Parliamentary Opposition in Non-Parliamentary Regimes: Latin America

SCOTT MORGENSTERN, JUAN JAVIER NEGRI and ANÍBAL PÉREZ-LIÑÁN

While the opposition is clearly defined in a parliamentary system, the definition is murky in multiparty presidential regimes. As a result, the role of opposition parties is not always clear. In this article, therefore, we evaluate coalition politics in Latin America, firstly to analyse the presidents' legislative support and secondly to consider the role of the opposition in lawmaking and oversight of the executive. The data suggest several conclusions. First, coalition politics in Latin America historically reduced the risk of military interventions. Second, though the opposition participates in the elaboration of laws, legislators tend to define their distinctive role as oversight, up to and including measures that force the removal of the president from office.

What is the best way to analyse the role of the opposition in Latin America? In parliamentary systems, policy debates turn on government–opposition relations. In the United States, the debate is typically about executive–legislative relations. In this article we argue that both vernaculars are relevant to Latin American politics.

The opposition is clearly defined for parliamentary politics as the parties not included in the executive cabinet. In the United States discussions revolve around executive–legislative relations because the independence of the branches makes defining the ins and outs more complicated. If the president is a member of the same party as the majority of both houses of Congress, then the opposition is simply the minority party. If, however, the president and the majority of members of one house of Congress are from different parties, then government and opposition lines are blurred, because policies can only be approved with the agreement of the president's party and some moderate legislators willing to 'cross the aisle'. In most Latin American countries the issue is even more complicated, because presidential systems are frequently conjoined with multipartism. As such, the definition and more importantly

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the role of the opposition in Latin America blends some ingredients from both the US and European models.

Many Latin American systems borrow a notion of coalitional government from the Europeans, despite early research that predicted the inability of presidential systems to form coalitions. As their own parties lack majority control of the legislature, and multiple parties hold important numbers of seats, some Latin American presidents have offered cabinet seats to opposition parties in an attempt to build European-style legislative support. This has led to some successes, but without the glue of confidence votes to hold the system together they have not always worked to cement legislative support.

A second possibility for the Latin American presidents is to run minority governments. Kaare Strom[1] found that about one-third of European parliaments are minority governments, and we find that 52 per cent of Latin American single-party governments are minority governments and that 51 per cent of Latin American presidents lack legislative majorities, even when offering cabinet posts to some legislative parties.[2] As in European-style minority governments, these presidents must rely on informal coalitions to pass their legislation (though some also try to evade the legislature altogether).

While the multipartism yields comparisons with European minority governments, presidential constitutions also yield a relation between the government and opposition that resembles the United States under times of divided government. At these times the Latin American presidents must bargain with legislatures that are frequently prone to reject executive proposals, thus forcing the president to compromise, buy support with policy or pork, or attempt to evade the legislative process.

While a model of government–opposition for Latin America would have to blend key components from Europe and the United States, the Latin Americans also have their own special ingredients. In particular, the institutional context is such that the legislatures do not generally play as significant a role in the policy process as in the United States. They are sometimes very influential – even to the point of removing the executive from office – but their role in policy-making is often more limited than that of the US Congress. As such, the opposition in Latin America (if defined as parties not in the executive's coalition) is even more marginalised than in the United States. The second difference is that the Latin American legislatures' fractionalisation can mean that no party controls a majority of the legislature. In these cases, there is not *an* opposition, but *multiple* oppositions. This creates new and greater collective action problems than in the US case, with implications not only for executive–legislative relations, but also for legislative organisation.

The goal of this paper is to explore these definitions and roles in several ways. In the first part of the paper we explore the size and shape of the

opposition in Latin American governments. We provide information about the fractionalisation of the Latin American legislatures with an eye towards the degree of presidential support. We also explore coalition politics, arguing that while some presidents try to build cabinet-style coalitions, others rely on informal arrangements for their legislative support. In the second part of the paper we discuss the apparent trade-off between presidential powers and the power of the opposition. Against common assumptions in the literature, we argue that the strength of the president and the opposition are not inversely related. The reason is that strong party organisations may empower both camps, while weak parties may hinder the operational capacity of the two branches of government. Thus, it is better to conceptualise government–opposition relations as a positive-sum game anchored in the party system rather than as a zero-sum game anchored in inter-branch disputes.

In the third part of the paper we analyse the role of the Latin American opposition and its impact on the political system. We consider this issue from several vantage points. From an opposition–government perspective, we use legislative surveys to map the roles played by opposition legislators in the policy-making process. The data suggest that, even though the opposition participates in the elaboration of laws, legislators tend to define their distinctive role as oversight rather than policy-making. From an executive–legislative relations perspective, we explore the degree to which those legislators exercise oversight in its most extreme form – by removing the president from office. Our analysis of 123 South American cabinets between 1958 and 1995 indicates that coalition politics in Latin America historically reduced the risk of military interventions against the president. At the same time, the analysis of more recent presidential downfalls in Latin America between 1980 and 2004 indicates that the opposition in Latin America has the capacity to oversee the executive and impeach the president (or force his or her resignation) when necessary, although this power is often misused for partisan reasons or invoked in an opportunistic manner when the president is unpopular.

DEFINING THE OPPOSITION IN LATIN AMERICA

Traditional research on Latin American executive–legislative relations has focused on the difficult relation between the branches. In contrast to parliamentary regimes, where the executive is formed by and is responsible to the assembly, the independent election of presidents means that only one party can win the grand prize. Still, this model presumes that there is an opposition that can stymie the president. Generally, the opposition is not carefully defined in these models, but Mainwaring argued that the executive–legislative conflict would be compounded by multipartism, because this would increase the

likelihood that the president would lack a working majority in the assembly.[3] The model suggests, therefore, that the separation of powers would inevitably generate irresolvable conflict between the branches thus threatening stability and democracy.[4] This model of executive–legislative relations does highlight an important challenge to presidentialism as institutional challenges have played important roles in recent constitutional crises (for example, Ecuador) and more distant breakdowns of democracy (Chile). Still, by and large a more prosaic form of politics generally ensues, with the two branches bargaining over policies and reaching compromises on many bills. This sort of successful politicking results from an important aspect of presidentialism that has been too often ignored in studies: coalitions.

Until recently, scholarship has ignored the possibility that coalitions could help overcome the 'difficult combination' of multipartism and presidentialism, perhaps because presidential systems lack some of the mechanisms that help cement parliamentary coalitions together (namely the appointment of the cabinet by the parliament, and confidence votes). Several recent works, however, have documented the great frequency with which presidents form supportive coalitions.[5] Deheza finds that 69 of 123 (56 per cent) cabinets formed in nine South American countries between 1958 and 1995 were coalition governments. Further, of the 66 cases where the president had majority support, in only 22 cases did that support rest on a single party.[6] Similarly, Cheibub, Przeworki and Saiegh[7] found that more than one-half of presidents who face a minority of their co-partisans in the legislature also form coalitions.

As a result of the prevalence of coalitions, we define the opposition in presidential systems as the group of legislators who do not belong to the president's party or to any party which has membership in the president's cabinet. This is, of course, a simplifying definition, that assumes that members of the president's party or members of parties in the president's cabinet are more likely to be supportive than other legislators. This is not always true, but it does allow for a precise categorisation that can shift over time as different parties enter or leave the cabinet.

In order to assess the relative size and the leverage of the congressional opposition in Latin America, we collected information for six indicators in 18 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) between 1978 (or the installation of democracy) and 2004. We use the following indicators in our analysis:

1. The size of the president's party. This variable measures the share of seats controlled by the president's party in Congress (as a proportion; computed separately for the lower house and for the Senate). In the case of Uruguay, we measured the size of the president's 'fraction' in Congress – a better

indicator of the core legislative support for the chief executive – whenever information was available.[8] Unfortunately, information for factional alignments was not available for Uruguay after 1995, or for countries with similar situations such as Colombia. In those cases, the variable simply reflected the size of the ruling party.

2. The size of the government's coalition. We defined the government's coalition in Congress as the president's party *plus* any other party or faction aligned with the executive. We compiled information on this subject from multiple sources.[9] In general, these sources defined government coalitions based on the distribution of cabinet positions, although the definition in the case of Beck *et al.* is less clear.[10] Information on coalitions is often imperfect, yet it allowed us to identify additional sources of support for the executive.
3. The size of the opposition. The size of the opposition in Congress was defined as the share of sets not controlled by the president's coalition.
4. Partisan cohesion. We computed a simple measure of cohesion among opposition parties by taking the ratio between the largest opposition party (in the House or the Senate) and the total proportion of seats controlled by the opposition in the respective chamber. Opposition cohesion, therefore, is assumed to decline as the number of parties in the opposition grows.
5. Effective number of parties. As a standard measure of party system fragmentation, we also computed the effective number of parties in the House and the Senate. The effective number of parties is defined as $1/(\Sigma p_i^2)$, where p is the proportion of seats controlled by the i-th party.[11] The index thus captures the number of parties in the chamber, weighted by their respective size.
6. The durability of coalitions. Because presidents have fixed terms in office, in presidential systems the dissolution of a ruling coalition cannot be equated to the end of the government. We used the data collected by Grace Ivana Deheza for nine South American countries between 1958 and 1995, and identified whether the end of coalitions resulted from a cabinet reshuffle, or from the end of an administration (because a newly elected president took office, because the president resigned, or because there was a military coup).[12]

Patterns of Opposition

Table 1 presents the average size of the president's party and the congressional opposition in 18 Latin American countries between 1978 and 2004. In the typical country, during a typical year, the opposition controlled 46 per cent

TABLE 1
AVERAGE SIZE AND UNITY OF THE OPPOSITION IN LATIN AMERICA (1978–2004)

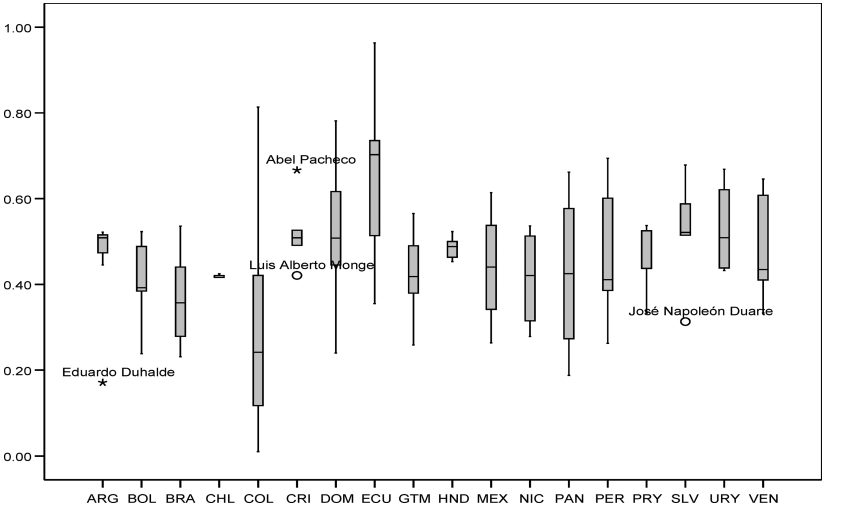
	President's party		Opposition[a]		Unity[b]	
Country	**House**	**Senate**	**House**	**Senate**	**House**	**Senate**
Colombia	0.39	0.39	0.30	0.33	0.53	0.59
Brazil	0.14	0.15	0.34	0.24	0.34	0.45
Bolivia	0.31	0.45	0.39	0.28	0.51	0.77
Nicaragua	0.54		0.39		0.69	
Chile	0.26	0.22	0.42	0.56	0.56	0.41
Mexico	0.55	0.76	0.43	0.23	0.54	0.83
Panama	0.27		0.44		0.64	
Guatemala	0.38		0.45		0.59	
Paraguay	0.55	0.52	0.45	0.48	0.77	0.70
Peru	0.50	0.42[c]	0.46	0.52[c]	0.52	0.54[c]
Latin America	0.39	0.43	0.46	0.40	0.62	0.68
Argentina	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.46	0.64	0.65
Honduras	0.49		0.48		0.92	
El Salvador	0.42		0.49		0.65	
Venezuela	0.39	0.40[d]	0.50	0.49[d]	0.59	0.76[d]
Costa Rica	0.49		0.51		0.79	
Uruguay	0.30	0.24	0.53	0.49	0.70	0.72
Dominican Republic	0.43	0.55	0.55	0.45	0.78	0.86
Ecuador	0.15		0.62		0.35	

Notes: [a]Opposition is defined as the share of seats not controlled by the president's party or the president's coalition; [b]Largest opposition party/Total seats for the opposition; [c]Prior to 1992; [d]Prior to 1999.

of the House and 40 per cent of the Senate. More than five percentage points above this average were the oppositions in Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. More than five percentage points below this average were the oppositions in Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Nicaragua. A large opposition did not necessarily mean a cohesive one: in Ecuador, where the opposition typically controlled more than 60 per cent of the seats in the unicameral Congress, the largest opposition party barely comprised 35 per cent of this bloc (that is, 22 per cent of the total seats).

Country averages mask significant dispersion across administrations, as suggested by Figure 1. The boxplots show the degree of variation in the size of the opposition faced by 108 administrations in the lower house during this period. The frame of each box indicates the upper and lower quartiles for each country – above the box lie one-quarter of the administrations facing the largest opposition contingents; below the box lie the 25 per cent of the presidents facing the weakest oppositions. The horizontal line dividing the box indicates the median case for each country. (Vertical lines stretch to

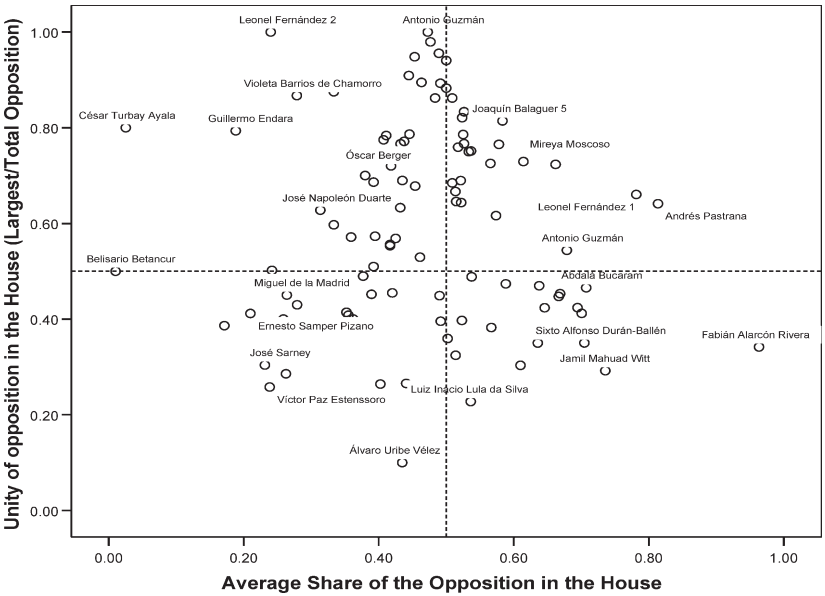
FIGURE 1
BOXPLOTS: SIZE OF THE OPPOSITION IN LOWER HOUSE TO 108 LATIN AMERICAN ADMINISTRATIONS, 1978–2004



mark the extreme values within a range equivalent to one and a half times the inter-quartile range; outliers outside this range are individually identified.) Dispersion is relatively small in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica (with some exceptions), and Honduras, while the size of the opposition may be hard to anticipate in Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, or Peru. The figure confirms the typically weak position of presidents in Ecuador, who lack strong parties and often rely on 'ghost' coalitions in Congress.[13] By contrast, figures showing a weak opposition (and a large dispersion) in Colombia reflect not only concrete historical conditions (presidents were often able to rely on relatively large parties plus additional allies in Congress) but also important measurement problems (it is difficult to identify the dissident factions within the president's party in Colombia and to code the alignment of the many micro-parties created in the 1990s). As a result, Colombian figures should be interpreted carefully.

The size of the opposition bloc, combined with the degree of partisan unity, determines four distinctive patterns of opposition. The first one, represented by the upper-left corner in Figure 2, indicates a pattern of *resistance* in which the opposition is small but remains united. This pattern constitutes about 39 per cent of the administrations in the sample. (Since the data points reflect averages for the whole administration, they may mask congressional realignments, as in the case of Nicaragua's Violeta Chamorro who lost support among

FIGURE 2
FOUR PATTERNS OF OPPOSITION IN LATIN AMERICA (108 ADMINISTRATIONS; 1978–2004)



the Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO).) The second pattern, reflected in the upper-right quadrant, indicates a typical situation of *divided government* – in which a united opposition controls at least one of the legislative chambers. If we focus on the lower house, about 21 per cent of the cases fall in this category. The third pattern, in the lower-left corner, corresponds to a potentially *feeble opposition*, a small and divided contingent with little capacity to veto the policies of the president and his allies (about 20 per cent of the administrations). The fourth pattern, by contrast, is one of potential *disarray*: albeit large, the opposition may be weak because it is highly divided, and the president may be able to offer selective incentives to particular parties or individual legislators to create ad-hoc coalitions. This pattern, corresponding to some 20 per cent of the cases, has been distinctive of the Ecuadorian setting.

Coalition Stability

Because we have defined the opposition as a residual category (that is, the members of Congress not in the president's coalition), the size of the opposition may vary over time according to the ability of the president to hold his or her coalition together. The above section gives a snapshot of the size of the

opposition at a particular point in time – the average year for each administration. Governing coalitions, however, are not always stable. Using Deheza's[14] data on cabinets in South America between 1958 and 1994, Table 2 compares the duration of cabinets according to their legislative support. We have classified cabinets as single-party (minority or majority) or coalition governments (minority, minimal-winning, and oversized). The table shows that, at least during the period 1958–95, single-party governments were more stable than coalition governments and majority-supported governments were more stable than minority governments. We computed the average duration for all cabinets (N = 123) and for non-terminal cabinets (those that ended during the life of a presidential administration and not because the

TABLE 2
AVERAGE DURATION OF CABINETS IN SOUTH AMERICA BY TYPE OF GOVERNMENT, 1958–95

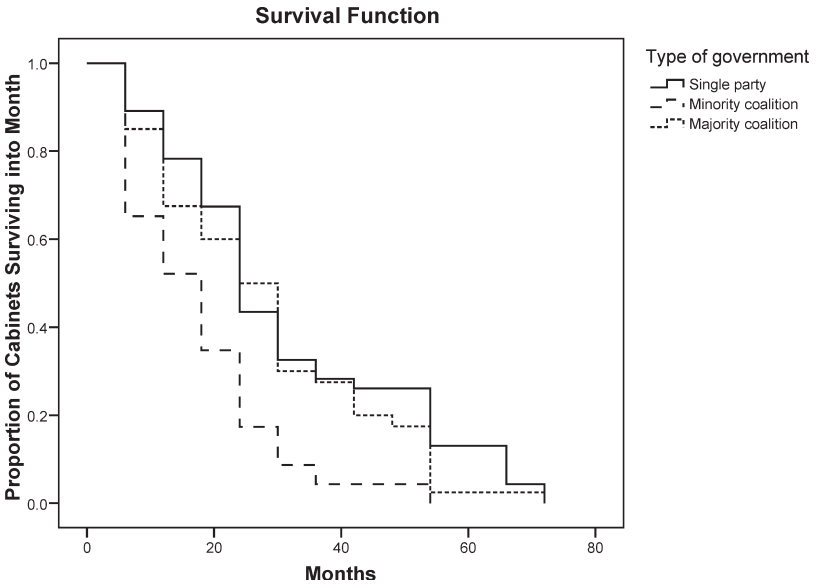
	Duration (months)			
Type	**All cases**	**Non-Terminal***	**Longest cases**	**Shortest cases**
Single minority party government	26.4	20.6	Venezuela: 1969–74, 1979–84	Bolivia 1985; Peru 1967–68; Uruguay 1972; Venezuela 1964, 1992–93
Single majority party government	28.5	29.3	Venezuela 1984–89, 1974–79; Peru 1985–90	Argentina 1973, 1973–74; Bolivia 1964, 1969 Uruguay 1967
Minority coalition	14.4	14.3	Peru 1963–67; Chile 1958–61	Bolivia 1982–83, 1984 (2), 1984–85; Brazil 1992 Chile 1972–73 Ecuador 1981–82
Minimal winning coalition	21.8	19.3	Bolivia 1989–93; Peru 1980–84; Chile 1990–94	Brazil 1960–61, 1963, 1963–64; Ecuador 1961–62, 1962–63
Oversized coalition	25.4	23.9	Colombia 1974–86; Venezuela 1960–64; Brazil 1987–90	Brazil 1961, 1963, 1985,

Note: *Non-terminal cabinets are cabinets that end during an administration, and not as a result of the end of the administration.

president finished his or her term, N = 71). The results are not substantially different: minority coalitions are particularly unstable, averaging only 14 months of life. If, however, presidents are able to build an oversized coalition, they raise the life expectancy of the government by almost 80 per cent.

Figure 3 illustrates the patterns identified in Table 2 from a different perspective. The graph shows the survival function for cabinets with different types of legislative support. The lines indicate the proportion of cabinets surviving until a certain point in time (based on life-tables constructed at six-month intervals). More than half of the minority coalition governments last less than a year. In contrast, majority coalitions (minimal winning and oversized are treated as a single sub-population) behave similarly to single-party governments: half of them survive for more than a year, and over 40 per cent survive longer than 18 months. About a quarter of single-party and majority coalition governments survive for three and a half years. Figure 3

FIGURE 3
SURVIVAL FUNCTION FOR SOUTH AMERICAN CABINETS, 1958–95



Note: Sample includes 123 cabinets included in Deheza's database. Terminal cabinets (cabinets terminated by the end of the administration) were treated as 'censored' cases in the life tables in order to avoid inflating the number of coalition dissolutions. Single-party cabinets were considered 'terminated' when the status of the party in Congress changed (i.e., the ruling party won a majority of the seats or became a minority party in the mid-term election) or if another party was incorporated into the cabinet.

Source: Based on G.I. Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial: America del Sur' (Doctoral dissertation, European University Institute, 1997).

suggests that a large, viable, opposition tends to encourage a faster dissolution of the government coalition.

PRESIDENTIAL POWERS AND THE POWER OF THE OPPOSITION

Having defined the opposition and evaluated its size, we now turn to an investigation of the out-parties' political influence. Multiple variables affect this influence. Here we focus on the interaction of the shape, size, and durability of coalitions with the presidents' 'partisan' and 'legislative' powers. Partisan powers are those tools that allow the executive to control the behaviour of legislators based on their partisan affiliation while legislative powers are generally constitutional prerogatives that determine the degree of influence of the president in directing the flow of legislation. As we explain below, this combination of variables determines the role of the opposition in the budget and policy process, the stability of governing coalitions, and presidential resignations.

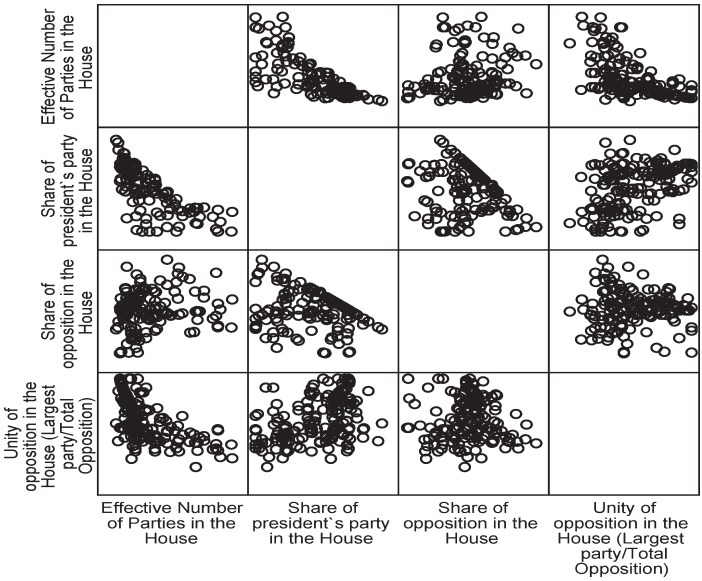
Partisan Powers

Students of presidentialism have emphasised that a fragmented party system weakens the 'partisan powers' of the president.[15] The implication, then, is that fragmentation empowers the opposition. There is not necessarily, however, a direct link between a president's partisan powers and the power of disparate legislative parties in their efforts to counter the executive. An important empirical question, then, is what is the effect of the party system on the size and cohesion of the opposition?

Figure 4 displays a matrix of scatterplots (the graphical equivalent of a correlation matrix) for our main indicators (the effective number of parties, the size of the president's party, the size of the opposition, and opposition's partisan unity). Each data point represents the lower (or only) legislative chamber in one Latin American country in one particular year between 1978 and 2004 (N = 395). The diagonal represents the plot of each variable against itself, and therefore is blank. (Graphics located above the diagonal mirror the ones located below the diagonal).

Consider the graph presented at the top of the first column (second row of first column), where cases fill the south-west half of the plot. This lower-triangular distribution indicates that a highly fragmented party system is sufficient to prevent the presence of a large presidential party in the lower house. In a system with few parties, the president may or may not have a majority party in Congress, but a large number of parties dividing the legislative seats guarantee that the president will lack a partisan majority. However, it does not follow from this fact that a fragmented party system will secure control of Congress by the opposition. The 'cloud' displayed in the plot located in row three of the first

FIGURE 4
BIVARIATE PLOTS FOR EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF PARTIES, SIZE OF THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY, SIZE OF THE OPPOSITION, AND OPPOSITION'S PARTISAN UNITY IN SOUTH AMERICA (LOWER CHAMBERS, 1978–2004)



column illustrates the situation for the lower house. Although the effective number of parties is positively correlated with the size of the opposition, the correlation is surprisingly low ($r = .15$, $p < .01$) because presidents with minority parties (representing 263 country-years in our sample) were able to build majority coalitions in the House in 41 per cent of the years. The plot located at the bottom of the first column indicates, at the same time, that a fragmented party system weakens the opposition by preventing partisan unity. The lower-triangular distribution again suggests that a fragmented party system is sufficient to impede partisan unity among the opposition (or, conversely, that a small number of parties is necessary to achieve unity). Thus, extreme multipartism affects the 'partisan powers' of both the president and the opposition. But because the executive branch has more resources at its disposal, the president often has a clear advantage over the leaders of the opposition in order to build legislative coalitions.

Legislative Powers

In an effort to compare the legislative powers of the presidents, Shugart and Carey created an index that combines six items into a single aggregate

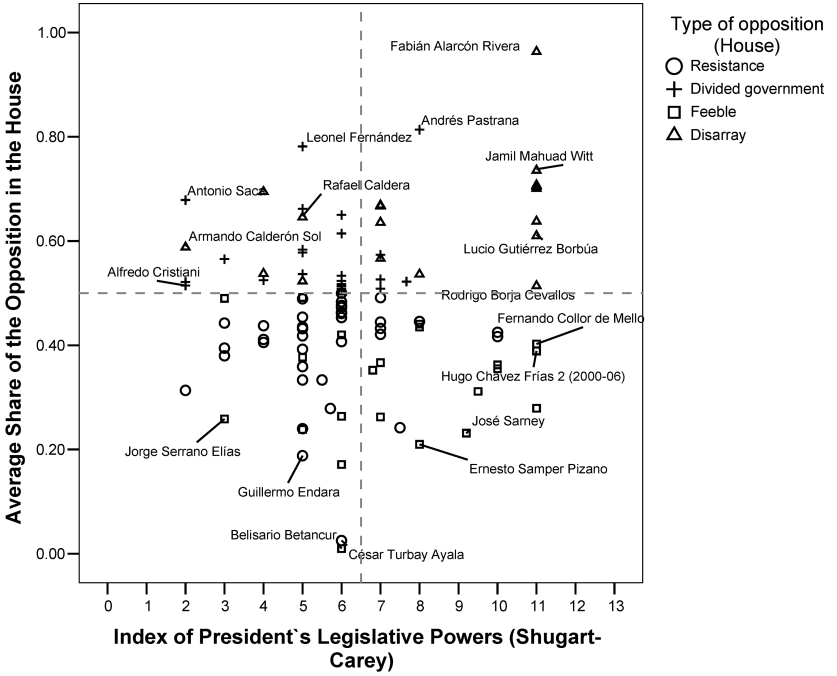
measure.[16] The components are: (1) whether the president has a package veto over legislation (and the size of legislative majority necessary to override the veto); (2) whether the president has an item veto over legislation (and, again, the size of legislative majority necessary to override the veto); (3) whether the president has constitutional decree authority (and how constrained it is); (4) whether the president is granted exclusive rights to introduce some types of legislation; (5) the degree of presidential control over the budgetary process; and (6) the ability of the president to initiate referendums. Each item is coded using a scale that ranges between 0 and 4 points (where 4 indicates greater constitutional powers for the executive branch), and the six items are aggregated simply by adding their scores.[17] Simple addition of ordinal scores is problematic, but the scale does provide a useful approximation of presidential powers, especially towards the extremes. Theoretically the scale can vary between 0 and 24 points, but empirically Shugart and Carey identified values ranging between 0 and 12, and our own coding of Latin American constitutions in force between 1978 and 2004 produced a range from 2 (for El Salvador's 1983 constitution) to 11 (for the constitutions adopted in Brazil in 1988; in Ecuador after the 1984 amendment and in 1998; and in Venezuela in 1999).[18]

Figure 5 plots the 108 administrations according to the president's constitutional power (in the horizontal axis) and the size of the opposition (in the vertical axis). Administrations were classified according to the patterns of opposition previously introduced in Figure 2: the opposition was considered potentially 'feeble' if it only controlled a minority of the seats in the House and it was divided (that is, no party controlled a majority of the seats within the opposition bloc); it was considered 'in disarray' if it controlled a majority of the seats but it was divided; it was coded as 'resisting' the government if it controlled a minority of the seats but it was united (that is, one party held a majority of the seats in the opposition bloc), and it was coded as a case of 'divided government' if it had a legislative majority *and* it was united.

The limited quality of the data on government coalitions, combined with the fact that data points in the figure indicate yearly averages for each administration, suggest that the location of specific presidents should be interpreted with caution. For instance, although Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello (1990–92) initially relied on a centre-right coalition that formally represented about 60 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, Collor's reluctance to negotiate with the legislators, combined with his liberal use of the presidential powers granted by the Constitution, eventually eroded his legislative base.[19] By the time he was impeached on corruption charges in late 1992, only 12 per cent of the deputies supported the president.

Despite these caveats, the figure suggests a distinctive pattern linking the constitutional powers of the president with the nature of the opposition.

FIGURE 5
SIZE AND TYPE OF OPPOSITION, BY PRESIDENT'S LEGISLATIVE POWERS LATIN AMERICA (1978–2004)



Source: Horizontal axis was computed according to: M.S. Shugart and J.M. Carey, Presidents and Assemblies. Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Presidents with relatively weak constitutional powers typically face a *resisting* opposition or a situation of *divided government*. In contrast, presidents with strong legislative powers typically confront an opposition that is potentially *feeble* or in *disarray*. In other terms, constitutionally weak presidents usually confront united opponents, while constitutionally strong presidents often face divided adversaries. How can we explain this pattern? One possible interpretation is that constitutional powers allow the executive branch to divide and conquer the opposition forces in Congress. Another, and possibly more important explanation is that the very same party systems that lead to the creation of strong presidential constitutions also account for the fragmentation of opposition forces. According to Matthew Shugart, countries with few, powerful parties tend to produce constitutions with relatively weak presidents, while countries with many weak parties tend to empower the executive branch.[20] By empowering the president, constitutional designers in countries

with weak and fragmented parties free opposition legislators from direct responsibility in national policy issues, but also limit the spending powers of those legislators in order to prevent excessive spending.

POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE OPPOSITION IN PRESIDENTIAL REGIMES

As described above, the opposition in most Latin American governments is generally characterised by divisions in its own ranks, thus limiting its ability to define and pursue a common policy. This weak position is compounded by multiple factors. First, as we also detailed above, most Latin American legislatures are hampered by constitutions that do not balance the executive and legislative powers; instead many Latin American presidents are endowed with special prerogatives over the budget and other policy areas, the ability to influence the legislative agenda, the line item veto, and other powers. Second, the Latin American legislatures lack important resources that limit their political roles. Few of these legislators have access to a large professional or technical staff or agencies such as the Congressional Budget Office in the United States. Further, because re-election rates are low, the legislators themselves generally lack expertise on policy or the political process. Finally, the legislators are often tied to parties in ways that limit their individual incentive actively to engage in the business of legislation.

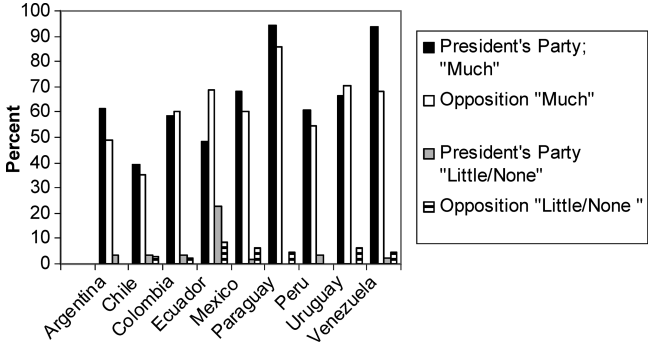
The result of these limitations leads to two levels of opposition influence. On the first level the opposition has only a limited involvement in the policy process. On the second, however, the opposition has actively and successfully pressured for the removal of problematic or unpopular presidents. We describe these two levels in the next two sections.

The Opposition and Policy Making

A first indicator of the opposition's influence in the policy process comes from the legislators' own views. Over the past decade the University of Salamanca has surveyed Latin American legislators on a wide range of issues.[21] One of the key items in Salamanca's survey of parliamentary elites reads: 'Thinking of your work as a deputy, how important would you rate your parliamentary activity – a lot, a significant amount, little, or none – in regard to the following roles?' Among the legislative roles analysed are: (1) Elaborating laws; (2) Elaborating the budget; and (3) Controlling the government.[22] We analyse responses from questionnaires utilised between 1998 and 2001.

Figure 6 focuses on the legislators' responses to the question about their role in 'elaborating legislation'. The data yield two important findings. First, in several countries only one-half – and in Chile less than 40 per cent – of legislators see themselves as playing an important role in developing legislation. Second, the figure shows only limited differences between the

FIGURE 6
PERCENTAGE OF SOUTH AMERICAN LEGISLATORS CLAIMING TO HAVE A LARGE OR MINIMAL ROLE IN ELABORATING LAWS*

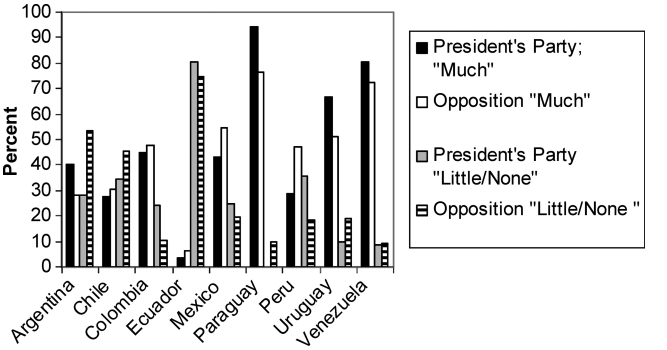


Note: Dates for Surveys: Argentina May–June 1998; Chile April–July 1998; Colombia July–Aug. 1998; Ecuador Aug.–Sept. 1998; Aug.–Sept. 1998; Mexico March–April 1998; Peru Aug.–Oct. 2001; Uruguay Oct.–Nov. 2000; Venezuela Oct.–Nov. 2000.
President's Party: Argentina PJ; Chile PDC; Colombia PC; Ecuador DP; Mexico PRI; Paraguay ANR (Colorados); Peru Perú Posible; Uruguay PC; Venezuela MVR.
Opposition: Argentina UCR + Frepaso; Chile UDI + RN; Colombia (1) PL; Ecuador PRE + PSC; Mexico PRD + PAN; Peru APRA (PAP); Paraguay PLRA; Uruguay FA + PN + EP Venezuela AD + Copei
Excluded from the analysis are legislators from organisations that supported the Executive and thus do not qualify as either the president's party or the opposition (parties of the Concertación in Chile, and MAS in Venezuela).
Source: *University of Salamanca's Survey of Parliamentary Elites.

in- and out-parties in most countries. In Chile, for example, 39 per cent of the members of the president's party answered that they played a significant role in developing legislation and almost the same percentage answered similarly for the two main opposition parties. There were somewhat larger differences in Ecuador and Venezuela; interestingly, in the former, more members of the opposition said they had a larger role in the development of legislation while the opposite was true in Venezuela in spite of criticism that their president, Hugo Chavez, wields excessive power.

Next, Figure 7 considers the legislators' responses with regard to their role in developing the budget. Here again we see important differences among and within countries. Except for the outliers of Ecuador (where only 6.3 per cent of the opposition said they had a large role in the budgetary process) and Paraguay (where 94.4 per cent of government legislators claimed to play a big role in the budget), the range in response to this question lies between 27.6 per cent of legislators of the Chilean president's party saying that they played an important role in elaborating the budget to 66.7 per cent of the president's party in Uruguay. The opposition claimed a similar or only slightly larger role in most cases (with Peru as an exception), though they claimed

FIGURE 7
PERCENTAGE OF SOUTH AMERICAN LEGISLATORS ANSWERING THAT THEY HAVE A LARGE OR MINIMAL ROLE IN ELABORATING THE BUDGET



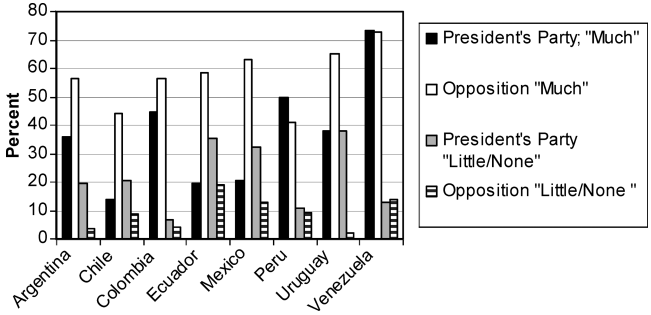
Note: See Figure 6 for further information.

significantly less involvement in Argentina (12 per cent) and Uruguay (15 per cent).

The second two bars for each country report the percentage of presidential party and opposition legislators that report having only a minimal role with respect to the budget. Here there are several significant differences between the ins and outs. In particular, a significantly greater percentage of out-party legislators in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay made this claim, while in Colombia and Peru more in-party legislators answered that elaborating the budget was an unimportant part of their job. Again there is an impressive range in this response to the question, with almost no legislators responding in this way in some countries, while half or more legislators suggested that the legislature plays a minimal role with regard to the budget in others.

A final indicator of the differences among governing and opposition parties comes in the legislators' responses to questions about their branch's role in oversight. Specifically the legislators were asked how important their role was in relation to 'controlling government activity'. Here we do find some significant differences both among countries and among parties in the different countries (Figure 8). In several cases there are large differences between the presidents' party's legislators and those of the opposition; in Argentina almost 20 per cent more of the opposition answered in this manner, in Chile the differences were over 30 points, and approached 40 points in Ecuador. Contrary to expectations, however, more legislators from the president's party in Peru and Venezuela (barely) saw controlling the government as a highly important role than did the opposition party legislators in those countries. In most countries few answered that oversight was

FIGURE 8
SOUTH AMERICAN LEGISLATORS' VIEWS REGARDING THEIR ROLE WITH RESPECT TO GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT



Note: See Figure 6 for further information.

unimportant, but a significant percentage of legislators from the president's party did not see this as important in Ecuador and Uruguay. Especially in Uruguay the president's party responses are dramatically different from those of the other parties.

Figures 6 to 8 suggest two main conclusions. First, the ways in which legislators define their own roles vary across countries more than between government and opposition within each country. This opens important questions for further research. Legislative roles may be shaped by institutional designs or by historical legacies operating at the national level. It is also possible that the observed variance across countries is partially a result of when surveys took place (for instance, some countries may have been in the midst of the budget debate when legislators were interviewed). Second, to the extent that opposition legislators identify a distinctive role for themselves, they claim the right to oversee the executive branch. Closer to their colleagues in parliamentary regimes (and in contrast to their counterparts in the United States), Latin American opposition legislators do not take direct responsibility for the policy-making process, but they may be willing to use their powers to check the executive branch. We discuss the implications of this role for horizontal accountability in the following section.

Although opposition legislators may not assume responsibility (or, alternatively, claim credit) for major policies, this should not be interpreted as proof that the opposition is systematically excluded from the policy-making process. In addition to the survey responses, we also investigated the propensity for different parties to vote with the majority on different bills. Morgenstern investigated 'policy coalitions' in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay using roll-call votes and found that the opposition parties were frequently

voting with the majority on controversial decisions (controversial voters are those where at least ten per cent of the legislature voted against the majority).[23] Table 3 highlights some of these results for the lower house.

These data focus on the main opposition party in each of these four countries, not parties that form part of the president's coalition. Even those parties, the table shows, are not consistently excluded from the policy process. In Argentina the Peronists held a near majority during Menem's initial years in the Casa Rosada, yet the opposition who had followed the discredited policies of his predecessor, Raúl Alfonsín, still sided with the majority on more than one-third of the votes. In Brazil the opposition is in an even weaker position, given the multiparty nature of the system. Further, during the period under investigation, the PT was considered the fringe left, and it held only about ten per cent of the legislative seats. In spite of these limitations, the PT sided with the legislative majority on 38.1 per cent of the controversial votes in 1995–98, though this proportion fell by more than one-half for 1995–98. In Chile the centre-left coalition (the Concertación) has controlled a majority of the seats in the lower house since the return to democracy in 1990. The two rightist parties, however, cannot claim that the left has excluded them from policy decisions, as they have been on the winning side of about one-half of the (controversial) legislative votes. Finally, in Uruguay the Frente Amplio found itself voting with the legislative majority on over 80 per cent of these votes. This figure must be considered carefully, however, as these votes were in favour of overturning presidential vetoes. The Frente Amplio, then, was siding against the president in each of these decisions.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF CONTROVERSIAL CONGRESSIONAL VOTES IN WHICH SOUTH AMERICAN OPPOSITION PARTIES VOTED IN THE MAJORITY

Country	Years	Opposition party or coalition	Controversial votes in which party voted with the majority (%)
Argentina	1989–91	UCR	35.0
Brazil	1991–95	PT	38.1
Brazil	1995–98	PT	16.2
Chile	1997–99	RN	47.8
Chile	1997–99	UDI	53.0
Uruguay*	1985–89	FA	82.4
Uruguay*	1990–94	FA	86.7

Note:*veto overrides.
Source: S. Morgenstern, *Patterns of Legislative Politics: Roll-Call Voting in Latin America and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

The Opposition and Political Stability

As we have emphasised, many Latin American presidents who lack a majority party in the legislature are able to build coalitions. These coalitions, however, are not always stable. Figure 3 showed that minority coalitions are particularly likely to disintegrate in the short run. In the European context, this is generally discussed in terms of government stability (that is, changes in the cabinet's composition), but in Latin America the concern has been with regime stability. In parliamentary systems, a large and cohesive opposition may dismiss the cabinet through a vote of no confidence and form a new government. In presidential systems, in contrast, a large and cohesive opposition is not supposed to affect the stability of the government because the terms in office (for the legislators as well as for the chief executive) are constitutionally fixed. Throughout the 1990s, however, the influential debate about the 'perils of presidentialism' emphasised the propensity of presidential regimes to face military interventions when minority presidents were unable to build stable coalitions and inter-branch conflict compromised the democratic process. Frustration with gridlock, it was argued, would encourage military intervention.[24] In this section we discuss the role of the opposition in shaping regime instability during the second half of the twentieth century as well as its role in cases of government instability in more recent years.

Regime instability, 1958–95 In order to examine how majority status and coalitional arrangements affected regime breakdown during the second half of the twentieth century, we classified the 123 cabinets included in Deheza's study according to the form in which they ended. Fourteen of them were terminated by a military coup, while the remaining 109 ended in some other way (the coalition dissolved, a new president took office, and so on).[25]

In Table 4 we present data on the frequency of military coups for different types of governments. Coalition governments in the Southern Cone were less exposed to military intervention than single-party governments. Indeed, coalition-making, more than majority status, seems to account for the lower rate of coups. Single majority party rule ended in a coup 18.2 per cent of the time, while single minority party governments faced military coups 15.4 per cent of the time. In contrast, only 3.6 per cent of the oversized coalitions and 4.2 per cent of minority coalitions ended with the fall of the regime. Taken as a group, 16.7 per cent of single-party governments faced military coups, compared to 5.8 per cent of coalition governments. The difference in risk is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.[26] Interim governments may be the most likely to end in military coups (one-third of them led to the breakdown of democracy) but the small number of cases prevents any comparison of risk across categories. The results presented in Table 4 suggest that styles of government, more than executive–legislative deadlock per se, constituted

TABLE 4
TERMINATION OF SOUTH AMERICAN CABINETS BY MILITARY COUPS, 1958–98

Type of cabinet	Form of termination		Total
	Coup	No Coup	
Single party			
Minority	4	22	26
%	15.4	84.6	100.0
Majority	4	18	22
%	18.2	81.8	100.0
Coalitions			
Minority	1	23	24
%	4.2	95.8	100.0
Minimal winning	2	15	17
%	11.8	88.2	100.0
Oversized	1	27	28
%	3.6	96.4	100.0
Interim	2	4	6
%	33.3	66.7	100.0
Total	14	109	123
%	11.4	88.6	100.0

Note: Coups terminating cabinets took place in Argentina (1962, 1966, 1976); Bolivia (1964, 1969, 1979, 1980); Brazil (1964); Chile (1973); Ecuador (1961, 1963); Peru (1962, 1968); and Uruguay (1973).
Sources: Based on G.I. Deheza, *Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial: America del Sur* (Doctoral dissertation, European University Institute, 1997), and P.H. Smith, *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the source of democratic breakdowns in Latin America in the past. When politicians adopted a majoritarian view of democracy the risk of breakdown was significantly greater than when they were willing to negotiate a consensus with the opposition via coalitions.

Government instability, 1980–2004. Since a wave of democratisation transformed the Latin American landscape in the 1980s, the military have for the most part withdrawn from politics.[27] However, even though in recent years democratic *regimes* have not broken down, democratically elected *governments* have collapsed on several occasions. Table 5 reports on the way in which 87 Latin American presidents left office between 1980 and 2004. We have classified the pattern of exit according to the type of opposition (as presented in Figure 2). A vast majority of presidents (70) completed their terms and a few others (3) died in office or retired due to health problems. But a relatively large number, 14 elected heads of state (17 per cent of those without health issues), were forced to leave office before their terms were completed. This happened in four different ways:

TABLE 5
LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS' PATTERNS OF EXIT FROM OFFICE, 1980–2004

	Normal exit		Termination (early exit)				
Type of opposition	**Finished term**	**Illness or death**	**Negotiated early exit**	**Resigned**	**Impeached or declared incapacitated**	**Ousted by military**	**Total**
Resistance	26	2	0	0	1	0	29
Divided government	19	0	2	2	1	0	24
Feeble	16	1	2	1	1	1	22
Disarray	9	0	0	1	1	1	12
Total	70	3	4	4	4	2	87

(1) *As a negotiated exit*. Four presidents – Hernán Siles Zuazo (Bolivia, 1985), Raul Alfonsín (Argentina, 1989), Joaquín Balaguer (the Dominican Republic, 1996), and Eduardo Duhalde (Argentina, 2003) – negotiated with the opposition an early exit from power as a way to defuse governability crises. Siles and Alfonsín accelerated the transfer of power to the next government in the midst of hyperinflation, Balaguer agreed to call for anticipated elections in 1996 as a result of severe accusations of fraud in the 1994 contest, and Duhalde called for elections to avoid civic unrest following a repressive incident in which the police killed two demonstrators during the Argentine economic debacle of 2001–3.

(2) *As a unilateral resignation*. Four other presidents – Alberto Fujimori (Peru, 2000), Fernando de la Rúa (Argentina, 2001), Adolfo Rodriguez Saá (Argentina, 2001), and Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (Bolivia, 2003) – resigned when they realised that they were in an untenable position due to the eruption of mass protests against their administrations and increasing political isolation. Prompted by corruption scandals and accusations of abuse of power and electoral fraud, Fujimori left the country and submitted his resignation from Japan. An infuriated Congress declared the president 'morally incapacitated' after he had resigned. In turn, de la Rúa, Rodriguez Saá, and Sánchez de Lozada (as well as some of their replacements) abandoned their offices when they realised that popular mobilisation was hard to control and that former political allies were no longer willing to support their administrations.

(3) *Following an impeachment or declaration of incapacity*. Presidents Fernando Collor de Mello (Brazil, 1992), Carlos Andrés Pérez (Venezuela, 1993), Abdalá Bucaram (Ecuador, 1997), and Raúl Cubas Grau (Paraguay, 1999) were directly accused by Congress and impeached or declared unfit to govern the country.

(4) *Following military interventions*. The last two cases correspond to instances in which military action forced the president to abandon the office. Confronting a hostile Congress, Guatemalan President Jorge Serrano attempted a self-coup in 1993, but refusal of the middle ranks to support his move led Serrano to resign. Congress then met and appointed the human rights ombudsman as interim president to complete the term. In 2000, a coalition of indigenous demonstrators and young military officers ousted Ecuadorian President Jamil Mahuad. The *junta* was unable to take over, but Congress legalised the exit of Mahuad and swore the vice-president in.

What was the role of the opposition in the fall of those administrations? This question is relevant for two reasons. On the one hand, a strong legislative

opposition may be able to hold the president accountable, impeaching the head of the executive branch if there is evidence of corruption or abuse of power. On the other hand, a strong legislative opposition may misuse its oversight powers or ally with other actors (military or civilian) outside the legislature to destabilise the government.

Three historical traits were common to all 14 crises. First, in none of them was the military able (or willing) to impose a dictatorship. This fact marks a break with the past, indicating a significant difference in the stability of democracy achieved in Latin America over the last two-and-a-half decades and the situation in earlier historical periods. Second, in all episodes popular protests were an important factor that weakened the position of the president and facilitated his downfall. Third, in all instances the opposition played an important role, either by negotiating a peaceful solution, removing the president from office by legal means, or securing a constitutional transfer of power after the president had resigned.

However, Table 5 indicates that the size and cohesion of the opposition is not enough to explain the recent demise of elected presidents. Presidents have been removed from office when the opposition was large and when it was small, when the opposition was united and when it was divided. Although our measures of the size and cohesion of the opposition are not sensitive enough to reflect short-term changes (an important factor because coalitions may easily dissolve in the midst of scandal or of protests against the government), the table suggests that – not surprisingly – other factors should also be taken into consideration.

In order to assess the relevance of the congressional opposition in those crises, we collected information on 467 presidents in office during particular years (for instance Alberto Fujimori in Peru in 1994) for 18 Latin American countries between 1980 and 2004.[28] The dependent variable (early exit) was coded as a dummy indicating whether the president was removed from office (or forced to resign) in any given year. Thus, the number of events is 14 out of 467 administration-years. For each country year, we collected additional information on five issues:

(1) *The size of the opposition relative to the majorities required to remove the president.* Using our estimates of the size of the opposition presented in previous pages and the relevant articles of each country's constitution, we created three dummy variables indicating whether: (i) the opposition had enough votes in Congress to impeach the president (that is, to initiate the accusation in the respective chamber); (ii) the opposition had enough votes in Congress to remove the president from office once the accusation was initiated; and (iii) the opposition had enough votes to declare the president physically or mentally incapacitated if the constitution allowed

Congress to do so. Although the three variables reflect similar institutional conditions, they are not highly correlated because the size of the opposition in each chamber and the supermajorities required for each decision vary (correlations range between 0.36 and 0.52).

(2) *The unity of the opposition.* We also included in the analysis our indicator of the opposition's cohesion in the lower house. This measure varies between zero and one, and it reflects the size of the largest opposition party divided by the total proportion of seats controlled by the opposition.

(3) *Presidential powers.* This variable reflects presidential powers in legislative affairs, according to the Shugart-Carey index (as explained above, points are assigned for package veto, item veto, constitutional decree authority, exclusive rights to introduce legislation, control over the budgetary process, and ability to initiate referendums). Scores range (in our sample) between 2 and 11, with a mean of 6.3.

(4) *Scandals.* We coded the presence of media scandals using *Latin American Weekly Report* (LAWR) as our historical source. Scandals were measured using a dummy with a value of 1 for years when LAWR reported that exposés about corruption or abuse of power had involved the president personally.

(5) *Protests.* We also used LAWR to collect information on popular protests against the president. This dichotomous variable was coded as 1 when the newsletter reported that popular protests had taken place to demand the resignation of the president, 0 otherwise.

Table 6 presents the results of a rare-event logistic analysis including those predictors. The first three models include the opposition variables separately, without significant results. The fourth model includes the three variables at once, and also controls for the partisan unity of the opposition. This model suggests that one of the critical factors shaping the outcome of a presidential crisis is whether the opposition has enough votes to remove the president from office through impeachment. It is less relevant whether the opposition can initiate the accusations (because the threat is not credible unless the decisive vote can be controlled by the opposition) or initiate a declaration of incapacity (this constitutional power is available to Congress in only nine countries, and it is often difficult to invoke). Paradoxically, a united opposition *reduces* the risk for the president. This is consistent with some of the previous findings in this paper, which indicate that a united opposition tends to co-exist with larger presidential cohorts in Congress and facilitates negotiations across blocs.

The last model includes the opposition variables plus the indicators of legislative powers, scandals and protest. Popular protest emerges as a strong predictor of presidential removals, but the opposition variable remains

TABLE 6
MODELS OF LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL REMOVALS FROM OFFICE, 1980–2004

Opposition had the constitutional power and the votes to:	**6.1**	**6.2**	**6.3**	**6.4**	**6.5**
(1) Impeach (accuse)	−0.068			−0.382	−0.719
	(0.697)			(0.666)	(0.392)
(2) Impeach & remove		1.041		1.988*	2.061*
		(0.567)		(0.687)	(0.654)
(3) Declare unfit			−0.108	−1.318	−0.833
			(0.927)	(0.811)	(0.653)
Unity of opposition				−1.941*	−0.665
(House)				(0.852)	(1.494)
Legislative powers					−0.068
					(0.127)
Scandal					0.729
					(0.796)
Protest vs. president					3.724*
					(0.696)
Intercept	−3.390*	−3.572*	−3.386*	−2.200*	−3.724*
	(0.375)	(0.332)	(0.352)	(0.483)	(1.353)

Note: Entries are rare-event logistic coefficients (standard errors clustered by country). Dependent variable is early exit. N = 467 (administration-years); *$p < 0.05$; two tailed.

significant. This finding suggests that extra-parliamentary mobilisation and parliamentary opposition acting together constitute a serious threat for the president.

How relevant is the role of congressional elites when compared to popular protests? Based on the last model, Table 7 presents the expected probability of a presidential downfall under different conditions. The column labelled 'P(Exit)' indicates that, in a situation with no protests and a weak opposition (defined for the sake of the simulation as an opposition able to accuse the president or declare the president incapacitated, but not to remove him or her from office on impeachment charges), the probability of a presidential removal is virtually nil. If protest is activated, but the opposition remains weak, the probability of a downfall is about 16 per cent. If, in contrast, the opposition is strong but there is no popular call for the president's resignation, the probability of a removal remains low (about three per cent). However, when both popular protest and a strong opposition are present, the probability of an anticipated exit from office increases to almost 60 per cent. Thus, although mass mobilisation appeared to be the most important factor shaping the outcome of recent political crises, it is clear that parliamentary opposition has played an important role in their definition. This result

TABLE 7
IMPACT OF CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION AND POPULAR PROTEST IN THE DEMISE OF LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

Protest	Opposition	P(Exit)	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
No	Weak	0.00	0.00	0.03
Yes	Weak	0.16	0.03	0.51
No	Strong	0.03	0.00	0.21
Yes	Strong	0.58	0.16	0.92

Note: Stochastic simulation of expected probabilities was computed using *relogitq*, based on Model 6.5. P(Exit) indicates the expected probability of a presidential removal (median of the simulated posterior density); upper and lower bounds indicate the confidence intervals around this value. 'Protest' denotes that a protest against the executive takes place; the opposition is described as 'Strong' if it has enough congressional votes to remove the president on impeachment charges (or as 'weak' otherwise). In all simulations the opposition's unity and the president's legislative powers are set at the sample's median value, scandals are assumed to be present, and the opposition is assumed to have the votes to initiate accusations against the president and to declare the president incapacitated.

shows that the opposition in Latin America often has the capacity to oversee the executive, although this power is sometimes misused for partisan reasons or invoked in opportunistic manner only when the president is very unpopular.

CONCLUSIONS

Though Latin America's opposition is so little studied that we were forced to begin this review with definitions, our analysis uncovered crucial political roles for the legislative groups not aligned with the president. Not only have they played important policy roles, but they have also not infrequently helped to bring down sitting executives.

In summary, we developed six themes. First, due to the combination of presidentialism and multipartism, defining the opposition in Latin America requires a mixture of US and European-based approaches. In most cases we borrowed the European idea that the opposition are those parties without cabinet membership, but recognise that presidential coalitions are inherently less stable and less supportive of the president than parliamentary coalitions. Second, using this definition, we showed that there is great diversity in the size and cohesion of opposition forces in Latin America. Some presidents have been successful in building over-sized coalitions, some face cohesive opposition majorities, and others face only small and divided groups in the legislature.

A third finding was that there is no necessary relation between the strength of the president and the strength of the opposition. This odd finding is the

result of the two distinct sources of a president's strength: constitution (legal powers) and legislative support. Shugart has shown that presidents with weak partisan powers are often endowed with strong constitutional powers.[29] In addition, we have found that many presidents with weak legislative support build coalitions to secure themselves. Further, and perhaps most importantly, the same party fragmentation that prevents a strong presidential majority in Congress often prevents the unity of the opposition, allowing the president to co-opt members of the opposition or to deploy his proactive powers.

Our final three findings relate to the role of the opposition in policy, oversight, and the removal of presidents from office. Our fourth finding was that the opposition does not distinguish itself significantly from other parties in its responses to questions about participation in legislation or the budget, though there was much cross-national differentiation. In several countries, however, the opposition did see oversight as a much more important role for the legislature than did the governing parties. This finding seems to have a direct relation to the survival of the president. Our fifth finding was that while attempts to check executive power historically often led to democratic breakdown, presidents who have been willing to form coalitions have been less exposed to military conspiracies, even if those coalitions have not constituted a legislative majority. Finally, however, while military coups have become much less common in Latin America, the opposition continues to play an important role in removing presidents from office via impeachment and other legal (or quasi-legal) procedures. This role, however, is contingent on the activation of the public as well as the size and strength of the opposition.

NOTES

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3. S. Mainwaring, 'Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination', *Comparative Political Studies*, 26/2 (1993), pp.198–228.
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5. D. Altman, 'The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multi-Party Presidential Democracies: The Case of Uruguay, 1989–1999', *Party Politics*, 6 (2000), pp.259–83; Amorim Neto, 'Presidential Cabinets, Electoral Cycles, and Coalition Discipline in Brazil'; Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial'; Zelaznik, 'The Building of Coalitions in the Presidential Systems of Latin America'.
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8. Altman, 'The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multi-Party Presidential Democracies'.
9. D. Altman, 'The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multiparty Presidential Regimes' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2001); T. Beck, P. Keefer, G. Clarke, P. Walsh and A. Groff, 'Database on Political Institutions (DPI2004)', *The World Bank* (Washington, 2006), available from http://econ.worldbank.org/staff/pkeefer; Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial'.
10. Coalition data for presidential regimes is not easily available, and definitions of coalitions often vary from study to study. We compiled information from multiple sources: Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial' (Appendix 2) offers information on nine South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) between 1958 and 1994; Altman, 'The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multiparty Presidential Regimes', offers information on nine multiparty systems (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) between 1979 and the mid or late 1990s (depending on the country); and Beck *et al.*, 'Database on Political Institutions (DPI2004)', *The World Bank*, offers information on the 18 countries between 1975 and 2004, but identifies no more than three coalition members in any given year. We treated a party as a member of the government coalition when at least one of the sources identified it as such.
11. M. Laakso and R. Taagepera, 'Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, 12 (1979), pp.3–27.
12. Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial'.
13. A. Mejía Acosta, 'Crafting Legislative Ghost Coalitions in Ecuador: Informal Institutions and Economic Reform in an Unlikely Case', in G. Helmke and S. Levitsky (eds.), *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp.69–84.
14. Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial'.
15. S. Mainwaring and M.S. Shugart, 'Conclusion: Presidentialism and the Party System', in S. Mainwaring and M.S. Shugart (eds.), *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.394–439.
16. M.S. Shugart and J.M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies. Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
17. Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, Chapter 8.
18. J.M. Payne, D. Zovatto, G.F. Carrillo Florez and A. Allamand Zavala, *Democracies in Development – Politics and Reform in Latin America* (New York: Inter-American Development Bank and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2002), added a seventh criterion – the reversionary point for the budget in the case that the president's proposal is rejected by Congress. We did not include this item for the estimation of the index, but some of our scores are greater than the ones presented by Shugart and Carey in *Presidents and Assemblies* (Table 8.2) because of occasional differences in our interpretation of particular constitutions. For instance, while Shugart and Carey coded the Venezuelan constitution of 1961 as a 0 in terms of legislative powers, we interpreted Article 173 as allowing for partial veto (overridden by simple majority), Article 228 as preventing Congress from

increasing budgetary items, and Articles 190 and 227 as giving the president exclusive rights to initiate budgetary amendments, yielding a total score of five points.

19. Amorim Neto, 'Presidential Cabinets, Electoral Cycles, and Coalition Discipline in Brazil'; G. Negretto, 'Government Capacities and Policy Making by Decree in Latin America: The Cases of Brazil and Argentina', *Comparative Political Studies*, 37 (2006), pp.531–62.
20. Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, Chapter 9, and M.S. Shugart, 'The Inverse Relationship Between Party Strength and Executive Strength: A Theory of Politicians' Constitutional Choices', *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1998), pp.1–29.
21. On a decade of Salamanca's survey of parliamentary elites, see M. Alcántara Sáez (ed.), *Políticos y Política en América Latina* (Madrid: Fundación Carolina – Siglo XXI, 2006).
22. Original wording: 'Pensando en el trabajo que desempeña como Diputado, ¿cuál es el grado de importancia – mucha, bastante, poca o ninguna – que otorga Ud. durante su actividad parlamentaria a los siguientes aspectos? (Elaborar leyes; elaborar el presupuesto; controlar el gobierno).'
23. S. Morgenstern, *Patterns of Legislative Politics: Roll-Call Voting in Latin America and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
24. See Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism'; Stepan and Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation'; Linz and Valenzuela, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*.
25. Deheza, 'Gobiernos de coalición en el sistema presidencial', see Appendix 2. Data on military coups were collected from P.H. Smith, *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Appendix 2.
26. One-tailed Z-test is 1.906 (normal approximation to the binomial).
27. F. Hagopian and S. Mainwaring (eds.), *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
28. The countries considered in the analysis (and the first year in the sample) are: Argentina (1983), Bolivia (1982), Brazil (1985), Chile (1990), Colombia (1980), Costa Rica (1980), the Dominican Republic (1980), Ecuador (1980), El Salvador (1984), Guatemala (1986), Honduras (1982), Mexico (1982), Nicaragua (1985), Panama (1989), Paraguay (1989), Peru (1980), Uruguay (1985), and Venezuela (1980). Peru in 1992 was eliminated from the sample because Congress was closed by the end of the year, but including this observation in the sample did not alter the results.
29. M. Shugart, 'The Inverse Relation between Party Strength and Executive Strength: A Theory of Politicians' Constitutional Choices', *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1998), pp.1–29.