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Legislative Politics in Latin America

This theoretically inspired study explores legislative politics in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. Instead of beginning with an assumption that these legislatures are either rubber stamps or obstructionist bodies, the chapters provide new data and a fresh analytical approach to describe and explain the role of these representative bodies in these consolidating democracies. For each country the book provides three chapters dedicated, in turn, to executive–legislative relations, the legislatures’ organizational structure, and the policy process. The analytical focus of each section, however, remains the same: the role of institutional factors (including the allocation of policy-making authority between the executive and legislative branches of government; the number of relevant parties in the legislature; and the structure of electoral incentives) in shaping the patterns of legislative behavior.

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Frontmatter

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 the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Contents

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <i>Tables and Figures</i> | <i>page</i> xi |
| <i>Contributors</i> | xv |
| <i>Preface and Acknowledgments</i> | xvii |
| <i>Party Names and Other Acronyms and Abbreviations</i> | xix |
| 1 TOWARDS A MODEL OF LATIN AMERICAN LEGISLATURES | 1 |
| <i>Scott Morgenstern</i> | |
| Part I: Executive–Legislative Relations | |
| 2 OSCILLATING RELATIONS: PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS IN ARGENTINA | 23 |
| <i>Ana María Mustapic</i> | |
| 3 PRESIDENTIAL CABINETS, ELECTORAL CYCLES, AND COALITION DISCIPLINE IN BRAZIL | 48 |
| <i>Octavio Amorim Neto</i> | |
| 4 EXAGGERATED PRESIDENTIALISM AND MODERATE PRESIDENTS: EXECUTIVE– LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS IN CHILE | 79 |
| <i>Peter M. Siavelis</i> | |
| 5 EXECUTIVE–LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS: THE CASE OF MEXICO (1946–1997) | 114 |
| <i>Ma. Amparo Casar</i> | |
| | vii |

Contents

Part II: Political Parties and Legislative Structure

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
| 6 | EXPLAINING THE HIGH LEVEL OF PARTY DISCIPLINE IN THE ARGENTINE CONGRESS | 147 |
| | <i>Mark P. Jones</i> | |
| 7 | PARTY DISCIPLINE IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES | 185 |
| | <i>Barry Ames</i> | |
| 8 | PARTIES, COALITIONS, AND THE CHILEAN CONGRESS IN THE 1990s | 222 |
| | <i>John M. Carey</i> | |
| 9 | UNDERSTANDING PARTY DISCIPLINE IN THE MEXICAN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES: THE CENTRALIZED PARTY MODEL | 254 |
| | <i>Benito Nacif</i> | |

Part III: Legislatures and the Policy Process

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 10 | FISCAL POLICY MAKING IN THE ARGENTINE LEGISLATURE | 287 |
| | <i>Kent H. Eaton</i> | |
| 11 | PROGRESSIVE AMBITION, FEDERALISM, AND PORK-BARRELING IN BRAZIL | 315 |
| | <i>David Samuels</i> | |
| 12 | APPOINTMENT, REELECTION, AND AUTONOMY IN THE SENATE OF CHILE | 341 |
| | <i>John Londregan</i> | |
| 13 | THE LEGAL AND PARTISAN FRAMEWORK OF THE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION OF THE BUDGET IN MEXICO | 377 |
| | <i>Jeffrey A. Weldon</i> | |

Part IV: Conclusions

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 14 | EXPLAINING LEGISLATIVE POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA | 413 |
| | <i>Scott Morgenstern</i> | |

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America
Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 15 | EPILOGUE: LATIN AMERICA’S REACTIVE ASSEMBLIES AND PROACTIVE PRESIDENTS | 446 |
| | <i>Gary W. Cox and Scott Morgenstern</i> | |
| | <i>References</i> | 469 |
| | <i>Author Index</i> | 493 |
| | <i>General Index</i> | 497 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America

Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America
 Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Tables and Figures

Tables

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 2.1 | Makeup of the Chamber of Deputies by period and political party | 26 |
| 2.2 | Makeup of Chamber of Senators by period and political party | 26 |
| 2.3 | Canceled sessions due to a lack of quorum in the Chamber of Deputies (1983–1995) | 27 |
| 2.4 | Presidential vetoes | 31 |
| 2.5 | Vetoes of initiatives presented by members of Congress, by political party | 34 |
| 2.6 | Number of positions and members on the front benches of the blocks | 35 |
| 2.7 | Number of standing committees by chamber | 36 |
| 2.8 | Bills passed by initiative and presidential period | 43 |
| 2.9 | Passage of bills initiated by members of Congress | 44 |
| 3.1 | Hypothetical example of how to calculate the cabinet coalescence rate | 54 |
| 3.2 | Presidential cabinets in Brazil (1985–1998) | 56 |
| 3.3 | Effective number of legislative parties (1985–1999) | 59 |
| 3.4 | Summary statistics of coalition discipline, support to the president, per cabinet in Brazil (1985–1998) | 64 |
| 3.5 | The determinants of the coalition discipline rate (in accordance with the president’s preferences) of cabinet parties (1989–1998) | 68 |
| 3.6 | Ministerial payoff ratio of the PMDB, PFL, and PSDB (1985–1998) | 71 |
| 3.7 | The determinants of individual parties’ support to the president’s preferences (1989–1998) | 73 |
| 4.1 | Comparison of presidential and legislative initiatives 1990–1993 | 85 |
| 4.2 | Forms of completion for presidential and legislative initiatives 1990–1993 | 86 |
| 4.3 | Length of consideration: Comparative measures of presidential and congressional initiatives | 87 |
| | | xi |

Tables and Figures

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 4.4 | Distribution of seats in the Chilean House of Deputies by party – 1989, 1993, 1997 | 90 |
| 4.5 | Distribution of seats in the Chilean Senate by party, 1989, 1993, 1997 | 91 |
| 4.6 | Legislation introduced according to urgency and branch of origin (1990–1993) | 92 |
| 4.7 | Length of legislative consideration of presidential initiatives according to urgency | 93 |
| 4.8 | Summary of approval rate for executive initiatives with and without urgency (1990–1993) | 94 |
| 4A.1 | Summary of legislation with origins in the legislative branch promulgated as law during the Aylwin administration (1990–1994) | 110 |
| 5.1 | Initiatives introduced and approved by the Chamber of Deputies (1982–1988) | 126 |
| 5.2 | Representation in the Chamber of Deputies, 1946–1985 | 127 |
| 5.3 | Representation in the Chamber of Deputies, 1988–1997 | 127 |
| 5.4 | Initiation and approval of bills, 1988–2000 | 128 |
| 5.5 | Chamber of Deputies' committee presidencies (1988–1997) | 130 |
| 5.6 | Structure of political opportunity | 136 |
| 6.1 | Percentage of seats held, by party | 152 |
| 6.2 | Party discipline in the Chamber of Deputies, 1989–1997 | 156 |
| 6.3 | Reelection to the Chamber of Deputies, 1989–1999 | 166 |
| 6.4 | Last post held by deputies (class of 1991–1995) prior to assuming office | 168 |
| 6.5 | Post held by deputies (class of 1991–1995) as of mid-1998 | 169 |
| 6.6 | Percentage of PJ and UCR senators (1995–1998) who held these positions during the post-1983 democratic period | 172 |
| 6.7 | Percentage distribution of PJ and UCR national senators (1995–1998) by the position they held immediately prior to being elected | 173 |
| 6.8 | Percentage distribution of PJ and UCR gubernatorial candidates (1991–1999) by the position they held when running for office | 174 |
| 6.9 | Percentage of the 40 individuals elected governor for the PJ and UCR between 1991 and 1999 who held these positions during the post-1983 democratic period | 175 |
| 7.1 | Cooperation and defection among PFL deputies: 1991–1998 | 202 |
| 7.2 | Cooperation and defection among PMDB deputies: 1991–1998 | 203 |
| 7.3 | Cooperation and defection among PSDB deputies: 1991–1998 | 204 |
| 7.4 | Cooperation and defection among PPB deputies: 1991–1998 | 205 |
| 7.5 | Cooperation and defection among PDT deputies: 1991–1998 | 206 |
| 7.6 | Cooperation and defection among PTB deputies: 1991–1998 | 207 |
| 7A.1 | Cooperation and defection among PFL deputies: 1991–1998 | 216 |
| 7A.2 | Cooperation and defection among PMDB deputies: 1991–1998 | 217 |
| 7A.3 | Cooperation and defection among PSDB deputies: 1991–1998 | 218 |
| 7A.4 | Cooperation and defection among PPB deputies: 1991–1998 | 219 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America

Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif

Frontmatter

[More information](#)**Tables and Figures**

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 7A.5 | Cooperation and defection among PDT deputies: 1991–1998 | 220 |
| 7A.6 | Cooperation and defection among PTB deputies: 1991–1998 | 221 |
| 8.1 | Partisan and coalition representation of elected legislators in post-transition Chile | 225 |
| 8.2 | Effective number of vote-winning parties/lists in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies | 228 |
| 8.3 | Renomination and reelection rates to the Chilean Chamber of Deputies, 1989–1993 | 232 |
| 8.4 | Renomination and reelection rates to the Chilean Chamber of Deputies, 1993–1997 | 233 |
| 8.5 | Renomination and reelection rates to the Chilean Senate | 235 |
| 8.6 | Experience of the 1997–2001 Chilean Congress | 236 |
| 8.7 | Committee characteristics, Congresses of 1994–1997 and 1998–2001 | 240 |
| 8.8 | Weighted UNITY scores for coalitions and parties | 246 |
| 8.9 | Ideological locations of Chilean legislators, by party, on 1–10, left–right scale | 249 |
| 8.10 | UNITY scores and ideological distances for cross-partisan blocs | 249 |
| 9.1 | Experience in office of incumbent deputies | 259 |
| 9.2 | Previous office experience of elected senators, 1997–2000 | 261 |
| 9.3 | Previous office experience of elected governors, 1976–1995 | 262 |
| 9.4 | Agenda control in the Chamber of Deputies under PRI majority: The flow of legislative bills from committees to the floor in the 56th Legislature (1994–1997) | 277 |
| 9.5 | Agenda control in the Chamber of Deputies without PRI majority: The flow of legislative bills from committees to the floor in the 57th Legislature (1997–2000) | 281 |
| 10.1 | Provincial shares of population, product, and revenue transfers versus the electoral importance of the provinces to the Peronist Party | 294 |
| 10.2 | How deputies voted on a list of services that would remain exempt from the VAT | 308 |
| 11.1 | Malapportionment in the Brazilian Congress, 1998 | 318 |
| 11.2 | Malapportionment and CMO membership | 319 |
| 11.3 | Budget amendments by agent, 1992–1999 | 321 |
| 11.4 | Percent value of all submitted amendments, by submitting agent | 322 |
| 11.5 | Percent value of all approved amendments, by submitting agent | 322 |
| 11.6 | Percent value of submitted amendments | 323 |
| 11.7 | Percent value of approved amendments | 323 |
| 11.8 | Percent value of executed amendments | 324 |
| 11.9 | Average percentage value of amendments submitted to benefit state government, per deputy, 1991–1998 | 334 |
| 11.10 | Average percentage of municipalities to which deputies submitted amendments as a percentage of all municipalities in the state, 1991–1998 | 336 |

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America
 Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Tables and Figures

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 11.11 | Value of amendments submitted to “their” city as a percentage of the total by deputies running for mayor, 1991–1998 | 338 |
| 12.1 | Descriptive statistics: Labor Committee votes | 347 |
| 12.2 | Descriptive statistics: Labor Committee proposers | 350 |
| 12.3 | Proposals leading to divided votes | 351 |
| 12.4 | Parameter estimates for the Labor Committee | 364 |
| 12.5 | Test results | 368 |
| 13.1 | Review of budget laws (1917–1998) | 395 |
| 13.2 | Timing of submission and approval of budget (1917–1998) | 399 |
| 13.3 | Budget approval, amendments, and vetoes (1917–1998) | 401 |
| 13.4 | Pork, supplemental bills, and use of <i>Facultades Extraordinarias</i> (1917–1970) | 407 |
| 14.1 | Reelection rates | 416 |
| 14.2 | Latin American electoral systems | 420 |
| 14.3 | Pedersen Index volatility scores, legislative elections, 1980–1997 | 423 |
| 14.4 | Extremism, cohesion, and unity | 424 |
| 14.5 | Determinants of party unity | 426 |
| 14.6 | Structure of partisan competition, lower House | 429 |
| 14.7 | Partisan composition and legislative power | 431 |
| 14.8 | Constitutional powers of the president | 438 |
| 14A.1 | Legislators’ self-placement on 10-point left–right scale | 445 |
| 15.1 | Presidential and assembly strategies | 455 |
| 15.2 | Variability of presidential support in the assembly, 1950s–1990s | 457 |

Figures

| | | |
|------|---|-----|
| 12.1 | Hypothetical policy preferences: High salience on the valence dimension | 355 |
| 12.2 | Hypothetical policy preferences: Low salience on the valence dimension | 356 |
| 12.3 | Estimated preferred outcomes | 366 |

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America
 Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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978-0-521-79219-6 - Legislative Politics in Latin America
Edited by Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface and Acknowledgments

Before 1997 few were studying the Mexican Congress, let alone other legislatures in Latin America. In 1996, however, the opposition parties in Mexico were poised to wrestle the PRI for control of the Congress for the first time, which they succeeded in doing the following year. Understandably, this generated tremendous interest in legislative politics not only among academics, but also in the business world, the press, and the general public.

At that time the two of us were working in the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) in Mexico City. Blanca Heredia and Carlos Elizondo, the academic secretary and general director of CIDE respectively, charged the two of us with organizing an international conference of our own design. We both had recently finished dissertations related to legislative politics and realized that bringing in other experts could provide the field much fuller descriptions and richer analyses than our own individual work. Further, Mainwaring and Shugart had been working on their volume on presidentialism in Latin America, and we saw an opportunity to complement their valuable study.

Our first challenge was in defining the scope of our study. In this we relied on the División de Estudios Políticos (Political Studies Division) of CIDE, where we first presented our ideas. The first drafts of the proposal covered many countries and themes. We were forced, therefore, into a tradeoff between depth and breadth. We opted for the former, as it allowed us to add theoretical rigor to studies of Latin American politics. Having made this decision, we settled on addressing two main theoretical issues, executive–legislative relations and legislative organization, with a third section showing how these issues shape the policy process.

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface and Acknowledgments

Our theoretical bent stems from our training in American politics, based on David Mayhew's general model of the U.S. legislature and Joseph Schlesinger's theory of political ambition. These works have been important cornerstones of studies of the U.S. Congress, since they have shown how simple assumptions about legislators' reelection drives shape politics. However, since they focus on just one case, they hide several assumptions about the nature of the party system, the constitution, the electoral system, and the reelection interests of legislators.

These "hidden" assumptions become variables in a comparative model. We therefore chose our four cases, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, to test their impact. The most prominent variable gleaned from the U.S. models is the reelection-seeking goal of legislators. In Latin America no country has reelection rates as high as those found in the United States, but Chile has the region's highest rates. At the other end of the spectrum is Mexico, where immediate reelection is prohibited. Argentina and Brazil lie at other nodes on the continuum, and thus these cases presented themselves as prime suspects for our study. These countries also provide important variance on our other variables, most importantly the shape of the party and electoral systems.

Our contributors, of course, share this methodological focus. This has allowed us to provide comparable chapters on each of the four countries for each of the three themes. As such, the volume combines depth of knowledge about the four cases as well as tests of our primary variables across four major Latin American countries.

In producing this volume we have incurred many debts. Foremost we must thank CIDE for its financial and moral support. The Center for International Studies at Duke University also provided key financial support for the project. The Fredrich Eber Foundation deserves a special mention for the important financial support from the early stages of the project. Also supportive were the Legislative Studies Committee (Comisión de Estudios Legislativos) and the Institute for Legislative Studies (Instituto de Estudios Legislativos) of the 57th Legislature of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies.

On the intellectual side, our primary thanks must go to an anonymous reviewer who provided almost 40 single-spaced pages of comments. Alex Holzman and Cambridge University Press were very encouraging and helped us focus our revisions. Finally, Lewis Bateman at Cambridge gave us the last necessary push to revise and improve some key sections.

*Party Names and Other Acronyms
and Abbreviations*

Party Names

Argentina

| | |
|---------|--|
| Alianza | Alianza para el Trabajo, la Justicia y la Educación (Alliance for Work, Justice and Education) |
| FG | Frente Grande (Large Front) |
| FR | Fuerza Republicana (Republican Force) |
| Frepaso | Frente País Solidario (Front for a Country in Solidarity) |
| MODIN | Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Independencia (Movement for Dignity and Independence) |
| PA | Partido Autonomista (Autonomist Party) |
| PDC | Partido Demócrata Cristiano (Christian Democratic Party) |
| PDP | Partido Demócrata Progresista (Progressive Democrat Party) |
| PI | Partido Intransigente (Intransigent Party) |
| PJ | Partido Justicialista (Justicialist Party [Peronists]) |
| PSD | Partido Socialista Democrático (Democratic Socialist Party) |
| PSP | Partido Socialista Popular (Popular Socialist Party) |
| UCeDé | Unión del Centro Democrático (Union of the Democratic Center) |
| UCR | Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union) |

Brazil

| | |
|------|--|
| PDS | Partido Democrático Social (Democratic Social Party) |
| PDT | Partido Democrático Trabalhista (Democratic Labor Party) |
| PFL | Partido da Frente Liberal (Party of the Liberal Front) |
| PL | Partido Liberal (Liberal Party) |
| PMDB | Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) |
| PP | Partido Progressista (Progressive Party) |
| PPB | Partido Progressista Brasileiro (Brazilian Progressive Party) |

Party Names and Other Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---|
| PPS | Partido Popular Socialista (Popular Socialist Party) |
| PRN | Partido da Reconstrução Nacional (Party of National Reconstruction) |
| PSB | Partido Socialista Brasileiro (Brazilian Socialist Party) |
| PSDB | Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy) |
| PST | Partido Social Trabalhista (Social Labor Party) |
| PT | Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker's Party) |
| PTB | Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (Brazilian Labor Party) |

Chile

| | |
|-----|--|
| PPD | Partido por la Democracia (Party for Democracy) |
| PS | Partido Socialista (Socialist Party) |
| RN | Renovacion Nacional (National Renovation) |
| UDI | Union Democratica Independiente (Democratic Independent Union) |

Mexico

| | |
|------|---|
| PAN | Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party) |
| PRD | Partido de la Revolución Democratica (Party of the Democratic Revolution) |
| PRI | Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party) |
| PT | Partido de Trabajo (Labor Party) |
| PVEM | Partido Verde Ecologista de México (Green Party) |

Other Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| CEDI | Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Institucional (Center for Studies for Institutional Development) |
| CEN | Comite Ejecutivo Nacional (National Executive Committee) |
| CLP | Comisión de Labor Parlamentaria (Committee of Parliamentary Work) |
| CMO | Comissão Mista de Planos, Orçamentos Públicos e Fiscalização (Joint Committee for Planning, Public Budgets and Oversight; Brazilian budget committee) |
| CONASUPO | Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (National Company for Public Subsistence) |
| CRICP | Comisión de Régimen Interno y Concertación Política (Committee for Internal Regulations and Political Concertation) |
| DGI | Dirección General Impositiva (Director Tax General) |
| DNU | Decree of Necessity and Urgency |
| DSV | double simultaneous vote |

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Party Names and Other Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| FOBAPROA | Fondo Bancario de Protección al Ahorros (Banking Fund for the Protection of Savings) |
| GC | Gran Comisión (Great Committee) |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INJ | Instituto Nacional Juvenil (National Youth Institute) |
| ISI | Import-substituting industrialization |
| M | District Magnitude |
| GAO | General Accounting Office (Contaduría Mayor de Hacienda) |
| MC | Member of Congress |
| MCDs | Mexican Chamber of Deputies |
| NUDs | Necessary and Urgent Decrees |
| PEMEX | Petróleos Mexicanos (Mexican Petroleum) |
| PR | Proportional Representation |
| SEGPRES | Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia (Ministry of the Secretary General of the President) |
| SMD | single-member district |
| VAT | Value Added Tax |