Since 1988 there have been eight mayoral elections in Colombia. In Barranquilla, the introduction of popular elections for mayor has proved to follow a pattern of dynamic alliance formations centered around strong personal and factional presence and weak political parties and movements. However, this arrangement has produced its own kind of stability. This paper examines the eight popular mayoral elections in Barranquilla, assesses the degree of party institutionalization, inter party completion and alliance formation between different party factions. It argues that Political groups show a great adapting capability to new rules and that is why political reforms have not had an important impact on their behavior. We conclude that applying traditional political party theory presents difficulties in explaining patterns of party affiliation and alliance formation.

Keywords

Political Parties, party factions, movements, political party systems.