually met with the Archbishop of Montevideo, Monseñor Nicolás Cotugno, and committed to oppose legislation de-criminalizing abortion (Iglesias 2008).

Presidential Disapproval

All three presidents have a relatively low percentage of negative statements towards them. Bachelet has a slightly higher percentage than Piñera which suggests that he is perhaps more popular, but I do not believe the difference is enough to be statistically significant. While Bachelet had to be conscientious of her Catholic base, she did attempt more progressive legislation like a morning after pill. However, the low percentages of the two could mean that they are both well-liked by the Church, or it could mean that the Chilean Catholic Church does not feel comfortable speaking out against the presidents. Madariaga suggests that the center right and the center left in Chile are not that different

from each other which could also explain why the disapproval percentages are so similar. Vázquez has the highest percentage of negative sentiment, but he also has the highest percentage of positive sentiment, even if it is a very slight difference from Piñera.

Dialogue

Chile

President	Dialogue (% of articles)
Bachelet	8.0%
Piñera	13.7%
Vázquez	2.2%

The Catholic Church Wants to Chat, Table 2

Both Bachelet and Piñera have higher rates of neutral statements than Vázquez. In *El Mercurio*, the Chilean Church spoke neutrally about Piñera about as much as they spoke positively about him and they spoke neutrally about Bachelet more than they spoke positively of her. But overall, the Church spoke much more positively and neutrally about both Bachelet and Piñera than they did negatively. I hypothesize this is because there is a greater mutual respect between the Chilean government and the Catholic Church. Many of the articles from *El Mercurio* mentioned dialogue. Either the Church was satisfied with the amount of dialogue they had with the sitting president or they wanted more, but dialogue with the president was seen as something expected that they could have access to.

During Bachelet's first term, the *sueldo ético,* or minimum wage, was one of policies that the Church was advocating for. Alexander Goic, former president of Chile's Episcopal Conference, gave an interview in 2007 about the importance of a minimum wage to not only care for the poor, but also to strengthen Chile economically. *El Mercurio* said:

Respecto del Ministerio de Salud, dice que está dispuesto a entablar un diálogo franco con la ministra María Soledad Barría, a quien no ve desde hace más de un año, cuando concurrió personalmente a su domicilio a dejarle el documento sobre las normas de fertilidad, texto que desde entonces ha enfriado las relaciones de la Iglesia con esa cartera en particular.

"Desde que asumí la presidencia siempre he dicho que las puertas del Episcopado están abiertas a cualquier persona y, sobre todo, a cualquier diálogo que nos ennoblece como personas," señaló [Goic].[8]

This article shows how involved politically the Church is and feels in Chile. It appears normal for the president of the Episcopal Conference to want a dialogue with the Ministry of Health and give his input. Where Uruguay's Catholic Church recognizes their lack of power and influence politically, Chile's Catholic Church appears to still have some input and involvement in Chile's politics. Other articles referenced priests and bishops on committees, particularly in La Araucanía where there has been conflict with the Bishop of Temuco playing a key role in mediations. Bishop Héctor Vargas worked as a mediator in the La Araucanía conflict, mediating between the Mapuche people and the government. While both presidents were praised over the years for their commitment to the region and to dialogue, Vargas said of Piñera in 2018:

Él (Piñera) nos hace ver que sí hay un interés, que el Gobierno está presente, que el Estado también está presente, que no estamos solos ni tampoco abandonados. Me parece que es una señal positiva; y es positivo que las autoridades estén muy en terreno, porque ahí pueden tomar conocimiento de lo que realmente pasa.[9]

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[8] Regarding the Ministry of Health, he says that he is willing to start a frank dialogue with Minister María Soledad Barría, whom he has not seen for more than a year, when he personally went to her home to leave her the document on fertility regulations, text which has since cooled the Church's relations with that particular portfolio.
"Since I assumed the presidency I have always said that the doors of the Episcopate are open to anyone and, above all, to any dialogue that ennobles us as people," he said. *El Mercurio*, 19 November 2007, author translation.

[9] He (Piñera) makes us see that there is an interest, that the government is present, that the state is also present, that we are not alone or abandoned. It seems to me that it is a positive sign; and it is positive that the authorities are very much on the ground, because there they can become aware of what is really happening. *El Mercurio,* 24 November 2018, author translation.

Uruguay

In contrast, in *El País*, the Uruguayan Church spoke neutrally about as much as it did negatively about Vázquez. However, it only spoke negatively about Vázquez 6.52 percent of the time. With the emphasis on secularization in Uruguay and the separation of church and state, perhaps the Uruguayan Church was less confident speaking directly about the president. On May 8, 2005, the President of the Episcopal Conference of Uruguay (a gathering of Roman Catholic bishops) said in *El País*:

> *Las señales de afinidad entre el Presidente de la República y la Iglesia Católica responden a convicciones personales y expresan conductas de buena educación. Los católicos no pugnan por espacios de gobierno, no nos interesa el poder político. La acción social de la Iglesia trasciende los planes coyunturales y los pedidos de colaboración del gobierno.*[10]

This public statement was early on in Vázquez's first term. It is possible that the Uruguayan Church feels more negative sentiment towards the secular national character than to a particular political individual. Two years later, on April 8, 2007, the archbishop of Montevideo gave an interview during Holy Week, also known as Tourism Week in Uruguay. Within the interview, he expressed disappointment and frustration about the falling numbers of Catholics and things like mass attendance and the lack of involvement the Church is permitted in education. He said:

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[10] "The signs of affinity between the president of the Republic and the Catholic Church respond to personal convictions and express good manners. The Catholics don't fight for government spaces, and we are not interested in political power. The social action of the Church transcends the temporary [or current] plans and the requests of collaboration from the government." *El Pais,* 8 May 2005, author translation.

> *En un cierto sentido, es muy fuerte la expresión, pero como que se está apagando la fe. Como que la Iglesia está en un camino de reducción a un recuerdo histórico como otras culturas o civilizaciones.*[11]

However, within the same interview, he did express that he had a good relationship with Vázquez. When asked, "What is your relationship and that of the Church with the government?" he replied:

> *Tuve el placer de recibir al presidente y su señora aquí. Y espero que el presidente cumpla su promesa y me devuelva el almuerzo (risas). Porque prometió hacer el tuco. María Auxiliadora hace la pasta y el tuco lo hace él.*[12]

He did not describe the relationship in much detail, but later he did say:

> *Nunca hablé con frecuencia con ningún presidente. Con éste tampoco. Pero la relación es buena desde el punto de vista personal e institucional.*[13]

Within these statements, it does seem likely that the Uruguayan Church has accepted its place regarding politics and is more concerned with appealing to the individuals who are leaving the Church.

In contrast to the above statement, the Chilean Catholic Church was vocal about wanting more dialogue between the church and state, or even being satisfied with the amount of dialogue. As shown in Table 2 above, almost eight percent of the Catholic Church's statements were about dialogue in Bachelet's administrations, and almost 14

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[11] "In a certain sense, the expression is very strong, but it seems that faith is fading. Like the Church is on a path of reduction to a historical memory like other cultures or civilizations." *El Pais,* 8 April 2007, author translation.

[12] "I had the pleasure of receiving the president and his wife here. And I hope that the president fulfills his promise and returns my lunch (laughs). Because he promised to do the tuco. María Auxiliadora makes the pasta and he does the tuco." *El Pais,* 8 April 2007, author translation.

[13] "I never spoke frequently with any president. Neither with this one. But the relationship is good from the personal and institutional point of view." *El Pais,* 8 April 2007, author translation.

percent in Piñera's. In contrast, only two percent of the statements mentioned dialogue during Vázquez's administrations.

Sample size for each president, Table 3

Presidents	# of total articles for both terms
Bachelet	88
Piñera	50
Vázquez	45

The amount of total articles in each administration would suggest that the Chilean Church is more vocal than the Uruguayan Church. Although, there isn't much difference between Piñera and Vázquez. However, Uruguay did gain a new archbishop, Nicolas Sturla, during Vázquez's second term who did make more public statements than the archbishop prior. Sturla was appointed archbishop in 2015 and cardinal in 2016 (Scuro 2018). The event and shift in and of itself brought about more statements by the Catholic Church. Similarly, many statements in Chile were also brought about by preparation for the visit of Pope Francis.

Hot Topics

Table 4, Hot Topics

Category	Bachelet	Piñera	Vazquez
Reproductive Rights	34%	12%	24.44%
Family	6.82%	16%	8.89%
Social Policy	32.96%	32%	31.11%
Foreign Policy	7.95%	8%	2.22%
Infrastructure	3.41%	0%	0%
National Identity	7.95%	6%	15.55%
Violence	20.45%	26%	11.11%
Natural Resources	0%	8%	0%
Marginalized Groups	5.68%	8%	8.89%
Drugs	2.27%	0%	4.44%
Social Movements	4.55%	12%	2.22%
Government Dissatisfaction	20.45%	20%	11.11%
Church-people relationship	23.86%	18%	13.33%
Church-Church relationship	12.50%	36%	22.22%
Church-state relationship	29.55%	30%	37.78%

Looking at the table, there doesn't appear to be any significant difference between the Chilean presidents and Vázquez in the amounts of topics covered by the Catholic Church. Reproductive rights were a more common topic for Bachelet and Vázquez since those were current issues during their terms. And there was more discourse within the Church and about the Church during Piñera's term since that was when the scandal about the abuse of minors by some members of the Catholic Church began. But all in all, it appears like the Chilean Catholic Church and the Uruguayan Catholic Church care about many of the same things, particularly reproductive rights and social policy. Both countries and all presidential terms had very similar percentages in the social policy category. This makes sense because it is perhaps the category that could be seen as most aligned to the Church's mission historically—caring for the poor.

The Uruguayan Catholic Church was most concerned with reproductive rights (24.44%) and the church-state relationship (37.78%). Abortion specifically was a key topic

within the reproductive rights category. Additionally, many of the articles in the church-state relationship category dealt with secularism. While reproductive rights were also important in Chile (and were a very hot topic during Bachelet's administration), Vázquez had a higher percentage of articles than Piñera. This possibly is because it was less of an active issue during Piñera's administration since Bachelet's administration was the one with the morning after pill and that ultimately legalized abortion in 2017. Legalizing abortion also had active legislation during Vázquez's presidency even though he promised to veto it.

Regarding Uruguay and the church-state relationship discussion in news articles, I believe Uruguay had a higher percentage because of the amount of discourse that is common about secularism. The role of church and state in the country was brought up frequently in regards to statues, "Christmas with Jesus" banners, publicly stating that the Church did not desire political power and is not a powerful lobby, and questioning whether secularism had gotten to the point of infringing on religious liberties.

However, there were more isolated topics that were specific to the countries. Some of the outliers could be attributed to topics that were relevant in the country at that time. For instance, one category where Piñera is an outlier is the church-church relationship category. One reason for the amount of articles about politics within the Catholic Church during his presidency was that members of church leadership were under fire for allegations about sexual abuse, including his own uncle. Church authorities were stepping down and there was some reorganization during his presidency. Another category that could possibly be attributed to current events of the time was that there was a higher percentage in the violence category for Chile than Uruguay. It could be that the Uruguayan

Church was less comfortable discussing violence or it could also be influenced that there was violence and conflict in the La Araucanía region during both Bachelet's and Piñera's presidencies and it was discussed in the news often. It is difficult to conclusively distinguish between categories since each president's term had different pressing issues that were in the news.

Conclusion

Some of the findings from the data were surprising. While Piñera had a higher approval rating than Bachelet, there was very little difference in the disapproval ratings. But most surprisingly, Vázquez's approval rating was more similar to Piñera than Bachelet. Piñera and Vázquez also had a similar sample size with Bachelet being mentioned more frequently.

It appears that party affiliation is not as important as I previously hypothesized. The Chilean Catholic Church did not speak negatively about either Bachelet or Piñera very much, and there were times where Vázquez and Piñera were more similar than Vázquez and Bachelet. Interestingly, the Church spoke about Vázquez mostly positively while the Chilean presidents had high rates of neutrality.

It seems that the differences are more dependent on country than political affiliation because while Piñera does have a higher percentage of positive statements than Bachelet, Piñera and Vázquez have similar percentages of positive statements. Additionally, Piñera and Bachelet both have very low percentages of negative statements with a slightly higher percentage of negative statements for Vázquez.

While there are news articles from *El Pais* that specifically quote the Uruguayan Catholic Church as saying that they do not want political power and they are not a strong

lobby, the data collected from the newspaper seems to support this as well. The Uruguayan Church only really speaks positively of Vázquez, not negatively and not neutrally. Additionally, they are not quotes as frequently about dialoguing with the president, at least not to the scale of the Chilean Church. The data indicates to me that the Church has mostly accepted its place in secular Uruguay and that it is not as comfortable or able to have an impact on political issues. While the Chilean Church talks about a wide variety of topics, from foreign policy to infrastructure, the Uruguayan Church persists with topics commonly associated with the Church, like social policy and reproductive rights. However, the amount of dialogue with and respect for Vázquez there was, in addition to his use of one of the Catholic "Christmas with Jesus" banners, does indicate that perhaps there is a shift underway of greater visibility for the Catholic Church in Uruguay.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church is still an involved actor in Latin America, even if the level of involvement differs from country to country. The Church's level of involvement in the 21st century appears to be more dependent on its history within the country than the political affiliation of the current sitting present within this sample of Chile and Uruguay. While I previously hypothesized that the Church's political involvement depended on the president's political affiliation, there were fewer differences between Chilean presidents Bachelet and Piñera, and more similarities between Piñera and Uruguayan president Vázquez than I anticipated. However, besides the data and percentages collected, the literature as well as the newspaper articles themselves seemed to suggest that Uruguay's history and culture of secularization was the root of the differences.

While Church and state have long been separated in both Chile and Uruguay, the Catholic Church is still vocal about the issues it cares about, although the Chilean Church appears to be vocal about a wider variety of issues than the Uruguayan Church. The Uruguayan Church was most vocal about abortion, social policies, and concerns that Uruguay's commitment to secularization was stifling the role of the Catholic Church. The Chilean Church was vocal about a wider variety of topics, including infrastructure, foreign policy, and transportation. But where the Uruguayan Church would make statements about how politics was not their role, the Chilean Church asked for more dialogue with the presidents.

However, I believe that political party does play somewhat of a role since Piñera had a higher approval rating than Bachelet, but the differences were not as severe as I anticipated. The Church appeared hesitant to speak negatively of either president, and they

did speak well or neutrally of Bachelet more often than negatively. The literature suggests that the differences between the two are slight for two main reasons. First, there are not that many differences between the center-right and the center-left at the end of the day and between either president's policies. It is suggested that Piñera's more conservative policies were constrained by Bachelet's popularity, and Bachelet's more progressive policies were tempered by her Catholic base. Second, Bachelet's original party, the Christian Democrats, was a party that the Catholic Church supported. Her personal background as a divorced woman and an agnostic does not suggest values aligned with the Church, but Catholics were a part of her voter base. And Bachelet did have dialogue with the Church about political issues. Additionally, even within Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez's policies were not what I hypothesized a center-left, socialist politician's policies to be. He promised the Church that he would veto measures legalizing abortion and, even though he was a Freemason, he also hung a Catholic banner outside of his private residence. Bachelet's and Vázquez's beliefs, policies, and actions were not what I expected of center-left, non-Catholic, socialist politicians. They were still involved with the Catholic Church.

All in all, this research concludes that within these cases, the history of the country has a greater determination in the role of the Church in politics today than political affiliation. The differences between center-left and center-right politicians were slight and not what I hypothesized with more similarities between Vázquez and Piñera than Vázquez and Bachelet in some ways. Additionally, the Uruguayan Church was vocal in the news about how the Church should stay out of politics and how it was not their role while the Chilean Church sought more dialogue and more involvement with the government.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this project. First, there was a scarcity of scholarly literature about Sebastián Piñera or Tabaré Vázquez, in English or Spanish. It was difficult to find scholarly sources that gave an overview of their presidencies much less sources that talked about their relationships with the Church. Second, all the analyzed newspapers were originally in Spanish and there may be social or linguistic context that a native speaker would understand better. Third, this project also only briefly considers the relationship between the state and other religious sectors (like Protestantism or Pentecostalism) to establish context. Fourth, there was a scarcity of scholarly literature that talked about changing religious dynamics in recent years in Latin America.

Burning Questions

There were a few points of interest I would have liked to explore further that were outside the scope of this project and I hope to see future research in. One of those was the role of social media in Church-state relations. Da Costa (2018) briefly mentioned how he suspected that social media was a factor in the de-privatization of religion in Uruguay and how it appeared to be bringing religion back into the public sphere. It would be interesting to see its effects on the relationship between the Catholic Church and politics and whether it has any. Similarly, the same article made me curious about whether there has been a significant change in the vocalness of the Uruguayan Church in the news over the years. Additionally, there has been a rise in Protestantism, especially Pentecostalism, in the region so it would be interesting to see its role and what the differences are between each group's political involvement and vocalness. During my data collection, while I was not collecting data on Protestant churches, I did come across articles where there were Protestant

conferences in Chile much like the Catholic ones where they mentioned politics (the articles only came up if they mentioned a president's name). It would be fascinating to compare each group's level of involvement as well as whether they felt similarly or differently about the presidents.

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