



Legislator Behavior and Executive-Legislative Relations in Latin America

The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil by Barry Ames

Fragmentacion Politica y Gobierno en Uruguay: ¿Un Enfermo Imaginario? by Daniel Buquet,
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Democratic Institutional Design: The Powers and Incentives of Venezuelan Politicians and
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LEGISLATOR BEHAVIOR AND
EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS
IN LATIN AMERICA

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- THE DEADLOCK OF DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL.* By Barry Ames. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. Pp. 331. \$59.50 cloth.)
- FRAGMENTACION POLITICA Y GOBIERNO EN URUGUAY: ¿UN ENFERMO IMAGINARIO?* By Daniel Buquet, Daniel Chasquetti, and Juan Andrés Moraes. (Montevideo: Instituto de Ciencia Política, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de la República, 1999. Pp. 129. \$18.00 paper.)
- DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN: THE POWERS AND INCENTIVES OF VENEZUELAN POLITICIANS AND INTEREST GROUPS.* By Brian F. Crisp. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000. Pp. 293. \$55.00 cloth.)
- LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONS AND IDEOLOGY IN CHILE.* By John B. Londregan. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 280. \$59.95 cloth.)
- CONGRESO, PRESIDENCIA Y JUSTICIA EN ARGENTINA: MATERIALES PARA SU ESTUDIO.* By N. Guillermo Molinelli, M. Valeria Palanza, and Gisela Sin. (Buenos Aires: CEDI-Fundación Gobierno y Sociedad and Temas Grupo, 1999. Pp. 732.)
- THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS IN POSTAUTHORITARIAN CHILE: INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION.* By Peter M. Siavelis. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000. Pp. 246. \$55.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- THE MEXICAN CONGRESS: OLD PLAYER, NEW POWER.* By Luis Carlos Ugalde. (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2000. Pp. 203. \$21.95 paper.)

The 1990s witnessed exponential growth in the study of political institutions in Latin America. As late as 1991, the institutionalist scholar was a rare outlier at the international congresses of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), and one had to search the conference program diligently to find a paper on political institutions. The 2001 LASA Congress in Washington, D.C., in contrast, was replete with papers written from an institutionalist perspective. Perhaps the best signal of the vitality of the institutionalist approach to Latin American politics is that in recent years, a substantial portion of the top assistant professor positions in Latin American

politics in U.S. political science departments have gone to candidates whose dissertations had an institutionalist focus.

This essay reviews seven of the best books on Latin American political institutions that have appeared in the past few years. These books share many commonalities, but two are salient. The obvious one is their analysis of political institutions, particularly the executive and legislative branches of government. The other is their focus on single countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile (two works), Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The latter commonality is a topic of methodological importance that merits a brief discussion.

Comparative Politics and Single-Country Studies

Many comparativists and comparative institutionalists in particular tend to be self-conscious about “the single-country issue.” In studying only one country, they risk being criticized for being insufficiently “comparative.” This criticism, as Barry Ames notes in *The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil*, ironically comes most often from scholars whose work focuses on a single country (the United States).

Two of the best responses to these critiques are presented by Ames. The first stresses the contribution of the study to theoretical advancement in the discipline, an effort often accomplished best by using and extending theory developed elsewhere. All the books to be examined here are explicitly comparative in that they bring general theories to bear on their particular country of study and in doing so greatly extend and improve those theories.

Ames’s second response is that the key issue is not the number of countries considered but rather the unit of analysis—and hence the number of observations. Thus a study of a single country can contain widely varying numbers of observations, depending on the units of analysis employed. For example, the books under review employ an array of units of analysis that include legislators, roll-call votes, committee votes, district-level elections, interest groups, and presidential legislative initiatives.

A third possible response is one that most students of institutions like the U.S. Congress know well: it takes years of study to gain sufficient understanding of an institution (or set of institutions) to be able to study it competently.¹ Furthermore, to carry out a comprehensive study of an institution, one must comprehend the political context in which it functions (and to a lesser extent, the economic and social contexts) and command a

1. This requirement is even more true for Latin American legislatures, where commercial enterprises and private interest groups tracking the national legislature are weak or nonexistent, where the information provided by the national legislature is generally much less complete than that provided by the U.S. Congress, and where personal ties are often crucial to access to data. Similar challenges confront scholars studying the executive and judicial branches in Latin America, and the barriers to entry faced by students of state and local governments and political parties are even more daunting.

broader knowledge of the other important political institutions that interact with it. From a practical perspective, one person carrying out a study similar to those examined in this essay must invest a large amount of time and energy that makes it almost impossible to analyze more than one or two countries in a five- or ten-year period.

The combined product of these seven excellent studies of executive and legislative politics in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela is a substantial improvement in scholarly understanding of the political consequences of institutions in presidential democracies. The contributions are too numerous to summarize accurately in this limited space. I will therefore concentrate on the books' contributions as they relate to two central themes in the institutionalist literature on presidential democracies: institutional determinants of legislator behavior and the related topic of the constitutional legislative and partisan powers of the president. My comments will center on the contributions vis-à-vis the theoretical discussions of these two important topics developed by Matthew Shugart, John Carey, Scott Mainwaring, and Stephan Haggard (Shugart and Carey 1992; Carey and Shugart 1994; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Shugart and Mainwaring 1997; Shugart and Haggard 2001). This body of literature is the same theoretical work that six of the seven books draw on to varying degrees in discussing legislator behavior and executive-legislative relations.²

Electoral Rules and Legislator Behavior: Candidate-Centered versus Party-Centered

The theoretical literature on institutional determinants of legislator behavior generally highlights four institutional factors that together influence the extent to which a legislator has incentives to pursue a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Shugart and Haggard 2001).³ Three of the key institutional factors identified by Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) as influencing the extent of candidate- versus party-centered behavior are the rules governing candidate selection (control over candidate nomination); the rules governing the order of election (open versus closed party lists);⁴ and district magnitude (the number of legislators elected from a constituency).⁵ Candidate nominations decided

2. The one exception is John Londregan's *Legislative Institutions and Ideology in Chile*.

3. A personal vote is one based on a legislator's own individual qualifications. Legislators who cultivate a personal vote tend to seek votes by stressing their individual attributes and achievements via advertising, credit claiming, and position taking.

4. In a closed-list system, political parties present a rank-ordered list of candidates. Voters cast a ballot for the entire list; they cannot alter the ordering of the candidates. The seats won by the party in the district are distributed based on the list's rank ordering. Although parties present a list of candidates in an open-list system, there is no rank ordering. Voters are generally required to cast a preference vote for a specific candidate. The seats won by the party in the district are distributed to those candidates who won the most preference votes.

5. The fourth factor is whether or not vote pooling takes place (when all votes cast for the

by the candidates themselves, open party lists, and high district magnitude represent the candidate-centered extreme. Candidate nominations decided by the political party leadership, closed party lists, and high district magnitude represent the party-centered extreme. Candidate-centered systems produce legislators who are more responsive to their constituents and less attentive to the requests of party leaders, while party-centered systems yield legislators more responsive to party leaders and less attentive to their constituents. As this relates to the president's partisan powers, presidents in party-centered systems, *ceteris paribus*, will tend to have more reliable legislative support than presidents in the candidate-centered systems.

This approach to the study of legislator behavior clearly dominates among these authors. Although they all consider other relevant factors influencing legislators in their specific country (like political career paths, political ambition, and the internal functioning of the legislature). These seven books analyze a total of ten national legislatures: the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and Senate; the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies; the Chilean Chamber of Deputies and Senate; the Mexican Chamber of Deputies; the Uruguayan Chamber of Deputies and Senate; and the Venezuelan Chamber of Deputies and Senate.

In *Democratic Institutional Design: The Powers and Incentives of Venezuelan Politicians and Interest Groups*, Brian Crisp utilizes Mainwaring and Shugart's (1997) framework to place the legislatures of Latin America into three categories regarding their institutional incentives for cultivating a personal vote (the countries examined in these books are noted in parentheses): low institutional incentives (Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela), moderate incentives (Chile, Uruguay), and high incentives (Brazil).⁶ Low is the equivalent of party-centered, and high, of candidate-centered. Based on this assessment, one would expect these books to find the least amount of candidate-centered activity and highest levels of party discipline in Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela and the greatest amount of candidate-centered activity and lowest levels of party discipline in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. Chile and Uruguay should occupy an intermediate location.

All seven studies provide relatively strong support for the Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) hypotheses on the relationship between electoral rules and party-centered versus candidate-centered behavior by legislators. Legislators in Mexico (Ugalde), Venezuela (Crisp), and Argentina (Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin) are very party-oriented, while deputies in Brazil (Ames) are highly individualistic (candidate-oriented).

party and its candidates are summed together for the purpose of seat allocation). Because vote pooling occurs in all Latin American countries except Colombia (a country not examined in these books), I do not discuss this factor here.

6. Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) employed a substantively similar classificatory scheme that leads to an identical rank ordering.

But whereas Mexican and Venezuelan legislators are loyal to the national party, Argentine legislators tend to be loyal to the provincial-level party. This difference highlights a slightly incomplete aspect of the original Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) classification scheme, one that was amended in later work (Shugart and Haggard 2001). Missing from the original scheme was a component that would distinguish the level of party nominations (national-level party versus district-level party), that is, the issue of which level of the party controls nominations. As is made clear in Guillermo Molinelli, Valeria Palanza, and Gisela Sin's *Congreso, presidencia y justicia en Argentina: Materiales para su estudio*, the locus of nomination activity in Argentina is found not at the national level but at the provincial level. Consequently, the national-level party is important to a legislator's political career, but the provincial-level party is the most important. As a result, Argentine legislators are provincially party-centered, not nationally party-centered.

In *The Mexican Congress: Old Player, New Power*, Luis Carlos Ugalde highlights the movement toward decentralization at both governmental and party levels that developed in the 1990s in Mexico, with a particular focus on the loosening of national-level control over nomination in the long governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). It is thus conceivable that in the future, PRI legislators will approximate the position of the Argentine legislators in the nature of their party loyalty (greater loyalty to the state party and less loyalty to the national party). This process is likely to be catalyzed by the fact that for the first time in modern Mexican history, the PRI does not control the presidency for the current term (2000–2006).

Chilean legislators are placed in the moderate category due to the country's use of open-list proportional representation. Yet both John Londregan's *Legislative Institutions and Ideology in Chile* and Peter Siavelis's *The President and Congress in Postauthoritarian Chile: Institutional Constraints to Democratic Consolidation* emphasize the highly disciplined nature of Chilean political parties. As Londregan underscores, the validity of much of his analysis hinges on high levels of party discipline being present because party members of the three Senate committees he analyzed are considered to hold ideological views representing their party's general position on public policy issues. He explains, "Senators on committees are very much representative of their Senate delegations, and if they remain on a committee for any length of time, the ideological positions they take must meet with substantial support within their own parties" (p. 102).

The strong role played by Chilean party elites in deciding who can be presented as candidates is highlighted by Siavelis. He notes that the binomial (two-member constituency) proportional-representation electoral districts employed for Chilean legislative elections along with the consequent formation of the two dominant pacts of political parties (the Center-Left and Center Concertación and the Center-Right Unión/ Alianza) require negotiation among the parties belonging to each pact (especially the Con-

certación with four relevant parties). Such negotiation determines how many Chamber and Senate candidates each party will field and in which electoral districts.

A lesson that can be drawn from the work of both Londregan and Siavelis on Chile is that the relationship between electoral rules and legislator behavior may not be additive but interactive instead. An open-list proportional-representation system with strong party control over nomination may differ little in terms of its effects on legislator behavior (especially responsiveness to party leadership) from a closed-list proportional-representation system with strong party control over nomination.

Uruguay is the other “moderate” case. The extent to which it belongs in this middle category depends on the level at which the legislator-party relationship is examined. If the level of the party component of the dyad examined is the national-level party, then the Uruguayan parties do fall into the “moderate” category. Daniel Buquet, Daniel Chasquetti, and Juan Andrés Moraes confirm this conclusion in detail in *Fragmentación política y gobierno en Uruguay ¿Un enfermo imaginario?* Although party discipline is relatively high, Uruguayan presidents on numerous occasions have experienced serious difficulties in obtaining the support of a significant proportion of their party’s legislators. Within the various intraparty factions, however, discipline and legislator behavior are much more similar to those of legislators in Crisp’s “low” category. Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes demonstrate that the key party level in Uruguay is the intraparty faction (best represented empirically by the intraparty Senate lists employed in the general elections).⁷ The intraparty factions, not the national party, control party-list access in Uruguay.

This faction-level loyalty is exemplified by the varying degrees of support received by President Luis Lacalle (1990–1995) from his Partido Nacional (PN) legislators. Those from his intraparty faction were loyal and consistently supported Lacalle in the legislature, while those in other PN factions often voted against the president. In many respects, this pattern places Uruguay in a situation similar to that of Argentina in that the electoral rules foster party-oriented behavior by legislators, but with party loyalty primarily to a subbranch of the party: the provincial-level party in Argentina and the intraparty faction in Uruguay.

Finally, Barry Ames convincingly demonstrates that the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies is an outlier in terms of the high degree of candidate-oriented behavior by Brazilian legislators. In *The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil*, Ames provides the most thorough analysis of the Brazilian Chamber

7. Uruguay uses the double simultaneous vote for its national legislative elections (and for presidential elections prior to 1999), with intraparty factions thus competing against factions of their own party as well as against factions from other parties (with votes pooled at the party level).

of Deputies to date, showing that Brazilian deputies behave in a highly individualistic manner in their activities in the legislature. Although this generalization has been questioned by some scholars, after reading Ames's presentation in this study, I have to conclude that his perspective must be considered ahead at this stage in the game (which I suspect is still in the middle innings).

A broad review of this group of books reveals that legislators in Brazil behave differently from legislators in the other five countries. These Brazilian deputies are more independent of party leaders and hence require greater policy concessions from presidents or larger transfers of pork to approve presidential legislation than do legislators in any of the other countries.

In his insightful study, Ames argues that the candidate-centered behavior of Brazilian legislators results from the interaction of a combination of institutional rules, especially open-list proportional representation, the country's unique "*candidato nato*" nomination rule (any incumbent deputy automatically may run for reelection on his or her party's list), large multi-member electoral districts, and strong federalism. Scholarly understanding of the effects of open-list proportional representation on legislator behavior in presidential democracies is based largely on the experience of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies. Yet in Brazil, open-list proportional representation is coupled with a rare set of rules governing candidate nomination. Thus as the Chilean case suggests, open-list proportional-representation systems in other contexts may be more compatible with party-centered behavior.

Executive-Legislative Relations: The President's Constitutional Legislative and Partisan Powers

In presidential democracies, the relationship between the executive and legislature is a topic of profound importance. The theoretical literature tends to separate this relationship into two parts: the constitutional legislative powers of the president and the partisan powers of the president (Shugart and Carey 1992; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Shugart and Mainwaring 1997; Shugart and Haggard 2001). The category of constitutional legislative powers of the president is relatively straightforward, while the partisan powers concerns factors such as the support enjoyed by the president's party in the legislature (majority or minority, veto-sustaining or not veto-sustaining) and the responsiveness of these legislators to their president.

The term *constitutional legislative powers of the president* refers to those legislative powers granted to the president or the executive branch in the constitution. The faculties normally deemed most important in presidential systems are decree power, veto power, and the exclusive power of legislative introduction (Shugart and Mainwaring 1997). Veto power and the exclusive power of legislative introduction are reactive in that they can be used

only to protect the status quo, while decree power is proactive in that it can be used to change the status quo.

Shugart and Mainwaring (1997) advanced a four-point classification scale of the president's constitutional legislative powers: potentially dominant, proactive, reactive, and potentially marginal.⁸ The Argentine and Chilean presidents are classified as potentially dominant, the Brazilian president as proactive, the Uruguayan president as reactive, and the Mexican and Venezuelan presidents as potentially marginal.

The Argentine and Chilean presidents share two major legislative powers: decree authority and a strong veto.⁹ In addition, the Chilean president possesses the important exclusive power of legislative introduction in certain areas. This ability, as both Londregan and Siavelis stress, makes the Chilean president very powerful. As Siavelis explains, "In certain areas (i.e., creation of new public services, remunerations, salaries, loans, benefits, social security, expenditures), the Congress may only accept, reduce, or reject presidential proposals. Congress cannot amend presidential initiatives or redistribute or increase expenditures in any of these areas" (p. 15).

Brazil is classified by Shugart and Mainwaring as proactive due to the president's possession of the powers of decree and exclusive introduction of legislation but lack of a strong veto. Uruguay is classified as reactive because of the president's possession of a strong veto and the power of exclusive introduction of legislation but lack of decree power.

At the other extreme are Mexico and Venezuela, whose presidents lack decree and exclusive introduction of legislation powers and have only a weak veto. In Crisp's discussion of Venezuela, however, he emphasizes the significance of the president's power to introduce emergency decrees without prior congressional approval. While the inclusion of this additional factor does not affect the rating of most other countries, its addition modifies the evaluation of Venezuela, with the Venezuelan president rated as substantially more powerful if one considers this emergency decree power.

Even including Crisp's addition, the authors under review generally agree with Shugart and Mainwaring's (1997) classification of the president's legislative powers in their respective countries. But in regard to the more

8. Crisp provides a similar classification, except that he introduces a fourth legislative power: the ability to introduce emergency decrees without prior congressional approval (in those countries where the president lacks regular decree power). Crisp's five-point ranking of these six countries—as potentially dominant, proactive, potentially proactive, reactive, or potentially marginal—is identical to that of Mainwaring and Shugart for all but Uruguay and Venezuela, both coded by Crisp as potentially proactive.

9. Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin provide an excellent discussion of decree and veto powers in Argentina prior to the 1994 constitutional reform (on which the Shugart and Mainwaring coding is based). They also track the president's use of these two powers across the years before and after 1994. Their informative book contains 414 tables summarizing a wealth of data on the Argentine executive, legislative, and judicial branches, making it an invaluable reference resource as well.

elaborate Shugart and Carey (1992) classification, Siavelis provides three useful modifications to the specific scores for Chile.¹⁰

Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) identified two key aspects of a president's partisan powers: the size of his or her legislative contingent and the extent to which it is responsive to the president's wishes. The size of the legislative contingent is measured by the percentage of seats held by the president's party in the legislature, while responsiveness is measured using the candidate-centered versus party-centered typology discussed previously (with candidate-centered being synonymous with less responsive to the party or president). Combining these two factors, Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) placed countries in four categories based on the level of the president's partisan powers: very high (Mexico), medium high (Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela), medium low, and very low (Brazil, Chile).

As Ugalde demonstrates in *The Mexican Congress*, in the period evaluated by Mainwaring and Shugart (1997), the Mexican president epitomized a president with very high partisan powers. He had tight control over candidate nomination and election, and his party (the PRI) consistently provided him with an absolute majority in both houses of the legislature.

If one takes into consideration that Venezuela barely missed inclusion in the very high category, then the classifications jibe overall with the respective evaluations of the authors under review, with the exception of Chile. It falls into the very low category because of Chilean use of open-list proportional representation combined with the calculation of the president's legislative contingent including only the seats held by members of the president's party (and not including seats held by members of other parties in the president's legislative coalition). As Siavelis details, thus far the Chilean coalitions have been fairly stable and disciplined, due in no small part to the straitjacket imposed by the country's binomial electoral system.

Returning to the measure of presidential partisan powers, two factors operate here: the size of the legislative contingent and the degree and direction of this contingent's loyalty. The books under review reveal the complexity of this issue.

In terms of loyalty or responsiveness, one extreme is represented by Mexico, especially the PRI (Ugalde), Chile (Londregan and Siavelis), and Venezuela (Crisp), where legislators are very party-centered and they are loyal mainly to the national-level party. Next come Argentina (Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin) and Uruguay (Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes), where legislators are also very party-centered but loyal to the provincial-level party and intraparty faction respectively. Last comes Brazil (Ames), where legis-

10. Siavelis modifies the following three scores for Chile (the original Shugart and Carey scores are in parentheses): exclusive introduction of legislation equals 2 (1); budgetary powers, 3 (2); and proposal of referenda, 2 (0). Siavelis's revision results in an increase from 5 to 9 in the overall score for the Chilean president's legislative powers.

lators are very candidate-centered: to the extent that they are loyal to the party, their loyalty tends to be to the state-level party.

These seven books also demonstrate effectively that from a president's perspective, a presidential party majority in the legislature is preferable to all other alternatives, and when the president possesses this level of support, he or she is extremely powerful. Mexico (Ugalde) and Venezuela (Crisp) are exemplary in this respect. Absent such a majority, the president must either govern with a legislative minority or form a coalition. When the president is clearly a minority president (one whose party has less than 45 or 40 percent of the seats in the legislature), the tendency in these countries has been to form a coalition government. This tendency has been especially true of Chile (Siavelis) and Uruguay (Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes), although Chilean coalitions have been pre-electoral and Uruguayan coalitions post-electoral. Coalitions have also been employed in Brazil, albeit in a more inconsistent manner (Ames).¹¹ The presence of a stable coalition complicates any coding mechanism based solely on the presidential party's legislative contingent. Although these coalition partners on average provide less reliable and more expensive legislative support than the president's copartisans, they are reasonably reliable and supportive in most instances, especially in Chile but also in Brazil and Uruguay (particularly early in the presidential term).

Discussion

These seven books provide substantial support for the classification of candidate-centered versus party-centered electoral rules and presidential constitutional legislative powers and presidential partisan powers developed by Shugart and his colleagues. Taken together, the books also suggest two modifications to these classification schemes.

First, where strong party control of nominations is present, it is not clear that the use of open-list proportional representation results in legislators who are significantly less party-centered than under closed-list proportional representation. Evidence from Brazil (Ames) and Chile (Londregan, Siavelis) suggests a need to reevaluate the candidate-centered effect of open-list proportional representation, particularly the extent to which it is conditional on other factors like the candidate nomination process, district magnitude, federalism, and the value of party labels. Along similar lines, the Argentine and Uruguayan cases highlight the importance of evaluating not only the extent of party control over the nomination process but also which level of the party exercises this control. As noted, the loyalty of legislators

11. Argentina's first noteworthy experience with coalitions took place in late 1999, after *Congreso, presidencia y justicia en Argentina* was published.

in Argentina and Uruguay tends to be to the provincial party and intraparty faction respectively, not to the national party.

The second modification highlighted by these books is the need to give greater consideration to the role of coalitions in presidential democracies. The topic of coalitions did not receive sufficient coverage in the initial work on executive-legislative relations in Latin America. The prominent role played by coalitions in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay is clear. Successful employment of coalitions in Chile and to a lesser extent in Uruguay highlights their potential and the need to incorporate them when creating measures of presidential partisan powers.¹²

After the U.S. House and Senate, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies is the most studied legislative institution in a presidential democracy. In the past decade, more than two dozen empirical studies of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies have been published. In comparison, one can count the respective number of similar studies of the Argentine, Chilean, Mexican, Uruguayan, and Venezuelan national legislatures in this period on one hand.¹³ The advanced nature of Brazilian congressional studies is revealed by the fact that it actually has developed a "debate." One prominent explanation for the relatively large-scale study of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies is the candidate-centered nature of legislators, which makes the application of theories developed for the study of the U.S. Congress more easily transferable than to party-centered countries and also makes the individual legislator the most relevant unit of analysis, as in the U.S. Congress.

In their respective contributions, Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes (on Uruguay), Crisp (Venezuela), Londregan (Chile), Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin (Argentina), Siavelis (Chile), and Ugalde (Mexico) all highlight the vital role played by political parties in areas such as forming governing coalitions, providing support for the president in the legislature, and conducting election campaigns. In countries with party-centered legislators, the individual legislator, while still a useful unit of analysis, is often not the primary political actor of interest in attempts to understand factors like the legislative process and executive-legislative relations. In these five countries, the party or factions within the party (geographical, ideological, clientelistic, or some combination thereof) are often the key to understanding such factors. Thus knowledge of the nomination process within parties, the internal governance structure of the parties, and the relationship between parties and

12. These and related issues have begun to be addressed by a growing number of scholars working on coalitions in presidential democracies, among them David Altman, Octavio Amorim Neto, Daniel Chasquetti, José Antonio Cheibub, Grace Ivana Deheza, Fernando Limongi, Adam Przeworski, and Sebastian Saiegh.

13. In the past few years, Mexico has represented a partial exception to this general characterization. As Ugalde notes, the Mexican Congress is now a much more relevant institution and hence a more popular one to study.

political careers takes on greater significance than in studies of the U.S. or Brazilian national legislatures.

These aspects of parties are nicely covered in the works under review, especially given the paucity of prior work on the topic, the considerable investment of time and energy needed to study them, and the fact that detailed study of these party-related factors lay beyond the main scope of the books. Crisp, Siavelis, Ugalde (for the PRI), and Buquet, Chasquetti, and Moraes all provide informative general discussions of these aspects of political parties in the countries they covered. They thus supply blueprints for future studies of the internal functioning of political parties, studies that Buquet, Crisp, and Siavelis are currently undertaking.¹⁴

As “semi-public institutions,” political parties are more secretive and less transparent than institutions like the executive and legislative branches. Studying them requires a tremendous investment of time and energy. Nonetheless, this is an area where scholarly knowledge is presently limited and understanding needs to be improved if analysts are to comprehend politics better in all countries, especially those with party-centered legislators.

Conclusion

It has only been possible to highlight a fraction of the intellectual contributions contained in this outstanding collection. These seven books vastly improve scholarly understanding of politics in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela in particular and politics in presidential democracies in general. One cannot claim to have a solid understanding of politics in any of these countries without having read the study on that country. As a group, these works greatly clarify the relationship between political institutions and the functioning of democratic government. In thus advancing scholarship, they highlight the ongoing utility (if not superiority in some areas of study) of work that carefully examines the functioning and consequences of political institutions in a single country.

14. See their papers presented at the LASA Congress, Washington, D.C., 6–8 September 2001: Daniel Buquet, “Selección de candidatos y fraccionización partidaria en Uruguay (1942–1999)”; Brian F. Crisp, “Candidate Selection in Venezuela (and Its Impact on Legislator Behavior)”; and Peter M. Siavelis, “The Hidden Logic of Candidate Selection for Chilean Parliamentary Elections.”

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