

David Samuels and Cesar Zucco. *Partisans, Antipartisans, and Nonpartisans: Voting Behavior in Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 184 pages. ISBN: 978-1-108-55374-2.

JOÃO V. GUEDES-NETO

University of Pittsburgh

The understanding of partisanship as a social psychological phenomenon is not something new.¹ Yet, recent advances in political behavior have consolidated the notion that party attachment is, in many cases, a relevant social identity not only in the United States (Iyengar et al., 2012, 2018; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Carlin & Love, 2018) but also in the rest of the world (Wagner, 2020). The novelty brought up by Samuels and Zucco (2018) is that antipartisanship can also represent a social identity strong enough to predict voting behavior. This finding, *per se*, places “Partisans, Antipartisans, and Nonpartisans: Voting Behavior in Brazil” as an essential book to anyone interested in electoral behavior and, more broadly, party politics.

Another merit of the book is testing this proposition in a context other than the United States—thus also offering a contribution to the study of Brazilian politics. As Samuels and Zucco (2018) highlight, the dominant view so far is that partisanship has minimal or no value in this country. However, they show that a significant share of the Brazilian electorate does hold strong attitudes toward at least one political party, be it in favor (partisans) or against it (antipartisans), and that this matters for voting behavior. Those dedicated to the study of comparative politics will find this book relevant to learn about the politics of Brazil.

In the following section, I briefly summarize the seven chapters of the manuscript. Since the authors rely on different methods and datasets, it makes sense to further explore the diverse strategies employed throughout the book. Additionally, they consider partisanship and antipartisanship as both dependent and independent variables. Their findings should motivate a variety of future studies related to political behavior and comparative politics. I present some of these in final section of the paper.

1. For instance, see Campbell et al. (1960).

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Samuels and Zucco (2018) introduce the book by summarizing the complex context of Brazilian politics—a country with many, lowly institutionalized parties that appears to be dominated by the center-left Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), at least when it comes to party attachment. This allows for a set of interesting puzzles: How come, among so many party brands, only the PT has managed to develop a substantive membership basis? At the same time, why so many people seem to hate the PT even though they are not attached to any other party? Finally, why has no other party benefited from the PT's decay in the aftermath of corruption and economic crises?

Their theory, which is summarized in the introduction, becomes clearer as one goes through the rest of the book. In chapter 2, Samuels and Zucco (2018) do an outstanding job compiling multiple surveys which were not previously explored in academia—at least not in such a combined form. Besides assessing partisanship through standard survey questions, they use different approaches to capture antipartisanship, e.g., measuring the refusal to vote for one party or simply voters' stark dislike of it. In some cases, when a feeling thermometer is available, antipartisanship means choosing the least positive score to a party.

Using these two measurements and focusing solely on the PT, they show that it is possible to map roughly 43 % of the Brazilian population (2010) based on four ideal types: hard-core *petistas* (those who identify with the PT and dislike another party); pure *petistas* (identify with the PT but do not dislike any other party); pure *antipetistas* (do not identify with any party and reject the PT); and other partisan *antipetistas* (identify with another party and reject the PT).

Their proposition is that the formation of antipartisanship does not require any party attachment. In fact, since the PT has been the only party capable of developing a large membership basis, rejecting it has become a social identity. In their own words, the consequence is that “out-group bias [i.e., antipartisanship] can act as a repellent, even if no in-group attraction serves as a magnet” (Samuels & Zucco, 2018, p. 22).

At this point, the puzzle is to understand why, in Brazil, some people become *petistas* (PT identifiers) while others become *antipetistas*. Their regressions fail to show any predictive effect of ideology or socio-demographic characteristics. Yet, they find that those who were engaged in other types of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are more likely to join the PT, while the opposite is true for *antipetistas*. They also show that *petistas* tend to be more favorable toward democracy, thus suggesting that this divide is an outcome of how individuals engage with the political system.

Based on this finding, Samuels and Zucco (2018) also argue that the strategy adopted by the PT to engage with organizations that already had their own

members helped the party to consolidate its brand and membership basis. Further evidence is presented in chapter 4. In this part of the book, they use a differences-in-differences design to show that when a municipality has both a local branch of the PT and a large number of NGOs, attachment to and votes for the PT tend to increase significantly. The authors are able to run these tests with an impressive combination and stratification of different datasets that culminate into a longitudinal panel of selected Brazilian municipalities.

In chapters 3 and 5, the authors flip the equation to treat partisanship and antipartisanship as independent variables. First, they replicate and expand a survey experiment that they developed in the past (Samuels & Zucco, 2014) to show that *petistas*, *tucanos* (identifiers of the center-right Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, PSDB), and *antipetistas* follow party cues, sometimes even to reject facts. This evidence of motivated reasoning strengthens the thesis that attachment to and rejection of parties matter. In chapter 5, they show that these social identities also influence who Brazilians vote for. Even in such a complex system, where sometimes party leaders may end up promoting other parties, being a *petista* or *antipetista* appears to be substantively relevant to political behavior.

Throughout the book, the authors make it clear that Brazil appears to have a fairly unique mix of institutional and behavioral elements. Thus, the question is whether it is possible to generalize the findings presented so far. They answer it based on data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), an international project that has fielded comparable surveys across a large number of countries since the 1990s. First, they show that antipartisanship is a relevant phenomenon in several parts of the world—in many cases being stronger than partisanship (or even than antipetismo in Brazil). On average, this type of voter accounts for one-third of all nonpartisans.

Their regressions suggest that, as in the Brazilian case, while socio-demographic characteristics are weak predictors of the partisan-antipartisan divide, antipartisanship is a relevant independent variable to predict electoral behavior. These findings reinforce the validity of the book's theoretical propositions and lay out the foundations for the conclusion chapter, where Samuels and Zucco (2018) summarize their contributions.

DISCUSSION

The multiple propositions, datasets, methods, and findings of this book motivate a plethora of research questions to be asked by those interested in political behavior or comparative politics. I begin with the latter stream of research. The authors make a plausible (and data-driven) claim that PT managed to consolidate its membership basis through linkages to non-governmental organizations, thus

implying that those who are antipartisans are not politically engaged. This proposition dismisses the role of protests as a type of political engagement. After all, according to the authors, “participation in a protest against something is not the same as actively working for something” (Samuels & Zucco, 2018, p. 44).

The first discussion that these claims motivate is the nature of protest politics. For instance, are protests always against something? Is it possible to say that those against something are most often also in favor of something else? Or, otherwise, if such distinction is adequate, could we infer that those who protest in favor of something tend to be partisans, while those protesting against something will be more likely to be antipartisans? In Brazil, it appears to be intuitive that many of those who engaged in the protests of 2013 did not have a clear idea of what they wanted. However, protest politics probably spans more possibilities than this case. Furthermore, once more data is collected, the links between other types of political engagement and antipartisanship could be further investigated. I wonder whether the use of different social media for political communication motivates negative attitudes toward certain political parties.

There are some more specific questions that could be asked. One of Brazil's left-wing party, the Partido Comunista do Brasil (PCdoB), has been the dominant player in student politics for several decades. Their influence ranges from student organizations at small universities to the national association of students (União Nacional dos Estudantes, UNE). Yet, their membership basis is not comparable to that of the PT. Is this because, in line with the authors' argument, the PCdoB was not able to move towards the center in order to attract a more diverse electorate? This proposition would be in line with that of Przeworski and Sprague (1988) when discussing electoral socialism. Or, did the PT benefit from a greater plurality of organizations, while PCdoB restricted its activism to mostly student affairs? In the case of European political parties, the church was strong enough to consolidate the Christian Democrats (Kalyvas, 1996). However, student organizations and a religion probably have much more differences than similarities.

In fact, the role of religion in Brazilian politics has been on the rise (Smith, 2016, 2017, 2019). Could President Jair Bolsonaro manage to build a large right-wing party based on the same strategy adopted by the PT? In this case, instead of diverse local NGOs, the populist leader could rely on evangelical churches—somewhat similar to what happened to the Christian Democrats in Europe (Kalyvas, 1996).

When it comes to political behavior, one possible path for future research is that of alternative measurements. Samuels and Zucco (2018) rely on categorical or binary variables when measuring negative and positive partisanship. This has been the standard in the profession so far (Rose & Mishler, 1998). However, a number of scholars also adopted ordered or continuous variables to assess party affect (Iyengar et al., 2018; Wagner, 2020). Consider CSES's feeling thermometer, which ranges from 0 (least positive) to 10 (most positive). When the authors convert this

into a binary variable (0 for antipartisans, all others for non-antipartisans), they assume that those choosing 1 are more similar to those who selected 10 than to respondents choosing 0. Is it possible to talk about antipartisanship as a matter of scale? If that is the case, we would probably be able to categorize a larger share of Brazilian voters than the roughly 43% that the authors labeled with their typology. The same is true for the cross-national statistics demonstrated in Chapter 6.

These recommendations do not represent shortcomings of the book. On the contrary, they are only possible because of the unique theoretical and empirical contributions of "Partisans, Antipartisans, and Nonpartisans: Voting Behavior in Brazil." As I wrote in the introduction of this review, this work has all the elements to become an essential book to anyone interested in the study of electoral behavior, political parties, Latin American politics, and Brazilian politics.

REFERENCES

- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American Voter*. University of Chicago Press.
- Carlin, R.E. & Love, G.J. (2018). Political Competition, Partisanship and Interpersonal Trust in Electoral Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science* 48(1): 115-139.
- Iyengar, S., & Krupenkin, M. (2018). The Strengthening of Partisan Affect. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 39(1), 201-218.
- Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., & Westwood, S. (2018). The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(7), 1-18.
- Iyengar, S., Sood, G., & Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affect, not ideology: A social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 76(3), 405-431.
- Kalyvas, S. (1996). *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. Cornell University Press.
- Przeworski, A., & Sprague, J. (1988). *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rose, R., & Mishler, W. (1998). Negative and Positive Party Identification in Post-Communist Countries. *Electoral Studies*, 17(2), 217-234.
- Samuels, D., & Zucco, C. (2014). The Power of Partisanship in Brazil: Evidence from Survey Experiments. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(1), 212-225.
- Samuels, D., & Zucco, C. (2018). *Partisans, Antipartisans, and Nonpartisans: Voting Behavior in Brazil*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, A. E. (2016). When Clergy are Threatened: Catholic and Protestant Leaders and Political Activism in Brazil. *Politics and Religion*, 9(3), 431-455.
- Smith, A. E. (2017). Democratic Talk in Church: Religion and Political Socialization in the Context of Urban Inequality. *World Development*, 99, 441-451.
- Smith, A. E. (2019). *Religion and Brazilian democracy: Mobilizing the people of God*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wagner, M. (2020). Affective polarization in multiparty systems. *Electoral Studies*.

