



Letter from the Editor,

I am once again extremely pleased to launch the new issue of the Ibero-American Journal of Legislative Studies – RIEL. This first volume of 2015 is a special issue particularly dedicated to the study of the working of the presidency in comparative perspective. All the five excellent papers in this volume were prepared and presented at the IX Meeting of the Brazilian Political Science Association (ABCP), which took place in Brasília on August 4-7, 2014.

Octavio Amorim Neto and I, who are the chairs of the political institution thematic area of ABCP, put together a round table (The Working of the Executive: Public Policies and Bureaucracy) and a panel session (The Institutional Presidency and the Intra-Governmental Coordination in Brazil and in Latin America) that discussed in depth important aspects related to the internal working of the executive in multiparty presidential regimes.

The decision to organize this special issue was fundamentally based on the necessity of improving our understanding of the policymaking process within the executive, the role played by different ministers coordinating policy decisions in coalition governments, the influence of the executive on the distribution of resources to subnational unities, the cosponsorship strategy ministers follow to facilitate the approval of bills in Congress, the determinants of the use of discretionary positions in the public bureaucracy etc. We hope this issue amplifies the research agenda of comparative coalition presidentialism.

Although the papers were primarily oriented to the study of the executive branch, about all papers presented in those sessions of the ABCP meeting, including the ones that we are publishing now in the RIEL, deal in one way or another with the legislative branch as if it would be the other face of the same coin.

The paper by Mariana Batista, for instance, analyzes the extent to which the power shared between the president and coalition partners affects the budgetary allocation of legislative amendments to the annual budget. She persuasively demonstrates that belonging to the same political party of the coalition minister increases the chances of appropriation of the legislative amendment to the budget.

Lucas Gonzales and Miguel Mamone provide a fascinating comparative assessment of distributive politics for public infrastructure in Argentina and Brazil. They claim and demonstrate, using original data on federal infrastructure spending for 24 provinces in Argentina and 27 states in Brazil for the period of 1999-2011, that the distribution of public funds is by and large a function of executive politics. They show that political reasons rather than programmatic aspects mostly motivate presidents when they allocate resources to subnational unities.

Felix Lopez and Sérgio Praça investigate the political process of selecting and appointing discretionary jobs (DAS) in the Brazilian federal public bureaucracy. The empirical approach is based on in-depth interviews with top bureaucrats such as vice-ministers, political party leaders, governing coalition leaders in three consecutive governments: Cardoso, Lula, and Rousseff. They show that the partisan influence in the process of occupying discretionary positions varies by areas and by government. They argue that coalition party leaders are the key players negotiating with the executive who will occupy each position in the public bureaucracy.

Camila Lameirão particularly analyzes the structure of the presidency itself. She argues that the Presidential Chief of Staff (Ministério da Casa Civil) is the key political player coordinating the main important political actions and decisions in the Brazilian presidentialism not only with regard to the legislative branch but also within the executive. Camila demonstrates that it is the Chief of Staff who has been responsible to organize the working of the presidency and to strategically control the actions of the government in Congress.

Finally, Lúcio Rennó and Stefan Wojcik discuss who, within the executive branch, has the responsibility of coordinating and elaborating the government's legislative agenda. Using descriptive statistics and network analysis, they show that the most successful avenue for a bill to be approved in Congress is when different ministers in the presidential coalition cosponsor the bill.

Enjoy,

Carlos Pereira

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