

# Institutions and politicians: an analysis of the factors that determine presidential legislative success

Manuel Alcántara Sáez  
(Universidad de Salamanca)  
Mercedes García Montero  
(Universidad de Salamanca)

## Abstract

This study questions the level of influence that different Latin American Presidents have on the making of laws. In order to delimit this analysis, it is necessary to understand the factors that affect decision-making in Latin American parliaments. Many of the theoretical approaches that tackle the study of decision-making within legislative bodies maintain that the products – in the shape of laws – that arise from this decisional process, besides depending on the institutional organization of the parliament itself, depend on the political actors taking part, on their strategies when adapting to this institutional framework, and on their interests as well as on their collective and individual preferences.

The aim of this research is to verify the explanatory strength of these theories in Latin American countries. Thus, an analysis is made of the importance that the institutional factors – relating to regulatory design- and the party factors –relating to both the presence of the political parties in the parliament and government and the ideological attitudes shown by the legislators- have in the legislative performance of diverse Latin American Presidents.

## Introduction

Studies focusing on legislative activity in Latin America, and more specifically on the importance of the role played by the President in this activity, have mainly been case analyses, with the two largest countries, Mexico and Brazil, being the center of attention of most of the researchers.<sup>1</sup> From these studies it can be gathered that, when explaining legislative activity, the different researchers resort to both institutional and political factors. However, since there is a lack of other cases for comparison, they cannot conclude what the influence of the presidents and parliaments on the legislative activity is due to in comparative terms; they can only reach conclusions that relate a country's legislative activity over time and see the effect of the political and institutional changes that have occurred during that time period.

Comparative studies focusing on legislative activity are quite scarce and recent. Among these, mention must be made of the article by Saiegh (2004), which analyses the passage rates achieved by 35 Executives, among which are eight Latin American countries,<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> One of the main reasons for the low number of studies is the difficulty in gaining access to the data on law-making of many of the Latin American Congresses. In the case of Mexico see Casar (2002), Hurtado (2002), Ugalde (2003), Alarcón and Jiménez (2003), Nava and Yañez (2003), Weldon (2004) or Jiménez (2004); for Brazil, Cheibub Limongi (2000), Ricci (2002); Samuels (2002) or Amorin and Santos (2003); for Argentina Molinelli *et al* (1999), Mustapic (2002), Calvo (2004) or Calvo and Alemán (2006); for Chile, Siavelis (2002); for Honduras, Taylor and Díaz (1999); for Nicaragua, Navarro (2004); for the countries in Central America, Ajenjo (2005); for Ecuador, Mejía (2000); for Uruguay, Lanzaro *et al* (2000); for Paraguay, Molinas *et al* (2004) and for Venezuela, Amorin and Malgar (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Honduras, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela.

concludes that the presidents of parliamentary systems have higher rates of success than those of presidential systems and that this decreases when the Executive is formed by a coalition government.

After analyzing these same data and focusing again on the form of government, Cheibub *et al* (2004: 578) state that legislative paralysis is very rare, even in presidential countries with minority governments. For these authors, the rate of presidential success falls when party positions on politics are polarized and political change has to be negotiated through promises and when government coalitions are internally divided as to their preferences. Another comparative study is the one carried out by Alcántara *et al* (2005) which analyzes the legislative activity of 12 Latin American countries. Although the objective of this work is not to reflect on the factors affecting such activity, empirical progress is made by showing, comparatively, the differences existing among the different countries and by disproving the statement that the role of Latin American parliaments is really marginal in all cases. A recent comparative study is the one by García (2007a and 2007b), who defends the importance of institutional factors in the influence of presidents and parliaments on legislation.

The aim of this study is to contribute to the few studies that have legislative activity in Latin America as their subject. Specifically, we seek factors that determine the degree of legislative success of different presidents in 14 countries in the area. Hence, an in-depth study is carried out of the contributions made by the different theories and methodologies that analyze the effects of institutional arrangements in legislative policy and at the same time their validity is compared using the data on law-making.

In the first part, the presidential legislative success indicator is defined; this indicator reports the variability of the Executive's passage rates in the different countries analyzed. Next, different factors that may have an effect on this are delimited and stated: the institutions, the political parties and the electoral cycle. In relation to the institutions, we decided to use of the index of legislative institutional power (IPII) (García, 2007a) which reflects the legislative institutional capacity of the parliament and Executive to intervene in legislative activity.

As regards the political parties, the weight of six variables is contrasted. Three of them refer to their presence in the parliament and in the Executive (legislative majorities, party fragmentation and forming of coalitions) and the other three focus on the ideological attitudes and positions shown by the same (polarization and ideological coherence and attitudinal discipline). The sources from which the indicators for measuring the set of the first three were extracted are the electoral results, whereas the attitudinal variables were made operative from the data extracted from the research project directed by Manuel Alcántara "Elites Parlamentarias Latinoamericanas" (PELA) (Ref. SEC94/0284; SEC95/0845 and SEC02/3484).<sup>3</sup> The last variable whose explanatory power is tested is the electoral cycle.

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<sup>3</sup> This research project, directed by Manuel Alcántara, has been carried out in the lower Chambers of Latin American countries since 1994; its objective is to collect the values and attitudes of Latin American Members of Congress by means of a questionnaire applied to a representative sample of the members of Congress of the different countries in the region. For further information on this research see García and Mateos (2006) and Alcántara (2006).

## 1. The legislative success of the Executive and the units of analysis.

This study inquires into the factors affecting the different rates of legislative passage of proposals by Latin American presidents. The indicator used, based on Alcántara *et al.* (2005),<sup>4</sup> for measuring these different rates is “legislative success” which refers to the relationship between the number of initiatives presented by the Executive and those finally passed (et al. 2005: 99). The units of analysis are the annual sessions or two-year legislative periods, except in the cases of Venezuela and Paraguay, where the unit of analysis is the whole presidential period of office and Mexico, where it coincides with the term of office (three years). In all, 103 periods of sessions pertaining to twelve Latin American countries are analyzed<sup>5</sup> coinciding with 40 different presidential terms of office.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 shows the values the aggregated legislative success indicator takes per presidential term of office and per period analyzed in each country. First it can be affirmed that, indeed, in the countries analyzed, the presidents have different rates of legislative success. If we focus on the entire analysis period in each country, the Mexican case clearly stands out, in which the Executive achieved the passage of 95.4% of the laws initiated in 1982-2003.

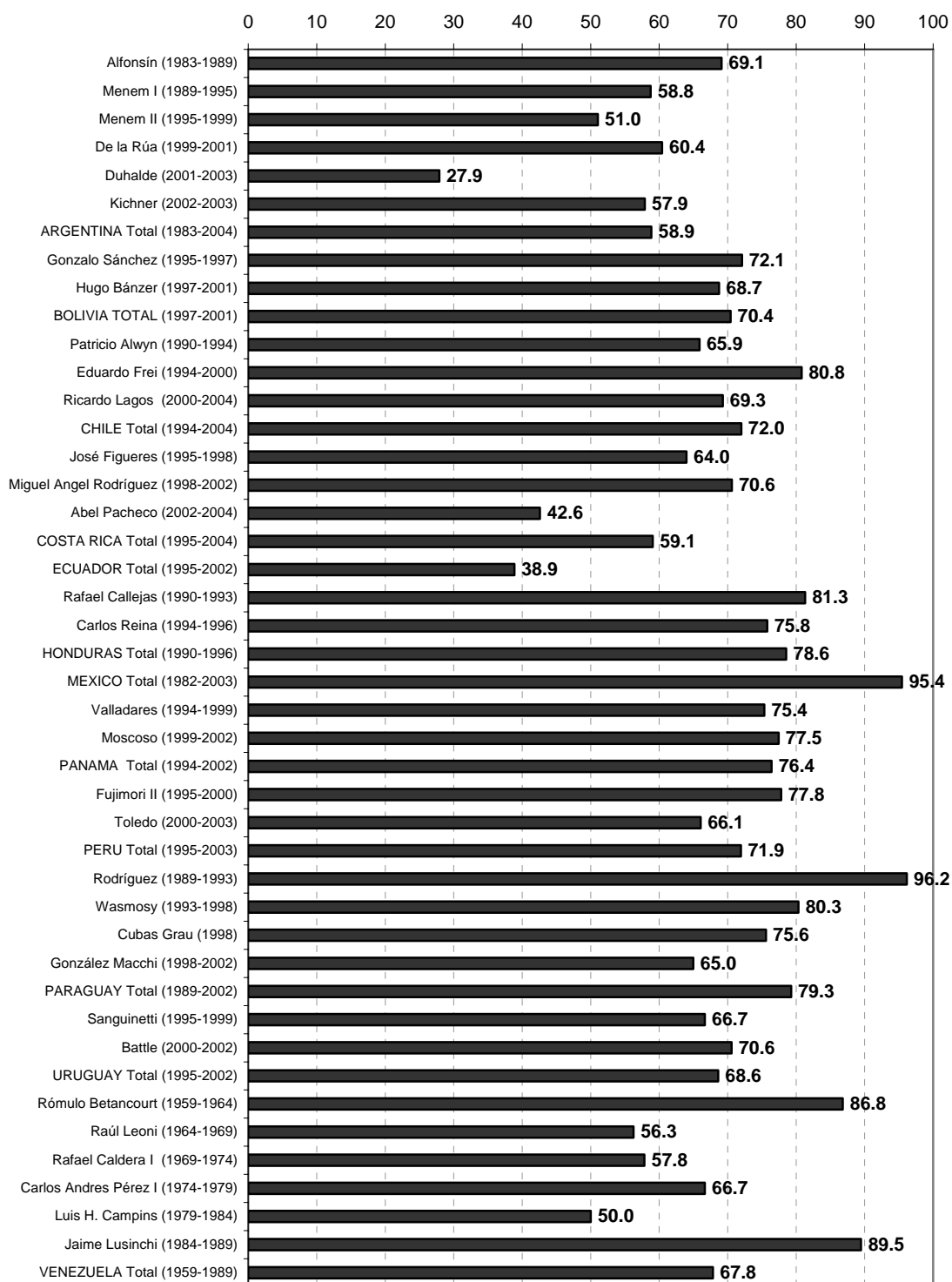
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<sup>4</sup> It relates the number of initiatives that the Executive presents in a session to the number of initiatives from the actors themselves which are passed. The empirical data in this study were collected within the framework of the research project directed by Manuel Alcántara, “El Parlamento en América Latina. Rendimiento del Poder Legislativo: Una clave interpretativa de los problemas de gobernabilidad de la región” financed by the Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional (FEDER) in the framework of the Spanish program for Research and Development (Ref. 1FD97-0906). Hence, most were obtained from primary sources, except those for Paraguay, taken from the study by Molinas *et al.* (2004), the data on Honduras prior to 1997, from the study by Taylor and Díaz (1999) and the data for Venezuela, from Amorin and Malgar (2000).

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately it was not possible to include 18 countries in the Latin American cases, as was our intention, owing to the difficulty in gaining access to the data on legislative activity in Latin American countries. However, having information on twelve is considered to be sufficient for performing the analysis the study proposes, since the cases analyzed are sufficiently representative of the regional situation. The Latin American countries not analyzed in the research are: Brazil, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.

<sup>6</sup> It is not our purpose here to make an in-depth study of each of the countries and verify the type of legislation the Executive Power initiates (its level of aggregation, its effect or its subject matter) but rather to concentrate on the President’s “success” rates. Hence, the laws will not be classified. Evidently, the subject matter of a law affects its probability of being passed. For some authors (Adler and Wikerson 2005), rather than showing the success of an actor in the passing of his/her proposals, an attempt should be made to show the common qualities of the laws passed and explain why these qualities are associated with the degree of “success”. We are, therefore, aware that by not classifying them, the “success” indicator becomes related to laws of unequal importance.

Figure 1: Success of the Executive by country, period of government and period of complete study



Source: own from legislation databases of the Project "El Parlamento en América Latina. Rendimiento del Poder Legislativo".

The data indicate that, despite the fact that Mexico is an extreme case, there are another six countries of the twelve analyzed (Paraguay, Honduras, Panama, Chile, Peru and Bolivia) where the *success* rate of the Executive is between 70% and 80%. Moreover, except for Ecuador, where during 1995-2002 the Executive scarcely managed to carry through 38.9% of its proposals, in none of the countries did the government have legislative *success* below 50%. However, if *success* in the passing of the projects of the Latin American presidents is compared with those of European countries, characterized by parliamentary systems, it is confirmed that these rates are relatively low, since in Europe what Olson (1994:85) calls the 90% rule occurs. That is, approximately 90% of the projects of the Executive are passed<sup>7</sup> (Alcántara *et al*, 2005).

If attention is focused on the periods of government, Mexico is again clearly outstanding, since all its presidents, during the period analyzed (1892-2003) have had *success* rates above 95%, although a slight decrease is observed from 1997 on, when the PRI no longer controlled the majority of the seats in Congress. Also outstanding is the presidency of Andrés Rodríguez in Paraguay (1989-1993) with a *success* rate of 96.2%. With lower success levels, other presidents who achieved percentages above 80% in the passing of laws they introduced were, in this order, Jaime Lusinchi and Rómulo Betancourt in Venezuela, Rafael Callejas in Honduras, Eduardo Frei in Chile and J. Carlos Wasmosy in Paraguay. On the other hand, presidents with *success* rates below 50% were all the presidents of Ecuador from 1995 to 2002 (Sixto Durán Ballén, Abdalá Bucarám, Fabián Alarcón and Jamil Mahuad) and the Costa Rican president Abel Pacheco (2002-2004). Other Latin American Executives with *success* rates below 60% were all the Argentinean presidents analyzed in this research study, except Raúl Alfonsín, and the Venezuelan presidents Raúl Leoni, Rafael Caldera and Luis H. Campins.

## 2. The institutions: the index of legislative institutional power (IPIL)

As has been mentioned, when the importance of the presidents in legislative activity is explored, in Latin American cases it is common to attribute the institutional authorities of the Executive with a fundamental role. The regulatory design reduces transaction costs either by facilitating exchange, promoting specialization, or by facilitating party discipline and the power of the majority parties in the Congress. Hence, it is undeniable that the institutions are of importance. The formal powers of the actors involved in the legislative procedure that mark the potential control of the legislative agenda are determined by at least two types of norms: the Constitution and the rules of order of the Chambers.

The central importance of the Constitution in the structuring of the decision-making process and in the formulation of policies is obvious, since in it the stages through which an initiative must pass to become law are defined, the bodies that will participate in the process are determined and the authority of the actors that participate is conferred and delimited. The internal rules regulate and organize in detail each of the stages defined by the Constitution and, although they must always be subject to what is stipulated by the Constitution, they also confer potential degrees of influence, especially for the members of the Legislative Power. This is of great importance since political change or stagnation, whether the *status quo* is maintained or modified, depends on the interaction maintained between the latter and the Executive Power.

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<sup>7</sup> For example in Western Germany in the period 1949-87 the percentage of government proposals passed was 84%; in Great Britain from 1950 to 1970 it was 95%; in Spain from 1982 to 2004, 88.3% and in Belgium between 1968 and 1996, 74.8%.

One of the ways of delimiting the importance that both powers have in the legislation is to analyze the legislative process as a way of isolating the institutional effects and the political effects. Thus, the ability that the institutions grant to the president and the legislature to exercise influence on the legislative agenda can be traced from the systematic analysis of these two basic norms, and some suppositions on the meaning of their intervention in the legislative activity expounded

In this research, in order to contrast the importance that the institutional design has in presidential legislative success, the index of legislative institutional power (IPII) prepared by García (2007a) is used. To prepare this index the author took 15 institutional indicators delimited by the legislative procedure. This procedure has three stages (initiating, constitutive, and effectiveness) and in each one a series of institutional factors act which allows the Executive or the Legislative Power to accelerate or ensure that their initiative is undertaken (positive or proactive agenda power) or allows them to delay or veto the entry of a project or its passing (negative or reactive agenda power) (Cox, 2006). Specifically, she uses 10 constitutional indicators which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Institutional indicators of agenda power in the legislative procedure stipulated in the Constitution and the internal regulations

Ordinary legislative procedure			Extraordinary legislative procedure
Initiating stage	Constitutive stage	Effectiveness stage	
-Exclusive initiative (PAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>	-Ability of the presidents to force the emergency process (PAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>	-Total veto and override (NAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>	-Power of decree (PAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>
-Setting up of the agenda or discussion schedule (PAP) <i>(Regulations)</i>	-Number of Chambers <i>(Constitution)</i>	-Partial veto and override (NAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>	-Calling of extraordinary sessions (PAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>
-Type of majority for changing the agenda (PAP) <i>(Regulations)</i>	-Incorporation of the committees <i>(Regulations)</i>		
	-Prerogatives to prevent the law being processed in committees <i>(Regulations)</i>		
	-Power of the committees to process bills <i>(Regulations)</i>		
	BICAMERALISM		
	-Symmetry <i>(Constitution)</i>		
	-Solving of disagreements between Chambers (PAP or NAP) <i>(Constitution)</i>		
	a. Total rejection		
	b. Amendments		

(PAP) Indicator of positive agenda power.

(NAP) Indicator of negative agenda power.

Source: García (2007a)

The other five indicators were extracted from the internal regulations of the chambers<sup>8</sup> and their inclusion is based on the supposition that the ability to make a law be taken into account and voted is fundamental, as is the faculty to block a bill or delay it. A considerable part of the different rules, procedures and structure of the Congresses deals with settling

<sup>8</sup> One of the scarcest resources in the Congress is time, since the plenary session has to attend to many tasks among which is the legislative one and, when it attends to this function, it faces a large number of proposals. This means that time control by the different authorities participating in the formulation of laws appears as a factor determining agenda power in the parliament, gaining special importance in the initiating stage, when what will be discussed is decided.

what will be addressed in the plenary, as determined in the “agenda” (Oleszek, 2004; Cox and McCubbins, 1993 y 2004; McCubbins, *et al*, 2005).

Therefore, the institutional mechanisms followed in order to determine the discussion schedule, together with the degree of consensus or concentration required for decision-making, as well as the power of the committees in the Chambers, are the basic elements that define both what is to be addressed in the plenary and the number and identity of the actors to participate in the legislative activity. The 5 indicators used for preparing the IPIL can be seen in Table 1 and, the same as in the case of constitutional legislative powers, they have been grouped taking into consideration the stage of the legislative procedure in which they can take part.<sup>9</sup> The value the countries analyzed in this study take in the index<sup>10</sup> as well as the different stages are given in Table B of the appendix.

There are differences between the values shown by the IPIL and those of other indexes that measure legislative power (Shugart and Carey, 1992: 155; Shugart and Haggard, 2001: 80; Samuels and Shugart, 2003: 43; Payne *et al.* 2003:216; PNUD, 2005:76 and Stein *et al.*, 2005: 49). Table 2 and Figure 2 show the different values given by the different indexes prepared for each of the Latin American countries and the year of the Constitution taken as reference. The first matter worthy of mention is the great heterogeneity among them. Not only is the value they adopt different, which is normal, since they respond to the measurement scale used, but also the presidential legislative powers in the same country are dissimilar depending on one index or another. This stems mainly from the indicators used for its preparation. In order to solve the inequality of the indexes and make them more comparable, the values have been transformed so that the scale varies from 0 to 1 instead of having its original range. A further problem concerning these measurements is that not all the dimensions or indicators have the same impact on the legislative power of the president, which may lead to errors if not considered. Of the indexes given, only that of Stein *et al.* (2005) evaluates the weight of each indicator.

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<sup>9</sup> The hypotheses behind the including of each institutional indicator are given in Table A in the appendix.

<sup>10</sup> Detailed information on the construction of the index and the values taken by the countries in each indicator can be seen in García (2007)

Table 2: Presidential legislative powers in Latin America according to different authors

	Shugart and Carey (1992)		Shugart and Haggard (2001)		Samuels and Shugart (2003)		Payne <i>et al</i> (2003)		PNUD (2005)		Stein <i>et al.</i> (2005)	IPIL
	Value	Value (0-1)*	Value	Value (0-1)*	Value	Value (0-1)*	Value	Value (0-1)*	Value	Value (0-1)*	Weight'd Value	Value (0-1)
Argentina 1853	2	0.10			2	0.33					0.44	<b>0.49</b>
Argentina 1853 (ref.1994)			6	0.75	5	0.63	7	0.28	28.5	0.65	0.23	<b>0.31</b>
Bolivia 1967 (ref.1994)	2	0.10	2	0.25	2	0.33	5	0.20	15	0.34		<b>0.41</b>
Brazil 1969	7	0.29									0.62	
Brazil 1988	9	0.37	3	0.37	3	0.50	11	0.44	19	0.43		
Chile 1891	8	0.33										
Chile 1925	8	0.33										
Chile 1969	12	0.50									0.66	
Chile 1989	5	0.31	4	0.50	4	0.67	12	0.48	34	0.77		<b>0.70</b>
Colombia 1886 (ref.1968)	8	0.33			6	1					0.59	
Colombia 1991	5	0.31	4	0.50	4	0.67	11	0.44	20	0.45	0.23	<b>0.51</b>
Costa Rica 1949	1	0.04	1	0.12	1	0.17	2.5	0.10	17	0.45		<b>0.33</b>
Ecuador 1979	6	0.25			2	0.33					0.59	<b>0.59</b>
Ecuador 1998			3		4	0.67	14.5	0.58	33	0.75	0.33	<b>0.58</b>
El Salvador 1982	3	0.12	2	0.25	2	0.33	6.5	0.26	20	0.45	0.29	
Guatemala 1985	4	0.17	2	0.25	2	0.33	6.5	0.26	14	0.32	0.26	<b>0.36</b>
Honduras 1982	2	0.10	1	0.12	1	0.17	2.5	0.10	14	0.32	0.24	<b>0.39</b>
Mexico 1917	5	0.31	1	0.12	1	0.17	2.5	0.10	15.5	0.35	0.19	<b>0.31</b>
Nicaragua 1987	3	0.12	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	0.32	12	0.27	0.43	
Panama 1972	5	0.31			2	0.33	10.5	0.42	27.5	0.62	0.19	<b>0.63</b>
Paraguay 1992	6	0.25	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	0.12	13	0.27		<b>0.61</b>
Peru 1979	0	0.00			1	0.17					0.50	
Peru 1993			4	0.50			13	0.48	16	0.36	0.27	<b>0.45</b>
Dominican Republic 1994	2	0.10	2	0.25	2	0.33	8	0.32	31	0.70	0.38	
Uruguay 1967	6	0.25	2	0.25	2	0.33	6.5	0.26	22.5	0.51		<b>0.44</b>
Venezuela 1961	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00					0.30	<b>0.51</b>
Venezuela 2000					1	0.17	7	0.28	11	0.25		

Source: own from Shugart and Carey (1992: 155); Shugart and Haggard (2001: 80); Samuels and Shugart (2003: 43); Payne *et al.* (2003:216), PNUD (2005:76), Stein *et al.* (2005: 49) and García (2007).

\*The transforming of the value of the index to a scale of 0 to 1 was carried out as follows:

Value (0-1)={value/upper value of the range of the scale} the coefficients are not weighted except for the index of Stein *et al.*(2005).

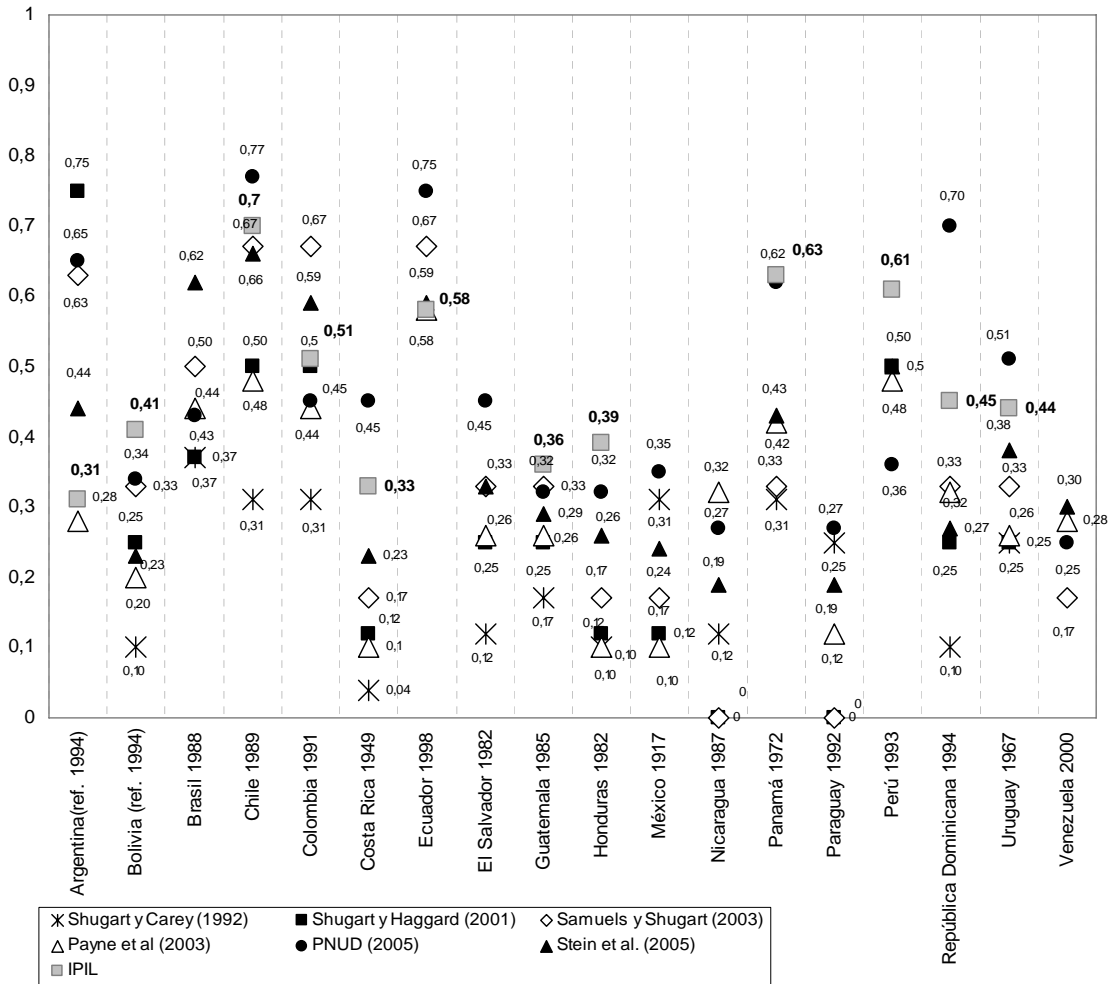
The countries where greater differences are observed, depending on the measurement considered, are the Dominican Republic, Argentina and Chile. The Shugart and Carey index (1992) tended to be low in comparison with the others. Hence, most of the cases are far removed from the maximum value that this can adopt, 0.50 and 0.37<sup>11</sup> being the highest values. Thus, it is considered that the Dominican Constitution only gives the president power of veto which, although a majority of two thirds is required to override it (see appendix) is not considered to be one of the strongest. Nevertheless, for Haggard and Shugart (2001) and Samuels and Shugart (2001) this ability to veto obtains the maximum

<sup>11</sup> 0.50 corresponds to the presidential legislative powers contemplated in the 1969 Chilean Constitution and 0.27 to the 1988 Brazilian Constitution currently in force.



value, which, added to the fact that only three indicators are taken into account, makes the index of presidential legislative powers rise. But the maximum value for this country is that given by the PNUD (0.70), once again because the power of veto is considered to be strong and because of the existence of certain prerogatives concerning the budget, which favor the president. These elements, together with the fact that the index shown is not weighted by indicators, make the value presented high.

Figure 2: Spatial distribution of presidential power indexes



Source: own from Table 1.

In the case of Argentina the different measurements vary from 0.28, which is the value given by Payne *et al* (2003) to 0.75, given by Shugart and Haggard (2001). Payne *et al* (2003) found that the president of Argentina has no major legislative powers, except for the right to veto (total and partial) which these authors fix as of intermediate degree (override requires the majority of two thirds of the members present), a certain ability of decree, subject, however, to the delegation of the Legislative power and the call for a referendum, the results of which are not binding. Nevertheless, Shugart and Haggard (2001) and Samuels and Shugart (2003) give the Argentinean president's ability to veto and decree the maximum value, whereas the PNUD (2005) and Stein *et al.* (2005), although considering the ability to veto strong, situate that of decree as weak, hence the index takes intermediate values.

As regards Chile, the different measurements give the president power over the legislation that varies from 0.31, offered by Shugart and Carey (1992) to 0.77, given by the PNUD and which is the highest value reached by a country in the indexes considered. This difference is, once again, due to the indicators and the score they receive. Thus, whereas Shugart and Carey (1992) consider the ability to veto and the powers over the budget intermediate, and the ability of exclusive initiative of legislation weak, the rest of the authors situate both the presidential ability to veto, that of exclusive initiative and influence on the budget in a high position.

### 3. The political variables

Despite the fact that the discussion about the relationship between the Legislative and the Executive has a strong institutional component, it is true that the normative prerogatives do not explain it fully. In unstable political systems the Constitutions change frequently and in many countries there is a break between what appears in the text of the constitution and what really happens (Mezey, 1993: 352-353).

Thus, the legislative process and its products depend not only on the institutional design of the countries but also on the political actors participating in it, on their strategies when adapting to the institutional network, and on their collective and individual interests. The configuration of the political parties is, therefore, crucial for understanding the relationships between the Executive and Legislative Powers.

#### 3.1. The presence of the parties in the legislature

##### 3.1.1. Legislative majorities

One of the basic characteristics of presidential systems is the fact that the Executive Power does not depend on a legislative majority for its forming. Hence, one of the first evident hypotheses that emerged from the new institutionalism when dealing with this type of system was the one that links the composition of the Congress to the Executive's ability to carry out its public policies. If the government does not have sufficient majority in the legislature, it will have greater difficulties in carrying through its agenda than if it has the support of an ample percentage of seats in the Congress, since the president should receive more support from the legislators elected by his/her own party than from those of other parties. Moreover, given that in presidential systems both branches of power are independent –not only are they separate as regards the functions they perform but also as regards the political interests they represent and the purposes they each pursue (Cox and McCubbins, 2001) – if there is no cooperation between the president and the Congress, situations such as political stagnation, legislative bottleneck and even the fall of the government can occur (Linz, 1990; Mainwaring, 1993; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997).

This basic idea that presidents in minority have greater difficulties in governing has given rise to many studies and hypotheses in Latin America. Thus, among the consequences of having an Executive Branch in the minority, it has been affirmed that the Executive uses unilateral constitutional powers, such as the decree, in order to carry through its agenda<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> When a president has an ample legislative majority, the use of unilateral power of decree is not very important for attaining political goals (Cox and Morgenstern, 2001) and, on the contrary, when the majority of the Congress has faith in the president as an agent, he/she can delegate power of decree in the Executive in order to speed up the legislative agenda (Carey and Shugart, 1998; Pérez and Rodríguez, 2003)

(Ferreira and Goretti, 1996; Cox and Morgenstern, 2001); strengthening of the role of the “median party” to define the modification of the *status quo* (Nacif, 2005; Negretto, 2002) and the need to form coalitions in order to govern (Chasquetti, 2001; Amorim, 1998; Pérez, 2000, Altman, 2001). All these consequences arise from the strategy the president takes to overcome the minority situation. The hypothesis maintained in this study with respect to the composition of the Congress and its relationship with the legislative activity is that *in the cases in which the party in government or the parties in the coalition government maintain an ample majority in the parliament, success in the passing of their proposals will be greater.*

Table C in the appendix summarizes the percentage of legislators that support the Executives under study in this research. To build the indicator that measures the legislative majorities, both the percentage of seats obtained by the president –in the lower and upper chambers- and the increase in this percentage in those cases in which the presidents formed a coalition were taken into account. The latter is important, since these legislators whose parties come to form part of the Executive are more likely to support the president than if they remain in the opposition. Finally, these percentages were used to prepare the indicator that appears in the last column of the table mentioned, which is used to contrast the importance of legislative majorities in the legislative activity and which contains the total percentage of legislators in both chambers who belonged to the governing party or parties after the coalitions were formed, if such was the case.

### 3.1.2. Fragmentation or effective number of parties

Party fragmentation is considered to be one of the most important dimensions when informing on the dispersal or concentration of the political system. Evidently, there is a great association between fragmentation, legislative majorities and the forming of coalitions, since it is to be expected that, as the number of parties increases, the proportion of seats of the president’s party will decrease and, therefore, the difficulty in forming majorities in order to govern will increase and coalitions will be formed (Mainwaring, 2002; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997, Altman, 2001). In presidential contexts, the multi-party system has been considered as a potentially dangerous factor for the stability of democracies (Mainwaring, 1993) although an ever-increasing number of authors considers that the danger depends on the ability to form coherent and stable coalitions when the number of parties is high (Chasquetti, 2001; Cheibub *et al*, 2002).

As regards the effects that the number of parties in the system has on the legislative activity, Sartori (1999:151) stated that the greater the number of parties (having a voice) the greater the complexity and probably the complication of the system will be. Thus, the greater the number of parties, the greater the transaction costs and the possibilities of stagnation (Cox and McCubbins, 1999). In the same line, Mainwaring (2002: 79) maintained that as the fragmentation of the party system increases, the president’s ability to obtain what he/she desires decreases. Therefore, the hypothesis to be tested is that *the existence of a high number of parties tends to limit the possibilities of finding support for the policies proposed by the Executive, which will make its degree of success decrease. This is strengthened by the fact that the increase in the number of players in the Congress reduces the ability to influence the chamber as a collective player.*<sup>13</sup> However, it should be mentioned that this statement also depends on the positions of the political parties. If the political parties other than the president’s party have positions close to those of the latter with respect to certain policies, then the difficulties for the Executive associated with a significant fragmentation should decrease, which

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<sup>13</sup> On the effects of the increase in the number of players, see Tsebelis (2002)

introduces the subject of polarization which, for Sartori (1994, 1999), is inseparable from fragmentation, as will be seen below.

One of the first indexes for calculating fragmentation was the one proposed by Rae in 1971, called *fragmentation index*,<sup>14</sup> which can take two values, depending on whether the strength of the parties is considered in terms of votes (electoral results) or in terms of seats. The difference between one value and the other depends on the distortion that the electoral system introduces in the proportionality between votes and seats. The value of this index ranges from 0 to 1, although the index most used for measuring the dispersion of political power is the one proposed by Laakso and Taagepera in 1979, called *effective number of parties*.<sup>15</sup> This indicator basically offers the same information as that of Rae, but, unlike it, it has the advantage of making it easier to appreciate how many parties compete in the elections and how many compete in the Congress, taking into account in both cases their respective relative sizes<sup>16</sup> (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999:36-37). In order to measure fragmentation, this study uses the latter index calculated from the seats.<sup>17</sup> Table D in the appendix gives the effective number of parties present in both the Lower Chamber and the Senate for each Latin American period of government studied and the total that corresponds to the mean of both Chambers –in the case of bicameral countries- is shown in Figure 3.

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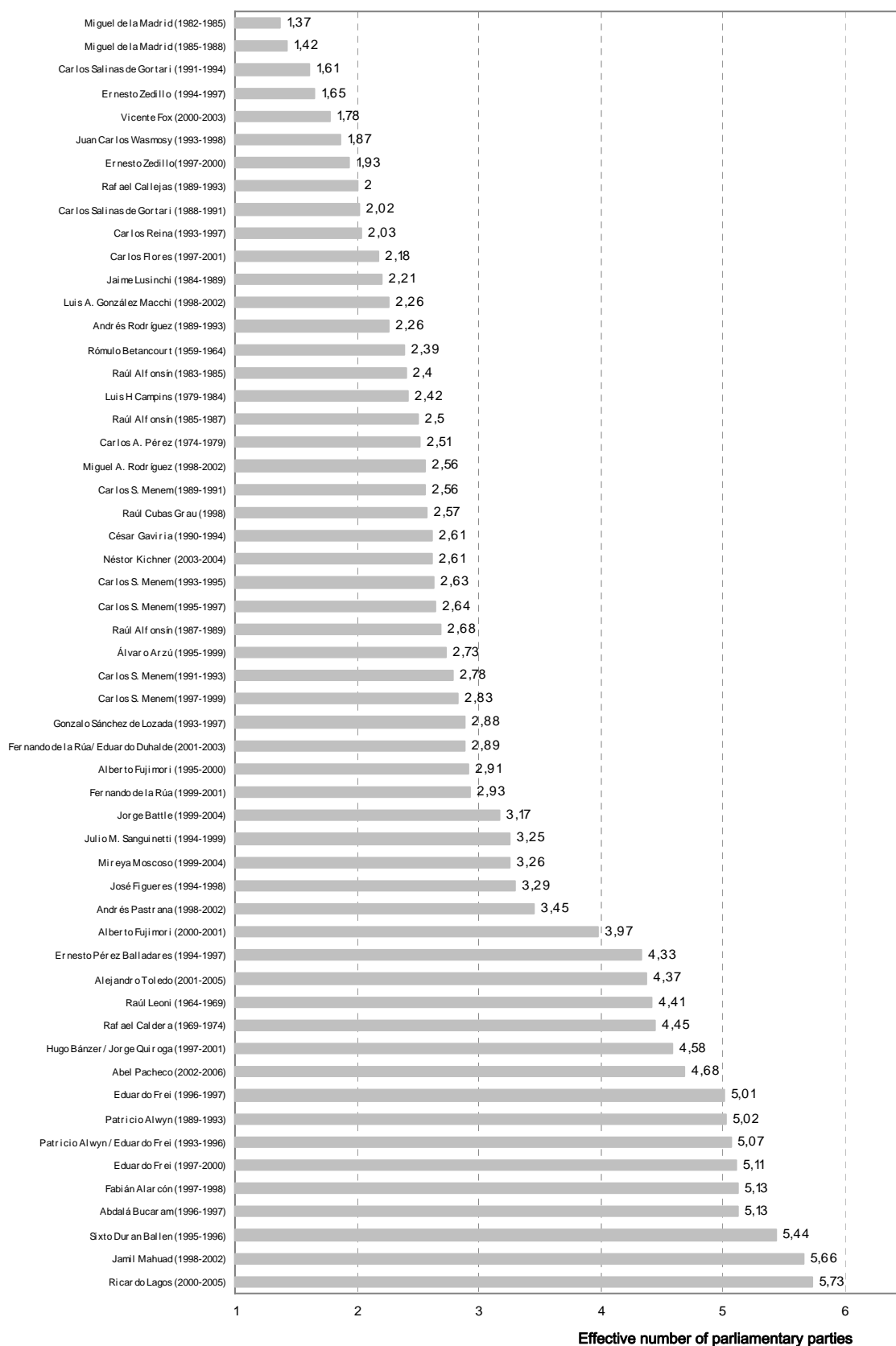
<sup>14</sup> Rae's formula for calculating the fragmentation index is  $F = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2$ ,  $p_i$  being the proportion of votes or seats of each party.

<sup>15</sup> The formula for the effective number of parties index is  $NEP = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$ ,  $p_i$  being the proportion of votes or seats of each party.

<sup>16</sup> The values of the effective number of parties index generally range in the +/-1 interval of the actual number of parties which ranges more than 10% of the vote. The value of this indicator will, therefore, be lower in the usual case in which not all the parties achieve similar results (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999:37).

<sup>17</sup> If each party has the same amount of seats, the effective number of parties will actually be equal to the number of parties with parliamentary representation.

Figure 3: Effective number of parties per period of government



Source: own

### 3.1.3. Coalitions

Strom (1990) defined the coalition as a set of political parties that agree to pursue common goals, join resources for materializing them and distribute the benefits of the achievement of these goals. These coalitions may be pre-electoral or may be formed after the elections. The forming of coalition Executives as well as their survival and effectiveness is a subject that has been dealt with extensively by researchers taking parliamentary systems as the study object.<sup>18</sup> However, until recently this matter had not been studied in Latin American countries, since it was thought that presidentialism generated fewer incentives for cooperation in a coalition (Stepan and Skach, 1993: 20) because under this type of government, party discipline cannot be trusted to occur (Mainwaring, 1993). Nevertheless, from 1995 onwards important studies on presidential systems in the region began to appear (Amorim, 1998; Deheza, 1998; Altman, 2001; Chasquetti, 2001; Lanzaro, 2001; Garrido, 2003; Cheibub *et al.*, 2002) which revealed that coalition governments are set up in the region fairly frequently.

The matter of coalitions is closely linked to the legislative majorities, since the decision to share the Executive among several parties depends on the percentage of seats obtained by the president's party.<sup>19</sup> The hypothesis the study tests is that *governments composed of one single party with a legislative majority will have greater success in having their proposals passed than those composed by a coalition, especially if the latter comprises a high number of political parties* since the increase in the number of actors makes the president's control over them and decision-making more difficult.<sup>20</sup>

In order to measure the variable for coalition and number of parties in the government a numerical scale has been set up that ranges from 1 to 5. The value of 5 is assigned to the periods of sessions in which the Executive is occupied by a single party which also has a percentage of seats higher than or equal to 50%, as can be seen in Table 3.

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<sup>18</sup> See Riker (1962); De Swaan (1973); Dodd (1976); Budge and Keman (1990); Laver and Schofield (1990); Strom (1990); Laver and Shepsle (1996); Mershon, (1999) Müller and Strom (2000).

<sup>19</sup> Deheza (1998) groups governments into two types a) single-party government and b) coalition government. The latter may be majority governments when they have support equal to or higher than 50% of the seats or minority governments when they control a percentage lower than the absolute majority. Although the forming of coalitions entails benefits for both the president and the parties forming it, it can also entail risks, since decision-making must have a greater number of actors, which limits the president's control while situations of lack of discipline can always occur.

<sup>20</sup> See Tsebelis (1995, 1998).

Table 3: Periods of government analyzed and number of parties in the Executive

Single-party government with majority	Government formed by one party in minority	Coalition formed by two parties	Coalition formed by 3 parties	Coalition formed by 4 parties or more
<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Bolivia</i>	<i>Bolivia</i>
-Carlos S. Menem (1989-1995)	-Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989)	Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2002)	-Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997)	-Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997-2001)
Carlos S. Menem (1995-1999)	<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>Panama</i>	<i>Chile</i>
-Eduardo Duhalde (2002-2003)	Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002)	-Sixto Duran Ballen (1995-1996)	-Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994-1999)	-Patricio Alwyn (1989-1994)
-Néstor Kichner (2003-2007)	<i>Costa Rica</i>	-Abdalá Bucaram (1996-1997)	<i>Venezuela</i>	-Eduardo Frei (1994-2000)
<i>Colombia</i>	-José Figueres (1994-1998)	-Fabián Alarcón (1997-1998)	-Raúl Leoni (1964-1969)	-Ricardo Lagos (2000-2005)
-César Gaviria (1990-1994)	-Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998-2002)	<i>Peru</i>	<i>Panama</i>	
<i>Guatemala</i>	-Abel Pacheco (2002-2006)	Alejandro Toledo (2001-2005)		-Mireya Moscoso (1999-2004)
-Álvaro Arzú (1995-1999)	<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>Uruguay</i>		
<i>Honduras</i>	-Jamil Mahuad (1998-2002)	Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994-1999)		
-Rafael Callejas (1989-1993)	<i>Venezuela</i>	Jorge Battle (1999-2004)		
-Carlos Reina (1993-1997)	-Rafael Caldera (1969-1974)	<i>Mexico</i>		
-Carlos Flores (1997-2001)	-Luis H. Campins (1979-1984)	-Vicente Fox (2000-2006)		
<i>Mexico</i>		<i>Venezuela</i>		
-Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988)		-Jorge Battle (1999-2004)		
-Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994)		-Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964)		
-Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000)				
<i>Paraguay</i>				
-Andrés Rodríguez (1989-1993)				
-Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993-1998)				
-Raúl Cubas Grau (1998)				
-Luis A. González Macchi (1998-2002)				
<i>Peru</i>				
-Alberto Fujimori (1995-2000)				
<i>Venezuela</i>				
-Carlos A. Pérez (1974-1979)				
-Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989)				

Unfavorable to the intervention of the Executive in legislative activity

Favorable to the intervention of the Executive in legislative activity

Source: own

The table shows that during the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s, although it was not the most frequent situation, the forming of coalitions in Latin American countries was common, which to some extent contradicts the expectations of the critics of presidentialism, who considered that such alliances had no ability to avoid the dual legitimacy and the trend to stagnation typical of systems with separation of power (Payne *et al.*, 2003:225). Of the 47 presidential periods analyzed, 26 were single party governments, 19 had an absolute majority and 8 governed in minority. The rest of the presidential periods (19) dealt with were coalition governments, 10 of which were formed by two

political parties, 3 Executives were formed by three parties and during 5 presidential periods the coalition was formed by four parties. The countries that stand out for having single-party governments with an absolute majority are Honduras, Paraguay and Guatemala, whereas the cases that concentrate coalitions with a larger number of parties are Bolivia, Chile, and Panama<sup>21</sup>, countries which, as has been seen above, have greater party fragmentation.

## 3.2. The attitudes of the legislators

### 3.2.1 Ideological polarization

For Sartori and Sani (1992) the fragmentation of the party system may reflect a situation of segmentation or a situation of polarization, that is, of ideological distance<sup>22</sup>. Hence, they maintain that there is something fundamental that cannot be detected except by counting the political parties, since “fragmentation hinders the functioning of democracy if (and only if) it expresses the existence of polarization” (Sartori and Sani, 1992:448). For these authors, when a system shows low values of polarization, a democracy can work even when its party system is fragmented, its social structure segmented and its political culture heterogeneous, since polarization is what determines the stability of the democratic system. Furthermore, and once again, this variable is highly related to those given in previous sections since whether competition is centripetal or centrifugal depends on it. If competition is centrifugal and the party system is fragmented, government coalitions will not be very viable (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999: 40). Hence, knowledge of polarization makes it possible to understand the forces that promote political agreements or render them unfit<sup>23</sup> and, consequently, allows spatial models of the forming of coalitions to be tested<sup>24</sup> (Altman, 2002: 90).

This variable is important for this research as it makes it possible to approach the degree of moderation or conflict in the relations between the Executive and Legislative branches since, as Mainwaring and Scully (1995:33) affirm, there is an inversely proportional

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<sup>21</sup> Although in these three countries the forming of coalition governments in the period studied was of crucial importance for their political system it should be pointed out that there are great differences between the Chilean coalitions, on the one hand, and the Bolivian and Panamanian ones, on the other hand. In Chile, the five parties that form the *Concertación por la democracia* (Coalition for Democracy) -Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC), Partido Socialista (PS), Partido por la Democracia (PPD) and Partido Radical Socialdemócrata (PRSD)- and the two that form the Union for Chile -Renovación Nacional (RN) and Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI)-, are structured in quite different and conflicting ideological positions, owing to the view they have of the authoritarian past and its legacy to democracy. All the Executives that have arisen in the most recent democratic period in Chile have been part of the *Concertación* and, despite the existence of trends within it, a certain consensus has been ensured as to a government program (Nolte, 2003). However, the Panamanian and Bolivian coalitions have been highly volatile, mainly because of the lack of a program pact in their forming. This has been subordinated to matters more related to the distribution of the resources and benefits of the quotas among the parties.

<sup>22</sup> Sartori (1992) defines polarization as the general sphere of the ideological spectrum of any political community.

<sup>23</sup> Mainwaring and Shugart (2002: 260) maintain that if a high percentage of seats is controlled by parties with similar ideological positions on most key issues, the need for the president's party to control a large number of legislators decreases, since it is easier to form a coalition.

<sup>24</sup> The literature that connects ideological polarization with government coalitions is very interesting. Some authors determine that the mere existence of “centrist” parties affects ideological polarization negatively (increasing it) and, consequently, the possibility of a coalition being formed or being able to survive diminishes (Hazan, 1997).



relationship between the polarization of a party system and the understanding between the branches of government. Hence, high ideological polarization hinders the coming together of common political areas on which to negotiate or reach agreements (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Hazan, 1997; Mainwaring and Shugart, 2002; and Altman, 2002). Thus, the hypothesis in this research study regarding polarization and its effect on legislative activity is that *greater ideological distances between the political parties cause greater conflict in the relations between the Executive and the Legislative and decrease the president's success.*

In order to capture polarization Sartori and Sani (1992) suggested seeing how distant the ideological positions of the parties are, expressed on a left-right ideological continuum. This continuum has traditionally been the backbone of political ideology. However, its use has been criticized for several reasons. One is that it may not be relevant in certain political systems or it may not contain the major divisions in each national context. A more general criticism mentions the emptiness of content of the expressions left and right as symbolic referents in today's world. Its applicability has also been questioned in Latin American countries owing, among other reasons, to the emergence of neo-populist electoral movements in which the mobilization axis does not respond to the traditional left-right ideological scale but rather to the characteristics of the political leadership. Despite all this, its use remains widespread among researchers<sup>25</sup> owing to the great flexibility and ability to adapt that the continuum has had over time and to the fact that it is an ideological referent for the political actors and the electors who still situate themselves on the axis, thus revealing empirically that there are identifying traits that differentiate the left and the right (Zechmeister, 2004; Alcántara, 1991 and 2004; Coppedge, 1998; Ruiz, 2003). Hence, this scale will be used here to measure ideological distances, although we are aware that the polarization of the parties can always be gone into in greater depth and its understanding improved by taking into account other variables which contain fundamental and generic divisions in each specific political system, besides the ideological place on the continuum.

The *polarization index* of Sartori and Sani (1992:428) refers to the absolute difference of the average ideological self-placement of the two most extreme parties of a system divided between the theoretical maximum of that difference, which, on a left-right scale of 1 to 10, is 9.<sup>26</sup> The measurement ranges from 0 to 1; the values close to 1 indicate greater ideological distance between the parties. This index is very simple but has a problem because of the distortion that can be caused in the result owing to the existence of radical parties which, however, are not of great importance in the political system (Hazan 1997:44). The *weighted polarization index* overcomes this drawback by calculating polarization taking into account both the position each party occupies on the left-right continuum and the weight that this party has in the system, measured in terms of votes or seats<sup>27</sup> (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999: 42). In order to prepare both indexes, in this study the data were taken

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<sup>25</sup> Many authors have focused, and continue to focus, their attention on the left-right continuum to deal with polarization (Castles and Meir 1984; Hazan 1997; Kitschelt 1994; Altman, 2002; Jones, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> The formula for the polarization index is as follows:  $IP = \frac{(x_d - x_i)}{9}$ , where  $x_d$  is the party with the most extreme ideological placement on the right of the scale and  $x_i$  is the party with the most extreme ideological placement on the left of the scale.

<sup>27</sup> The formula for calculating the weighted polarization index is:  $IPP = \sum_{i=1}^n p_i (x_i - \bar{x}_p)^2$ , where  $p_i$  is the party's proportion of seats or votes,  $x_i$  is the mean position of the party on the scale of 1 to 10 and  $\bar{x}_p$  the average of the positions of all the parties on that scale, weighted by the distribution of votes or seats.

from the “Proyecto Elites Parlamentarias Latinoamericanas” (PELA).<sup>28</sup> From this information, obtained through a questionnaire carried out by means of personal interviews with the legislators, in this project a complete database was prepared which contains the perceptions and attitudes on several major topics of the members of Congress of 17 countries in the region from 1994.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, the question used to measure polarization is the one corresponding to the ideological self-placement of the representatives on the left(1)-right(10) scale.<sup>30</sup> Table 4 gives the values of Sartori and Sani’s polarization index as well as the weighted polarization index for each of the periods of government for which data from the project are available and which coincide with those analyzed in this study.

The Latin American countries with the most polarized party system (see Table 4 and Figure 4) are Chile,<sup>31</sup> Ecuador and Panama although there are important variations by period of government.<sup>32</sup> Thus, terms of office such as that of Uruguay 1999-2005, Peru 1995-2000 or Colombia 1998-2002 can be included; all these are countries which, as a whole, are not outstanding for having a highly polarized party system. On the other hand, the countries in which the party system has greater ideological homogeneity are Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala and Argentina. Mexico is a special case since although it could be characterized as a party system of moderate polarization, the index reveals the existence of an increase in the degree of polarization from the first term of office for which information is available until the most recent periods.

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<sup>28</sup> The appendix includes the technical charts of the studies.

<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately the polarization indexes cannot be completed with information on the Upper Chambers. Although the project “Functions and Functioning of the Senates in the Southern Cone” of the Institut Für Iberoamerika-Kunde of Hamburg made a valuable contribution to research on the Senates in Latin America, the databases on the attitudes of the senators obtained by this project are limited to a single legislature. Hence, it was decided not to include them in the calculation because of the risk of biasing the polarization index calculated.

<sup>30</sup> The wording of the question in the questionnaire is as follows: “As you will remember, when speaking of politics the expressions left and right are normally used. On this card there is a series of boxes that go from left to right. In which box would you place yourself, taking into account your political ideas?”

<sup>31</sup> In Chile, as has already been said, the political parties are divided into two blocs with clearly differentiable ideology- on the one hand the *Concertación por la Democracia* can be defined as center-left and, on the other the *Unión por Chile* is on the right – as well as by opposing positions concerning the dictatorship of General Pinochet. In the political debates, this party division has been reflected as the violation of human rights during the military dictatorship or the survival of institutional legacies from the previous regime. Moreover, within the two blocs there are also differences, a fact which undoubtedly affects the value obtained in the polarization indicator. Despite this, the Chilean party system has been considered to be one of the most institutionalized in the region (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Siavelis, 200) and the country has had no democratic stability problems thanks to the collaboration and consensus of the political actors that have formed the government coalitions.

<sup>32</sup> The fact that these three countries have in common a fragmented party system lead one to think that there may be a relationship between polarization and the number of parties that compete in the political system. Further on in the chapter verification will be made of whether or not this relationship occurs.

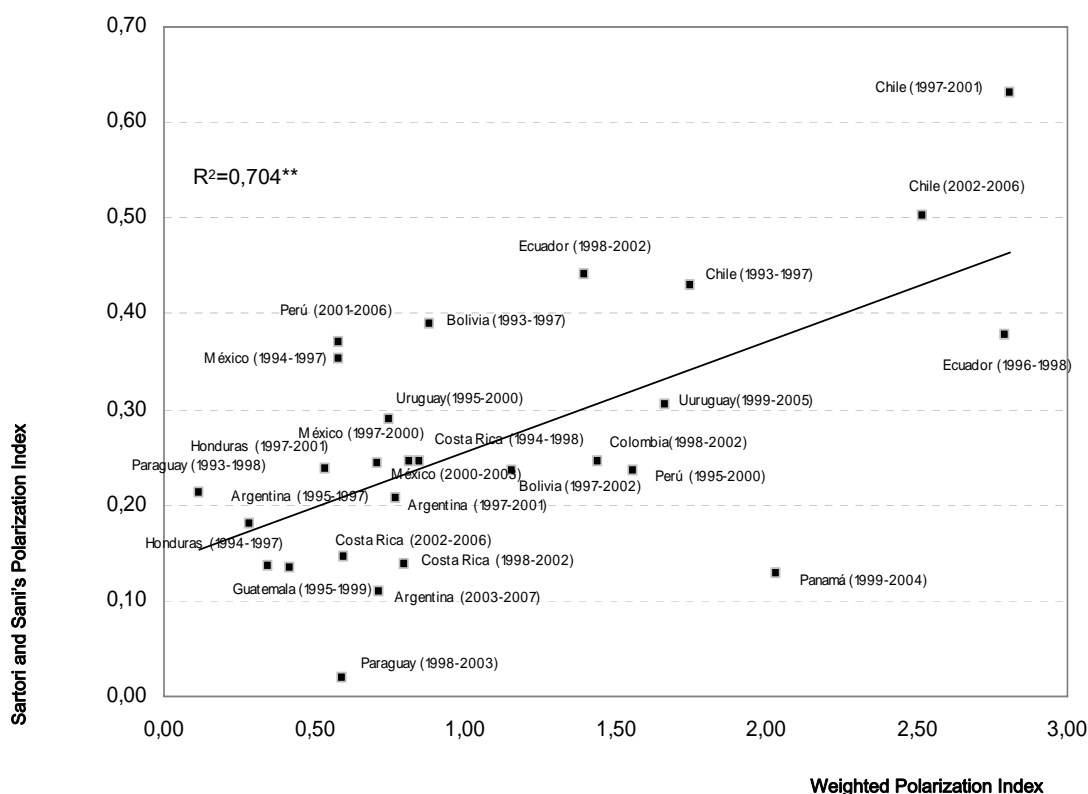
Table 4: Values of the weighted polarization index and Sartori and Sani's polarization

	Weighted Polarization (ideological placement)	Sartori and Sani's polarization (ideological placement)	Most extreme parties
Argentina (1995-1997)	0.29	0.08	PJ-FREPASO
Argentina (1997-2001)	0.77	0.23	PJ-FREPASO
Argentina (2003-2007)	0.72	0.11	PJ-ARI
Bolivia (1993-1997)	0.88	0.29	ADN-CONDEPA
Bolivia (1997-2002)	1.16	0.29	ADN-CONDEPA
Chile (1993-1997)	1.75	0.38	UDI-PS
Chile (1997-2001)	2.81	0.60	UDI-PS
Chile (2002-2006)	2.52	0.35	UDI-PS
Colombia (1998-2002)	1.44	0.23	PC-PL
Costa Rica (1994-1998)	0.85	0.30	PUSC-PFD
Costa Rica (1998-2002)	0.80	0.15	PUSC-PLN
Costa Rica (2002-2006)	0.60	0.14	PUSC-PLN
Ecuador (1996-1998)	2.79	0.37	PSC-MUPP/NP
Ecuador (1998-2002)	1.40	0.40	PSC-MUPP/NP
Guatemala (1995-1999)	0.42	0.12	PAN-FRG
Honduras (1994-1997)	0.35	0.10	PN-PL
Honduras (1997-2001)	0.53	0.15	PN-PL
Mexico (1994-1997)	0.58	0.28	PAN-PRD
Mexico (1997-2000)	0.71	0.31	PAN-PRD
Mexico (2000-2003)	0.82	0.31	PAN-PRD
Panama (1999-2004)	2.03	0.10	PA-PRD
Paraguay (1993-1998)	0.11	0.09	ANR-PEN
Paraguay (1998-2003)	0.59	0.11	ANR-PEN
Peru (1995-2000)	1.56	0.19	Cambio'90-APRA
Peru (2001-2006)	0.58	0.21	Unidad Nacional-UPP
Uruguay (1995-2000)	0.75	0.21	PN-FA
Uruguay (1999-2005)	1.67	0.31	PN-EP/FA

Source: own from PELA.

As was to be expected, both polarization indexes maintain a very high correlation, indicating that their measurements of the ideological distances between the parties are similar although not exactly the same. Panama (1999-2004) and Ecuador (1996-1998), as can be seen in Figure 4, are the two most outstanding cases in which the values of the two indexes do not coincide; thus, whereas Sartori and Sani's index shows that Panama is a country with low levels of polarization, the value of the weighted index reveals a polarized party system. Ecuador occupies one of the highest places with respect to its degree of weighted polarization, but if Sartori and Sani's index is taken as a reference it is in an intermediate position. This difference, in both cases, is due to the nuance introduced by weighting with the number of seats, since Panama and Ecuador are two systems with high parliamentary fragmentation despite the fact that, in relative terms, there are no great ideological distances between the parties. In this research study, therefore, we opted for the use of the weighted polarization index for testing the hypothesis that relates this variable to legislative activity because it seems to more in harmony with the political situation.

Figure 4: Dispersion of the ideological polarization indexes



Source: own from PELA

### 3.2.2. Ideological coherence of the government party/parties

Another of the variables that has been mentioned as a factor affecting legislative activity is the coherence or consistency maintained by the legislators of the Executive party or the parties forming the government coalition. If polarization reflects the ideological distance between the parties, coherence seeks to reflect the intra-party distance. This research, following Ruiz (2003) and, faced with the confusion caused by the use of the terms coherence and cohesion<sup>33</sup> as synonyms to reflect the attitudes inside the parties,<sup>34</sup> opts for the term coherence understood as “the degree of convergence among the members of a party in aspects of potential importance in the party-political arena”. Among the consequences of low degrees of coherence is the difficulty in achieving political changes (Cox and McCubbins, 2001; Tsebelis, 1995, 2002). Thus, if the majority party in the congress is distant from the *status quo*, greater coherence of the party will mean less stability in politics. Owing to this reasoning, the authors who analyze presidentialism have assumed that predominant and coherent parties facilitate the setting in motion of policies promoted by the Executive, whereas parties with little coherence hinder this type of initiative (Cox and McCubbins, 2001). Nevertheless, if the party with the majority in the Congress is identified with the *status quo*, the greater coherence of the party will give greater stability to

<sup>33</sup>Party cohesion refers to the homogeneity or unity of the members of the party in their behavior, normally referring to voting in the Chambers.

<sup>34</sup> A clear difference between the two concepts and others used for reflecting the party universe can be seen in Ruiz and García (2003) and Ruiz (2003).

politics (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2003). The hypothesis to be tested in this research study is that *the existence of greater degrees of coherence among the legislators in the president's party or in the parties forming the government coalition will increase the legislative success of the Executive* since smaller attitudinal distances among the legislators of the government party or parties will make it easier to achieve cooperation and reach agreements for modifying and preparing public policies.

In order to reflect the degree of coherence of the political party or parties that support the president, the ideological coherence that is “the degree of intra-party agreement in the ideological self-placement of its member” has been used (Ruiz, 2003). The restricted use of the ideological dimension, the same as occurred with the polarization variable, is not entirely correct since there is a variety of dimensions with respect to which the legislators can show different levels of coherence. Thus, Ruiz and García (2003) distinguish between two dimensions: programmatic and ideological, to which Ruiz (2003) adds a third, organizational. In each of these dimensions the levels of coherence revealed by the legislators of one same party may be heterogeneous; however, in this study we opt for the ideological coherence expressed on the left-right continuum in order to test its effect on legislative activity. Although it entails a risk of losing information, this dimension was chosen because it gains in simplicity, the different political systems become more comparable and also because of the ability this axis has to structure ideology and group attitudes symbolically, as mentioned when referring to the polarization variable.

The indicator used for measuring the degree of ideological coherence is standard deviation (Ruiz and García, 2003; Ruiz, 2003) which shows the distance between the position in which the legislators place themselves on the ideological scale [(1)left-(10)right] and the mean for the whole government party or parties on this scale.<sup>35</sup> It therefore shows the variability of the legislators on the left-right continuum in relation to the mean position of their party/parties. The data used for constructing the indicator were extracted from the research project mentioned, PELA,<sup>36</sup> Figure 5 gives the summary of the values they adopt for the period of office as well as the party or coalition corresponding to the period which was the starting point for calculating ideological coherence.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Standard deviation is defined as the square root of the variance. The latter is the mean of the square of the differences of  $n$  scores with respect to their arithmetical mean. It expresses the variability of the scores of the subjects in a variable. Standard deviation is used instead of variance because the latter is expressed in units squared whereas standard deviation is expressed in the same unit as the variable measured. The formula for

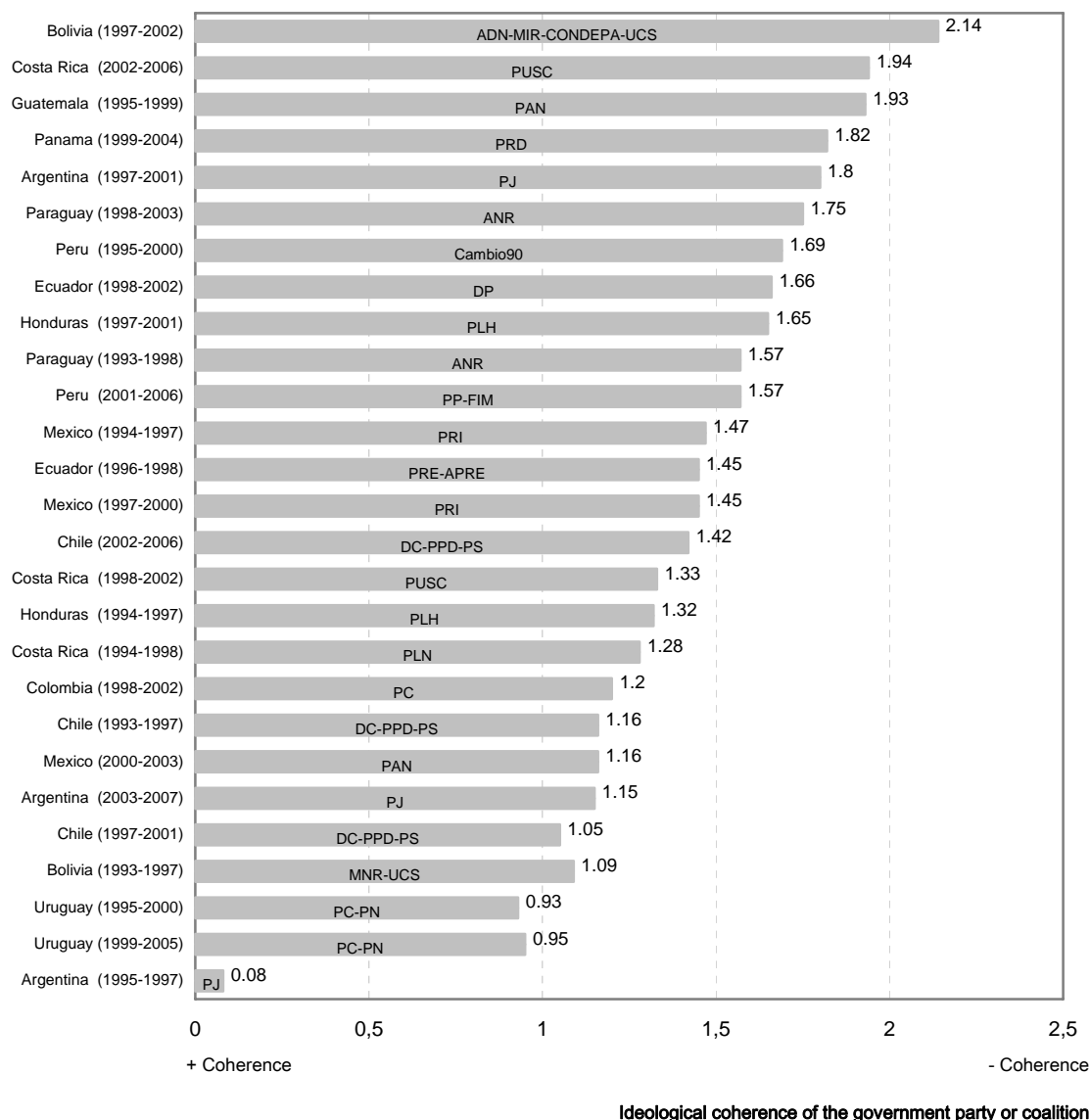
calculating the standard deviation is:  $s^2 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}}$ ; where  $x_i$  is the value offered by each subject in the

variable  $x$  (ideological self-placement of the legislator in our case),  $\bar{x}$  is the mean value for all the subjects (mean ideological self-placement of the government party or coalition in our case) and  $n$  is the number of subjects.

<sup>36</sup> As with the ideological polarization variable, the question selected from the questionnaire is the one referring to the ideological self-placement of the legislators: “As you will remember, when speaking of politics the expressions left and right are normally used. On this card there is a series of boxes that go from left to right. In which box would you place yourself, taking into account your political ideas?”

<sup>37</sup> The calculation of the coherence of the party or parties supporting the government may not include all the political parties that formed the coalition. This only occurs in those cases in which a party has a small number of seats and, given its scarce importance for representative effects, the PELA Project did not interview its legislators.

Figure 5: Ideological coherence of the government party or coalition



Source: own from PELA

### 3.2.3. Attitudinal discipline

Another of the variables on which there is a widespread consensus that it is able to affect the legislative results is legislative discipline. Its influence is due to the fact that the president's ability to carry through political initiatives depends on whether the party or parties supporting him/her in the Congress also does so in voting his/her proposals. In presidential regimes, unlike in parliamentary systems, the parties do not need to be highly disciplined, but lack of discipline often makes it more difficult to establish stable relationships between the government, the parties and the Congress. Hence, if there is no unity in the legislators' vote, the presidents may not be able to promote their legislative agendas. Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) consider that discipline, together with the percentage of legislators that belong to the president's party, shapes the *president's party power* and this, if it is weak, makes political changes difficult and leads to institutional blocking. The literature has, therefore, linked low discipline to political and legislative paralysis

(Archer and Shugart, 1997; Crisp, 1997; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997; Cox and McCubbins, 2001; Mustapic, 2002), although it has also been related to the increase in the personal vote on the part of the legislators as well as to the decrease in motivation for giving support to public products (Ames, 2001; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Pérez and Rodríguez, 2003). Consequently, the hypothesis that relates this variable to legislative activity is that *low levels of discipline in the government party or parties lead to a decrease in the Executive's success rates.*

In order to be able to test the hypothesis posed, an indicator must be found that measures discipline, since measurements of party discipline constructed from the vote do not reflect the cost of obtaining party support because voting comes at the end of the negotiations between the presidents, party leaders and legislators. What would be necessary for understanding the previous process, which, in general, is what is lacking, is the direction towards which the representatives lean during the processes of negotiation (Mustapic, 2000; Ames, 2000). Thus, García and Marengi (2003) suggest understanding legislative discipline as “the *tendency* of the legislators of the same party to follow the lines marked by the party in congressional voting and unity in *behavior* at the time of voting.” Hence, for the authors, discipline has two dimensions: on the one hand an attitudinal dimension and, on the other hand, a behavior (cohesion) dimension. The attitudinal dimension is given by the values that each legislator has individually, and which form part of their own heritage and motivate them, previously, to make a decision that may or may not go in the direction of the designs set by the party to which they belong. The behavior dimension of discipline corresponds to the vote that the legislator actually casts in the Congress. For García and Marengi (2003) discipline cannot be captured without taking both dimensions into account, since it is at the time of making the decision of how to vote, marked by the legislator's attitude toward discipline, when a change of trend can occur towards what the party lays down or toward what the legislator previously thought he/she should vote.

This is an original way of understanding discipline, since most of the studies dealing with the legislative discipline of Latin American parties empirically and/or comparatively<sup>38</sup> have focused on its measurement in roll-call voting<sup>39</sup> which not only does not, in itself, reflect

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<sup>38</sup> Most of the analyses of discipline in Latin America are case studies among which the following should be mentioned: Figueiredo and Limongi (1995); Mainwaring and Pérez (1997); Carey (1999); Ames (2000), Ugalde (2002); Jones (2001), Nacif (2002); Weldon (2002) and Morgenstern (2003).

<sup>39</sup> The most classic and most widely used index is the one proposed by Rice (1928) which is the summatory of the difference between the majority percentage and the minority percentage of the vote of the parliamentary group present at the time of voting divided between the sum of the majority and minority percentages. This index ranges from 0 to 1; values close to 0 indicate very low discipline and values close to 1, very high discipline. This index has been criticized mainly because it overestimates the party's degree of discipline, since there are matters that generate a high degree of consensus and which, when included in the index, overvalue the existence of discipline. Jones (2001) proposed a way of overcoming this by establishing as a selection criterion for roll-call voting that at least 20% of the votes should belong to the losing option. However, this decision has been criticized for being arbitrary and able to hide situations of strong discipline. Ames (2000: 41-42), when posing the problem of overestimation of discipline with purely procedural or unilateral voting, weights the index by the number of representatives that voted and by the closed nature of the voting. Another basic issue discussed when preparing the indexes of discipline is the integration of the absences of the legislators and abstention (Weldon, 2002). Absences and abstentions can be caused by different factors and one of them is that the legislators are absent and/or abstain so as not to have to vote against the party and so as not to be “punished” for it. Jones (2001) proposes two indexes: relative discipline and absolute discipline. The latter is the one that contemplates those who do not vote and abstentions. Another discipline index for roll-call voting is the one proposed by Carey (1999), called weighted unity index, which has an element that he calls contested or conflictive and in which the presence or absence of the legislators at the time of voting is also included (García and Marengi, 2003).

discipline but also has some drawbacks. The first is its low implementation in the countries in the region, to which is added, in second place, the way in which its use is regulated. In some countries, such as Argentina and Paraguay, roll-call voting only takes place for certain laws and on certain occasions, that is, it is for special use, whereas in other countries, such as Peru and Brazil, roll-call voting is the norm (García and Marengi, 2003). Obviously, this makes comparison between countries difficult. Another drawback in the use of this indicator is the difficulty in gaining access to the complete data for this type of voting. Hence, in this study, without wishing to obviate the importance of voting as a reflection of behavior, we focus on the attitudinal dimension of discipline.

Once again, the data that serve to construct this indicator were taken from the PELA research project. Specifically, the items in this questionnaire that reveal the attitude toward discipline in the government party or parties are: 1) the attitude toward discipline of vote (understood as the predisposition to consider that the vote should be decided freely by the legislator or by the party); 2) perception regarding the expulsion of representatives who vote against the party's decision; 3) the attitude toward the tendency to defect (whether the seat belongs to the party or to the legislator) and 4) the predisposition of the legislators to take into consideration the opinion of the party leaders when making political decisions.<sup>40</sup> With the answers given to these three questions by the legislators in the governing party/parties the *discipline/attitudinal* indicator was constructed, with values ranging from 0 to 1. In the positions close to 1 were the legislative periods with legislators from the government party/parties with the most disciplined attitudes and, at 0, those with attitudes less favorable toward maintaining discipline.<sup>41</sup> The scores for the periods of office for which information is available are given in Figure 6.

The values in this figure<sup>42</sup> do not have to be in harmony with the cohesion or actual behavior of the legislators when voting in the plenary in a disciplined way or not. They only show the representatives' predisposition to act and be influenced by the party in their voting. If the parties are faced with legislators with undisciplined attitudes, they will have to make greater efforts to achieve unity in voting by distributing incentives and penalties.

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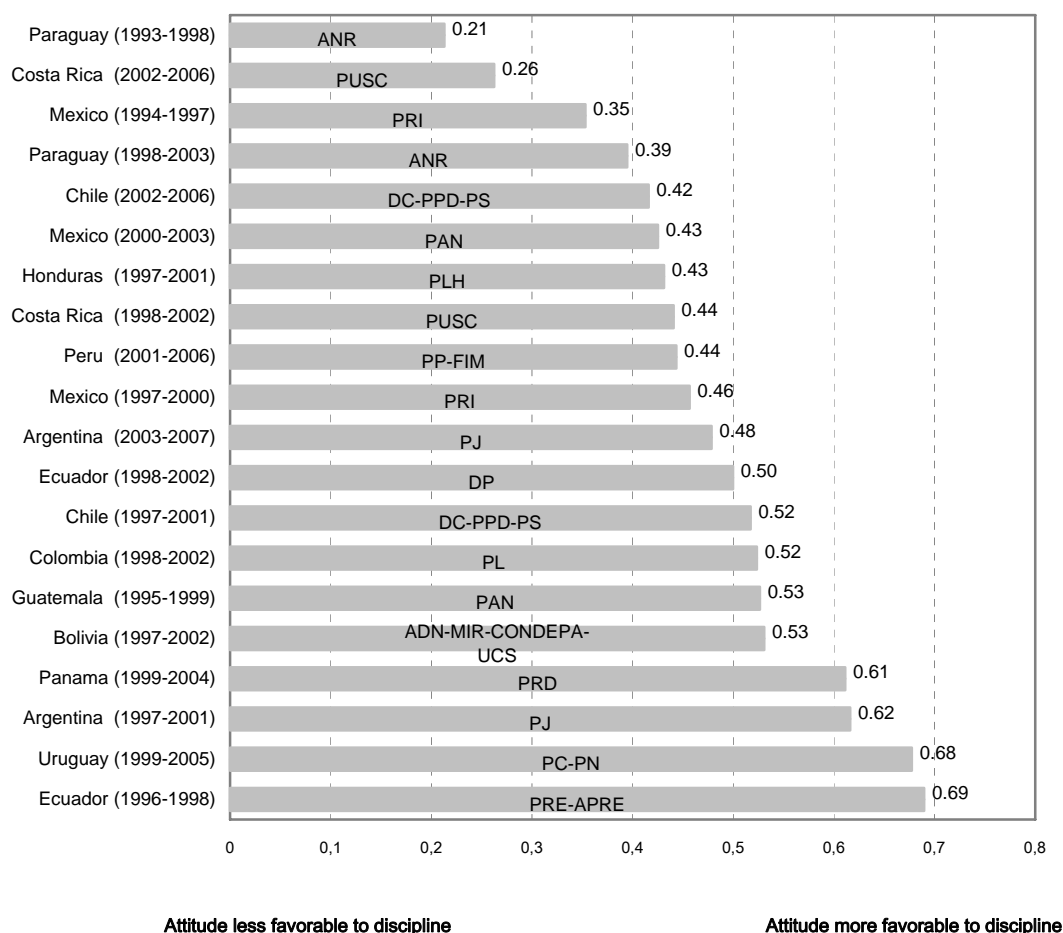
<sup>40</sup> The complete text of the questions used is as follows: "The subject of discipline has traditionally given rise to highly diverse opinions. With which of the following opinions are you most in agreement?" Party discipline should always be demanded in the parliamentary group. Each representative should be allowed to vote according to his/her own criterion. Some matters should be subject to discipline and others not. "Next, I would like to know whether you are very much, quite a lot, not very much or not at all in agreement with the following statement: a political party should expel a member of Congress who votes against his/her party's political decisions"; "Sometimes a representative who has been elected in the lists of a certain party later decides to break with this party. On these occasions, what do you think the representative should do?: keep his/her seat and join another parliamentary group or resign so that another candidate from the party in whose lists he/she was elected can occupy it" and "To what extent do you take into account the opinion of your party leaders when making political decisions? – very much, quite a lot, not very much, not at all".

<sup>41</sup> Table E in the appendix shows how the answers were transformed to construct the indicator that reflects attitudinal discipline.

<sup>42</sup> During the first stage of the research project, which corresponds to the collection of information for 1993-1997, the questions selected for measuring attitudinal discipline were not posed; they were included in the following stages. Hence, there is no complete information for the whole analysis period.



Figure 6: Attitudinal discipline of the government party or parties.



Source: own from PELA.

### 3.3. Electoral cycle

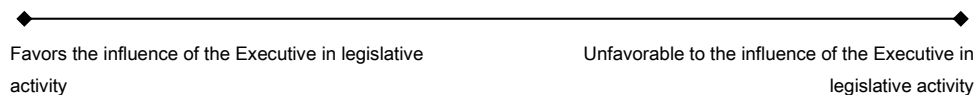
A final explanatory factor considered in this study is the electoral cycle. It is included because of the existing consensus concerning the idea that, after the presidential election, there is a climate favorable to the Executive –“the honeymoon period”- which can be taken advantage of by the president to carry through unpopular or conflictive policies. If such measures are introduced later on in the period of government, they may find more obstacles in their passage, since the likelihood of losing the favor of the Legislature increases (Shugart and Carey, 1992; Coppedge, 1994; Mejía, 2000). This relationship, between legislative support for the president and the electoral cycle, has been considered to be one of the main differences between the presidential and parliamentary systems of government, since, in parliamentary systems, the legislators’ support for the Executive seems guaranteed after the government has been formed. Among the causes considered, when referring to presidential systems, for explaining that the Executives lose the support of Congress as the next presidential election approaches, is the fact that the party leaders have to consolidate their own identities and avoid being penalized for the government’s errors (Mainwaring, 1993). Thus, at the end of the presidential term, the parties are more concerned with their electoral results and will behave more like vote-seeking actors, and

this is even more likely in coalition governments<sup>43</sup> (Altman, 2001). Hence, the hypothesis to be tested in this research is that in the sessions closest to the year in which the president was elected the Executive's success is greater.

In order to measure the electoral cycle variable, a scale was prepared with values that group the units of analysis -the periods of sessions- according to their time distance from the presidential election, measured in years. The percentile distribution of the periods of office analyzed here according to this scale is summarized in Table 5. This table also shows that the periods of office taken into account in the research are divided similarly in the different years of the electoral cycle, except for the fifth year. This is because there are very few countries in which the presidential period lasts five years; in most Latin American cases the cycle is 4 years.

Table 5: Distribution of the periods of sessions according to the electoral cycle.

	The presidential election was held in that same period of sessions	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> year	Total
N	19	26	26	22	12	3	108
%	17.6	24.1	24.1	20.4	11.1	2.8	100%



Source: own.

### 3.4. Other explanatory factors

To sum up, the previous pages have focused on the operationalization of seven variables that the institutional literature has considered capable of influencing the legislative activity and seven hypotheses have been outlined for testing in the following section. Nevertheless, before analyzing the effects of the independent variables defined, two factors must be commented which may be explanatory although their weight will not be tested in this research, mainly because we lack the necessary data for their measurement and operationalization. The first of these variables and the one which is of greatest importance, especially for explaining the levels of presidential *success*, is popular support for the Executive.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, several studies have called attention to the effect of public opinion on the behavior of the Legislative Branch, which can generate greater cooperation of Congress with the president, provided that the president has ample public backing. This relationship has been

<sup>43</sup> There are several case studies for Latin America that attempt to prove the existence of this relationship empirically, such as Coppedge (1994) for Venezuela, Conaghan (1994) and Mejía (2000) for Ecuador, Carey (1997) for Costa Rica and Ajenjo (2004) for Central America. The results given by Ajenjo (2004: 135) seem, however, to be contrary to the hypothesis maintained by other authors, since she corroborates an increase in the control of the legislative agenda by the Executive in the last year of the electoral cycle, whereas in the preceding years the influence of the Executive does not show significant variations.

<sup>44</sup> This variable was formulated by the literature on rational choice when dealing with the United States Congress. The proposition, given that the president has very little ability for legislative initiative, is that for a policy that the Executive is interested in to be accepted by Congress, first, both the president and the initiative must enjoy popular support (Groseclose and McCarty 2001; McCubbins *et al*, 2005).

stressed in case studies in Latin American countries, such as those carried out by Mainwaring (1997) for Brazil, Altman (2000) for Uruguay and Calvo (2004) for Argentina. In order to evaluate the weight of this factor in the legislative activity, homogeneous public opinion bases would be necessary for the 14 countries on which this study focuses, as well as the evaluation the citizens make of the different presidents over time and, despite the efforts made to collect this information, it has not been possible to obtain it.

Another variable that is difficult to measure, and hence its empirical testing has been rejected, is the composition of the cabinet of the Executive. Amorin (1998; 2006) proposed an interesting theoretical model that explains how the forming of the cabinets helps the president to carry through his/her legislative agenda.<sup>45</sup> Hence, the composition of the Executive's ministerial team can help to predict their levels of *success*. It has not been possible to find out the composition of the cabinets and their ministerial changes for the 40 presidential periods this study covers, therefore its influence cannot be shown.

#### 4. Towards an explanation of presidential success

##### 4.1. Interactions between the party variables

In the previous section it was mentioned that many of the variables that define the political parties are related to each other, so that some may be the effect of others. In order to verify the relationships between these seven explanatory factors, we considered it appropriate to run a correlation analysis to find the degree of influence and relationship among them. Table 6 gives the results of the analysis and reveals the existence of some very strong pairs of associations. The correlation between the effective number of parliamentary parties and the existence of broad government coalitions is outstanding (0.765). Hence, in party systems characterized by a high number of political actors in Congress, the forming of government coalitions is much more frequent. Another of the relationships the data show is that between the forming of coalitions and ideological polarization (0.630). In systems in which the political parties are more polarized more coalition governments occur.

This relationship, however, needs explaining, since both variables show a high association, not because the ideological distances help coalitions to be formed, but rather because in fragmented party systems, in which coalitions are more likely, polarization is higher (0.735). This is endorsed by Downs' theory (1957), according to which the most rational strategy for parties in systems in which a high number compete is to produce a specific and integrated ideology which differentiates the party from the rest as a way to achieve greater electoral support. On the other hand, in two-party systems, the most rational strategy a party can follow is to produce a diffuse and moderate ideology, thus showing lower degrees of polarization.

Figure 7 shows the dispersion of the different periods of government in the crossing of the weighted polarization and fragmentation variables. The trend line clearly reflects the

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<sup>45</sup> Presidents may have two strategies for setting their policies in motion: the first is based on the use of the ordinary legislative process and, therefore, has to take heed of the legislators' opinions and interests, and the second is based on the use of their legislative powers and constitutional prerogatives such as the decree and the veto. If the goal is to carry the legislation through parliament, the president must form a majority government and, consequently, appoint members of the parties for the different ministries on a proportional basis according to whether or not the government is a coalition. If the goal is to legislate through unilateral initiatives, then the president may form the cabinet with technocrat ministers (Amorin, 2006:423). Mejía (2000) proposes a hypothesis in this sense for the case of Ecuador.

existence of the aforementioned positive linear relationship between the number of parties and ideological polarization. Specifically, Chile and Ecuador are the two countries that stand out by occupying the most extreme position in both variables and, therefore, in the last decade<sup>46</sup> their presidents have had as their counterpart parliaments with high ideological polarization, formed by a high number of influential parties. Other Latin American presidents who acted in contexts of high fragmentation, albeit with a less extreme situation as regards degree of polarization, were Alejandro Toledo in Peru and Hugo Bánzer in Bolivia, although in most of the Latin American presidential periods of office considered in this study the effective number of parties in the parliament did not reach extreme pluralism. Thus, the presidents of Argentina, Honduras and Paraguay, among others, acted in two-party scenarios or scenarios of two and a half parties with low polarization; this situation was more frequent in Latin America.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> This was the context of Patricio Alwyn, Eduardo Frei and Ricardo Lagos in Chile and of Abadalá Bucaram and Fabián Alarcón in Ecuador.

<sup>47</sup> In order to verify that this high correlation between fragmentation and polarization is not being biased by the calculation of the indicators, since the number of seats intervenes in both, another analysis was performed between polarization and fragmentation, using Sartori and Sani's index in which the formula does not use the composition of the Congress but, as seen in the previous section, only the distance between the two most extreme parties and, as the results show, this association is confirmed, since the correlation index continues to be very high (0.702\*\*).

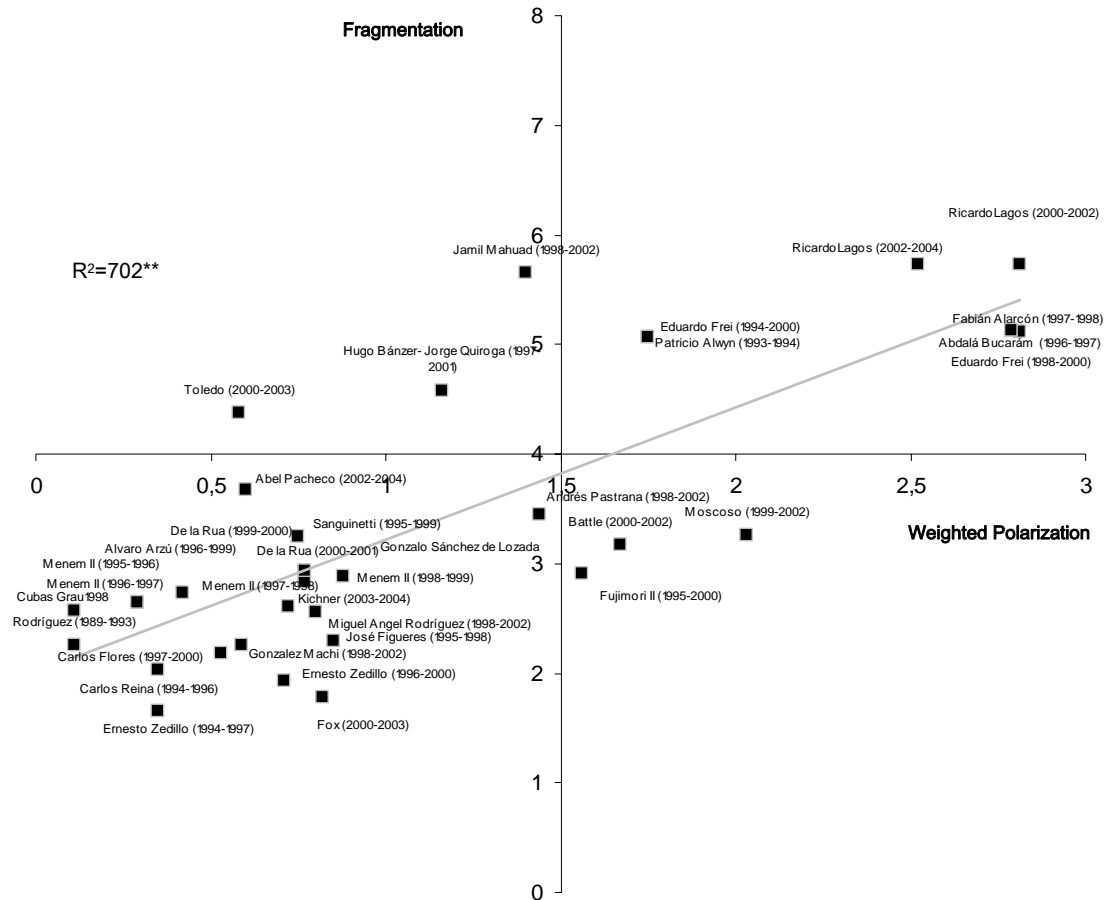
Table 6: Correlations among the political variables

		Attitudinal discipline	Effective number of parliamentary parties	Legislative majority	Weighted polarization	Party coherence/government coalition	Electoral cycle
Effective number of parliamentary parties	Pearson's correlation	0.144					
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.295					
	N	55					
Legislative majority	Pearson's correlation	-0.018	-0.306(**)				
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.897	0.001				
	N	55	118				
Weighted polarization	Pearson's correlation	0.429(**)	0.735(**)	-0.260(*)			
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.001	0.000	0.022			
	N	53	78	78	78		
Party coherence/government coalition	Pearson's correlation	-0.211	0.046	0.118	-0.089		
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.130	0.691	0.305	0.438		
	N	53	78	78	78	78	
Number of years since presidential election	Pearson's correlation	-0.077	-0.049	0.038	0.000	0.000	
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.583	0.618	0.696	0.999	0.999	
	N	53	108	108	75	75	108
Coalition and number of parties in the government	Pearson's correlation	0.302(*)	0.765(**)	0.017	0.603(**)	0.002	0.103
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.025	0.000	.857	0.000	0.988	0.290
	N	55	118	118	78	78	108

\*\* Correlation significant at level 0.01 (bilateral).

\* Correlation significant at level 0.05 (bilateral).

Figure 7: Dispersion of the periods of government on the crossing of the fragmentation and polarization variables



Source: own from the composition of the Congress and PELA.

Other significant correlations, although much more moderate, are those established between: ideological polarization and attitudinal discipline (0.429), which shows that the legislators most identified with and open to following the guidelines dictated by their parties are those that act in contexts with great ideological polarization; fragmentation and legislative majorities (-0.306), showing that the greater the number of parties in the parliament, the lower the percentage of legislators the government controls;<sup>48</sup> forming coalitions and attitudinal discipline (0.302), which indicates that in governments composed of a greater number of parties attitudinal discipline is higher; and legislative majorities and the degree of ideological polarization, whereby in systems in which the government has a more solid majority there is a lower degree of ideological polarization in the political parties.<sup>49</sup> Finally, the only variable among those considered which is not linked to the political actors is the electoral cycle and, as might be expected, it has no statistically

<sup>48</sup> This association is not very high. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that in order to calculate the legislative majorities the negotiations of the Executive for forming larger majorities were taken into account, besides the composition of the Congress arising from the elections. Therefore, the indicator that measures the legislative majority includes not only the president's party but also the rest of the parties that support him/her. This undoubtedly moderates the relationship between the two variables.

<sup>49</sup> Although some of these relationships are very interesting and open up new roads of research, they are beyond the specific objective of this study.

significant relationship with any of the other explanatory factors that refer to the party system.

The correlations found in the previous analyses empirically confirm the existence of very strong associations between some of the variables linked to the party system. However, their impact on legislative activity remains to be tested; this will be dealt with in the following pages. In order to test the hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was chosen as a route to find the possible relationships between the independent variables defined and the rates of presidential *success*.

Among the conditions necessary for guaranteeing the validity of the statistical model chosen is non-collinearity. As has been observed, three of the independent variables defined (parliamentary fragmentation, ideological polarization and existence of coalitions and number of parties forming them) show very high association, Pearson's correlation index being higher than 0.5,<sup>50</sup> thus revealing a linear relationship among them. It was therefore decided to eliminate the variable for coalition and the number of parties forming it, since the information it provides was considered to be already contained, to a large extent, in the variable for party fragmentation in the Congress, given that the forming of these governments depends, as has been seen, on the number of parties present in the parliament.

Furthermore, we decided to merge two variables: ideological polarization and fragmentation, as we considered that, although they are related, they refer to different issues. In order to merge the two factors without losing the information they contain a new indicator was created in the form of a scale ranging from 1 to 4.5<sup>51</sup>. Predominant party systems with low polarization would be situated at 1 and extreme pluralism systems with high polarization at the maximum value, 4.5. The hypothesis to be tested is that in the periods of sessions in which *a large number of highly polarized parties act, the Executive's success will be lower than in those periods in which the number of parties present in the Congress is lower and their ideological distance is small.*

Figure 8 groups the countries according to the value they take in the new indicator arising from the merging of the polarization and fragmentation variables. Given that in the period analyzed in this research elections have been held in the different countries to renew both the Executive and the Legislative Branches, the value of the indicator is not the same per

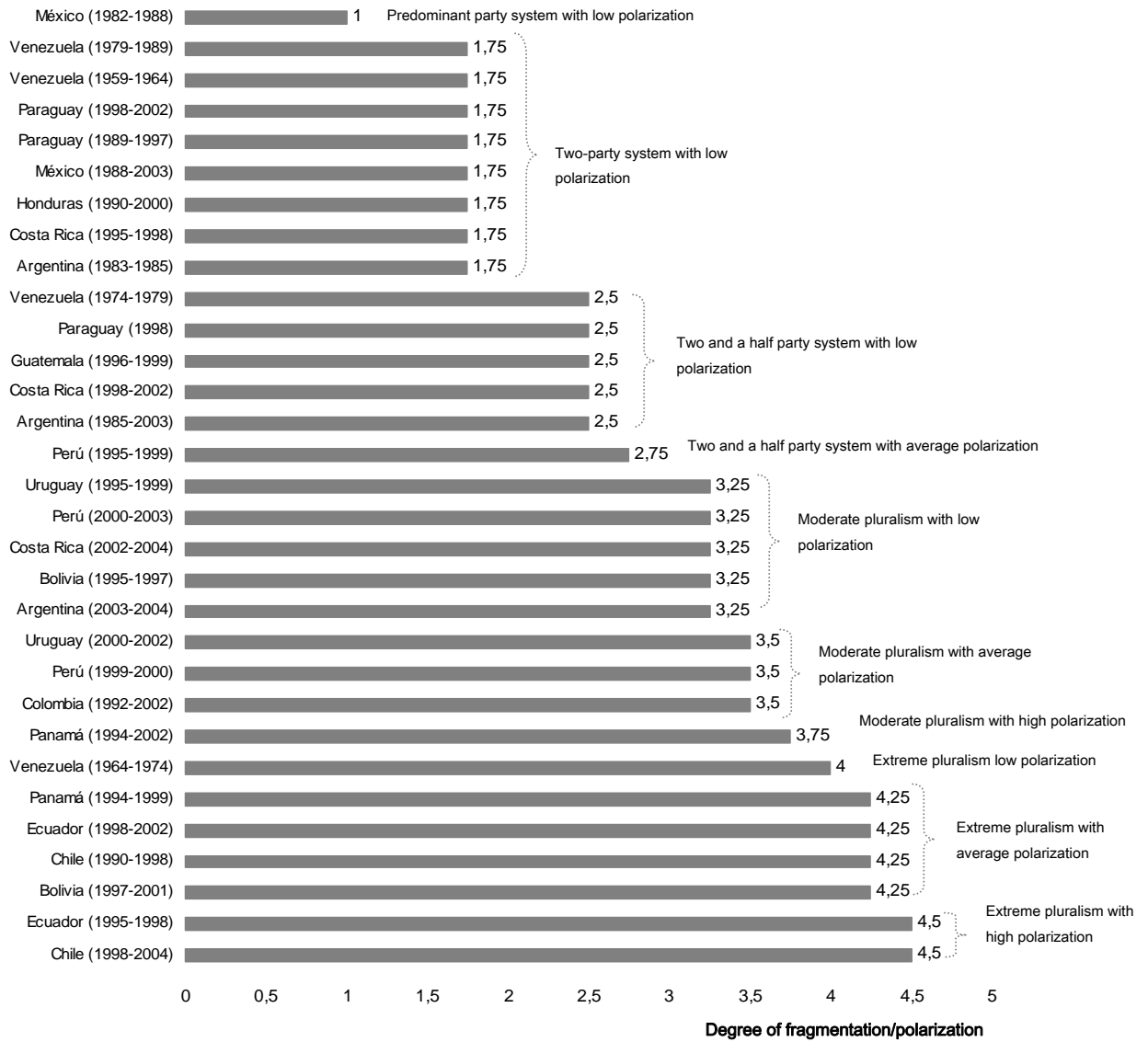
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<sup>50</sup> Linear relations higher than 0.5 show collinearity.

<sup>51</sup> The procedure for merging was as follows: on the one hand we took the classification of Mainwaring and Scully (1995), discussed when referring to the fragmentation variable, which situates the system according to the effective number of parties in the predominant party system (when the index is below 1.7), two-party system (values between 1.8 and 2.4), two and a half party system (when the effective number of parties is between 2.5 and 2.9), moderate pluralism system (index between 3.0 and 3.9) and extreme pluralism (values above 4). On the other hand, the ideological polarization variable was classified in three categories: low polarization (when the index values are between 0 and 0.94), average polarization (values between 0.95 and 1.88) and high polarization (1.88 and 2.81, which is the maximum value this index acquires in the systems dealt with). Finally, the categories were brought together on a scale ranging from 1 to 4.5, assigning 1 to predominant party systems with low polarization, 1.25 to predominant party systems with average polarization and so on until reaching the value 4.5 corresponding to extreme pluralism systems with high polarization.

country, although the trend is for there to be no major changes in the values, since a brusque change would mean a point of inflexion in the party system.<sup>52</sup>

Figure 8: Values adopted by the countries in the merging of the fragmentation and polarization variables.



Source: own from the effective number of parties and the weighted polarization index.

#### 4.2. Explanatory analysis

Once the problem of collinearity has been overcome, the explanatory analysis can be performed through multiple regression.<sup>53</sup> Table 7 summarizes the hypotheses posed –all

<sup>52</sup> This is the case of Peru where the three elections occurring during the period of analysis have given rise to a different configuration of the party system from the two and a half party system with average polarization characteristic of the period (1995-1999), to moderate pluralism with low polarization (2000-2003) or average polarization (1999-2000) which is, undoubtedly, an indicator of the relatively low institutionalization and stability of the party system during the period.

<sup>53</sup> The function selected for the degree of fit was the ordinary least squares criterion, by means of which the sum of the squares of the vertical distances between each point and the regression straight line is minimized.



linear, both in negative and positive sense. Two models are proposed for testing them. In the first one, the explanatory model for *success* contains only the independent variables relating to the parties and the electoral cycle and the weight of the IPIL is not tested in it. In the second model the institutional index has been added to the explanatory factors previously mentioned in order to isolate the effects of the party system and the institutional effects.

Table 7: Explanatory hypotheses of legislative activity

Independent variables	Executive success
	Hypothesis
Index of legislative institutional power (IPIL)	In the legislative periods characterized by high values in the IPIL the Executive's success in passing its proposals is greater
Legislative majority	In the cases in which the president has the support of an ample percentage of seats in the parliament, success when passing his/her proposals is increased
Ideological coherence government party/coalition (Self-placement variable)	As ideological differences decrease and there is greater coherence between the legislators belonging to the coalition party that sustains the Executive, the president's success increases
Fragmentation and polarization of the party system	The existence of a large number of highly polarized parties in the Congress reduces the Executive's success
Attitudinal discipline	Low levels of discipline in the government party or parties lead to a reduction in the Executive's rates of success
Electoral cycle (number of years since the election of the president)	As the period of office moves on from the date of the election of the Executive, the president's success decreases

Source: own

In Table 8 it can be seen that in the first model, two of the party factors proposed have a significant joint impact on the variability of the Executive's *success*. Specifically, the ideological coherence of the government party or coalition and the percentage of legislators supporting the Executive have an influence on the number of laws the Executive manages to pass. These two variables together explain 11% of the variance of presidential *success*. The factor with the greatest statistical strength in the impact on *success* is a legislative majority, thus confirming the starting hypothesis that the control of a higher percentage of legislators by the Executive increases the number of initiatives the parliament passes corresponding to presidential proposals. Although with less strength, ideological coherence also affects the degree of presidential *success*, since in the periods of office in which the party or parties of the executive maintain greater ideological distances at the intra-party level, the president achieves a lower percentage in the passing of the initiatives he/she presents in the Congress. The explanatory factors that have no statistical strength for discriminating the degree of *success* of the Executive are attitudinal discipline, fragmentation and polarization of the parties in the legislature and the electoral cycle, although the sign shown by the three variables tends toward the direction proposed by the starting hypotheses.

Table 8: Explanatory models of the *success* of the Executive

Independent variables	Model 1				Model 2			
	Executive <i>success</i> (without IPIL)				Executive <i>success</i> (with IPIL)			
	B	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	100.18 5		4.245	0.000**	71.183		3.733	0.001**
Attitudinal discipline	-42.608	-0.082	-1.461	0.154	-41.623	-0.236	-1.861	0.072
Fragmentation and polarization	-1.790	-0.082	-0.512	0.612	-24.810	-1.138	-4.543	0.000**
Electoral cycle (number of years since the election of the president)	-2.303	-0.161	-0.955	0.347	-5.264	-0.367	-2.701	0.011*
Coherence of government party/coalition (self-placement variable)	-17.876	-0.372	-2.171	0.037**	-9.624	-0.201	-1.471	0.151
Legislative majority	0.479	0.384	2.314	0.027**	0.949	0.761	5.101	0.000**
IPIL					164.85 6	1.274	4.838	0.000**
R <sup>2</sup> corrected	0.110				0.476			

\*\* Relation significant at 0.01 (two-party).

\* Relation significant at 0.05 (two-party).

The next explanatory model contains, besides the factors that refer to the political parties and the electoral cycle, the index that summarizes institutional power. With the introduction of the IPIL, prediction of legislative activity improves visibly, as does the goodness of fit of the model.

Taken as a whole, the IPIL, fragmentation and polarization of the parties with parliamentary representation, the percentage of legislators with similar interests to the government and the electoral cycle explain 47% of the variance in the Executive's *success*.

The two most important variables in the regression equation in this model are the institutional index, confirming that institutional designs more favorable to the influence of the Executive increase the government's *success* significantly, and the existence of a legislative majority in favor of the president. The degree of *success* can also be largely explained by the number of parties present in the parliament and their degree of polarization, which reveals that the greater the latter the lower the percentage of laws that the president manages to carry through. A final variable with significant influence on the dependent dimension, although with less weight than the others, is the electoral cycle, which confirms the starting hypothesis that newly elected presidents achieve greater legislative success.

These results show that the institutions are important in determining the president's legislative *success*. Hence, the Executives in Latin American countries achieve greater influence if they have institutional benefits, although it also helps if they have ample majorities, if the parties present in the parliament are few and ideologically close and if the date when they assumed office is recent.

These results are consistent with most of the hypotheses posed in the research. It is not the aim of this study to affirm that the final model found maintains a causal effect at other times or in other regions. However, it can be said that these results are not contradictory and show validity despite the fact that the explanation of presidential success can be visibly

improved with the introduction of other variables, an increase in the sample, or the testing of the hypotheses in other regions.

## Conclusions

This study has analyzed the main variables, linked to political parties, which the institutional literature has considered strong enough to intervene in presidential success and has tested the weight of these variables, together with the institutional design, in the passage rates achieved by Latin American Executives. Six of the explanatory factors operationalized in the previous pages are related to the political parties: three focus on their number and parliamentary presence (legislative majorities, fragmentation, forming of coalitions) and the other three refer to the ideological attitudes shown by the parties (polarization, coherence and discipline gathered from the positions of the legislators). Besides these variables there are the electoral cycle and the institutions operationalized by means of the index of legislative institutional power (IPIL).

The procedure followed with each of the variables was to first prepare the theoretical hypothesis that relates each factor to legislative success, and to then seek the best indicator for its measurement and empirical testing. Nevertheless, the description of the values that each variable acquires in the different periods and countries analyzed in the research offered information beyond that strictly related to the dependent variable. Thus evidence was found to show that, although there is a tendency for a legislative bottleneck to occur when there is a minority government, this is very slight, which gives nuance to some of the suppositions that maintain that when this situation occurs under a form of presidential government, it leads to institutional paralysis. Likewise, it was confirmed that the forming of coalition governments, although not the majority situation, has in fact occurred fairly frequently in Latin American countries, which contradicts the statement by the critics of presidentialism who considered that these alliances did not have the ability to prevent dual legitimacy and the trend to stagnation typical of this form of government.

As regards the different explanatory factors, a great deal of the literature links one to another. In this chapter it was indeed confirmed that there is a very high association between fragmentation and the need to form coalitions as well as between fragmentation and ideological polarization. Other more moderate and unfamiliar relationships that merit more detailed exploration and which are beyond this study are those found between ideological polarization, the forming of coalitions and attitudinal discipline.

With respect to the determinants of legislative *success*, the analyses carried out have revealed the importance of the institutional index in improving the prediction of presidential *success*. This responds to a linear combination of different variables, but the factors that stand out with most influence on variability are the IPIL and legislative majorities. To sum up, the scenario that increases the president's legislative *success* is characterized by an institutional design, defined by the rules of Congress and the Constitution, which favors his/her influence, an ample legislative majority, a legislature composed of few parties in which the degree of ideological polarization among them is low and a time, in terms of electoral cycle, when the president has just taken office.

## Appendix

Table A: Institutional hypotheses that guide the construction of the IPIL

IPIL indicator	1. Executive success
	Hypotheses
<b>Initiating stage</b>	
Exclusive initiative	In countries in which the Executive has more power of exclusive initiative, success in the passing of its proposals is greater
Setting of the agenda	Procedures concentrated in the hands of few actors for the preparation of the agenda favor the success of the Executive in legislative activity
Type of majority for modifying the agenda	Procedures that hinder modification of the agenda favor the success of the Executive
<b>Constitutive stage</b>	
Committee members	In those countries in which the election of the committee members is more centralized (the responsibility of fewer actors) success of the Executive in legislative activity is higher
Prerogatives for omitting the committee procedure	The regulations that facilitate obviating the committee stage in the legislative process favor the success of the Executive in legislative activity
Power of the committees for processing laws	The greater the legislative prerogatives of the committees, the lesser the success of the Executive
Ability of the Executive to force urgent processing	In those cases in which the Executive has prerogatives that facilitate the urgent processing of its projects, success in passing its initiatives will be greater
Number of Chambers	In those countries where the legislature has two Chambers success of the Executive is less
<b>Bicameral government systems</b>	
Degree of symmetry	In countries with a bicameral system in which there is symmetry in both Chambers, the Executive will have less success in passing its proposals
Disagreement between Chambers (total rejection)	Asymmetric procedures for solving disagreement between the Chambers when a bill is rejected favors the success of the Executive if one of the Chambers loses strength of veto
Disagreement between Chambers (modifications)	In countries with a two-chamber system with more concentrated forms for solving conflicts the Executive's success increases, since it is easier for the legislative group supporting the government in one of the Chambers to impose its criterion
<b>Effectiveness stage</b>	
Total veto and override	In those countries in which in order to override the presidential veto very restrictive majorities are required, the Executive's success will be greater
Partial veto and override	In those countries in which there is the possibility of partially vetoing bills and override requires very ample majorities, the power of veto is stronger and the success of the Executive greater.
<b>Extraordinary legislative procedure</b>	
Power of decree	In those countries in which the power of the president to legislate by decree is contemplated, the legislative success of the Executive will be greater
Calling of extraordinary sessions	In those countries in which the Executive has facilities for calling extraordinary sessions, its legislative success will be greater

Source: García (2007)

Table B: Values of the index of institutional legislative potential (IPIL) by stages and total

	Initiating stage	Constitutive stage	Bicameral	Effectiveness stage	Extraordinary procedure	Total	Total (0-1)
Argentina 1853	*	*	0	0.65	0.83	1.48	0.49
Argentina 1853 (1994)	0.13	0.13	0	0.65	0.63	1.54	0.31
Bolivia 1967	0.61	0.31	0.6	0.25	0.3	2.07	0.41
Chile 1980	0.86	0.58	0.8	0.65	0.63	3.52	0.70
Colombia 1991	0.62	0.23	0.4	0.28	1	2.53	0.51
Costa Rica 1949	0.17	0.31	**	0.33	0.5	1.31	0.33
Ecuador 1979	*	0.21	**	1	0.57	1.78	0.59
Ecuador 1998	0.41	0.35	**	1	0.57	2.33	0.58
Guatemala 1985	0.19	0.46	**	0.33	0.47	1.45	0.36
Honduras 1982	0.33	0.5	**	0.25	0.47	1.55	0.39
Mexico 1917	0.19	0.38	0.4	0.42	0.17	1.56	0.31
Panama 1972	0.43	0.42	**	0.83	0.83	2.51	0.63
Paraguay 1967	*	*	0.2	0.62	1	1.82	0.61
Paraguay 1992	0.39	0.38	0.2	0.45	0.3	1.72	0.34
Peru 1993	0.36	0.33	**	0.1	1	1.79	0.45
Uruguay 1967	0.49	0.55	0.2	0.47	0.47	2.18	0.44
Venezuela 1953	*	*	0.2	0.65	0.1	0.95	0.32
Venezuela 1961	*	*	0.2	0.65	0.67	1.52	0.51

Source: own

\*In these cases the prevailing regulations for the constitutional period are lacking, hence the index was calculated taking into account only the constitutional prerogatives in the stage and weighting their value over the total value that the index can reach without the aforementioned prerogatives being present.

\*\* Countries with single chamber legislative design.

Table C: Percentage of legislators supporting the government

President (term of office)	Party/parties	% Legislators president's party Lower Chamber (election)	% Legislators government party/parties Lower Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators president's party Upper Chamber (election)	% Legislators government party/parties Upper Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators government party/parties total
<i>Argentina</i>						
Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1985)	UCR	51.19	51.19	39.10	39.10	45.15
(1985-1987)	UCR	50.79	50.79	39.10	39.10	44.95
(1987-1989)	UCR	44.49	44.49	39.10	39.10	41.80
Carlos S. Menem (1989-1991)	PJ	48.03	48.03	56.50	56.50	52.27
(1991-1993)	PJ	45.53	45.53	58.30	58.30	51.92
(1993-1995)	PJ	49.03	49.03	58.30	58.30	53.67
(1995-1997)	PJ	51.75	51.75	55.50	55.50	53.63
(1997-1999)	PJ	46.30	46.30	55.50	55.50	50.90
Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001)	UCR/FREPASO	33.07	48.25	30.60	30.60	39.43
(2001-2002)	UCR/FREPASO	27.63	34.24	30.60	30.60	32.42
Eduardo Duhalde (2002-2003)	PJ	47.50	47.50	65.9	56.9	52.20
Néstor Kichner (2003-2004)	PJ	52.10	52.10	55.50	55.50	53.80
<i>Bolivia</i>						
Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997)	MNR/UCS/MBL	40.0	60.77	62.96	66.66	61.87
Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997-2001)	ADN/MIR/CONDEPA /UCS	25.38	73.85	40.74	85.18	79.51
<i>Chile</i>						
Patricio Alwyn (1989-1994)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	31.67	51.67	27.65	46.80	49.23
Eduardo Frei (1994-1997)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	29.17	56.67	28.26	45.65	51.16
(1997-2000)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	30.80	58.33	29.16	41.67	49.99
Ricardo Lagos (2000-2005)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	10.00	53.33	10.41	41.67	47.50
<i>Colombia</i>						
César Gaviria (1990-1994)	PL	59.80	59.80	57.89	57.89	58.84
Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002)	PC	32.30	32.30	14.70	14.70	23.50
<i>Costa Rica</i>						
José Figueres (1994-1998)	PLN	49.12	49.12			49.12
Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998-2002)	PUSC	47.37	47.37			47.37
Abel Pacheco (2002-2006)	PUSC	33.33	33.33			33.33
<i>Ecuador</i>						
Sixto Duran Ballen (1995-1996)	PUR/PCE	2.6	11.69			11.69
Abdalá Bucaram (1996-1997)	PRE/APRE	24.39	28.6			28.6
Fabián Alarcón (1997-1998)	PRE/APRE	24.39	28.6			28.6
Jamil Mahuad (1998-2002)	DP	28.93	28.93			28.93
<i>Guatemala</i>						
Álvaro Arzú (1995-1999)	PAN	53.75	53.75			53.75
<i>Honduras</i>						
Rafael Callejas (1989-1993)	PNH	55.47	55.47			55.47
Carlos Reina (1993-1997)	PLH	55.47	55.47			55.47
Carlos Flores (1997-2001)	PLH	52.34	52.34			52.34

(Table C continued: Percentage of legislators supporting the government)

President (term of office)	Party/parties	% Legislators president's party Lower Chamber (election)	% Legislators government party/parties Lower Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators president's party Upper Chamber (election)	% Legislators government party/parties Upper Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators government party/parties total
<i>Mexico</i>						
Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1985)	PRI	74.75	74.75	98.44	98.44	86.60
(1985-1988)	PRI	73.00	73.00	98.44	98.44	85.72
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1991)	PRI	52.00	52.00	93.75	93.75	72.88
(1991-1994)	PRI	64.00	64.00	95.31	95.31	79.66
Ernesto Zedillo (1994-1997)	PRI	60.00	60.00	74.21	74.21	67.10
(1997-2000)	PRI	47.80	47.80	60.15	60.15	53.97
Vicente Fox (2000-2003)	PAN/PARM	41.40	44.60	35.93	35.93	40.27
<i>Panama</i>						
Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994-1997)	PRD/PALA/LIBRE	41.79	43.10			43.10
Mireya Moscoso (1999-2004)	PA/PDC/PLN/ Solidaridad	25.4	39.4			39.4
<i>Paraguay</i>						
Andrés Rodríguez (1989-1993)	ANR	66.70	66.70	66.66	66.66	66.69
Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993-1998)	ANR	47.50	47.50	44.44	44.44	45.97
Raúl Cubas Grau (1998)	ANR	56.30	56.30	53.33	53.33	54.82
Luis A. González Macchi (1998-2002)	ANR	56.30	56.30	53.33	53.33	54.82
<i>Peru</i>						
Alberto Fujimori (1995-2000)	Cambio90	55.83	55.83			55.83
Alberto Fujimori (2000-2001)	Cambio90	43.33	433.33			43.33
Alejandro Toledo (2001-2005)	PP/FIM	37.50	46.67			46.67
<i>Uruguay</i>						
Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994-1999)	PC/PN	32.30	55.60	33.33	67.67	61.64
Jorge Battle (1999-2004)	PC/PN	32.30	55.60	32.26	54.83	55.22
<i>Venezuela</i>						
Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964)	AD/COPEI	54.90	69.17	62.70	74.50	71.84
Raúl Leoni (1964-1969)	AD/FDP/URD	33.17	55.78	46.80	70.20	62.99
Rafael Caldera (1969-1974)	COPEI	27.60	27.60	17	17	22.30
Carlos A. Pérez (1974-1979)	AD	51.00	51.00	59.60	59.60	55.30
Luis H Campins (1979-1984)	COPEI	42.20	42.20	47.70	47.70	44.95
Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989)	AD	55.90	55.90	63.60	63.60	59.75

Source: own from composition of the Chambers

Table D: Effective number of parliamentary parties in the Chamber of Representatives, Chamber of Senators and total of both Chambers by term of office.

President (term of office)	ENP Chamber of Representatives	ENP Chamber of Senators	ENP Total both Chambers
<i>Argentina</i>			
Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1985)	2.19	2.6	2.4
(1985-1987)	2.4	2.6	2.5
(1987-1989)	2.75	2.6	2.68
Carlos S. Menem (1989-1991)	2.79	2.33	2.56
(1991-1993)	3.15	2.4	2.78
(1993-1995)	2.86	2.4	2.63
(1995-1997)	2.86	2.42	2.64
(1997-1999)	3.25	2.4	2.83
Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001)	3.45	2.4	2.93
Fernando de la Rúa/Eduardo Duhalde (2001-2003)	3.43	2.35	2.89
Néstor Kichner (2003-2004)	2.75	2.46	2.61
<i>Bolivia</i>			
Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997)	3.71	2.05	2.88
Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997-2001)	5.5	3.66	4.58
<i>Chile</i>			
Patricio Alwyn (1989-1993)	5.2	4.83	5.02
Patricio Alwyn /Eduardo Frei (1993-1996)	4.88	5.26	5.07
Eduardo Frei (1996-1997)	4.88	5.14	5.01
(1997-2000)	5.07	5.14	5.11
Ricardo Lagos (2000-2005)	6.1	5.36	5.73
<i>Colombia</i>			
César Gaviria (1990-1994)	3	2.22	2.61
Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002)	3.28	3.62	3.45
<i>Costa Rica</i>			
José Figueres (1994-1998)	3.29		3.29
Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998-2002)	2.56		2.56
Abel Pacheco (2002-2006)	4.68		4.68
<i>Ecuador</i>			
Sixto Duran Ballen (1995-1996)	5.44		5.44
Abdalá Bucaram (1996-1997)	5.13		5.13
Fabián Alarcón (1997-1998)	5.13		5.13
Jamil Mahuad (1998-2002)	5.66		5.66
<i>Guatemala</i>			
Álvaro Arzú (1995-1999)	2.73		2.73
<i>Argentina</i>			
<i>Honduras</i>			
Rafael Callejas (1989-1993)	2		2
Carlos Reina (1993-1997)	2.03		2.03
Carlos Flores (1997-2001)	2.18		2.18
<i>Mexico</i>			
Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1985)	1.73	1	1.37
(1985-1988)	1.83	1	1.42
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1991)	3.04	1	2.02
(1991-1994)	2.21	1	1.61
Ernesto Zedillo (1994-1997)	2.29	1	1.65
(1997-2000)	2.86	1	1.93
Vicente Fox (2000-2003)	2.55	1	1.78



(Table D continued: Effective number of parliamentary parties in the Chamber of Representatives, Chamber of Senators and total of both Chambers by term of office.)

President (term of office)	ENP Chamber of Representatives	ENP Chamber of Senators	ENP Total both Chambers
<i>Panama</i>			
Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994-1997)	4.33		4.33
Mireya Moscoso (1999-2004)	3.26		3.26
<i>Paraguay</i>			
Andrés Rodríguez (1989-1993)	1.97	2.55	2.26
Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993-1998)	1.89	1.85	1.87
Raúl Cubas Grau (1998)	2.45	2.69	2.57
Luis A. González Macchi (1998-2002)	1.97	2.55	2.26
<i>Peru</i>			
Alberto Fujimori (1995-2000)	2.91		2.91
Alberto Fujimori (2000-2001)	3.97		3.97
Alejandro Toledo (2001-2005)	4.37		4.37
<i>Uruguay</i>			
Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994-1999)	3.3	3.19	3.25
Jorge Battle (1999-2004)	3.07	3.27	3.17
<i>Venezuela</i>			
Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964)	2.58	2.2	2.39
Raúl Leoni (1964-1969)	5.35	3.46	4.41
Rafael Caldera (1969-1974)	4.89	4.01	4.45
Carlos A. Pérez (1974-1979)	2.72	2.3	2.51
Luis H. Campins (1979-1984)	2.65	2.18	2.42
Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989)	2.42	1.99	2.21

Source: own

Table E: Construction of the indicator for attitudinal discipline

<b>Questions used</b>
<p>"The subject of discipline has traditionally given rise to highly diverse opinions. With which of the following opinions are you most in agreement?" Party discipline should always be demanded in the parliamentary group. Each representative should be allowed to vote according to his/her own criterion. Some matters should be subject to discipline and others not</p>
<p>"Next, I would like to know whether you are very much, quite a lot, not very much or not at all in agreement with the following statement: a political party should expel a member of Congress who votes against his/her party's political decisions"</p>
<p>"Sometimes a representative who has been elected in the lists of a certain party later decides to break with this party. On these occasions, what do you think the representative should do?: keep his/her seat and join another parliamentary group or resign so that another candidate from the party in whose lists he/she was elected can occupy it"</p>
<p>"To what extent do you take into account the opinion of your party leaders when making political decisions? – very much, quite a lot, not very much, not at all".</p>
<b>Transformation</b>
<p>The transformations made with the values of the questions for the construction of the indicator were carried out in two steps. First the four questions were recoded so that each would acquire a maximum value of 1. Thus, in the question referring to the attitude shown to discipline 0 was given to legislators in favor of representatives voting according to their own criterion. On the other hand, the representatives who think that discipline of vote should always be demanded were assigned the value 1, whereas those who consider that discipline should be subject to the issues obtained a value of 0.5</p>
<p>The question concerning the degree of agreement with the expulsion of a legislator who votes against the political decisions of his/her party was transformed so that those who were not at all in favor of expulsion were given a value of 0, those who were not very much in agreement with the expulsion were assigned 0.33, those who were quite in agreement 0.66 and those who were totally in agreement, 1.</p>
<p>Concerning the opinion as to whether a representative who leaves the party he/she was elected for should keep his/her seat or resign it, the value given to those who consider he/she should leave the position as representative is 1, whereas the legislators who thought that the seat should be kept received the value of 0.</p>
<p>The question on the degree to which the legislators take into account the opinion of their party leaders when making political decisions was transformed so that those who say they take them greatly into account received a value of 1, those who take them into account quite a lot, 0.66, those who do not take them very much into account 0.33 and those who state that they do not take them into account at all, 0.</p>
<p>The second step was to calculate the mean obtained in the four questions and transformed into a scale ranking from 0 to 1 which, finally, is the indicator that measures attitudinal discipline in the study. In the values close to 1 would be those terms of office when the representatives of the government party or parties have an attitude more favorable to discipline and in the values close to 0 those less favorable to receiving instructions from their party.</p>

Source: own from PELA

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