

Incumbency (dis)advantage in Latin America?
Analysis of Presidential and Legislative Elections in the 21st
Century

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Abstract

The incumbent advantage, a phenomenon regularly observed in established democracies and Western countries, is not as evident in young democracies with developing economies. This thesis analyzes whether an incumbent advantage exists in Latin American democracies during presidential and parliamentary elections in the 21st century. The regression analysis results indicate that the advantage is significantly smaller in presidential elections than in parliamentary ones. Additionally, the study tests hypotheses explaining incumbent (dis)advantages in different contexts. The key empirical findings are that clientelism and less developed liberal democratic institutions are advantages for the incumbent, whereas low levels of equality and insufficient effectiveness in office are disadvantages. Furthermore, the main explanatory variables from the literature on the impact of economic growth and corruption proved to be ambiguous. Moreover, a relationship was also found between a reduction in violence levels, a religious freedom and the expansion of women's rights and an advantage for the incumbent. The study also includes mini case studies explaining the causal links for clientelism, liberal democratic institutions, egalitarianism, and incumbent (dis)advantage.

List of Content

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Chapter 1: Literature Review</i>	4
Not only an advantage but also a disadvantage of incumbency?	4
Features of presidentialism and presidents in Latin America	8
The peculiarities of legislatures and party system in Latin America	10
Theory of Voting	12
<i>Chapter 2: Methodology</i>	14
Operationalization of Incumbency	14
Data	17
Method of analysis	19
<i>Chapter 3: Hypotheses</i>	21
<i>Chapter 4: Empirical analysis</i>	27
<i>Chapter 5: Case Study</i>	42
The Dominican Republic and clientelism advantage	42
Bolivia and the lack of institutions of liberal democracy as an incumbent advantage	44
Guatemala and the lack of egalitarianism as a problem for the incumbent	45
<i>Conclusion</i>	48
<i>References</i>	50
<i>Appendix</i>	65

List of Tables

Table 1. Systematizing theoretical arguments about incumbency disadvantage	6
Table 2. Regression results of parliamentary elections with static variables	30
Table 3. Regression results of parliamentary elections with dynamic variables	31
Table 4. Regression results of presidential elections with static variables	32
Table 5. Regression results of presidential elections with dynamic variables	33
Table 6. Summary of variables	41
Table 7. President elections incumbency	65
Table 8. Parliamentary elections incumbency (Part 1)	66
Table 9. Parliamentary elections incumbency (Part 2)	67
Table 10. Descriptive statistics of variables	68
Table 11. Correlation matrix	68
Table 12. Description of the independent variables	69

Introduction

Latin America has traditionally been considered one of the hotspots of political instability. High levels of clientelism, weakness of the state, the ability to mobilize protest quickly, high volatility in voting, instability of the party system, and a tendency towards radicalization all make elections here particularly unpredictable. Decades of stable democracy and succession of power, as in Venezuela, in just one decade can lead to democratic backsliding and further autocratization. Parties that regularly prove their electoral viability may find themselves on the brink of survival at the next election. These factors make the study of elections and incumbency in Latin America incredibly valuable for comparativist purposes.

It is common knowledge that when an incumbent president is up for reelection, in most cases we are willing to accept that he or she has a slight advantage in office. This hypothesis has been repeatedly tested in Western European countries and has entered the literature as the concept of “incumbent advantage”. However, after the third wave of democratization, scholars have obtained new data from young democracies, where it became clear that there may exist not only an “incumbent advantage” but also an “incumbent disadvantage”. At a minimum, many record a lack of advantage. Over the past 15 years, scholars have begun to study this phenomenon extensively, analyzing elections at various levels among all emerging young democracies. These results are contradictory, as many not only do not find an incumbent advantage but somewhere even record a disadvantage (Uppal, 2009; Klačnja 2015; Filho, Biderman, and Desposato, 2022). The starting point of this study was the fact that between 2013-2023, 73% of presidential elections in Latin American democracies were won by the opposition (Canales and Cohen, 2023). This goes against arguments from the literature that incumbents are

of higher quality because they have already been elected (Ashworth & Bueno de Mesquita, 2008), they have greater recognition among residents (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987), more media coverage (Prior 2006), and more resources and authority (Gordon, S. C., & Landa, 2009).

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the study of the advantages and disadvantages of incumbency in young democracies in general and Latin America in particular. Conclusions about the effects of incumbency in young democracies are mixed, our knowledge is limited by the relatively small number of empirical studies, and reliable theoretical explanations for the disadvantages of incumbency are only beginning to emerge in the literature. The merit of this study is that for the first time, an entire region will be investigated, not just elections within a single country. The empirical part will test the main theoretical explanations for the incumbent disadvantages that exist in the literature and will also propose new explanatory factors. In addition, the study will compare parliamentary and presidential elections to enhance our understanding of the pros and cons of being in office under different competitions. This is an important distinction because even within a single country, researchers have documented the advantage of incumbency in some elections and the disadvantage in others, such as in Brazil (Klas̃nja, Titunik, 2013; Magalhães, Hirvonen, 2015; Filho et. al, 2022), or in Mexico, where researchers have found “incumbency curse” in mayoral elections but not in federal parliamentary elections (Lucardi & Rosas, 2016).

This is the first work to analyze the incumbency disadvantage at the highest: presidential and parliamentary levels in Latin American countries. In addition to comparativist goals, this work will also contribute to the regional study of Latin America. Existing electoral trends will be investigated, testing structural and institutional explanations to interpret the variation. The

research question of the investigation is formulated as “what factors influence the presence of incumbency advantage and disadvantage in Latin American parliamentary and presidential elections in the 21st century?”.

This study will firstly perform a literature review, in particular it will systematize the arguments on research on incumbency disadvantage. Then it will describe how incumbency is operationalised in the study, what method was used and what data was used. I also explain the hypotheses, in the empirical part I conduct a regression analysis of parliamentary and presidential elections with two types of variables (static and dynamic), and complement the research with a case study to explain causal relationships about variables without strong theoretical explanations in literature.

The main outcomes of this study are a systematisation of the literature on incumbent disadvantage in young democracies and empirical findings. In particular, a positive relationship was found between high levels of clientelism, low levels of liberal democracy and incumbent advantage, and a relationship between government inefficiency, high levels of inequality and incumbent disadvantage. In addition, potentially new research directions were found in exploring the impact of increased women's rights, religious freedoms and reduced violence as an incumbent advantage.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter will examine theory on the advantages and disadvantages of incumbency, the characteristics of presidential and parliamentary elections in Latin America, and the peculiarities of electoral behaviour.

Not only an advantage but also a disadvantage of incumbency?

Incumbent advantage is a well-proven phenomenon in research (Erikson, 1971; Cox and Katz, 1996; Gelman and King, 1990). For example, many studies show that incumbent advantage exists for both legislators (Levitt and Wolfram, 1997) and parties (Lee, 2008), as well as for more localized levels of elections (Hirano and Snyder, 2009). Specific empirical measurements have found that in the U.S. the incumbent advantage in elected office is estimated at 7-9%. For Germany, the incumbent's plus was estimated at 1.5-2.4% (Hainmueller and Kern, 2008), and for the UK at 0.5-1% (Katz and King, 1999). However, these studies focus on extremely stable countries with long democratic experiences, while the electoral data in young democracies and developing countries show a paradoxical situation. In many such countries, researchers record not only the absence of an incumbency advantage but also the presence of an incumbency disadvantage. Several studies record this disadvantage in India (Uppal, 2009), Brazil (Klas̃nja, Titiunik, 2013; Filho, Biderman, Desposato, 2022), Romania (Klas̃nja, 2015), Zambia (Macdonald, 2014; Seekings, 2023), and in Mexico (Lucardi, Rosas, 2016). This deviation from the entrenched fact of incumbency advantage is highly questionable because, despite the recorded fact, the literature is very limited in answering questions about the reasons for this state of affairs.

In terms of incumbent advantage, this work relies on three main types of advantage. The first, financial advantage, gives the incumbent access to public funds and campaign donors; the second, strategic advantage, means that the incumbent has a first-mover advantage; the third, informational advantage, means that the incumbent is a better known politician or party, in addition to having a reputation for winning (De Magalhaes, 2015). These arguments are detailed in earlier studies: incumbents are of higher quality because they have already been chosen in popular elections (Ashworth & Bueno de Mesquita, 2008), greater recognition among residents (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987), greater media coverage (Prior, 2006). It seems that in a young democracy, these advantages can be exploited to an even greater extent, due to weaker institutionalization and greater space for manipulation. For example, there is research that incumbent control over local radio stations is strongly associated with later electoral success in Brazil (Boas & Hidalgo, 2011). The most classic argument in the Cox and Katz (1996) paper implies that officials have access to public resources that represent a giant competitive advantage and they can be used to improve electoral prospects. This situation is exacerbated by the inherent problem of clientelism in most Latin American countries, where incumbents, using patron-client networks, can exchange material and other benefits for electoral support and political loyalty (Levitsky, 2007; Schaffer & Baker, 2015). This fact helps to suggest that incumbents in Latin American countries are conversely better positioned to utilize these resources for reelection. This argument is formulated by Filho, Biderman, and Desposato (2022, 7) “is that all else equal, the incumbency advantage should be largest in the least developed and poorest contexts, where the marginal utility to voters of the benefits that a politician may deliver are greatest”.

However, some empirical evidence from developing countries and young democracies contradicts these arguments. There are arguments in the literature that voters in these countries

punish incumbents for corruption (Klašnja 2015; Klašnja 2016; Roh, 2017), lack of accountability shapes people's dissatisfaction with existing policies (Klašnja & Titiunik, 2017), different electoral systems affect the chances of incumbents (Ariga, 2015), lack of institutionalization of party and political system (Brinks, Levitsky, Murillo, 2019; Martínez, 2021). Also, the most important explanations are related to the economy, different studies have their specificities, but on average they can be reduced to the fact that the economy in such countries is often met with problems and crises, and voters tend to punish incumbents for poor performance much more harshly than in mature democracies (Bochsler & Hänni, 2019a; Corrêa & Cheibub, 2016; Murillo & Visconti, 2017; Piscopo et al, 2022; Singer, 2013; Valdini & Lewis-Beck, 2018). Also, an important argument is related to the poor quality of democracy, insufficient quality of politicians, and lack of democratic maturity among voters leads to high volatility in voting (Lucardi & Rosas, 2016; Macdonald, 2013; Munck, 2024, Seekings 2022; Uppal, 2009). This is most pronounced in Uppal (2009, 10), where the author quotes a losing Chief Minister after an election who says, “I think people just want change every five years”.

One of the theoretical contributions of this study is to systematize the literature on the incumbency gap in young democracies. Table 1 demonstrates the existing explanations more fully. Since some papers present more than one argument, they can be located in more than one category.

Table 1. Systematizing theoretical arguments about incumbency disadvantage

Explanation	Idea/Ideas	Works
Economic issues	Economic voting / These countries often face economic difficulties, plus mature democratic behaviour has not developed. People do not see rapid economic change, and because of this,	Uppal, 2009; Macdonald, 2013; Bochsler & Hänni, 2016; Murillo &

	<p>young democracies are more likely to view the work of the incumbent negatively. (Bochsler & Hänni, 2019a; Gervasoni, Tagina, 2019; Murillo & Visconti, 2017; Singer, 2013; Valdini, & Lewis-Beck, 2018)</p> <p>Countries or regions with high levels of poverty, inequality and weak economic development can penalize incumbents for this (Uppal, 2009; Avelino et. al, 2022; Seekings 2022; Robles, Benton, 2018, Lewis, 2020)</p> <p>Conditional Cash Transfer Programs may harm the incumbent because the excluded voters are highly dissatisfied or the voters are dissatisfied with the direct buying of other people's/their votes (Corrêa & Cheibub, 2016)</p>	<p>Visconti, 2017; Singer, 2013; Valdini, & Lewis-Beck, 2018; Robles, Benton, 2018; 2019a; Corrêa & Cheibub, Gervasoni, Tagina, 2019; Lewis, 2020; Avelino et. al, 2022; Seekings 2022;</p>
Corruption	<p>The corruption of elites damages both the image of politicians and worsens the economic situation of citizens and leads to serious mistrust</p>	<p>Klašnja 2015; Klašnja 2016; Lucardi & Rosas, 2016; Awojobi, 2016; Klašnja & Titunik, R. 2017; <u>Schleiter, Tavits, 2018</u>; Seekings, 2022</p>
Violence	<p>Incumbent's inability to cope with high levels of violence leads to a disadvantage of incumbency</p>	<p>Duraisamy, Jerome, 2017; Carreras & Visconti, 2022</p>
International factor	<p>Other countries or international organizations may provide political/economic aid or pressure. Deterioration of international relations harms the incumbent</p>	<p>Briggs, 2012; Robles, Benton, 2018; Springman, 2020</p>
Poor quality of incumbents	<p>Weak incumbents quality leads to constant rotation as incumbents' performance disappoints the electorate. The poor quality of democracy</p>	<p>Linden, 2004; Ravishankar, 2009; Gordon, Landa, 2009;</p>

	can also be harmful.	Uppal, 2009; Macdonald, 2013; Klašnja & Titunik, R. 2017; Baturo, 2022, Opalo, 2017; Eggers, 2017; Kartik, Van Weelden, 2018; Agomor et. al, 2023; Munck, 2024,
Electoral rules	Different electoral rules shape different perspectives for incumbents, especially in developing democracies	Golden & Picci, 2015; Ariga, 2015; Salas 2016; Dettman et. al, 2017
Lack of the institutionalization	The lack of institutionalization of the political system and the party system in particular leads to the incumbent's inability to stabilize its advantage	Opalo, 2017; Klašnja & Titunik, R. 2017; Brinks, Levitsky, Murillo, 2019; Martínez, 2021.

Features of presidentialism and presidents in Latin America

Presidential systems are a characteristic feature of the Latin American region, meaning that (1) the head of the executive branch (president) is elected by popular vote, and (2) the term of office for both the president and the assembly is fixed (Shugart, Mainwaring, 1997). The likelihood of adopting presidential constitutions in Latin America is much higher (87.9% compared to 44.0% for non-Latin American presidential constitutions); moreover, a characteristic feature of systems in this region is the broad powers of the executive branch in legislation (Cheibub et al., 2011). This departure from Enlightenment ideas of a clear separation of powers makes the figure of the president even more important in the political system. Starting from classical criticism of presidential systems for young democracies (Linz, 1990), Latin

America is one of the main empirical materials for proving arguments from both sides. The key features of presidential elections in Latin America will be highlighted below.

Firstly, a characteristic feature of presidential elections is high volatility. Political systems with high institutionalization presuppose competition among roughly the same opponents from election to election, while in weakly institutionalized systems, the change of rivals occurs much faster (Sánchez, 2009). In his analysis, Mainwaring (2016) notes that the average volatility rate in presidential elections in Latin America during the period from 1990 to 2015 is high - 32.6%. For comparison, this is higher than in six Asian countries (25.6%) and four African countries (28.6%), although lower than in fourteen Eastern European countries (43.6%), nevertheless, each of these results is an example of strong volatility (Mainwaring et al. 2016). In addition, volatility in the 2000s and 2010s in Latin America was higher (average 36.6%) than in the period 1970-1990s (average - 26.2%) (Mainwaring, 2018). The main centers of stability during this period were Brazil, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic, while the most unstable were Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Guatemala.

Weak institutionalization leads to one of the main risks, as Linz (1990, 1994) wrote - the risk of outsiders appearing in the political system. The institutional conditions of most Latin American countries allow people without political experience to create new parties and successfully participate in presidential elections (Mainwaring, 1993). Two main risks associated with the victory of outsiders are the possibility of personalizing the political system and reducing the effectiveness of the executive branch (Suárez, 1982). There is current research on the issue of outsider victories in Latin America (Carreras, 2012), the most relevant case being the election of Javier Milei as president of Argentina.

Another important factor is that politics in Latin America is very personalized and often personality-based. This hinders the formation of a stable system, and it is not uncommon for strong candidates to create new parties for elections, using it as a short-term platform to help accumulate support (Navia, 2022). One of the main consequences we can highlight is that the electorate is more likely to punish presidents because they consider them responsible for implementing the country's political course.

The peculiarities of legislatures and party system in Latin America

Following the third wave of democratization, which had a significant impact on Latin America, scholars conclude that the region is characterized by high electoral volatility, emphasizing the instability of party systems (Coppedge, 1998; Mainwaring, 2018). As noted by Mainwaring (2018: 32-33), "more party systems in Latin America have experienced decay or collapse than institutionalization". The situation is further complicated by the lack of stable party affiliations in many countries (Rosenblatt, 2018), although most Latin Americans identify themselves ideologically (Zechmeister, 2015). An important explanation for this is that cyclical disruptions in democracy have not contributed to the formation of long-term cleavage structures (Dix, 1989). In another study, Roberts (2009) argues that after the spread of neoliberalism since the 1990s in Latin American countries, the region entered a period of serious doubts about these economic reforms, as the population did not see the expected results in poverty reduction. This is reflected in contradictory and inconsistent election results. Clientelism remains a significant problem, exploiting the fertile ground of poverty and high inequality, preventing the formation of programmatic parties (Kitschelt et al., 2010). Although there are counterexamples, such as Argentina, where clientelism on the contrary rather helped to stabilize the party system. Due to these factors, situational alliances are formed in some countries without relying on sufficiently

stable parties, which are created for a specific electoral period with specific tasks and then disappear just as quickly. For example, this is the case with “Peru Wins”, which was founded in 2010, won the elections, and was dissolved in 2012. The famous quote by Schattschneider (1942: 1) states that “Political parties created modern democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties”. Levitsky and Zavaleta (2016), for example, claim that Peru manages to have democracy without parties.

This situation is certainly not unique to Latin America as a region but also characterizes developing countries in general. Compared to Western Europe, party structures in the developing world are much less stable both organizationally and electorally, finding it more challenging to establish a sociological basis for party identity, and the mass nature of parties and the structuring of party competition are significantly lower (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). One of the most representative analyses of the institutionalization of the party system in contemporary Latin America was conducted in Mainwaring's work (2018), in which the author demonstrates the volatility and instability of party systems in the region. The key characteristics analyzed include: (1) stability of members of the party system (2) stability in inter-party electoral competition (3) stability of parties’ ideological positions. Across all these three parameters, the author convincingly demonstrates that from 1990 to 2015, Latin America was extremely unstable, and the average level of volatility was high: 12.4%. For example, in twenty developed industrial democracies from 1945 to 2006, volatility was 10.7% (Mainwaring et al. 2016). The bastions of stability were Honduras, Mexico, Uruguay, and Chile, while the most unstable were Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru. It is also worth noting that voting volatility in the lower house of parliament was lower than in presidential elections in the region. The situation of frequent emergence of new parties differs from the stable competition among the same parties. When a

voter gives victory to the opposition, they generally express dissatisfaction with the ruling party and its policies. In contrast, regular voting for new parties and their significant vote share signals not only dissatisfaction with the current power but also with the entire set of existing options in the political system (Mainwaring, 2018).

Low-institutionalized systems are prone to sudden changes. This is why parties in this region tend to have sudden ideological shifts in programs (Lupu, 2016). This important condition hinders the formation of party brands and the creation of long-term partisan structures. Research also shows that the lack of a clear party brand makes parties vulnerable to erosion and potential collapse (Morgan et. al, 2011). This is compounded by poor governance and corruption, which increases citizens' cynicism towards parties. Furthermore, many politicians create parallel structures to replace parties (Levitsky and Zavaleta, 2016).

Theory of Voting

The main problem with analyzing voting in young democracies is that results from election to election are highly volatile, making it difficult to find patterns (Mainwaring, 2016). In the context of economic voting, Roberts (2008) refers to this as hyperaccountability, in which voters penalize the incumbent for smaller economic problems than in older democracies. In addition, the work relied on the concept of retrospective voting. Retrospective voting implies that the electorate evaluates the incumbent based on the successes and failures that have been demonstrated during the period in office (Fiorina, 1981). Much of the work on retrospective voting focuses on the relative economic indicators on which voters base their votes. The research analyzes the economic growth variable, but the study extends the logic of retrospective voting to other variables as well. For example, it investigates how the dynamics in the area of liberal democracy or violence control are affected during the incumbent's term, and how these dynamics

are evaluated by the electorate. Going to a higher level of abstraction, the study is based on rational choice theory (Downs, 1957). This implies that the voter, acting as a rational actor, when participating in an election, wants to maximize utility at the end of the election. That is, they will support the party or candidate that maximizes their benefit. Most studies link this benefit to economic performance, but I argue that dynamics such as security or democracy may also be important to voters.

In Latin America, party voting and social cleavages may not be the main explanation because in many countries party systems are institutionalized at a very low level. These factors were central in the middle of the last century (Campbell et al., 1960; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) but have lost importance in many industrialized democracies (Lachat, 2008), and Latin America is no exception. Instead, ideological voting is also important in Latin America because Latin Americans have strong value beliefs, many of which are closely aligned with leftist values, and these are reflected in electoral outcomes (Lupu, 2016). Low institutionalization allows parties in many countries to successfully maneuver between different ideologies, being able to “catch” the voter in the next election.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter will describe how incumbency is operationalized in the work, how the data was collected and what method will be used in the empirical part.

Operationalization of Incumbency

For this study, several datasets with incumbent results in parliamentary and presidential elections in Latin America in the 21st century were manually compiled. The definition of the incumbent's victory in each case can be found in the appendix on parliamentary and presidential elections separately. Incumbent and other electoral information was collected from the IFES Election Guide, IPU Archive, Rulers Database, ACE Project, and local country resources.

For presidential elections, I define incumbency for presidents if (1) the same president wins the next election, e.g., Evo Morales' several consecutive terms in Bolivia. But since this is a rare situation and in some countries, the president cannot be re-elected (as in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Paraguay), I also consider incumbency if (2) the election is won by a president from the same party from which the previous president won. For example, in 2018 Paraguay's election was won by Mario Abdo Benítez of the Colorado Party, and in 2023 Santiago Peña of the same party won, I consider this an incumbent's victory. Even if an incumbent president could be re-elected in the country, the key is to tie it to the party, as it is an intra-party decision as to which candidate is preferred. The operationalization used in this study simultaneously addresses two potential problems. On the one hand, countries with weakly institutionalized political systems tend to be dominated by personalism in politics and the incumbent is the current president. In addition, such countries have less rigorous term limits. On the other hand, in countries with stronger institutionalization, parties play a significant role as a way of organizing, and a key role

of incumbency is to belong to those parties. The advantages of incumbency, which are seen as key in the study (financial, strategic, informational) are covered by this operationalization.

Defining incumbency in the Legislatures is more problematic because Latin America has countries with unstable party systems: with short-term coalitions, unstable old parties, and regular emergence of new parties. In addition, the number of parties can be large, and the formal winner of an election may not get more than 25%. In addition, there are several ways to define incumbency: through party or president. In this study I distinguish between parliamentary and presidential elections, i.e. for parliamentary elections incumbency is defined only within parties. That is, if in 2006 a party won a plurality and formed a government coalition, and in 2010 again became the largest party with the largest coalition, I call it an incumbent victory. In most cases, the necessary data was found whether the biggest party formed a government coalition, but there are 3 countries where such data could not be found. In these cases, incumbency was determined solely from plurality. The key indicator in determining the incumbent is the number of seats, not the larger percentage. The presence of a smaller percentage and a larger number of seats indicates that the electoral system in the country is at least not fully proportional. This operationalization is a compromise to give equal weight to the importance of both proportional and majoritarian components. If the country's parliament consists of two chambers, the election to the lower chamber was analyzed.

That is, in the research design parliamentary and presidential incumbency do not overlap, it does not matter which party's president was president for the parliamentary dimension. The basic idea behind this operationalization is that voters may estimate performance differently in parliamentary and presidential elections, and one of the goals of the study is to look at the difference in these evaluations. For example, in the Costa Rican elections, the presidential

incumbent won 2 out of 5 elections, while the parliamentary incumbent, the National Liberation Party, won 4 out of 5 elections. There is a similar situation in Costa Rica where the Broad Front won 4 out of 4 parliamentary elections while at the presidential level, the incumbent won 2 out of 4 countries. There are also opposite situations where incumbent presidents are re-elected more often, in Brazil 3 out of 5, in parliamentary elections the incumbent party is 2 out of 5. Based on this, the main argument for this operationalization is that voters may vote differently in different elections. This is influenced by the fact that they may in parliamentary elections vote more ideologically, for the closest parties, and in presidential elections more strategically, realizing that candidates from small parties do not stand a chance. In addition, an important argument from the literature that a large number of Latin American countries have not developed reliable party affiliations (Rosenblatt, 2018) suggests that there may be a large variation in voting in presidential and parliamentary elections. Moreover, voting volatility in presidential elections is significantly higher than in Latin American parliamentary elections (Mainwaring et al. 2016), which also has an impact. Of course, since Latin America is dominated by presidential systems, the incumbent's advantage from winning a parliamentary election may be smaller, especially if the presidential election is won by a president from a different party. However, the ability to control the legislative process, to have access to the allocation of resources, to have a permanent presence in the media, as well as to enjoy the image of winners, and to receive the benefits of endorsed policy decisions can be seen as having an incumbent advantage. Thus, all these factors make a parallel study of incumbency effects in presidential and parliamentary elections theoretically justified.

Data

Almost all independent variables were collected from the V-Dem Database (Codebook v.12). There is a criticism of indices based on expert assessments, as they add subjectivity, however, the clustering of estimates and constant updating of the database, as well as its widespread use in research makes this source reliable enough for serious analytical work. Moreover, many hypotheses of interest are difficult or essentially impossible to operationalize other than through expert assessments (e.g., measuring corruption or religious freedom). All data on economic growth were collected from World Bank Open Data reports.

For all independent variables, except for economic growth, I use two variations – static and dynamic. The static variable is the performance of some index for the election period (performance in a particular year). Using the Liberal Democracy Index as an example, a static variable means looking at the relationship between the level of that index in 2018 and the incumbent's win/loss in that year. The meaning of a static variable is that it operationalizes how a particular structural or institutional factor affects re-election. The dynamic variable Liberal Democracy for the same election implies that I subtract from the final level (2018) the level that was in place when the incumbent took office (2014). It turns out that during the time that the incumbent was in power, the country could have become more democratic or less democratic. Thus, dynamic variables assess the incumbent's performance in different areas, capturing progress, regression, or statics during the period in power. This variable is in the logic of retrospective voting, where voters reward or penalize the incumbent for their performance based on the incumbent's previous performance. Summarized, static variables assess structural or institutional conditions, while dynamic variables assess the specific performance that the incumbent has accomplished during his term. A potential problem is that for each election we do

not have information on whether it occurred at the beginning of the year or at the end, nor do we have data on the actual term of the incumbent. Collecting this information separately is extremely time-consuming, so for the purposes of the study, a conservative estimate was chosen based on the date of the first and second elections within a case.

Since many of the data are limited to the year 2000, virtually all of my data on variables begin in 2000. Therefore, some early elections that are from the early 21st century have been excluded as I do not have prior data for them (e.g. elections from 2000-2002).

My sample consists of 82 cases of parliamentary elections and 75 cases of presidential elections in Latin America. I consider only democratic elections, drawing on the tradition of the minimalist definition of democracy (Schumpeter, 1942), which can be expressed as “Democracy is a system in which parties lose elections” (Przeworski, 1991). In some Latin American countries, we certainly face great difficulties in how to define the regime because the level of uncertainty is extremely high and at the moment it is hard for us to determine where the necessary level of “fair and free elections” lies. In particular, the main question is whether we can assess Bolivian elections as democratic under Evo Morales because there has been a long democratic backsliding. However, qualitative and quantitative assessments allow us to evaluate Bolivia as minimally meeting the criteria of democracy (Wolff, 2013; Anria 2016). Venezuela in Hugo Chávez's first term could be labeled a democracy, but as I noted earlier, some elections in the early part of the century were excluded because there is a lack of country-level data. With the advent of Hugo Chávez's second term, quantitative and qualitative assessments record that authoritarian reforms (manipulation of elections, turning the legislature into an executive branch, taking away the autonomy of judges, etc.) no longer make it possible to assess Venezuela as democratic (Corrales, 2024).

Thus, since the focus of my research is based on the tradition of studying Latin America as a unified space due to cultural similarities and a shared historical path, my sample includes elections from 16 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Paraguay, and Uruguay. More detailed information on all elections will be available in the Appendix.

Method of analysis

The method used in this thesis is the logistic regression method used for binary classification problems. Logistic regression is a statistical model that describes the relationship between a binary dependent variable (i.e., a variable that can only take on certain discrete values, such as yes/no options) and an independent variable (Tranmer & Elliot, 2008). The use of this type of regression is because my dependent variable is binary – win or lose incumbent. This method is common in this type of research and in the social sciences in general. Since my sample is not too large (75 and 82 cases), I will be guided by thumbs principles (Van Belle, 2011; Van Voorhis & Morgan, 2007). The basic guidelines suggest that there should be about 10-15 cases for each variable in the model. Thus, in the study, each model will be limited to a maximum of 6-7 variables per model to meet the recommendations. Having a sample that is not very large results in the study needing to present many different models to test hypotheses, as including more alternative explanations will bias the results. To capture significance, I use $p\text{-value} = 0.05$, which is a recognized standard in social science research (Kennedy-Shaffer, 2019)

Various tests were also performed for my models to check the robustness of the results. First, the models were tested for multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when two or more independent variables in a model are highly correlated with each other, which can lead to unstable coefficient estimates and make it difficult to interpret the results (Daoud, 2017). A

complete table with the correlation matrix for all independent variables used can be found in the appendix. In addition, the Variance Inflation Factor was tested using the `vif()` function in the R model. VIF is calculated for each independent variable by estimating how much of that variable can be explained through the other independent variables in the model. I interpret the VIF results as follows, if the score exceeds 5 – I consider how the model could be changed to reduce distortion, however, if the variables presented are important to me they were left if not exceeding 10. It is commonplace in VIF research that if its score is greater than 10, it signals significant multicollinearity problems (Kim, 2019). Such models were excluded. Also using Cook's distance, models were checked for influential cases and outliers (Kim & Storer, 1996).

Chapter 3: Hypotheses

Hypotheses will be presented here, first, they are formulated, and then an explanation is offered for them. Additional explanations to the variables used in the empirical analysis can be found in Appendix in Table 12.

H1: A higher level of clientelism favors the incumbent's advantage

Clientelism is the personalized and discretionary exchange of goods or services for political support that parties or individual candidates use to win elections (Kitschelt, 2000; Stokes et al., 2013). The presence of personalization helps to separate clientelism from other types of redistributive politics (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The basic mechanism of clientelism is that politicians direct some form of public goods to a particular territory or members of a group. The groups or territory have political brokers who are intermediaries between politicians and voters. They have personal connections with people on the ground through which they can, firstly, effectively bring benefits to the people and, secondly, explicitly demonstrate that the availability of these benefits is linked to certain policies and the personal connections of the broker and the politician (Auyero, 2000; Stokes et. al, 2013). Thus, the ultimate recipient does not develop an obvious perception that they are being “bought”, but they realize that their welfare and opportunities depend on certain political forces and they should be “grateful”. During periods of choice, the transfer of benefits is reinforced and political machines provide electoral mobilization in favor of the patron. This mechanism may vary depending on the cultural and socio-economic context because, for example, more direct bribery of voters works better in poor countries, where the ultimate utility of the benefits provided to people is much higher there than in richer countries.

Clientelism stems from the principle of positive reciprocity (Finan and Schechter 2012), in which each party understands the tacit rules of the game (sometimes quite explicitly), and fulfills its part of the social contract. There is a debate in the literature about the effectiveness of clientelism, particularly in the context of the wealthy and democratizing countries of Latin America (Mares and Young 2016). Nevertheless, it is still a widespread practice; in the 2010 and 2012 elections, 15% of voters surveyed said they had been asked to buy their vote (Americas Barometer, 2012). Certainly, it still works quite effectively in many countries through social benefits, goods and services from civic society and religious organizations (Holland & Palmer-Rubin 2015), monetary transfers and selective benefits, loans from private actors (Mares 2015), through other positive and negative incentives from state employees (Weitz-Shapiro 2012) and partisan brokers (Stokes et al. 2013). However, there are also arguments that voters are willing to punish parties for clientelism as undermining fundamental democratic values (Carlin and Moseley, 2022), particularly poor electorates excluded from patron-client networks are willing to punish clientelist parties for being deprived of public goods (Mares and Young 2019).

The literature on clientelism, on the one hand, suggests that it can interfere with the creation of stable party structures, leading to a regular rotation of winners and the emergence of new parties. However, the main argument of incumbent advantage assumes that the ruler has access to public resources that they can use to secure re-election. Logically, a high level of clientelism reinforces the incumbent advantage because aligned patron-client networks are much easier to activate during electoral periods. There is compelling research that suggests that direct financial assistance can significantly increase the chances of reelection. At the presidential level, this logic is well illustrated by Hugo Chávez's first two terms in Venezuela, which enabled him to stay in power during critical periods of negative socioeconomic conditions. At the

parliamentary level, there is research that MPs can wield a lot of power in social matters, for example, there is evidence of helping people get children into schools or hospitals. However, some work questions the effectiveness of direct tranches because it can cause a strong backlash from constituents who have not received financial assistance. Thus, most work on the topic predicts that clientelism favors the re-election of the incumbent.

It could be said that clientelism and democraticness have a high correlation with each other, and this is the main reason why clientelism works. Indeed the democratic leaders have Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay with low levels of clientelism, but there are important counterexamples in the form of, for example, the highly democratic Paraguay with high clientelism rates (especially in the last 5 years), and Bolivia, which is one of the democratic outsiders with very modest clientelism rates.

H2: The lower level of institutional development of liberal democracy contributes to the incumbency disadvantage

The following hypothesis also suggests two competing explanations. On the one hand, the obvious logic of the weaker institutions of liberal democracy suggests that through a menu of manipulation and distortion of electoral competition, the incumbent will have an advantage. Greater control over the media, unequal access to financial resources, targeted repression of the opposition, and more help the incumbent keep positions in its hands while meeting minimum democratic standards. On the other hand, the most democratic countries in Latin America such as Costa Rica and Uruguay have extremely stable party systems, and incumbents very rarely lose elections in the 21st century. The alternative logic is supported by the example of Chile, where power regularly shifts from one camp to another, suggesting that the argument that a higher level of democracy implies more fierce electoral competition may also be relevant. Thus, the second

hypothesis is based on the fact that incumbents in “middle” countries, which are neither leaders nor outsiders in terms of democracy, experience the greatest disadvantage from their position. This is because, firstly, the political system is not stable enough and the existing instruments do not allow the incumbent to benefit from their position. Secondly, the general democratic nature favours the people to be strongly involved in politics and fully able to express their discontent by punishing the government with negative votes during electoral periods. In this sense, Guatemala is a prime example of a country that holds regular democratic elections, but the incumbency is an absolute disadvantage. Mainwaring (2018, 9) says that it is a unique example of “persistently low institutionalization” and the fluidity of this country's party system leads many researchers to question its existence. Thus, there is a real democratic struggle in the country, but the political process and political parties are exceptionally “chaotic” (Sanchez, 2008). Certainly, in other “middle democratic countries”, the political process is more stable, but still rather poorly institutionalized, leading to high volatility of results (Brinks, Levitsky, Murillo, 2019; Martínez, 2021).

H3: Lower levels of egalitarianism favour the incumbent disadvantage

H3A: Regression in egalitarianism for the incumbent favours the incumbent disadvantage

Egalitarianism in this study is assessed using the V-Dem (Egalitarian component index). It includes assessments of equal protection (the state provides and protects the rights of all social groups equally), equal access (the state provides equal opportunities to participate in politics and influence policymaking), and equal distribution of resources (the extent to which tangible and intangible resources are equally distributed in society). Ideas of egalitarianism and egalitarian democracy correlate strongly with leftist ideas, and ideas of social justice, which are historically

popular in Latin America (Beasley-Murray et. al, 2009, Falletti & Parrado, 2018). In addition, for most of the 21st century, scholars have talked about a massive movement of voters toward leftist ideology in Latin America (Levitsky, & Roberts, 2011). Some studies record that inequality increases political distrust in state institutions, which can turn into a disadvantage for the incumbent (Zmerli, Castillo, 2015), as well as the link between inequality and political instability (Kaufman, 2009). Thus, there is both a value component at work here, which involves a disposition towards leftist ideas, and an economic effect related to the consequences of inequality. Those countries in which governments are high in this component are more likely to benefit from incumbency, as voters, acting as rational actors, vote for the government, among other things, to support the status quo. The H3A hypothesis tests how voters evaluate the progress of the incumbent over the period in power. A reciprocal effect is at work here; voters are willing to punish the incumbent for increasing levels of inequality, just as they are willing to reward egalitarian achievements.

H4: Incumbents who made a weak performance in the quality of government effectiveness have a disadvantage of incumbency

One of the main arguments for the incumbent disadvantage in young democracies and developing countries is the fact that the poor quality of public administration makes people rotate every election (Uppal, 2009). Government effectiveness is defined through The World Bank Dataset index as “perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of public service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of government commitment to those policies”.

Efficiency is a complex concept that assesses various phenomena – from problems with corruption of politicians to the quality of implementation of infrastructure facilities. In addition,

efficiency here is assessed not by outside experts, but directly from surveys of citizens. That is, this variable in a sense analyzes the rationality of Latin Americans. There is an extensive literature on the topic that examines inefficiency as an important predictor for not being re-elected. (Linden, 2004; Macdonald, 2013; Ravishankar, 2009; Gordon, Landa, 2009; Munck, 2024). The main problem is that in many Latin American countries there are serious structural and institutional problems that are only entrenched by the fact that the quality of democratic candidates, due to the youth of democracy and the peculiarities of local politics, leaves much to be desired. Deficits in accountability, lack of qualifications and experience in competitive democratic politics, and lack of institutional support due to low institutionalization can affect the lower quality of political candidates (Ravishankar, 2009; Uppal, 2009; Brinks, Levitsky, Murillo, 2019). The curse of incumbency is that until a candidate obtains office, it is impossible to accurately assess how successful they will be in office. Thus, when candidates gain office, they demonstrate their poor public management skills, which can exacerbate the propensity for opportunism. Therefore, time after time, voters face bad governance, and elect a new candidate, hoping that they will prove to be more talented and honest, and as a result, an effective politician.

Chapter 4: Empirical analysis

If we compare the advantage and disadvantage of incumbency in the context of presidential and parliamentary elections, incumbents won 40% of elections in presidential elections and 55% in parliamentary elections within my sample of the 21st century. The difference of 15% is more than significant. This is explained by several reasons. First, the technical point of defining incumbency and the difference in the type of election is important. To win an election an incumbent in a presidential election needs an absolute majority of votes, which is a more difficult task than gaining a relative majority in parliament and entering the government. The very possibility of coalition politics, and not having to gain an absolute majority gives incumbent parties an advantage to be considered incumbent. On the other hand, as indicated in the theory, the party system is highly unstable in Latin America and there is a high level of personalism in politics in many countries. This fact should relatively counterbalance the formal imbalance that exists in the definition of incumbency in presidential and parliamentary elections. Second, voters have different perceptions of the value of different elections. Since presidentialism is the hallmark of Latin American democracy, it is logical to assume that it is the president on whom citizens place their main expectations, and who also has the highest responsibility as the holder of the greatest powers. Instability is higher in presidential elections, as Latin American voters are quite active, and many countries show contradictory development in socio-economic issues, so, logically, the main way to express their dissatisfaction is in presidential elections. The high role of a particular personality in politics, as well as the characteristic Latin American populism, initially gives many people great hope, but as the welfare situation deteriorates or violence and crime increase, the wave of popular resentment falls precisely on a particular leader. The tendency of the electorate in developing democracies to

want change reinforces this effect (Uppal, 2009). Parliamentary elections work by the reverse logic, where accountability is more diffuse. It is blurred because the main responsibility is linked primarily to the president, in addition, coalition politics provides an opportunity to blame failures in the realization of electoral promises on intransigent competitors and the insufficient majority of the party in the parliament. It is also worth noting that in some countries, such as Mexico and Argentina, parliamentary elections are held more often than presidential elections. A party that is allied with the president usually has a serious advantage before the election, so it is easier for such parties to be re-elected within one presidential term. This is because the president, taking advantage of his position in power, can accumulate resources and popular support in favor of his party, as a friendly parliament should help in the implementation of the political course. Third, the clientelism characteristic of Latin America may work better at the party level. Since many parliaments in Latin America are highly fragmented with a high index of effective parties, winning in relative terms may have much to do with appealing to loyal supporters. Parties, unlike presidents, are more institutionalized entities that have a wider network of local contacts through regional headquarters and are structurally composed of a larger number of stable supporters in different parts of the country. This factor allows them to mobilize clientele more effectively. An additional factor is the greater history and sustainability of parties than of individual leaders. For example, the clientelist networks that were built in the middle of the last century by Perón in Argentina still exist today. The Justicialist Party, Argentina's Peronist party, still benefits from this legacy, and capitalizes electorally on clientelist networks, regularly pitting the anti-Peronist Front for Victory and other parties against each other. Many parties that win regularly have a long history, institutionalization, established image, and credibility that can attract people in an unstable environment, in that sense the age of individuals (presidents) is much shorter.

My first hypothesis about the level of clientelism is confirmed in both types of elections (Table 2 and Table 4). In more clientelist countries, indeed, the plus of incumbency is better expressed. In this sense, there are no surprises here; most theoretical and empirical arguments suggest just that. Clientelism, in the presence of democratic competition, can work for several major political actors in a country, and elections can be partly a representation of how effective patron-client ties are in each camp. An incumbent may regularly lose in such an environment if its performance in other areas is unimpressive and if the opposition can effectively mobilize its clientele. However, empirical evidence proves that getting into power in emerging democracies with high levels of clientelism yields a very large skew because the state is a unique source of resources. Private business, labor unions, oligarchs, and other potential sources of wealth do not have a comparable set of advantages, which is why all the classical theories about the upside of incumbency are only strengthened in a context like Latin America. The dynamics in the amount of clientelism is not a significant factor in either Table 3 or Table 5 for both type of election. That is, voters do not penalize parties for either an increase or decrease in the volume of clientelism.

Table 2. Regression results of parliamentary elections with static variables

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Incumbent							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
LibDemF	-5.698** (2.489)	-9.638*** (3.329)	-6.886** (3.041)	-6.888** (3.046)	-9.333*** (3.578)			
WomenCivilLibF		5.325** (2.591)			5.825** (2.685)			
ClientelismF	-5.469*** (1.920)	-5.960*** (2.190)	-5.276*** (1.965)	-5.654*** (2.011)	-5.989*** (2.129)			
PolPolarizationF					-0.228 (0.286)		-0.091 (0.241)	-0.179 (0.276)
EgalitComponentF						3.372** (1.603)	3.282** (1.608)	-6.864* (4.010)
VerticalAccountF						-7.025 (4.535)	-7.011 (4.585)	
EcGrowth	0.084 (0.121)	0.073 (0.131)	0.101 (0.123)	-0.273 (0.349)	0.021 (0.133)	-0.078 (0.111)		-1.610** (0.657)
RegimeCorruptionF			-0.818 (1.751)	-3.235 (2.778)	0.716 (1.902)			
MassMobilF		0.310 (0.337)	0.351 (0.323)	0.350 (0.326)				
IntAutonomyF		-0.862 (3.771)						-1.054 (3.603)
EcGrowth:RegimeCorruptionF				0.772 (0.657)				
PhViolenceF								2.206 (2.437)
EgalitComponentF:EcGrowth								2.203** (0.912)
Constant	5.771*** (2.155)	5.187 (7.788)	5.799** (2.708)	7.136** (3.007)	4.153 (3.008)	4.605 (3.451)	4.591 (3.564)	5.905 (7.380)
Observations	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
Log Likelihood	-51.539	-48.673	-50.897	-50.100	-48.851	-53.886	-54.064	-51.784
Akaike Inf. Crit.	111.077	111.346	113.795	114.199	111.702	115.772	116.129	117.568

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 3. Regression results of parliamentary elections with dynamic variables

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Incumbent						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
GovernEffectivnessMinus	2.237** (1.091)	2.275** (1.061)	2.224** (1.050)	2.907** (1.320)	2.887** (1.350)	3.167** (1.287)	3.412** (1.326)
EcGrowth	-0.120 (0.115)						-0.106 (0.121)
EgalitDif	0.117 (2.854)			2.744 (8.616)			
GovernEffectivnessMinus:LibDemMinus				77.602** (33.715)	81.415** (36.232)		
LibDemMinus	0.480 (3.174)			-9.748 (6.098)	-11.289 (7.098)		
RepresentationOfDisadvMinus		-0.294 (1.927)					-1.164 (2.059)
VerticalAccountMinus		2.553 (4.296)					
IntAutonomyMinus		-3.673 (5.879)		-6.079 (8.490)			
PolPolarizationMinus			-0.084 (0.568)		-0.536 (0.673)		
HorizontAccountabilityMinus			0.753 (2.152)			-5.498 (3.635)	-6.323 (3.960)
EngagedSocietyDIF			-0.227 (0.804)				0.485 (0.849)
ClientDIF			-0.246 (2.072)				
RegimeCorruptionMinus					1.679 (4.512)	1.438 (4.181)	
WomenCivilLibMinus					1.079 (10.757)		
PhViolenceMinus						-1.716 (4.097)	
GovernEffectivnessMinus:HorizontAccountabilityMinus						42.313** (18.057)	41.114** (17.124)
Constant	0.536 (0.447)	0.150 (0.234)	0.185 (0.257)	0.210 (0.250)	0.294 (0.273)	0.236 (0.247)	0.590 (0.475)
Observations	82	82	81	82	82	82	82
Log Likelihood	-52.287	-52.733	-51.953	-47.175	-47.051	-48.838	-48.462
Akaike Inf. Crit.	114.574	115.467	115.905	106.350	108.101	109.676	110.925

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 4. Regression results of presidential elections with static variables

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Result					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ClientelismF	-5.301*** (1.919)				-7.549*** (2.861)	
EngagedSocietyF	0.636 (0.543)					
HorizontAccountabilityF					-10.873*** (3.794)	-7.320*** (2.295)
ReligionFreedomF					11.090*** (4.059)	9.207*** (3.194)
EcGrowth	0.230 (0.141)		1.369** (0.557)		0.306* (0.159)	0.206 (0.149)
LibDemF	-8.497*** (2.902)		-6.385** (3.021)	-7.746** (3.272)		
PhViolenceF		-2.077 (2.376)	-2.067 (2.483)	-4.203 (3.194)		
RegimeCorruptionF:EcGrowth			-2.276** (0.972)			
EgalitComponentF		6.428** (2.653)	9.160*** (3.107)	11.277*** (3.773)	-2.255 (3.254)	
WomenCivilLibF				0.069 (3.976)		
RegimeCorruptionF		4.717** (1.928)	10.375** (4.426)	2.839 (2.203)	0.843 (2.442)	
PolPolarizationF		-0.284 (0.306)		-0.669* (0.375)		
GovernEffectivnessF						-1.985 (2.060)
MassMobilF					0.891* (0.491)	0.701* (0.387)
IntAutonomyF						3.035 (3.819)
EcGrowth:GovernEffectivnessF						0.729 (0.480)
Constant	3.933* (2.274)	-4.228* (2.270)	-6.567* (3.712)	0.694 (3.045)	-33.248*** (12.687)	-38.128*** (14.474)
Observations	75	75	75	75	75	75
Log Likelihood	-43.777	-46.497	-40.391	-43.163	-35.829	-38.988
Akaike Inf. Crit.	97.553	102.993	94.782	100.326	87.659	93.976

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 5. Regression results of presidential elections with dynamic variables

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	Result								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
PhViolenceMinus	3.681** (1.867)	3.661** (1.639)	3.604** (1.711)						
RepresentationOfDisadvMinus	-0.086 (0.559)								
VerticalAccountMinus	2.350 (6.434)								
LibDemMinus		-5.817 (6.696)	-5.979 (6.803)	-15.726 (19.677)					
PolPolarizationMinus					-0.492 (0.360)			-0.160 (0.328)	
ClientDIF						0.918 (1.743)			-0.246 (1.526)
WomenCivilLibMinus								4.933** (2.312)	5.494** (2.736)
EngagedSocietyDIF									-0.071 (0.481)
RegimeCorruptionMinus							3.398* (2.010)	2.124 (1.722)	3.433* (2.084)
EcGrowth		0.069 (0.124)	0.066 (0.125)	0.066 (0.129)	0.063 (0.132)	0.087 (0.131)	0.051 (0.125)	0.066 (0.123)	0.066 (0.126)
IntAutonomyMinus			1.176 (3.217)						
GovernEffectivnessMinus			-0.223 (0.693)		0.487 (1.608)	0.560 (1.639)	0.505 (0.766)		0.843 (0.820)
EgalitDif				3.962** (1.840)	4.891** (2.041)	4.463** (2.192)	4.921** (1.992)		
LibDemMinus:EcGrowth				3.230 (6.616)					
EcGrowth:GovernEffectivnessMinus					-0.243 (0.435)	-0.200 (0.437)			
Constant	-0.467* (0.250)	-0.656 (0.492)	-0.639 (0.492)	-0.708 (0.489)	-0.679 (0.516)	-0.792 (0.507)	-0.692 (0.487)	-0.670 (0.488)	-0.702 (0.489)
Observations	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Log Likelihood	-47.193	-46.690	-46.574	-46.841	-46.468	-47.330	-46.008	-47.029	-46.553
Akaike Inf. Crit.	102.385	101.380	105.147	103.683	104.937	106.660	102.016	104.058	107.106

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

The second hypothesis, about the effect of the quality of the institutions of liberal democracy on the incumbency disadvantage, is confirmed for both types of elections. Indeed, a higher level of quality of liberal democracy is a disadvantage for incumbents because of more competitive elections, and less opportunity for the incumbent to rely on manipulation and coercive mobilization. The succession of incumbents in Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay confirms this fact, and vice versa – the stability of incumbents in Bolivia, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic suggests the opposite. The latter group of countries suffers from defects in democratic institutions, and incumbents are the main beneficiaries of this. Interestingly, the dynamics in the degree of democracy of the regimes are also not significant. One could speculate that voters might punish the incumbent for lowering the quality of democratic norms and standards by expressing dissatisfaction with the vote, although on the other hand in strongly de-democratizing regimes leaders often manage to consolidate support around them by explaining illiberalism as a particular way of the state. This trajectory was characteristic of Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, when, under the guise of expanding the representation of the "poorest and underrepresented," checks and balances were actually destroyed. The only evidence that improvements in the quality of liberal democratic institutions may play a role is the significant interactive variable with the government effectiveness in the Table 3. That is, if voters evaluate positively the dynamics of the quality of governance and the country becomes more democratic, only in this combination can voters evaluate this as a plus for the incumbent. The explanation for this is that in the first stages of democracy building, people may not see the positive effects of introducing these institutions (Fuchs, & Roller, 2006). In addition, they may feel some regression in the quality of governance. This is why it is important that people view the quality of governance positively.

The third hypothesis about the influence of egalitarianism is also confirmed in both Table 2 and Table 4. This once again proves the special ideological specificity of Latin American countries, where the importance of equality is fundamentally important. Leftist ideas historically constitute a certain ideological foundation of Latin America, the specificity of the region is also confirmed by the fact that "left-right" has a special dimension here, different from the European one (Lynch, 2007). The presence of a "pink" turn, in which more and more politicians like Lula da Silva in Brazil, Evo Morales in Bolivia, or Borich in Chile come to power symbolizes the social demand for more left-wing politics (Beasley-Murray et. al, 2010). The results suggest that voters are ready to evaluate the current government according to this component because the implementation of social policy guarantees them better living conditions and also corresponds with their ideas about values and progress. Despite the fact that the index of egalitarianism relatively correlates with the index of liberal democracy, the final directions of significance differ, which confirms that they operationalize different phenomena. Moreover, for presidential elections, the H3A hypothesis, in which voters penalize incumbents for deteriorating egalitarianism, is also confirmed. This is important evidence that, in young democracies, the disadvantage of incumbency may be that authorities with contradictory economic policies may increase inequality, and be penalized for doing so. This is important in the context of arguments about economic growth and economic voting. In countries where income redistribution does not work well, economic growth may not be felt by large numbers of the population, and in some cases may even harm the poorest due to inflation and deteriorating purchasing power (Oishi & Kesebir, 2015). This relationship is captured in 8th model in the Table 2 at the level of parliamentary elections. There, economic growth as a positive predictor for the incumbent's reelection works only with an interactive effect of increasing economic equality.

The fourth hypothesis, the only one of the dynamic variables, is confirmed (president elections). The main implication of this hypothesis is that many politicians and experts try to frame voters in developing democracies as irrational, impulsive actors who do not know what they want or demand the unenforceable. However, these results clearly show that if presidents or parties show a decent comprehensive performance in different spheres and residents feel the positive changes that are implemented by the state, they are well-deserved to vote for incumbents again. By evaluating the candidate through his retrospective successes, they can appreciate his contribution and express it in the elections.

In Table 2 in Model 2 and 5, a high level of female liberties is a predictor of incumbent victory. This is interesting data for interpretation that can tell us about the role of women voters in Latin American politics. Back in the second half of the last century, feminist movements played an important role in democratic transitions in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, and Peru. Even now, women and feminist movements are an important political force in the region; for example, Argentine President Javier Millay's hints that the right to abortion could be restricted resonated and provoked women's protests (Lambertucci, Constanza, 2023). As electoral rights have expanded, it has become clear to politicians that the composition of the electorate has changed dramatically, and if they want to win elections they need to target policies that include women. This is why we can note that progress in guaranteeing women's rights is perceived by a significant part of the electorate as a great advantage, and in those countries that have shown success in this area, incumbents can reap the political dividends. This relationship is captured even better by the dynamic variable in Table 5 (8 and 9 Models), where the two models show that progress in women's rights helps an incumbent get re-elected. This correlation lends itself to the logic that women's emancipation can pay dividends for politicians since a large portion of the

female electorate is a beneficiary of this change, but there is a lack of literature on this. More robust conclusions can be drawn after further research.

The lack of transparency and horizontal accountability is considered in the literature as an obstacle to obtaining the incumbent's advantage. One of the main explanations is that there is a large distance between voters and politicians. People have no effective ways to monitor the performance of politicians, and the only and most obvious opportunity to express their dissatisfaction is through elections. The lack of accountability makes people doubt the quality of politicians, and they are more likely to be willing to believe that incumbents in office realize their corrupt motives and use the mandate to extract rents. My results contradict this argument as they suggest that a lack of accountability leads to an incumbent's advantage. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive and not logical, but there is a similar logic at work here with a general flaw in democratic institutions. The absence of accountability on the part of officials demonstrates the absence of maturity of democratic institutions, while incumbents in these Latin American countries can capitalize on the features of the system. Mainly, it is access to financial resources to finance electoral campaigns and to conduct activities through patron-client networks to activate the loyalty of supporters and influence the media and other administrative resources. Thus, the lack of accountability is an advantage, as the incumbent can use public resources more arbitrarily and freely. I consider this variable to be a duplicate of LiberalDemocracyIndex, for double checking.

The biggest puzzle is the relationship between religious freedom and incumbent advantage. In general, there is a big problem in interpreting religious freedom as a predictor because it is usually considered in conjunction with other indicators of democratic development and human prosperity (Makridis, 2020). However, the key reason why this cannot be done in the

presented case is that the indicator is not strongly correlated with any other index, it is not related in any way to democracy because, for example, the most democratic countries are Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay, and in terms of religious freedom they are closer to the middle, while the leaders are consistently Brazil and Argentina. This makes religious freedom a unique factor worth interpreting separately. Moreover, religion has historically played an important role in Latin America, according to the survey (Statista, 2020) 57% of respondents identify as Catholic and 19% as Protestant. In addition, for example, the Catholic Church has also played an important role in political changes. In the second half of the 20th century, the Catholic Church actively fought for human rights and social justice, against poverty, acting as an actor of democratization in some countries, among others. One possible explanation for the incumbent's advantage in countries with greater religious freedom can be found in the fact that it is micro-level important to voters, and their votes among other things signal satisfaction with the way they can conduct their religious life. Second, incumbents in such countries can actively engage with different religious groups, gaining their support. They can build a base of supporters through different churches, and they can also implement social programs in a targeted manner through church organizations.

The big surprise was that economic voting and the level of corruption are not consistently significant for incumbent disadvantage, as the literature predicts. Economic growth is a significant predictor for incumbent advantage only in Table 4, and then the relationship is not stable. Moreover, regime corruption and incumbent advantage have a positive relationship in Table 4 and 5, which is counterintuitive, and is probably so because of the strong correlation with the liberal democracy index. The main empirical finding is that the interactive variable of economic growth and regime corruption has a significant relationship with incumbent

disadvantage. That is, voters are willing to punish incumbent corruption only if there are tangible economic consequences for themselves. Regarding economic voting, the most obvious explanation for the lack of stable significance is the great chaos associated with economic policy in the 21st century. I have 6 cases where an incumbent ran for parliamentary elections after a term in power with an average negative GDP in percentage terms, and 50% of the cases still managed to get re-elected (in Uruguay, Mexico, and Ecuador), all the other cases of failed re-election are in Argentina, where dissatisfaction with the economy did lead to change. In the 11 cases where the average annual average GDP exceeded 5% with a probability of 73% re-election occurred. The lack of statistical significance can be explained through the cases of Guatemala, where almost all the time there is a steady growth of around 3%, but due to the chaos of the party system no political dividend can be extracted by the incumbent, and for example, Brazil, where average growth of 0.01% by 2018 and 2.35% by 2014 allowed re-election, but greater growth of 3.03% by 2022, 3.44 by 2006 and 4.52% by 2010 did not, as other factors turned out to be more important. Some studies show that in transition economies, the preconditions for economic voting are formed gradually (Duch, 2001). It is also important that macroeconomic indicators may be much less important variables for predicting voting than the individual socioeconomic status of citizens complicated by inequality (Tavits, 2005) The lack of stable results due to the level of regime corruption and the change in corruption over the incumbency period has no obvious answers on the surface. The most likely explanation seems to be the correlation between less democracy and more corruption, which has already been considered as a factor.

For the presidential election, the dynamic variable of reduced violence and incumbent advantage was also significant. Latin America is considered one of the most violent regions in the world, as the level of violence and the number of intentional homicides has long been high

(Bergman, 2006; Rivera, 2016). This is partly because the state has little control over gangs and armed groups that can control entire neighborhoods using violent methods. Some work has documented how the transition to democracy and the weakness of the state has reduced the capacity to effectively control crime in Latin America in some cases (Munck, 2003). In addition, high levels of poverty and inequality are important predictors of violent outbursts (Hagan & Peterson, 1995). Several studies show that an incumbent's inability to control violence is an important predictor of why incumbency is a disadvantage (Carreras & Visconti, 2022; Edwin et. al, 2017). My results support the findings of this literature.

Table 6. Summary of variables

Hypothesis	Type of elections	
	Parliamentary elections	Presidential elections
Clientelism	Confirmed (static)	Confirmed (static)
Liberal Democracy Index	Confirmed (static)	Confirmed (static)
Egalitarian component	Confirmed (static)	Confirmed (static and dynamic)
Effectiveness of the government	Confirmed (dynamic)	Not confirmed
Other variables not stated as hypotheses, but significant and reasonable		
GovernEffectivness:LibDem (interaction)	Confirmed (dynamic)	Not confirmed
Physical violence	Not confirmed	Confirmed (dynamic)
ReligionFreedomF	Not confirmed	Confirmed (static)
Women Civil Liberties	Confirmed (static)	Confirmed (dynamic)
Economic growth	Not confirmed	Unstable confirmed
Regime Corruption	Not confirmed	Not confirmed

Chapter 5: Case Study

The brief case study will examine those variables on which there is a deficit of literature in the field of causal mechanisms. Since there is a fair amount of literature on the link between violence and inefficiency and incumbent disadvantage, in this part I focus on clientelism, institutions of liberal democracy, and issues of inequality.

The Dominican Republic and clientelism advantage

The Dominican Republic is the country with the highest level of clientelism in the region, where the incumbent is regularly re-elected. The Dominican Liberation Party, PLD, has controlled the government for most of the 21st century, losing elections just twice in 2000 and 2020. Two presidents have been in office for a combined twenty years in power: Leonel Fernandez (1996-2000; 2004-2012) and Danilo Medina (2012-2020). Unlike many other Latin American countries, the Dominican Republic has not greatly succeeded in combating the clientelism established under Rafael Trujillo (1930-61). The main beneficiaries of sustainable clientelist networks are the old parties who can use it to their advantage, mainly the PLD.

For example, since 2023 there has been a fierce struggle between the PLD and the current ruling party PRM, the Modern Revolutionary Party, which is trying to cancel government contracts that were awarded before 2006 because they are “corrupt and exceptionally opaque” (Hiraldo, 2023). The government explains that years of PLD rule led to contracts being distributed to loyal businessmen, who in turn helped to share rents and ensure electoral mobilization. One important mechanism of PLD clientelism was the “Solidaridad” program. Under the program, the state sent direct transfers to the poorest on debit cards that could be spent in specialized stores. The key problem with such assistance, as experts point out, is that the

government does not work to ensure that people begin to gain financial autonomy, and start learning skills that would help them escape the poverty trap (Fisher et. al, 2013). Instead, the state binds people even more tightly to itself by manipulating the threat of canceling transfers if they do not get people's support during the electoral period. The Public Expenditure Review (World Bank, 2021) showed that in the Dominican Republic, the number of publicly employed workers far exceeds the number of effectively employed. Public employment is one of the most effective ways to influence electoral preferences because the set of “carrots and sticks” is greatly increased because bonuses and layoffs are largely at the will of the ruling party. PLD has also managed to avoid the problems of some other countries, where the growth of clientelism provoked an exorbitant burden on the state budget. While Brazil and Venezuela actively included the poor in electoral processes, in the Dominican Republic the authorities were slow to issue identity documents to the poor, thereby excluding them from the political process and clientelist networks (Morgan et. al, 2011). Furthermore, the old parties have been successful in extending clientelism to the middle class as well (Morillo et. all, 2005).

Thus, inequality and poverty, together with the low level of organization of the public sector, foster clientelist ties, allowing parties to meet electoral needs without much cost, as they can offer low-cost individual benefits in exchange for votes (Magaloni et al. 2007). Using the mechanisms described above, PLDs have managed to get re-elected in elections for years. After taking office in presidential elections in 2004, the party managed to capitalize on the position until 2020. The use of state resources to reach out to the clientele played a significant role in this.

Bolivia and the lack of institutions of liberal democracy as an incumbent advantage

Bolivia's history in the 21st century is almost entirely tied to Evo Morales and the MAS-IPSP party he founded. Morales first came to power in 2005, and post-election protests in 2019 resulted in his ouster, but he was succeeded by a politician also belonging to the MAS-IPSP party, Luis Arce. The assessment of Bolivia as a democracy has remained unclear for many scholars, as Morales' policies have been controversial and the level of uncertainty is substantial. Some scholars have expressed that quantitative indices underestimate the level of democracy in Bolivia because they are too Eurocentric, ignoring “important changes in terms of descriptive representation, party incorporation, and non-electoral participation” (Wolff, 2018; 692). However, most works rather speak of democratic defects in Bolivian democratic institutions, some call the regime hybrid (Ellerbeck, 2013), some define it as delegative democracy (Zinecker, 2009), as a regime with an uncertain trajectory (Morlino, 2009), as competitive authoritarianism (Sánchez-Sibony, 2021), as “pursuing a path towards competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky & Loxton, 2015). As much as these assessments differ, the overall outcome is that in terms of qualitatively defining Bolivia as a democracy, there is a great debate; in terms of quantitative assessments, since Evo Morales came to power, the V-Dem recorded a gradual decline in the area of institutions of liberal democracy. By 2019, the score was one of the lowest among Latin American countries, the median level for the 21st century is also one of the lowest.

Evo Morales came to power in 2006 on a wave of ideas of social justice, he was an indigenous man and his program was full of leftist ideas. After taking office, he began to implement reforms, such as nationalizing Bolivia's oil and gas sector. Like all such leaders, he relied heavily on social spending early in his term, building his image as a defender of the poor and underrepresented. The most troubling symptom characterizing Morales as a potential

autocrat and demonstrating Bolivia's de-democratization trajectory was the new constitution in 2009, which allowed Morales to be elected once again. Although in 2016 a majority of the population (51.3%) voted against constitutional amendments that would have allowed Morales to be elected for a third consecutive term, the Constitutional Court ruled in 2017 that it restricted human rights by allowing him to run in the 2019 elections (Verdugo, 2019). Morales has also been accused of violating electoral laws (Escobari, Hoover, 2019), over-concentration of power in one hand (Morales, 2019), destroying an independent court, restricting the media (Quintanilla, 2014), and repressing the opposition (Brewer-Osorio, 2020).

The Bolivian example helps to disentangle how the causal mechanism may work by explaining the significant effect that I capture in my empirical part. First, the lower level of democratic institutions helps presidents and parties to invade electoral rules and change term limits. Second, in the elections themselves, they can use electoral manipulation to ensure their victory. In 2019, Morales was up for re-election for a fourth term at the end of the first round, but the country was hit by massive protests that accused the president and the ruling party of fraud, as a result of the massive protests, Morales left the country and new elections were called. Empirical studies are confirming potential unfair practices (Escobari, Hoover, 2019). After all this, the MAS-IPSP (founded by Morales) candidate won the election. Thus, this case study demonstrates how, in less democratic countries, incumbents can use imperfect institutions to influence electoral rules and gain electoral advantage.

Guatemala and the lack of egalitarianism as a problem for the incumbent

Guatemala is the most unstable country in Latin America. It has the youngest population in Latin America, the largest number of indigenous peoples in the population (42%), and one of the highest levels of poverty and inequality in Latin America (Sanchez et. al, 2016). The

concentration of land in the same hands is the highest among Latin American countries (the Gini coefficient for land is 0.84 as of 2014), and the combined wealth of Guatemalan millionaires amounted to 65% of the GDP (Sanchez et. al, 2016). The country, on the one hand, is plagued by economic underdevelopment and inequality, with political and ethnic inequalities (Canelas, Gisselquist, 2018; Gatica-Domínguez et. al, 2019) and urban/rural inequalities (Gauster, Isakson, 2013). Together with these factors, Guatemala is a relatively stable democracy where power is regularly replaced in fair and free elections. As described above, the Guatemalan political system is the most unstable in Latin America, with scholars calling the party system a “weakly institutionalized party system” (Jones, 2011), describing the problem as “underinstitutionalization” (Sánchez, 2008). As scholars note, this has largely hindered Guatemala's progress toward building a liberal democracy, but high political competition and active civic participation prevent a potential autocrat from usurping power.

Based on these premises, social justice and economic issues are key to the political agenda. One clear example of how this can hinder incumbency is the 2015 protests against President Otto Pérez Molina and his government over a corruption scandal. The La Línea corruption case began when the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala provided evidence that high-ranking Guatemalan officials were involved in a customs corruption scheme. Protests ensued in Guatemala because, against a backdrop of deep poverty and inequality, such news was received by citizens with great distress. As a result of the proceedings and protests, many members of the top Guatemalan establishment were suspected of corruption, Guatemalan actor Jimmy Morales won the elections in late 2015. One of his main advantages was the fact that he had little political experience, but he had not been involved in politics at the highest level, so he was seen as an “outsider”.

Of course, one could say that this example is extreme because not all Guatemalan elections are accompanied by scandals of this level. However, from 2007 to 2023, the incumbent has consistently lost in all five presidential elections. This example rather sharpened the logic of Guatemalan politics – the constant dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent cabinet leads people to vote protestingly in every new election. The underrepresentation of large numbers of people, mostly poor, rural, and indigenous people, leads people to constantly rotate leaders and parties, expecting to finally get the political results they want. Since it is difficult for an incumbent to show great progress during the period of rule, they invariably face incumbency deficit because they have failed to fulfill the demand of the people including fighting inequalities of various kinds. This mechanism can be deepened by the fact that politicians who come to power are invariably privileged actors, and the weak institutionalization of the system unleashes their hands in the field of rent extraction, and they demonstrate poor quality of public administration. For what they are invariably punished by the voters at the next elections.

Conclusion

The contribution of this study is three main points. First, the contribution is the systematization of theoretical arguments about the incumbency disadvantages in developing countries and young democracies. So far, no single work has systematically summarized all the main explanations that different authors apply to explain this phenomenon. In my table, I cite the main works on this topic from different regions. This theoretical contribution should help further aid the evolving debate on incumbent deficits, and may also help to adjust future research directions. Second, all existing studies on incumbency deficiency are focused on a specific country, while this study investigates cross-country dependencies. The advantage of this approach is that we can generalize our private country findings to a larger sample with greater confidence. At the same time, this study is the first large regional cross-country study of the disadvantages and advantages of incumbency. Moreover, previous studies, such as Brazil and Mexico, have focused on regional elections for the understandable reason of sample size suitable for RDD design. Compared to this study, my work is certainly much less precise, e.g., it does not identify a specific percentage size of the advantage or disadvantage of incumbency. However, an undoubted advantage is that the hypotheses are tested at the level of the most important elections, and in addition, they are tested for the first time at the level of a cross-country regional study of Latin America. Unlike many other similar studies, the key here is not the estimation of effect size, but the initial testing of hypotheses at the highest level. In addition, In this work, it was found that presidents benefit less from their incumbent position than parties in parliamentary elections, winning 40% of the time, while in parliamentary elections parties win 55% of the time. Thus, this study contributes both to the study of incumbent advantage and disadvantage in Latin America and a general empirical contribution to the study of incumbency at the level of

presidential and parliamentary elections. Third, this thesis both tests existing hypotheses in the literature at the empirical level and proposes some new ones. This study found a relationship between clientelism and incumbent advantage, lower levels of liberal democracy and incumbent advantage, and how low levels of egalitarianism and governance efficiency are disadvantages for incumbents. In addition, the classical explanations of corruptness and poor economic performance as a curse for the incumbent were not confirmed, only the interactive effect of these two variables was found to be significant. In addition, outside of the original hypotheses, a relationship was found between reduced violence and incumbent advantage, which has support in the literature, and several relationships that have little support in the literature. Specifically, increased women's rights and higher levels of religious freedom favor incumbent re-election. These hypotheses require further testing and can be addressed in subsequent studies of the advantages and disadvantages of incumbency in young democracies.

Studies such as this one are important for analyzing the democratic future of many countries, particularly those in Latin America. Distrust of government and political institutions is made up of various institutional factors that accompany incumbency, as well as the particular performance of the incumbent in office. Incumbent disadvantage can lead politicians in such countries to behave in a more opportunistic and predatory manner, as they have no long-term incentive to try to please the electorate due to the “incumbency curse”. This jeopardizes the stability and credibility of democracies in these countries, which is a great challenge. Further research could focus on exploring additional factors affecting the prospects of incumbents, as well as more in-depth theorizing on the possible disadvantages of incumbency.

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Appendix

Table 7. President elections incumbency

Country	Winner	Party	Alliance ^a	Year of elections	Win as Incumbent
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	PJ	FPV	2003	YES
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	PJ	FPV	2007	YES
Argentina	Mauricio Macri	PRO	Cambios	2011	NO
Argentina	Mauricio Macri	PRO	Cambios	2015	YES
Argentina	Alberto Fernández	PJ	FDT	2019	NO
Argentina	Javier Milei	PL	LLA	2023	NO
Bolivia	Evo Morales	MAS-IPSP		2005	NO
Bolivia	Evo Morales	MAS-IPSP		2009	YES
Bolivia	Evo Morales	MAS-IPSP		2014	YES
Bolivia	Luis Arce	MAS-IPSP		2020	YES
Brazil	Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva	PT	Strength of the People	2006	YES
Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	PT		2010	YES
Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	PT		2014	YES
Brazil	Jair Bolsonaro	PSL		2018	NO
Brazil	Lula da Silva	PT		2022	NO
Chile	Michelle Bachelet	Socialist	Concertación	2006	YES
Chile	Sebastián Piñera	National Renewal	Coalition for Change	2010	NO
Chile	Michelle Bachelet	Socialist	Nueva Mayoría	2013	NO
Chile	Sebastián Piñera	Independent	Chile Vamos	2017	NO
Chile	Gabriel Boric	Social Convergence	Apruebo Dignidad	2021	NO
Colombia	Álvaro Uribe	Colombia First	Francisco Santos Calderón	2006	YES
Colombia	Juan Manuel Santos	Party of the U	Angelino Garzón	2010	NO
Colombia	Juan Manuel Santos	Party of the U	National Unity	2014	YES
Colombia	Iván Duque	Democratic Center	Great Alliance for Colombia	2018	NO
Colombia	Gustavo Petro	Humane Colombia	Historic Pact	2022	NO
Costa Rica	Oscar Arias	PLN		2006	NO
Costa Rica	Laura Chinchilla	PLN		2010	YES
Costa Rica	Luis Guillermo Solís	PAC		2014	NO
Costa Rica	Carlos Alvarado	PAC		2018	YES
Costa Rica	Rodrigo Chaves	PPSD		2022	NO
Dom. Republic	Leonel Fernández	PLD		2004	NO
Dom. Republic	Leonel Fernández	PLD		2008	YES
Dom. Republic	Danilo Medina	PLD		2012	YES
Dom. Republic	Danilo Medina	PLD		2016	YES
Dom. Republic	Luis Abinader	PRM		2020	NO
Ecuador	Rafael Correa	PAIS Alliance		2006	NO
Ecuador	Rafael Correa	PAIS Alliance		2009	YES
Ecuador	Rafael Correa	PAIS Alliance		2013	YES
Ecuador	Lenín Moreno	PAIS Alliance		2017	YES
Ecuador	Guillermo Lasso	CREO	CREO-PSC	2021	NO
El Salvador	Antonio Saca	ARENA		2004	YES
El Salvador	Mauricio Funes	FMLN		2009	NO
El Salvador	Salvador Sánchez Cerén	FMLN		2014	YES
El Salvador	Nayib Bukele	GANA		2019	NO
El Salvador	Nayib Bukele	NI		2024	YES
Guatemala	Álvaro Colom	UNE		2007	NO
Guatemala	Otto Pérez Molina	PP		2011	NO
Guatemala	Jimmy Morales	FCN		2015	NO
Guatemala	Alejandro Giammattei	Vamos		2019	NO
Guatemala	Bernardo Arévalo	Semilla		2023	NO
Honduras	Manuel Zelaya	Liberal		2005	NO
Honduras	Porfirio Lobo Sosa	National		2009	NO
Honduras	Juan Orlando Hernández	National		2013	YES
Honduras	Juan Orlando Hernández	National		2017	YES
Honduras	Xiomara Castro	Libre		2021	NO
Mexico	Felipe Calderón	PAN		2006	YES
Mexico	Enrique Peña Nieto	PRI		2012	NO
Mexico	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	MORENA		2018	NO
Panama	Martín Torrijos	PRD		2004	NO
Panama	Ricardo Martinelli	CD		2009	NO
Panama	Juan Carlos Varela	Panamienista		2014	NO
Panama	Laurentino Cortizo	PRD		2019	NO
Panama	José Raúl Mulino	RM		2024	NO
Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	PDC	APC	2008	NO
Paraguay	Horacio Cartes	Colorado		2013	NO
Paraguay	Mario Abdo Benítez	Colorado		2018	YES
Paraguay	Santiago Peña	Colorado		2023	YES
Peru	Alan García	APRA		2006	NO
Peru	Ollanta Humala	PNP	Peru YESs	2011	NO
Peru	Pedro Pablo Kuczynski	PPK		2016	NO
Peru	Pedro Castillo	Free Peru		2021	NO
Uruguay	Tabaré Vázquez	Broad Front		2004	NO
Uruguay	José Mujica	Broad Front		2009	YES
Uruguay	Tabaré Vázquez	Broad Front		2014	YES
Uruguay	Luis Lacalle Pou	National Party	Coalición Multicolor	2019	NO

Table 8. Parliamentary elections incumbency (Part 1)

Country	Party	Year	Win as Incumbent
Argentina	Justicialist Party	2003	NO
Argentina	Front for Victory	2005	YES
Argentina	Front for Victory	2007	YES
Argentina	Front for Victory	2009	YES
Argentina	Front for Victory	2011	YES
Argentina	Front for Victory	2013	YES
Argentina	Front for Victory	2015	YES
Argentina	Cambiamos Let's change	2017	NO
Argentina	Frente de Todos	2019	NO
Argentina	Juntos por el Cambio	2021	NO
Argentina	UP	2023	NO
Bolivia	Movement for Socialism	2005	NO
Bolivia	Movement for Socialism	2009	YES
Bolivia	Movement for Socialism	2014	YES
Bolivia	Movement for Socialism	2020	YES
Brazil	PMDB	2006	NO
Brazil	PT	2010	NO
Brazil	PT	2014	YES
Brazil	PSL	2018	YES
Brazil	Social Liberal Party	2022	NO
Chile	Concertación	2006	YES
Chile	Coalition for Change	2010	NO
Chile	Nueva Mayoría	2013	NO
Chile	Chile Vamos	2017	NO
Chile	Chile Podemos Más	2021	YES
Colombia	Colombian Liberal Party	2006	YES
Colombia	Social Party of National Unity	2010	NO
Colombia	Colombian Liberal Party	2014	NO
Colombia	Colombian Liberal Party	2018	YES
Colombia	Colombian Liberal Party	2022	YES
Costa Rica	National Liberation Party	2006	NO
Costa Rica	National Liberation Party	2010	YES
Costa Rica	National Liberation Party	2014	YES
Costa Rica	National Liberation Party	2018	YES
Costa Rica	National Liberation Party	2022	YES
Dominican Republic	Dominican Liberation Party	2006	NO
Dominican Republic	Dominican Liberation Party	2010	YES
Dominican Republic	Dominican Liberation Party	2016	YES
Dominican Republic	Modern Revolutionary Party (PRM)	2020	NO
Ecuador	Institutional Renewal Party of National Action	2006	NO
Ecuador	PAIS Alliance	2009	YES
Ecuador	PAIS Alliance	2013	YES
Ecuador	PAIS Alliance	2017	YES
Ecuador	PAIS Alliance	2021	YES
El Salvador	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front	2009	YES
El Salvador	ARENA	2012	NO

Table 9. Parliamentary elections incumbency (Part 2)

Country	Party	Year	Win as Incumbent
El Salvador	Nationalist Republican Alliance	2015	YES
El Salvador	Nationalist Republican Alliance	2018	YES
El Salvador	Nuevas Ideas	2021	NO
Guatemala	National Unity of Hope	2007	NO
Guatemala	Patriotic Party	2011	NO
Guatemala	Renewed Democratic Liberty	2015	NO
Guatemala	UNE	2019	NO
Guatemala	Vamos	2023	NO
Honduras	Liberal	2005	NO
Honduras	National	2009	NO
Honduras	National Party of Honduras	2013	YES
Honduras	National Party of Honduras	2017	YES
Honduras	Libre	2021	NO
Mexico	PAN	2003	YES
Mexico	PAN	2006	YES
Mexico	Institutional Revolutionary Party	2009	NO
Mexico	Institutional Revolutionary Party	2012	YES
Mexico	Institutional Revolutionary Party	2015	YES
Mexico	MORENA	2018	NO
Mexico	MORENA	2021	YES
Panama	Democratic Revolutionary Party	2004	NO
Panama	Democratic Change	2009	NO
Panama	Democratic Change	2014	YES
Panama	Democratic Revolutionary Party	2019	NO
Paraguay	Colorado Party	2008	YES
Paraguay	National Republican Association – Colorado Party	2013	YES
Paraguay	National Republican Association – Colorado Party	2018	YES
Paraguay	National Republican Association – Colorado Party	2023	YES
Peru	Union for Peru	2006	NO
Peru	Peru Wins	2011	NO
Peru	Popular Force	2016	NO
Peru	Free Peru	2021	NO
Uruguay	Broad Front	2004	YES
Uruguay	Broad Front	2009	YES
Uruguay	Broad Front / Progressive Encounter	2014	YES
Uruguay	Broad Front / Progressive Encounter	2019	YES

Table 10. Descriptive statistics of variables

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Standard_Deviation
EcGrowth	3.36	3.60	-2.10	8.76	2.06
ClientelismF	0.51	0.54	0.04	0.88	0.25
EngagedSocietyF	3.33	3.47	1.37	4.59	0.69
ReligionFreedomF	3.76	3.79	3.20	3.96	0.14
GovernEffectivnessF	-0.20	-0.21	-1.04	1.17	0.49
HighCourtIndF	2.47	2.63	0.13	3.65	0.85
HorizontAccountabilityF	0.70	0.74	0.09	0.98	0.23
IntAutonomyF	1.88	1.89	1.62	1.97	0.08
LibDemF	0.54	0.54	0.11	0.86	0.20
MassMobilF	2.52	2.42	0.63	4.00	0.82
PartyCompAcrossRegionF	1.46	1.54	0.34	1.97	0.43
PhViolenceF	0.80	0.86	0.42	0.98	0.15
PolPolarizationF	2.17	2.18	0.13	3.98	0.98
RegimeCorruptionF	0.53	0.57	0.03	0.84	0.26
RepresentationOfDisadvF	1.37	1.25	0.71	2.67	0.45
VerticalAccountF	0.87	0.89	0.59	0.95	0.07
WomenCivilLibF	0.72	0.75	0.43	0.95	0.15

Table 11. Correlation matrix

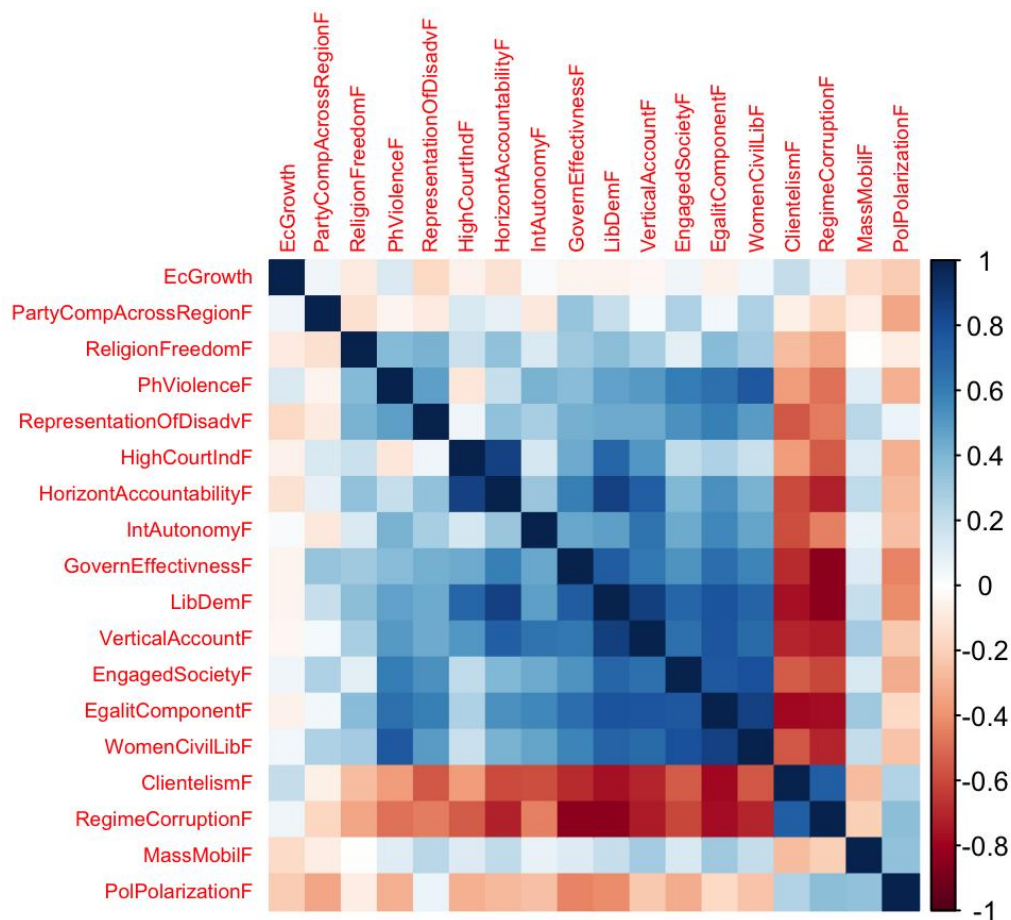


Table 12. Description of the independent variables

Variable	Clarification by V-Dem Codebook	Idea	Literature
Clientelism	To what extent are politics based on clientelistic relationships. Clientelistic relationships include the targeted, contingent distribution of resources (goods, services, jobs, money, etc) in exchange for political support.	High level of clientelism facilitates incumbent's vote buying mechanism. Helps to gain votes OR negative reaction of voters?	Mares and Young 2016; Holland & Palmer-Rubin 2015; Mares 2015, Stokes et al. 2013; Weitz-Shapiro 2012; Carlin and Moseley, 2022
EngagedSociety	When important policy changes are being considered, how wide and how independent are public deliberations. This question refers to deliberation as manifested in discussion, debate, and other public forums such as popular media.	In countries with more developed institutions of deliberative democracy, people have more trust in the government, so they are more likely to support the incumbent	Bowler et. al, 2007
ReligionFreedom	This indicator specifies the extent to which individuals and groups have the right to choose a religion, change their religion, and practice that	Incumbent gains an advantage by meeting the religious demands of society and by supporting the various religious structures of the	Campbell, 2006; Schwörerh & Fernández-García, 2021; Perry et. al, 2021

	religion in private or in public as well as to proselytize peacefully without being subject to restrictions by public authorities.	incumbent. Importance of the variable in the context of religiosity in Latin America	
EcGrowth	What an economic performance the country has shown during the incumbent's term	These countries often face economic difficulties, plus mature democratic behaviour has not developed. People do not see rapid economic change, and because of this, young democracies are more likely to view the work of the incumbent negatively.	Bochsler & Hänni, 2019a; Corrêa & Cheibub, 2016; Murillo, M. V., & Visconti, G; 2017, Piscopo et al., 2022; Singer, 2013; Valdini, & Lewis-Beck, 2018
EgalitComponentF	To what extent is the egalitarian principle achieved? The egalitarian principle of democracy holds that material and immaterial inequalities inhibit the exercise of formal rights and liberties, and diminish the ability of citizens from all social groups to participate.	High levels of inequality create a lack of incumbency because voters will penalize the incumbent for lacking significant accomplishments in a central to Latin America issue	Zmerli, Castillo, 2015; Kaufman, 2009; Kapiszewski et al., 2021, Levitsky, & Roberts, 2011

	Egalitarian democracy is achieved when 1 rights and freedoms of individuals are protected equally across all social groups; 2 resources are distributed equally across all social groups; and 3 access to power is equally distributed by gender, socioeconomic class and social group.		
GovernEffectivness	Government Effectiveness captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.	State's low level of efficiency hurts incumbent's chances	Uppal, 2009; Gervasoni & Tagina, 2019
HighCourtIndF	When the high court in the judicial system is ruling in cases that are salient to the government, how often would you say that it makes decisions that merely	Supreme Court independence is not correlated with the Liberal Democracy variable and other potential explanatory	Bojarski, 2021; Vanberg et. al, 2023

	reflect government wishes regardless of its sincere view of the legal record?	variables. This variable is taken because (1) courts are often one of the first sources of eliminating the separation of powers, (2) limiting the independence of judges can cause great resentment as, for example, happened in Poland. Thus, restricting the independence of judges by the incumbent may have a negative effect on voting by the electorate	
HorizontalAccountabilityF	To what extent is the ideal of horizontal government accountability achieved? Horizontal accountability concerns the power of state institutions to oversee the government by demanding information, questioning officials and punishing improper behavior. This form of accountability ensures checks between institutions and prevents the abuse of power.	Because this variable has a strong correlation with LibDemIndex, it essentially duplicates much of that index. However, it also has its own content related to the horizontal accountability erosion problem	Ruth, 2018; Barreda, 2014

	The key agents in horizontal government accountability are: the legislature; the judiciary; and specific oversight agencies such as ombudsmen, prosecutor and comptroller generals.		
IntAutonomyF	Is the state autonomous from the control of other states with respect to the conduct of its foreign policy?	The idea of international autonomy comes from how international support (economic and political) affect the chances of an incumbent. There is an array of literature on this in Africa, I am testing this explanation in the Latin American context	Briggs, 2012; Robles, Benton, 2018; Springman, 2020
LibDemF	To what extent is the ideal of liberal democracy achieved?	The general logic is that in more authoritarian regimes it is easier for an incumbent to take advantage of his position by distorting the equality of the electoral field. Conversely, in more democratic countries, competition is more intense.	Lucardi & Rosas, 2016; Macdonald, 2013; Munck, 2024, Seekings 2022; Uppal, 2009

MassMobilF	<p>In this year, how frequent and large have events of mass mobilization been?</p> <p>This question concerns the mobilization of citizens for mass events such as demonstrations, strikes and sit-ins. These events are typically organized by non-state actors, but the question also concerns state-orchestrated rallies (e.g. to show support of an autocratic government).</p>	<p>Do mass protests contribute to the defeat of the incumbent? Latin America is known for its protest culture of street actions, but finds protest reflected in elections</p>	<p>Escobar & Alvarez, 2018; Arce, 2010;</p>
PhViolenceF	<p>To what extent is physical integrity respected?</p> <p>Physical integrity is understood as freedom from political killings and torture by the government. Among the set of civil liberties, these liberal rights are the most relevant for political competition and accountability. The index is based on indicators that reflect violence committed by government agents and that are not directly referring to elections.</p>	<p>Incumbent's inability to cope with high levels of violence leads to a disadvantage of incumbency. Examples of India and Mexico.</p>	<p>Carreras & Visconti, 2022; Edwin et. al, 2017</p>

PolPolarizationF	<p>How would you characterize the differences of opinions on major political issues in this society?</p> <p>While plurality of views exists in all societies, we are interested in knowing the extent to which these differences in opinions result in major clashes of views and polarization or, alternatively, whether there is general agreement on the general direction this society should develop.</p>	<p>Political polarization can help an incumbent stay in power if a split into two poles leaves him with a majority. The modern example of Georgia, or Venezuela at the beginning of the century under Chavez (the argument is just from Corrales' article)</p>	Corrales, 2011
RegimeCorruptionF	<p>To what extent do political actors use political office for private or political gain?</p>	<p>The corruption of elites damages both the image of politicians and worsens the economic situation of citizens and leads to serious mistrust</p>	<p>Klašnja 2015;</p> <p>Klašnja 2016</p>
RepresentationOfDisadvF	<p>Are there disadvantaged groups in the society?</p> <p>Clarification: Disadvantage refers to socioeconomic disadvantage. Specifically, in order to be</p>	<p>This variable is another operationalization, an additional one for EgalitComponent to check the impact of inequality (here</p>	<p>Zmerli, Castillo, 2015; Kaufman, 2009;</p> <p>Kapiszewski et.</p>

	considered disadvantaged members of a social group must have an average income that is significantly below the median national income.	specifically economic inequality)	al, 2021
VerticalAccountF	To what extent is the ideal of vertical government accountability achieved? Vertical accountability captures the extent to which citizens have the power to hold the government accountable. The mechanisms of vertical accountability include formal political participation on part of the citizens — such as being able to freely organize in political parties — and participate in free and fair elections, including for the chief executive.	Lack of accountability leads to a crisis of confidence in incumbents	Klašnja & Titunik, 2017
WomenCivilLibF	Do women have the ability to make meaningful decisions in key areas of their lives? Women's civil liberties are understood to include freedom of domestic movement,	As electoral rights have expanded, it has become clear to politicians that the composition of the electorate has changed dramatically, and if they want to win elections they	Jaquette, 2018; Espinal, Zhao, 2015; Carreras, Castañeda-Angarita, 2014

	<p>the right to private property, freedom from forced labor, and access to justice.</p>	<p>need to target women as well. This is why we can note that progress in guaranteeing women's rights is perceived by a significant part of the electorate as a great boon, and in those countries that have shown success in this area, incumbents can derive political dividends from it.</p>	
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