

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Allies and Traitors: Vice-Presidents in Latin America

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Abstract

Vice-presidents in Latin America have often been at the centre of political turbulence. To prevent conflicts within the executive, most Latin American countries have therefore put in place formulae to elect presidents and vice-presidents on a joint electoral ticket. Still, it is common for presidential candidates to pick running mates from other parties in order to construct alliances and appeal to a broader set of voters. But the presence of such ‘external’ vice-presidents seems to increase the risk of presidential interruption in general and impeachment processes in particular. Accordingly, we argue that the frequently overlooked institution of the vice-president deserves attention as a possible intervening variable that can contribute to the explanation for government crises and their outcomes in Latin America.

Keywords: vice-presidents; presidents; interrupted presidencies; presidential impeachment; constitutions

Introduction

On 12 May 2016, Dilma Rousseff left the presidential palace in Brasilia after the country’s Senate had voted to commence impeachment procedures against her. Delivering a brief speech to supporters, she lambasted the ‘coup’ against her and Brazilian democracy, and pointed an accusatory finger at her vice-president for five years, Michel Temer.¹ Temer was indeed the first person to benefit from her fall, assuming office as president the same day.

Rousseff’s accusations against her deputy, together with recent similar processes in countries such as Paraguay and Guatemala, resonate well with the history of the vice-presidency in the region. Often labelled ‘a magnet for conspiracies’,² or a ‘coup-maker on a state salary’,³ the office has repeatedly been found at the centre of real or imagined coups and intrigues to oust sitting presidents.

¹See for instance *Folha de São Paulo*, 16 May 2016.

²J. Lloyd Meecham, ‘Latin American Constitutions: Nominal and Real’, *The Journal of Politics*, 21: 2 (1959), pp. 258–75.

³See Ariel D. Sribman, *La vicepresidencia Argentina (1983–2009)* (Porto: Edições Universidade Fernando Pessoa, 2011), p. 9.

This situation may, in turn, stem from the fact that Latin American presidents have often had vice-presidents who come from outside their own parties. As we will demonstrate, presidencies with such 'external' vice-presidents are almost three times as likely to suffer interruptions such as coups and impeachments than are those which have a designated successor with the same partisan background as the president.⁴

There is thus reason to think that the vice-presidency matters, and, in this article, we give an account of the institution's historical evolution and current role in Latin America. More specifically, we study how vice-presidents have been elected and what role they have played during government crises. Over time, we thus observe a regional tendency towards electoral systems that should promote greater political congruence between the president and the vice-president, and, hence, decrease the likelihood of conflicts between the two. In today's Latin American democracies, however, electoral considerations have often led presidential candidates to pick running mates from outside their own political party. But by doing so presidential candidates may unwittingly be reinforcing a source of potential tension that constitution-makers in Latin America have historically tried to eliminate.

Yet our argument is not that the vice-presidency is the primary cause of such instability. Rather, we believe that the institution represents an unjustly overlooked intermediary variable and possible causal mechanism in the relationship between presidentialism, political instability and factors such as party fragmentation. Accordingly, the principal purpose of this article is to provide an empirical and analytical description of the vice-presidency in Latin America and its relationship to the presidency, thereby demonstrating its political relevance in general, and its relevance for the literature on presidentialism and governance in particular. In doing so, we are in a sense juxtaposing two positions with regard to the vice-presidency: one that presents the institution as mostly inconsequential, and one that sees it as an important factor for understanding the outcome of government crises in the presidential regimes of Latin America. But above all our approach is inductive, as we attempt to use our overview of the vice-presidency to formulate some initial propositions regarding when and how the institution may matter, and point to further lines of inquiry into the vice-presidency, its role and significance, and its relevance for studies of presidentialism in Latin America.

Previous Studies and Our Data

Vice-presidents are often dismissed as irrelevant and have rarely been the focus of systematic academic enquiry and consideration. There are exceptions to this neglect, however. For instance, Juan Linz points out the risk that the vice-presidency may bring an unqualified or unpopular politician to the presidency.⁵ Similarly,

⁴A presidential interruption, or breakdown, can be defined as the premature termination of a presidency, but which does not lead to a simultaneous democratic breakdown. For analyses of the concept and phenomenon, see e.g. Kathryn Hochstetler, 'Rethinking Presidentialism: Challenges and Presidential Falls in South America', *Comparative Politics*, 38: 4 (2006), pp. 401–18; and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵Juan Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, 1: 1 (1990), pp. 51–69; Juan Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?', in Juan J. Linz and Arturo

Matthew Shugart and John Carey briefly discuss the possible benefits and disadvantages of having a vice-president, and the merits of different forms of electing its titular (they conclude that the best solution is no vice-presidency and a special election to fill presidential vacancies).⁶ But there is to our knowledge no systematic comparative study of the office's political role either in normal political times, or in times of crisis, and one searches in vain for the inclusion of this variable in most systematic cross-national studies of different aspects of Latin American presidentialism.⁷

Even so, individual vice-presidential offices in Latin America have lately received increased scholarly attention, possibly due to the prominent role some of them have played in a number of recent presidential crises. Such studies, which tend to be inspired by the US literature on the institution, fall mostly within the fields of political history and law.⁸ Although they often contain considerable empirical information, there is frequently little of theoretical and comparative insight in these case studies.

Valenzuela (eds.), *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), ch. 1, pp. 32–4.

⁶Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 91–3. See also Joseph Uscinski, 'Smith (and Jones) Go to Washington: Democracy and Vice-Presidential Selection', *Political Science and Politics*, 45: 1 (2012), pp. 58–66.

⁷See e.g. Peter M. Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern (eds.), *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart (eds.), *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); José Antonio Cheibub, *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment*; Taylor C. Boas, *Presidential Campaigns in Latin America: Electoral Strategies and Success Contagion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). See also Sérgio H. Abranches, 'Presidencialismo de coalizão: O dilema institucional brasileiro', *Dados*, 31: 1 (1988), pp. 5–34; David Altman, 'The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multi-Party Presidential Democracies: The Case of Uruguay, 1989–1999', *Party Politics*, 6: 3 (2000), pp. 259–83; Jorge Lanzaro (ed.), *Tipos de presidencialismo y coaliciones políticas en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2001). For exceptions, however, see Mariana Llanos and Leiv Marsteintredet, 'Conclusion: Presidential Breakdowns Revisited', in Llanos and Marsteintredet (eds.), *Presidential Breakdowns in Latin America: Causes and Outcomes of Executive Instability in Developing Democracies* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 213–28, and Kathryn Hochstetler and David Samuels, 'Crisis and Rapid Reequilibration: The Consequences of Presidential Challenge and Failure in Latin America', *Comparative Politics*, 43: 2 (2011), pp. 127–45. Another recent, but partial, exception can also be found in Germán Bidegain, 'Vicepresidentes en América del Sur: Una agenda de investigación', *Colombia Internacional*, 89 (2017), pp. 159–88.

⁸For Argentina, see Mario D. Serrafro, *El poder y su sombra. Los vicepresidentes* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Editorial de Belgrano, 1999); Mario D. Serrafro, 'Vicepresidencia efímera y ruptura anunciada: El caso de la Alianza', *Anales de la Academia Nacional de Ciencias Morales y Políticas* (Buenos Aires: ANCMYP, 2007); and Sribman, *La vicepresidencia*. For Uruguay, see Pablo Mieres, 'Las candidaturas vicepresidenciales en las campañas electorales. El caso de Uruguay 2009', paper presented to the Cuarto Congreso Uruguayo de Ciencia Política, Montevideo, November 2012. For Mexico, see Diego Valadés, 'La sustitución presidencial en México y en derecho comparado', in *Documento de Trabajo. Derecho Constitucional* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 2004). For a recent comparative analysis, see Pablo Mieres and Ernesto Pampín, 'La trayectoria de los vicepresidentes en los regímenes presidencialistas de América', *Revista de Estudios Políticos (Nueva Época)*, 167 (2015), pp. 101–34.

The Argentine vice-presidency is perhaps the most studied vice-presidential office in Latin America, which may be because it is also the oldest such institution in continuous existence in the region.⁹ The Argentine studies have focused either on the relationship between the president and the vice-president, or on the historical and institutional development of the office.¹⁰ With the exception of the more journalistic account of Nelson Castro,¹¹ the role of vice-presidents during presidential crises has received less attention in Argentina.

In Bolivia, former vice-president and subsequent President Carlos Mesa directed a project on the vice-presidency, which focused mainly on the institution's history,¹² and in countries such as Colombia and Brazil one can find shorter articles about the office and its inclusion in or exclusion from various constitutions throughout history.¹³ Likewise, in Mexico, even though the vice-presidency was abolished in 1917, there has lately been a constitutional and legal discussion focused on whether or not there is a need for such an institution. While some observers point to the country's troubled history with the office, others have focused on the need for clear rules for presidential succession during times of instability, and hence have argued for reinstalling the vice-presidency.¹⁴

Although we are convinced there is more literature on the vice-presidency in the various countries in Latin America than we have been able to find and review, we believe that there is still an absence of systematic studies on the institution. Given the reputation for political meddling that the vice-presidency has traditionally enjoyed in Latin America, and the recent and historic instability of the continent's presidential regimes, we find this lacuna puzzling. The following pages are an attempt to remedy this absence by providing an overview of the institution and the role that it has filled in the politics of the continent. In doing so, we draw on data from two unique recent databases on vice-presidencies in Latin America.¹⁵

The first database deals with the vice-presidency and the rules of succession in Latin American constitutions since independence. The data come from 188

⁹See Nelson Castro, *La sorprendente historia de los vicepresidentes argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones B. Argentina, 2009); Serrafiero, *El poder y su sombra*; Serrafiero, 'Vicepresidencia efímera'; Sribman, *La vicepresidencia*.

¹⁰Serrafiero (*El poder y su sombra*) offers the most comprehensive study of the vice-presidency of any Latin American country to date, analysing it from its inception in Argentina in 1853, elections of presidents and vice-presidents, the role of vice-presidents in government, and the relationship, during both normal times and crisis, between the president and vice-president.

¹¹Castro, *La sorprendente historia*.

¹²Gustavo Aliaga P., Carlos Cordero C. and Carlos D. Mesa G. (eds.), *El vicepresidente ¿La sombra del poder?* (La Paz: Vicepresidencia de la República, 2003).

¹³Hernán Alejandro Olano García, 'La vicepresidencia de la república en la historia constitucional de Colombia', *Quid Iuris*, 27 (2015), pp. 133–96; Alcides de Mendonça Lima, 'O vice-presidente da república na constituição federal de 1946': online at <http://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/ojs/index.php/rda/article/viewFile/11036/10016> (last access 24 Sept. 2018).

¹⁴María del Pilar Hernández, 'Sobre la sustitución presidencial', in Nuria González Martín (ed.), *Estudios jurídicos en homenaje a Marta Morineau. Sistemas jurídicos contemporáneos. Derecho comparado. Temas diversos* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006), pp. 409–39; Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, 'Creación de una vicepresidencia en México', in Diego Valadés (ed.), *Gobernabilidad y constitucionalismo en América Latina* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2003), pp. 251–2; Valadés, 'La sustitución presidencial'.

¹⁵For a description of the databases, see the [Appendix](#). For a detailed list of the sources used to build each database, please contact the authors.

constitutions and 68 constitutional amendments relating to the rules of succession. The second database focuses on the political relationship between presidents and their vice-presidents,¹⁶ and on the occurrence of political crises and ‘presidential interruptions’. It covers democratic countries in Latin America in the period from 1978 to 2016 and contains information on 114 presidencies and 220 combinations of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.¹⁷

These databases provide us with unique systematic data for Latin America in its entirety on the methods for electing vice-presidents and on the relationship between them and their presidents. Below we use this evidence to present a comparative account of the historical evolution of the vice-presidency from independence onwards, and to analyse the role of the vice-presidency during recent (1978–2016) elections and government crises in democratic Latin America.

The Origins of the Latin American Vice-Presidency

In adopting republican constitutions, the newly independent states of Latin America faced the twin problems of how to select a head of state and how to make provision for succession should that ruler become incapacitated. In the tumultuous years after independence, several mechanisms were attempted for the former task. Simón Bolívar proposed a president for life for Bolivia in 1826, and later installed a dictatorship in Gran Colombia in 1828, and Mexico attempted a monarchy under Agustín de Iturbide in 1822. With the exception of the Brazilian monarchy, all such experiences were short-lived. Inspired by French Enlightenment thinking and the example of the United States, the constitutional solution that eventually prevailed was a presidential system with direct or indirect periodic elections of the head of state.

Following the US example, presidential succession in Latin America, in turn, was often entrusted to a vice-president.¹⁸ As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), most of the

¹⁶Classification is essentially made on the basis of political positions and party affiliations in the time immediately before the electoral period. Accordingly, presidents and their deputies may be coded as coming from different parties even if the two candidates nominally appear as a joint coalition in the election or if the vice-president comes to join the president’s party for the election. As long as the vice-president belongs to an identifiable party that had a separate existence until immediately before the electoral period, it is coded as an ‘external’ vice-presidential candidate; the same is the case with persons who were clearly political independents prior to their inclusion on a presidential ticket. The reason for this backward-looking classification is that classification based on position during the electoral campaign or in office may understate differences, as the president and the vice-president may have a clear interest – during the electoral period – to appear more united than they really are.

¹⁷Note that Peru, Costa Rica and (until recently) Panama have (had) a system with double vice-presidents (a system that has also been employed in other countries historically, e.g. in Bolivia following the 1880 revision of the 1878 Constitution). In the following analysis we report on the first vice-presidents. As the order of succession between the vice-presidents is set, this does not affect the conclusions below. For further information on the database, see the [Appendix](#).

¹⁸The US vice-presidency was partly designed to secure a national vote behind the presidential candidate, and partly modelled on the position of the Lieutenant Governor in the US states. In *The Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton had proposed a vice-president as presidential successor, elected the same way as the president. He argued that since the vice-president could end up in the presidency it was important that he was elected in the same manner as the president, which would secure the same qualities in the vice-president as in the president, and ‘authorise the vice-president to exercise the same authorities ... as

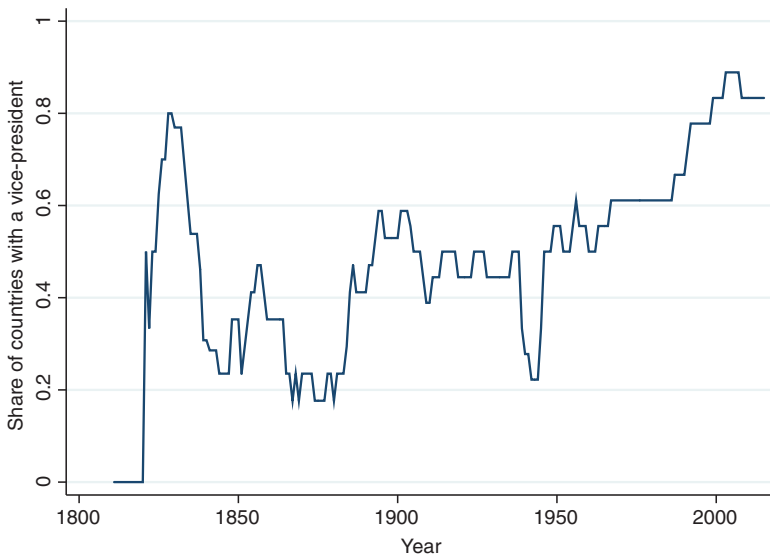


Figure 1. Share of Countries with One or More Vice-Presidents in Latin America since Independence
 Source: Latin American Presidential Succession and Vice-Presidency Database

constitutions that came into force in the newly independent Latin American republics included a vice-president.¹⁹

The Latin American vice-presidency, however, fell quickly in disrepute, and Figure 1 shows that the popularity of the office in the region has varied considerably over time. The anecdotes and stories concerning tensions and conflicts between presidents and their deputies are many, and it is possible that the source of the vice-presidency's reputation as a conspirator lies in the developments during this early period after independence. For instance, the first two vice-presidents of Mexico (Nicolás Bravo and Anastasio Bustamante) both tried to overthrow their presidents, though only the latter was successful (in 1830).²⁰ After even more conflicts involving the vice-president under the first presidency of Antonio López de Santa Anna in the early 1830s, the office was abolished for the first time in 1835.²¹

The controversies surrounding the vice-presidency were not unique to Mexico. During the turbulent early nineteenth century, the role of the vice-presidency was enhanced by the long physical absences of presidents who led their armies in war.²²

the president'. Cited from Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Cynthia Brantley Johnson (New York: Pocket Books, 2004), p. 490. See also Joel K. Goldstein, *The White House Vice Presidency. The Path to Significance, from Mondale to Biden* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2016), pp. 11–13.

¹⁹The figure does not distinguish between countries with one or more vice-presidents. See note 17 above.

²⁰Jan Bazant, 'Mexico from Independence to 1867', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 423–70, pp. 431ff.

²¹See Will Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

²²Another cause of presidential absence that enhanced the vice-president's power consisted in presidents who were not interested in actually ruling their countries. Examples include Generals Santa Anna in Mexico and Pedro Santana in the Dominican Republic, and some presidents during the 1890s in Colombia.

Returning presidents would often find themselves in conflict with the vice-presidents who had comfortably ruled in their stead. The most famous example is probably that of Gran Colombia, where Vice-President Francisco de Paula Santander ruled during Simón Bolívar's absence in the wars of liberation. Upon Bolívar's return, their increasing political differences generated a deep rift in government, and Santander was accused of treason.²³ When Bolívar took dictatorial power in 1828, he removed the vice-presidency.²⁴ Similar conflicts occurred both in Bolivia in the 1830s,²⁵ and in Argentina during the war of War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70).²⁶

Accordingly, the office's reputation for being 'a magnet for conspiracies' (in Lloyd Meecham's term)²⁷ and conflicts between presidents and vice-presidents led to the abolition of the vice-presidency in six countries during the 1830s alone (see Figure 1).²⁸ Presidents thus often gained the upper hand in conflicts with their deputies. But while removing the vice-presidency may have terminated a source of conspiracies, it also removed an element of power-sharing, and served the interests of powerful presidents with little desire for being checked by a vice-president.

Furthermore, one could argue that it was not the vice-presidency itself that caused tension between presidents and their deputies, but rather the electoral formulae that tended to elevate antagonists to the presidency and vice-presidency. Contrary to what would subsequently become the norm, several early constitutions, such as Mexico's charter of 1824, Chile's of 1828 and Peru's of 1828, gave the vice-presidency to the runner-up in the presidential election (as did the 1787 US Constitution).²⁹

²³In fact, one of the Santander faction's demands had been to curb presidential power so that Bolívar would rule with a *consejo de gobierno* (governing council), which would include a seat for the vice-president. See Carolina Guerrero, 'Los Constituyentes de la Unión Colombiana: Una creación limitada y menguada', in Elena Plaza and Ricardo Combellas (eds.), *Procesos constituyentes y reformas constitucionales en la historia de Venezuela: 1811–1999* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Políticas, 2005), pp. 75–106, p. 102.

²⁴See e.g. Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 62–5, and Guerrero, 'Los Constituyentes de la Unión Colombiana'.

²⁵See Carlos D. Mesa G., 'Reseñas biográficas de los vicepresidentes de Bolivia', in Aliaga *et al.* (eds.), *¿La sombra del poder?*, pp. 259–335, p. 264f.

²⁶See F. J. McLynn, 'The Argentine Presidential Election of 1868', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 11: 2 (1979), p. 310. In contrast, President Abraham Lincoln stayed in Washington DC during the US Civil War.

²⁷Meecham, 'Latin American Constitutions'.

²⁸In Bolivia 1839, Chile 1833, Honduras 1839, Mexico 1835, Nicaragua 1838 and Peru 1834. See e.g. Carlos D. Mesa G., 'Apuntes para una historia de la vicepresidencia y de los vicepresidentes de Bolivia', in Aliaga *et al.* (eds.), *¿La sombra del poder?*, pp. 91–104; Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808–1994* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 49–50; Héctor Fix-Zamudio, 'Marco Jurídico', in Patricia Galeana (ed.), *México y sus constituciones* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998), pp. 198–242; Raúl Chanamé Orbe, *La república inconclusa* (Lima: Derrama Magisterial, 2012), p. 216.

²⁹The runner-up electoral system for the vice-presidency was present in seven constitutions in our database. Data from early constitutions regarding the election of vice-presidents, however, are fraught with problems, and in constitutions where the text is ambiguous and other sources cannot confirm the electoral formula, we code the data as missing. Early constitutions were often short-lived, and it is possible that no election was held within the life of the constitution, which makes coding impossible in ambiguous

But this electoral formula also brought almost automatic divisions between presidents and vice-presidents, as the new president's principal competitor became his designated successor, obviously giving the latter incentives to promote the demise of the former. This point was not lost on the politicians of the early nineteenth century. In the United States the problem was solved by introducing separate ballots for presidents and vice-presidents in the electoral college in 1804. In Latin America, however, it was more common to simply abolish the institution altogether.

Nevertheless, in spite of its reputation, the vice-presidency provides a practical, economical, and stable solution to succession should the presidency become vacant, and during the decades leading up to the year 1900 vice-presidents gradually became more common again in Latin American constitutions (see [Figure 1](#)).³⁰ Furthermore, constitution-makers in several countries turned their attention to finding a formula for electing the vice-president that would ensure a proper balance within the executive power, but without creating the tensions recurrent in the runner-up model. As can be seen in [Figure 2](#), which shows the different electoral formulae (the runner-up model, the independent election of the vice-president and the shared ticket model), already at the inception of the new republics a different electoral formula was being tried: separate election for vice-president. This electoral formula co-existed with the runner-up system after independence, but as the latter system was not employed after the mid-nineteenth century, independent election of the vice-president became predominant in Latin America. In 1906, independent elections of the vice-president were employed in six out of nine countries with such an office. In total, of the 125 constitutions on which we have data on the mode of election of the vice-president, 38 constitutions in 13 countries established independent elections for the office.

But even if the use of a separate ballot for electing the vice-president did not automatically create the same tension as the runner-up model had done, it constituted no guarantee against electing an incongruous combination of president and

cases. Also, in several cases it is somewhat difficult to determine whether the vice-president was independently elected or whether s/he was the runner-up to the presidency. Furthermore, if the president did not win 50 per cent of the votes in the electoral college, the final election would often be decided by Congress, which would appoint both the president and the vice-president from among the top contenders. In some elections we suspect that the independent election of the vice-president worked in practice as a runner-up system, in which Congress gave the vice-presidency to the runner-up in the presidential contest as a consolation prize. For example, in the 1825 presidential election of the Central American Federation, the vote was decided by the Federal Congress after neither of the two candidates (Manuel José Arce and José Cecilio del Valle) obtained the minimum of 50 per cent of the registered votes. Congress gave the presidency to Arce, who had obtained fewer votes than del Valle in the electoral college (34 vs. 41) and the vice-presidency to del Valle. Del Valle eventually declined the vice-presidency, however, which, after another failed attempt, was given to Mariano Beltrana. See Franklin D. Parker, 'José Cecilio del Valle: Scholar and Patriot', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 32: 4 (1952), pp. 516–39.

³⁰The trend, however, was not unequivocal as both Mexico after the Revolution and Venezuela after Juan Vicente Gómez's coup in 1908 removed the vice-presidency. See Hernández, 'Sobre la sustitución presidencial'; Friedrich Katz 'Mexico: Restored Republic and Porfiriato, 1867–1910', in Bethell (ed.), *Cambridge History of Latin America*, pp. 3–78; and Allan R. Brewer-Carías, *Las constituciones de Venezuela. Estudio preliminar* (San Cristóbal, Venezuela and Madrid: Ediciones de la Universidad Católica del Tachira and Centro de Estudios Constitucionales Madrid, 1986), p. 85f.

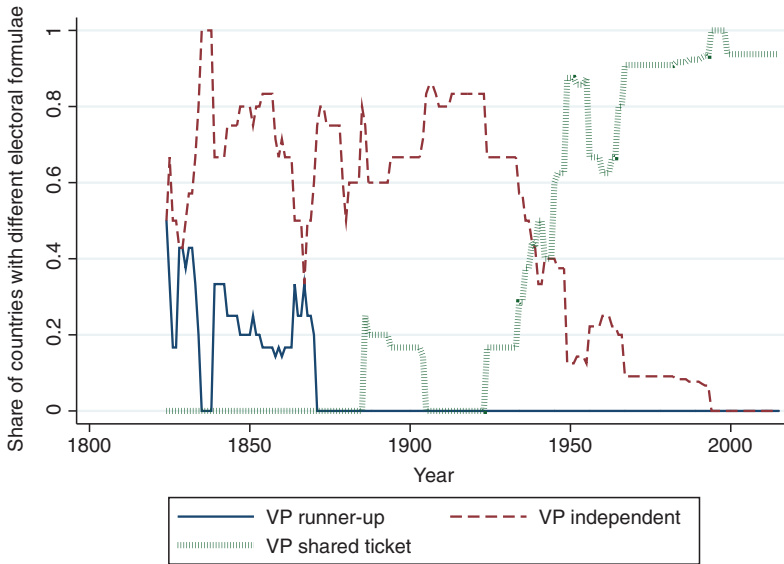


Figure 2. Electoral Formulae for Electing the Vice-President in Latin America

Source: Latin American Presidential Succession and Vice-Presidency Database

vice-president from different parties, and conspiracies involving the vice-president continued to be a recurring feature on the continent. Hence, apart from Vice-President Gómez' overthrow of Cipriano Castro in Venezuela in 1908, Colombian Vice-President José Manuel Marroquín overthrew President Manuel Antonio Sanclemente in 1900,³¹ Dominican Vice-President Horacio Vásquez organised a coup against President Juan Isidro Jimenes in 1902,³² and in 1934 Vice-President José Luis Tejada was rumoured to have participated in the plot that sealed the fate of President Daniel Salamanca in Bolivia. Interestingly, Tejada and Salamanca had been elected on a joint ticket, but as representatives of different parties. Salamanca's overthrow thus contained elements that presaged future patterns.

Towards the Modern Vice-Presidency

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the proportion of Latin American republics having vice-presidents held relatively stable at one in two. What varied was the mode of election. Whereas the runner-up and separate ballot models had dominated during the century of independence, it gradually became more common to elect the vice-president on the same ballot as the president. This model had been pioneered in a couple of countries around the year 1900, and would become increasingly popular during the course of the twentieth century.

³¹Sebastián Mazzuca and James A. Robinson, 'Political Conflict and Power Sharing in the Origins of Modern Colombia', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 89: 2 (2009), pp. 285–321.

³²Julio A. Campillo Pérez, *Elecciones dominicanas: Contribución a su estudio* (Santo Domingo: Relaciones Públicas, 1982), pp. 125–31.

This popularity may have been because it promised to end divisions between presidents and their designated successors, and is also most certainly related to the invention and establishment of parties and party systems, and the increasing prevalence of direct over indirect elections. Indeed, from the 1920s independent elections for the vice-presidency would steadily decline and, from mid-century onwards, only Brazil during its second republic (1946–64) applied this electoral formula for the vice-presidency.

In fact, developments in Brazil would provide a reminder of the perils involved in applying this system. In the 1960 election the right-wing politician Jânio Quadros was elected president, while João Goulart from the other end of the political spectrum was re-elected vice-president on a separate ballot. When Quadros suddenly resigned in the autumn of 1961, Goulart became president. The political position of the executive shifted accordingly, which – in the polarised political climate of the 1960s – set the country on the road to a military coup. Of course, neither did joint tickets guarantee political stability. In the same year as the Brazilian coup against Goulart, Víctor Paz Estenssoro of Bolivia was overthrown in a coup by his erstwhile running mate, Air Force General René Barrientos, whom he had reportedly picked as his deputy to ensure the loyalty of the armed forces. Just as in the case of Brazil, Barrientos' act of treason spelled an end to democratic politics, and ushered in 15 years of military governments.

Given that vice-presidents in several countries thus contributed to the processes that led to the downfall of democracy, it is somewhat surprising that the period since democracy's return to Latin America in the 1980s has coincided with a renewed popularity of the vice-presidency. At the initiation of the third wave of democracy, only three out of every five Latin American countries had a vice-president. During the following years that proportion would rise to more than four out of five, as Nicaragua (1987), Venezuela (1999), Colombia (1991) and Paraguay (1992) installed vice-presidencies, and Honduras substituted such an office for the country's three 'presidential delegates' in 2003, only to return to the previous system in 2008–9. As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), the vice-presidency has today attained what seems to be a region-wide and permanent presence in Latin America: the only two Latin American countries, apart from Honduras, that do not have a vice-presidency are Chile and Mexico.

With the renewed enthusiasm for the vice-presidency, the joint ticket model for electing vice-presidents has become predominant. In some countries, this may have been because of the lessons taught by history. Accordingly, the 1988 constitution in Brazil kept the vice-presidency, but stipulated that its holder should be elected on the same ticket as the president. Similar arrangements were set up in country after country, until, at the end of the twentieth century, the separate election of vice-presidents had gone the way of the runner-up model of the previous century. True, some special arrangements survived into the 2000s. For instance, Bolivia's 1967 constitution (in force until 2009) stipulated that Congress should select president and vice-president should no single ticket receive more than 50 per cent of the popular vote. In 1989, the Bolivian Congress famously picked Jaime Paz Zamora (who had come in third place in the popular vote) for the presidency, but chose Luis Ossio, the running mate of Hugo Banzer (who had come in second place) to be his deputy. More dramatically, in Paraguay in the year 2000, a by-election

was held for the post of vice-president following the murder of the previous incumbent (which also led to the downfall of the president, rumoured to be behind the killing of his deputy).³³ In the event, the contest was won by the opposition candidate, leading to a situation of political tension within the government.³⁴

But even with the ticket-sharing model, conflicts between presidents and their designated successors have continued to be a common feature in Latin America. In Panama, for instance, a conflict about corruption allegations between President Ricardo Martinelli and his Vice-President Juan Carlos Varela, from different parties, reportedly left Martinelli's government dysfunctional.³⁵ In Honduras, President Manuel Zelaya and his Vice-President Elvin Santos, both from the Liberal Party, experienced serious rifts, which ended in Zelaya opposing Santos' bid to run for the presidency in 2008. The conflict weakened Zelaya's position in his own party, contributing to his downfall in 2009.³⁶ Similarly, the case of Dilma Rousseff being ousted in favour of her vice-president had a precedent in neighbouring Paraguay, where an alliance of convenience – between the presidential candidate Fernando Lugo and the Liberal Party that had supplied his vice-president – turned sour in 2012 as a botched land eviction led to fatalities; the following crisis exposed Lugo to the machinations of his vice-president's party and resulted in him being voted out of office through an express impeachment that left his deputy in power.³⁷

The Vice-Presidency Today

As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), the vice-presidency is today more common in Latin America than ever before, meaning that most Latin American presidents have designated successors waiting in the wings. During normal political times, however, the vice-presidency in Latin America is commonly considered unimportant and in most countries the office and its functions remain under-institutionalised. Exceptions to this rule include Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay, where the vice-president is also the speaker of the Senate.³⁸ While this is often a ceremonial

³³Indeed, the events behind this murky episode displayed elements of the runner-up model, as it brought together politicians from opposing sides: President Raúl Cubas had previously been the running-mate of the controversial General Lino Oviedo. As the latter was forced to withdraw from the race, Cubas became presidential candidate. As per the statutes of the Colorado Party, however, the previous runner-up to Oviedo in the party primaries became his vice-president.

³⁴Yet it has been argued that this might actually have saved President Luis Ángel González Macchi from impeachment by members of his own Colorado Party, as they feared that his ouster would lead their opponents in the Liberal Party to gain the presidency. Pérez-Liñán, *Presidential Impeachment*, pp. 29–35.

³⁵See e.g. *The Economist*, 24 Nov. 2012.

³⁶Mariana Llanos and Leiv Marsteintredet, 'Epilogue. The Breakdown of Zelaya's Presidency: Honduras in Comparative Perspective', in Llanos and Marsteintredet (eds.), *Presidential Breakdowns*, pp. 229–38. See also note 52.

³⁷Lugo's Impeachment Plunges Paraguay into Political Limbo', *Latin American Weekly Report*, 28 June 2012; Leiv Marsteintredet, Mariana Llanos and Detlef Nolte, 'Paraguay and the Politics of Impeachment', *Journal of Democracy*, 24: 4 (2013), pp. 110–23.

³⁸Bolivia might currently have the most powerful vice-presidency in the region. Under Evo Morales, Vice-President Álvaro García Linera has taken a prominent position as an important ideologue, intellectual and political actor. Whether the strong and visible vice-presidency in Bolivia will survive the current government, however, remains to be seen.

task, it can at times have crucial importance, as when Vice-President Julio Cobos cast the decisive vote against the Argentine government's proposed law on agricultural taxes in 2008.³⁹ Cobos' actions are a reminder that the vice-presidency during normal political times may play the role of a check on the president, and contribute an element of power-sharing to the presidency. Yet, as might be suspected, such a function is likely to be resisted. Even though presidents cannot remove the vice-president, or the office, through constitutional reform, they can find other ways to neutralise the vice-president, as Cobos would learn when the president isolated him after his decisive vote.⁴⁰

Today, all vice-presidents except the Venezuelan are elected together with their presidents as part of a joint offer to the electorate.⁴¹ Theoretically, such a joint ticket should create greater political cohesion within the executive. Yet the peculiarities and multi-party nature of Latin American politics appear to have conspired against such logic, as many presidential hopefuls seem to be doing exactly what constitution-makers in the region have tried to avoid: creating a potential political divide at the centre of executive power that can be exploited to upset the democratic process. They have done this by picking their vice-presidents from outside their own party.

The Vice-Presidency and Cross-Party Alliances in Latin America

Studies of the US vice-presidency often stress the 'balancing' potential of the running-mate, whereby qualities of the vice-president should complement those of the presidential candidate in order to appeal to broader electoral segments.⁴² Whereas in the stable two-party system of the US such balancing relates to qualities such as age, gender and geographic origin, it is not uncommon in Latin America, in particular in the continent's more fluid multi-party systems, for presidential candidates to take a step further and balance their tickets by including persons from

³⁹Sribman, *La vicepresidencia*, pp. 88ff.

⁴⁰A president's power to isolate or side-line the vice-president may vary with the executive and legislative duties in the various countries' constitutions. Side-lining a vice-president is likely to be easier in countries where the vice-president has no constitutional duties and all tasks are assigned by the president. This is the case in five countries in Latin America today, including Ecuador where, in August 2017, President Lenin Moreno – unable to remove the vice-president (Jorge Glas) – stripped him of all his executive tasks by decree following the disclosure of his involvement in a bribery scandal related to the Odebrecht conglomerate. The Comptroller General subsequently recommended that Glas be removed from office and sentenced to jail. After his absence from office for more than 90 days, Congress declared the vice-presidency vacant and selected a new vice-president. We appreciate insight from Santiago Basabe Serrano on this case.

⁴¹In Venezuela, the authority to name and remove the vice-president rests with the president only. This formula is very rare, but not unique to the Bolivarian constitution of Venezuela. The formula was possibly inspired by Simón Bolívar, since it first appeared in the Bolivian constitution of 1826, where the president for life selected the vice-president, although in that case the selection had to be confirmed by Congress. A similar system existed in Guatemala between 1956 and 1964, where the president drew up a list of potential presidential successors – *designados* – from which Congress selected a first and a second, who would succeed the president in that order.

⁴²See e.g. Lee Sigelman and Paul J. Wahlbeck, 'The "Veepstakes": Strategic Choice in Presidential Running Mate Selection', *American Political Science Review*, 91: 4 (1997), pp. 855–64; and Danny M. Adkison, 'The Electoral Significance of the Vice Presidency', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 12: 3 (1982), pp. 330–6.

outside their own party.⁴³ Indeed, of the two leading tickets in presidential elections in Latin America between 1978 and 2016, 98 out of 220 (45 per cent) have included what can be called ‘external’ candidates for vice-president, i.e. persons who either have had a background in other political parties or who were political neophytes without any previous partisan experience (the latter group amounts to 30 candidates ranging from persons who were well known non-politicians – several of them being media personalities – to virtual unknowns whose primary quality may have been to not overshadow the presidential candidate him- or herself).

Such joint candidacies have sometimes made for very strange political bedfellows, as candidates strive to draw votes from across the political spectrum. Accordingly, the Banzer–Zamora ticket in Bolivia in 1993 comprised both a former guerrilla (Zamora) and the dictator he had sought to overthrow (Banzer). Likewise, Daniel Ortega was joined by Jaime Morales Carazo – a rightist politician and erstwhile Contra – for his electoral bid in 2006. Less dramatically, but still remarkably, Dilma Rousseff picked Michel Temer, a leading politician of the centre-right clientelistic Partido do Movimento Democrático do Brasil (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, PMDB) for her running mate in 2010. In doing so, she was only following the precedent established by her political mentor, however.⁴⁴ For his fourth and successful run for office in 2002 Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had chosen a running mate who would effectively allow him to dispel fears regarding the presumed radicalism of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ Party, PT), businessman José Alencar from the rightist Partido Liberal (Liberal Party).⁴⁵

As can be seen in Table 1, such external vice-presidential candidates are much more common in countries that have a larger number of political parties. Indeed, the difference in party fragmentation between those elections in which there is at least one external vice-presidential candidate on either of the two leading tickets and those in which there is not is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.⁴⁶ While the data allow only for speculation in this regard, one may assume that it is the need to appeal to sympathisers of other parties and/or to secure future legislative majorities that explain this correlation. In Brazil since 1985, for instance, only three of the 16 leading vice-presidential candidates have come from the same party as the presidential candidate (locally known as ‘*chapa puro sangue*’ or ‘full-blooded ticket’).

Even more remarkably, all of the eight vice-presidents elected in Brazil since the return of democracy have had a background in a party different from that of the president. Brazil is an extreme case, but, since 1978, out of 114 elected Latin American presidencies in systems in which a vice-president is also elected, 43

⁴³In particular during the so-called ‘Left wave’, ticket-balancing has become common as a number of nominally leftist presidential candidates have sought to demonstrate their moderation through their vice-presidential candidates in order to appeal to the centrist majorities in the electorate. For the moderation of the ‘turn to the Left’ in this regard, see Fredrik Uggla, ‘A Turn to the Left or to the Centre?’, *Stockholm Review of Latin American Studies*, 3 (2008), pp. 9–19.

⁴⁴Brazil: President in the Dock’, *Latin American Weekly Report*, 25 Aug. 2016.

⁴⁵Wendy Hunter, ‘The Normalization of an Anomaly: The Workers’ Party in Brazil’, *World Politics*, 59: 3 (2007), pp. 440–75.

⁴⁶For the former, the mean effective number of political parties was 4.31 with a standard deviation of 2.23, and for the latter the same figures were 2.96 and 0.90, respectively.

Table 1. External Vice-Presidential Candidates on the Two Leading Tickets at Different Levels of Party Fragmentation (Latin American Elections 1978–2016)

Number of effective parliamentary parties	Elections	External vice-presidential candidates	External candidates/election
–3.0	38	22	0.59
3.01–4.0	23	22	0.96
4.01–	30	42	1.40

Source: VPILA database. Sources for number of effective parliamentary parties: Manuel Alcántara, 'Elections in Latin America 2009–2011: A Comparative Analysis', Kellogg Institute Working Paper no. 386 (2012), App. III and Michael Gallagher, 'Election Indices Dataset' (2015) at http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/people/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/Docts/ElectionIndices.pdf (last access 12 Oct. 2018).

Note: The correlation (Pearson's r) between the number of effective parliamentary parties and external vice-presidential candidates on the two leading tickets is 0.454, and is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

(38 per cent) have had deputies who did not have a background in the president's party (15 of these were political independents prior to their elevation to the vice-presidency, with the rest coming from other parties). Thus, in practice Latin American politicians seem to have circumvented the institutional safeguard (the joint election) against divisions and potential strife within the executive power. Interestingly, this seems to have an effect on the emergence and outcomes of government crises.

The Vice-President in Times of Crisis

While it has not been uncommon for relationships between presidents and vice-presidents to sour to the point where the latter have become vocal critics of their governments, as was the case with Julio Cobos in Argentina and Juan Carlos Varela in Panama mentioned above, this normally means little for the operation of the presidency. Indeed, the full importance of the office becomes apparent only during full-fledged political crises. This is of course in line with the institution's function, which is to provide an institutionalised structure for succession should the president become incapacitated, die or be removed. In such instances, the political relationship between vice-president and president is likely to acquire particular importance.

It can be suspected that presidents with external vice-presidents will be more likely to suffer attempts to bring about their forced removal from office. The reason for this is that interruption would in such circumstances lead to a greater political change than if the vice-president were a loyalist from the president's own party. Opposition parties seeking a political change would find the chances of producing such a change increased in the presence of an external vice-president. Indeed, several vice-presidents have actually been open about this possibility. For instance, when the Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutiérrez ran into increasing problems in 2004, and Congress was considering how to impeach him, his Vice-President Alfredo Palacio, an independent outsider, declared in the national media he was more than ready to become president should it come to that.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Ecuador: Reprieve for Gutiérrez as OAS Meets', *Latin American Weekly Report*, 8 June 2004.

For the 'external' vice-president and his/her party, the prospect of a presidential interruption opens a road to the presidency, and thus an incentive to bring about such an event. The party of the vice-president would have a stronger incentive to topple the president than if theirs had been only one opposition party among others, as such an action will not only hurt a political competitor, but also give the vice-president's party supreme executive power. A slightly different logic, but no less compelling, may apply to other allies of the government. Even though they may not be next in line of succession, they may see in a less politically tainted vice-president a stronger guarantee for their interests than a beleaguered president from an unpopular party.

Accordingly, it could be assumed that external vice-presidents stand a better chance of ascending to the presidency after an interruption brought about by external agents than would an internal one. Whereas it would make little sense to interrupt a presidency only to have the president replaced with a potentially vengeful loyalist, a vice-president without direct partisan ties to the president is likely to show more gratitude towards the promoters of the interruption,⁴⁸ while bestowing a cloak of democratic legitimacy to the events that brought about the president's demise. It is likely that a president's opponent may find an external vice-president more open to such possibilities, hence increasing the risk for the president.

In fact, there is rather clear evidence as to the importance of vice-presidential partisan affiliation during crises that lead to presidential interruptions. [Table 2](#) displays all 21 instances of permanently interrupted presidencies between 1978 and 2016 in the Latin American countries with a vice-presidency. The table identifies the main reason for the president's fall, the relationship between president and vice-president, and the eventual outcome for the vice-president. It is organised according to the reason for each president's demise, i.e. natural causes (illness, death), presidential resignations or whether an external actor forced the president's ouster through votes in Congress or a coup. As will be seen, there are certain systematic differences among these groups of cases, which indicate the importance that an external vice-president may have in times of presidential crisis.

With regard to the reasons for interruption, for most of these there is no evident association between their occurrence and the presence of an external vice-president, as interruptions due to natural causes, presidential resignations or military interventions happen with equal frequency no matter what the political relationship between president and vice-president. However, when it comes to successful impeachment processes or congressional dismissals of popularly elected presidents with vice-presidencies in Latin America, it is notable that all of these have occurred in situations in which the vice-president has either come from a party different from the president's (Michel Temer in Brazil and Federico Franco in Paraguay, for instance) or has been a political independent (Alejandro Maldonado in Guatemala and Alfredo Palacios in Ecuador).⁴⁹ The evidence thus seems to support

⁴⁸For the importance of the opposition controlling the line of succession, see Andrés Malamud's analysis of the fall of President Fernando de la Rúa in Argentina: 'Social Revolution or Political Takeover? The Argentine Collapse of 2001 Reassessed', *Latin American Perspectives*, 42: 11 (2015), pp. 11–26.

⁴⁹Maldonado had been installed as vice-president just months prior to the impeachment of President Otto Pérez Molina since the former vice-president, Roxanna Baldetti (a loyalist towards Pérez Molina), had already been successfully removed in the same scandal that eventually toppled the president.

Table 2. Interrupted Presidencies in Latin American Democracies with Vice-Presidents 1978–2016

Reason	Country	President	Year	Vice-President	VP's background ^a	Political Outcome
Natural causes (death)	Ecuador	Jaime Roldós Aguilera	1981	Oswaldo Hurtado	I	VP assumed the presidency.
Natural causes (suicide)	Dominican Republic	Antonio Guzmán	1982	Jacobo Majluta	I	VP assumed the presidency.
Natural causes (death)	Brazil	Tancredo Neves	1985	José Sarney	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Natural causes (illness)	Bolivia	Hugo Banzer	2001	Jorge Quiroga	I	VP assumed the presidency.
Natural causes (death)	Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	2013	Nicolás Maduro	I	VP assumed the presidency.
Resignation (new elections)	Bolivia	Hernán Siles Zuazo	1985	Jaime Paz Zamora	E	VP resigned to run in upcoming elections but was defeated.
Resignation	Argentina	Raúl Alfonsín	1989	Víctor Martínez	I	VP left power with president. Elections already held.
Resignation (after failed self-coup) ^b	Guatemala	Jorge Serrano	1993	Gustavo Espina	I	Loyal VP failed to take power. Congress elected new president.
Resignation (new elections)	Dominican Republic	Joaquín Balaguer	1996	Jacinto Peynado Garrigosa	I	New elections called, VP ran but was defeated.
Resignation (pending impeachment)	Paraguay	Raúl Cubas	1999	(Luis María Argaña)	I	VP had been murdered. Head of Senate assumed power.
Resignation	Peru	Alberto Fujimori	2000	Ricardo Márquez Flores	I	First VP had resigned shortly before. Second VP declined. Congress elected new president.
Resignation	Argentina	Fernando de la Rúa	2001	(Carlos Alvarez)	E	VP had already resigned. Congress elected new President.

Resignation	Bolivia	Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada	2003	Carlos Mesa	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Coup/uprising	Ecuador	Jamil Mahuad	2000	Gustavo Noboa	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Coup	Honduras	Manuel Zelaya	2009	Aristides Mejía	I	VP went into exile. President of Congress took power.
Impeachment	Brazil	Fernando Collor de Mello	1992	Itamar Franco	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Dismissed by Congress	Ecuador	Abdalá Bucaram	1997	Rosalía Arteaga	E	VP assumed the presidency for a few days, but leader of Congress soon took over.
Dismissed by Congress	Ecuador	Lucio Gutiérrez	2005	Alfredo Palacios	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Impeachment	Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	2012	Federico Franco	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Congress removed immunity, leading to resignation	Guatemala	Otto Pérez Molina	2015	Alejandro Maldonado	E	VP assumed the presidency.
Impeachment	Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	2016	Michel Temer	E	VP assumed the presidency.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Notes: ^a E and I denote respectively external (VP with no background in the president's party) and internal (VP with background in the president's party) vice-presidents. Vice-presidents whose names are in brackets had left office before their presidents' fall.

^b A self-coup is when a president uses unconstitutional means to dissolve or curtail the other powers of the state (legislative and judicial).

the above argument that an external vice-president may embolden a president's opponents and thus increase his or her vulnerability to forced interruptions.⁵⁰ Even though a simple association does not suffice to affirm causality in this regard, the connection is strong enough to indicate that the vice-president's political affiliation should be a factor to consider in future studies of presidential interruptions.⁵¹

The rightmost column ('Political Outcome') of Table 2 indicates other interesting relationships between the vice-president's political affiliation and his or her chances of remaining in office after a presidential interruption. Cases in which death or illness was the cause of presidential disruption have always led to the assumption of the vice-president, irrespective of his or her partisan affiliation. This would be in line with expectations, as such events do not depend on political actors and their possible calculations. Yet, in the cases in which succession is triggered by political crisis, the pattern is different, and outcomes seem related both to the way in which the president leaves office, and to the political relationship between president and vice-president. In the eight cases in which presidents resigned on their own initiative in midst of crises, this has normally forced out their vice-presidents from political power as well (if they had not already left office before the president did, as in Argentina in 2001 and – a result of assassination – in Paraguay in 1999). This outcome is not surprising if the vice-president is perceived to have been jointly responsible for the situation causing the crisis. Accordingly, in no case has a presidential resignation led to a vice-president from the president's own party assuming power. The only case in which a vice-president has taken power after such an event was one in which the designated presidential successor was a political independent: Carlos Mesa, who assumed the Bolivian presidency upon Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's resignation in 2003. Significantly, Mesa had distanced himself from the president during the preceding crisis, a move that his political independence might have facilitated, and which seems to have made him acceptable for the opposition in Congress and on the streets.

The association between the vice-president's affiliation and the outcome of a presidential interruption appears even clearer when such an event is brought about by the actions of outside parties, i.e. by a coup or an impeachment. In such cases, the final outcome appears closely related to the political affiliation of the vice-president. In the two cases of coups interrupting a presidency, the one vice-president who was allowed to assume power (Gustavo Noboa in Ecuador) was an independent who had been included on the presidential ticket of the ill-fated Jamil Mahuad, but who had come to oppose many of the government's policies. In the coup in Honduras in 2009, conversely, Manuel Zelaya's vice-president was a handpicked collaborator close to the president and fell with him.⁵²

⁵⁰Furthermore, Samuels and Shugart register only one occurrence in their 53 countries in the period between 1946 and 2007 in which the party of a president initiated and voted in favour of impeachment. This was the case with Raúl Cubas in Paraguay. See David J. Samuels and Matthew S. Shugart, *Presidents, Parties, Prime Ministers. How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 108–20.

⁵¹On this point, see also Ana María Mustapic, 'América Latina: Las renuncias presidenciales y el papel del Congreso', *Política*, 47 (2006), pp. 55–70.

⁵²The coup against Zelaya is also the only example of a presidential interruption enforced by external actors in which the president and his deputy came from the same party. Honduras was indeed a special

Table 3. Interruptions to Elected Latin American Presidencies with External, Internal or No Vice-President, 1978–2016

	Total number of presidencies	Interrupted	Per cent interrupted
External vice-president	43	10	23 %
Internal vice-president	71	6	8 %
No vice-president	24	1	4 %

Notes: These figures exclude interruptions for health reasons and deaths (five presidencies in total; see Table 2). Venezuela after 1999 and Honduras (except 2005–9) are also excluded due to their anomalous succession rules. The rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's Rho) between the status of the vice-president and the occurrence of an interruption is (-0.220) and significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Likewise, just as there is a connection between successful impeachment processes or congressional dismissals (a group in which we include the instance of the Guatemalan Congress stripping Otto Pérez Molina of his immunity from prosecution) and the presence of an external vice-president, all of the vice-presidents in such cases, except one, were able to assume power after their presidents had been forced out of office. The exception was Rosalía Arteaga in Ecuador, vice-president to Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, who kept power for only two days after Congress had dismissed Bucaram, after which she lost it to the president of Congress.

The patterns described above also hold true when we look at the survival rate of Latin American presidents with internal, external or no vice-presidents (Table 3). Between 1978 and 2016, there were 43 elected presidents in Latin America with 'external' vice-presidents. Ten of these governments, or 23 per cent, ended prematurely (excluding for health reasons). In comparison, of the 71 elected presidents who had vice-presidents from the president's party, only six, i.e. 8 per cent, saw the president permanently removed from office by crises or by external actors, and in no case through impeachment as detailed above.⁵³ In the countries without a vice-president, though, there has been only one presidential interruption during the period (the impeachment of Carlos Andrés Pérez in Venezuela).

case. Elected Vice-President Elvin Santos had resigned in November 2008 to compete for the presidency in 2009. President Zelaya then nominated his Minister of Defence, Aristides Mejía, as vice-president, but the opposition challenged this promotion. When Zelaya was deposed by the coup in June 2009, a congressional majority, including Zelaya's own Liberal Party, supported the coup and sidestepped Mejía with the argument that President of Congress Roberto Micheletti (also of the Liberal Party) was Zelaya's constitutional successor.

⁵³Furthermore, in three of these six cases (Guatemala in 1993, Dominican Republic in 1996 and Peru in 2000), these early terminations of the presidencies could actually be said to have been a response to earlier anti-democratic actions by the presidents themselves, which means that their classification as interruptions can be debated. A similar argument could possibly be made with regard to Cubas in Paraguay, who is in the same group. Leiv Marsteintredet, 'Explaining Variation of Executive Instability in Presidential Regimes: Presidential Interruptions in Latin America', *International Political Science Review*, 35: 2 (2014), pp. 175–96.

While such figures demonstrate a possible correlation, they should not be confused with causation. As was shown above, features such as party fragmentation also correlate with external vice-presidents, and could by themselves increase the risks of presidential interruptions, leading to a spurious conclusion regarding the connection between the two factors. Similarly, although we can give anecdotal evidence of vice-presidents inviting such interruptions, or of how the opponents of deposed presidents reasoned, closer studies of the processes involved are required to substantiate any causality in this regard. What the data do show, however, is that the vice-presidency and the relationship of its titular to the president seem to represent important intermediary variables for explaining political developments during government crises.⁵⁴

In sum, then, Dilma Rousseff's fate does not appear extraordinary, but rather as another case of a little-noticed connection between vice-presidential affiliation and the risk of presidential interruptions. 'External' vice-presidents seem to attract interruptions and are also more likely to benefit from these than are vice-presidents drawn from the president's own party.

Conclusions

This article offers the first comprehensive overview of the vice-presidency in Latin America. By focusing on the institution's role during elections and presidential interruptions, we have tried to demonstrate the political relevance of this hitherto overlooked office.

Combining two original databases on the vice-presidency, we show how Latin American countries have struggled with the question of presidential succession and the incentives for tensions and betrayal that the office may imply. Having previously chosen vice-presidents from runners-up, or through separate ballots, which risked giving the vice-presidency to political opponents to the president, most countries eventually tried to solve this problem by electing president and vice-president on the same ticket. But electoral considerations seem to conspire against such a solution. Accordingly, giving the vice-presidency to persons from outside the president's own party has become a common strategy in Latin America, and seems to be related to the need to build presidential support in a multi-party setting.

It may not always be possible to equate the creation of such mixed electoral tickets with the separate election of the vice-president.⁵⁵ In particular, the former strategy would seem to require an element of ideological proximity and is often the result of formal cross-party alliances, which is not the case with the separate ballot. Yet the considerable pragmatism evident in choosing running-mates, combined with the ephemeral nature of many party alliances, means that the result of both mechanisms of election may be similar; namely the institution of designated successors to the president who have little interest in his or her permanence in office.

⁵⁴It should also be noted that it has been much more common for vice-presidents to gain the presidency by succession than by election: whereas in contemporary Latin America only two external vice-presidents have subsequently been elected to the presidency (Paz Zamora in Bolivia in 1989 and Varela in Panama in 2014), seven external vice-presidents have become presidents through presidential interruptions.

⁵⁵We are grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of the article for making this point.

Accordingly, while the choice of external running-mates may be rational from an electoral perspective, it may also put the stability of the executive in danger. This suspicion is supported by our data, as vice-presidents from outside the president's party are associated with a markedly increased risk of presidential interruptions, particularly in the form of impeachment proceedings. Such external vice-presidents also seem to have a greater chance of benefitting from such interruptions.

The mechanism that underlies such developments appears to be related to the vice-president's role as a designated successor to the president. In fact, this succession formula makes presidential regimes confront some of the same succession dilemmas as those faced by authoritarian and monarchical regimes.⁵⁶ His or her privileged position as successor may induce the vice-president to conspire against the president, and/or embolden the latter's political opponents if they sense that there are internal divisions within the executive. Although they are clearly not helpless when confronting such situations, presidents have less room for manoeuvre given the vice-president's constitutional protection, which in most countries means that he or she cannot be removed by the president.

Yet the political stability that Latin America has enjoyed during recent decades means there are too few cases to draw a firm conclusion as to the causal impact of an 'external' vice-president on presidential survival. It is possible that countries with such vice-presidents are also more crisis-prone to begin with, because of higher degrees of party fragmentation, possibly weaker party systems and similar variables. Therefore, we cannot claim that the presence of a vice-president (even an external one) is by itself the cause of instability and presidential interruption. Rather, we see the institution as a possible intervening variable that may explain the outcome of periods of instability and attempted overthrows of the executive power. In such cases, the succession role of the vice-president, combined with the institution's ability to confer a degree of legitimacy on presidential interruptions, seem to make it more significant than has often been assumed, and it appears from our description that the question of whether the president and his/her deputy share partisan affiliation has particular importance in this regard.

In the end, though, a definitive answer as to the effects of having a president and a vice-president from different parties will require further research. Even so, we hope that the preceding pages indicate that vice-presidencies may wield considerably more political importance than is commonly assumed. More particularly, we believe that the above analysis indicates a number of possible further enquiries related to the vice-presidency. We still know little of the role of vice-presidents in presidential governments during normal times and what may explain potential variation in the office's performance across the region. Similarly, our assumptions above concerning the legitimacy and power that follows from different modes of electing the vice-president could certainly be discussed further, and more refined

⁵⁶See Jason Brownlee, 'Hereditary Succession in Modern Autocracies', *World Politics*, 59: 4 (2007), pp. 595–628; and Andrej Kokkonen and Anders Sundell, 'Delivering Stability – Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000–1800', *American Political Science Review*, 108: 2 (2014), pp. 438–53.

models developed in this regard, possibly combined with more detailed evidence on how the vice-president can serve as a vote-winner. On a related note, the fact that external vice-presidents are more common in multi-party settings indicates that the office may often have an important role in the formation and maintenance of government coalitions and should be considered by scholarly debates on such issues. Likewise, the extent to which the vice-president – particularly an external one – can serve as a mechanism for power-sharing and internal accountability within the executive power can offer a promising avenue for further enquiry regarding the role of the vice-president in the normal operation of the presidency. Related to this, and in a sense contrary to our analysis above, the importance of the vice-presidency for maintaining political stability by offering an institutionalised solution to presidential interruptions remains to be explored,⁵⁷ along with the quasi-parliamentary mechanisms evident in impeachment and dismissal processes that shift executive power from one party to another by way of the vice-president.

Appendix: Description of the Databases Used

The Latin American Presidential Succession and Vice-Presidency Database (LAPSVP)

Maintained by: Leiv Marsteintredet, University of Bergen.

Brief description: the database contains data on constitutional succession rules, rules on election and re-election of presidents and vice-presidents, and regulations of the vice-presidency for all countries in Latin America from independence with exception of constitutions under the Central American Federation and Panama before it became independent in 1904, and Cuba. Key variables are whether there is a designated successor (vice-president or *designado*) or not; the line of succession; how the successor is elected; the mode of succession (permanent/temporary); the duties of the successor/vice-president; and re-election rules for president and successor.

Years covered: 1819–2016.

Countries covered (since year): Argentina (1819), Bolivia (1826), Brazil (1824), Chile (1822) Colombia (1830), Costa Rica (1844), Dominican Republic (1844), Ecuador (1830), El Salvador (1841), Guatemala (1825), Honduras (1825), Mexico (1814), Nicaragua (1826), Panama (1904), Paraguay (1844), Peru (1823), Uruguay (1830), Venezuela (1821).

Number of cases: 256 (188 constitutions and 68 reforms).

Variables: country; year of constitution/reform; vice-president (presence/absence), number of vice-presidents/designates; who is presidential successor; rules of succession; rules of presidential election; rules of election of successor; electoral term president; electoral term vice-president; term limits president; term limits vice-

⁵⁷We owe this argument to Andrés Rivarola. For related arguments, see Hochstetler and Samuels, 'Crisis and Rapid Re-equilibration', and Leiv Marsteintredet and Einar Berntzen, 'Reducing the Perils of Presidentialism in Latin America through Presidential Interruptions', *Comparative Politics*, 41: 1 (2008), pp. 83–101.

president; rules of impeachment (majority required to depose president/vice-president; number of veto points in impeachment process); duties of vice-president.

Main sources: national constitutions, including constitutional reforms relating to rules of elections, re-election, term limits, presidential succession and the vice-presidency. The point of departure was the Cervantes virtual database on constitutions;⁵⁸ gaps have been filled in and the Cervantes virtual database has been double checked against specific country sources.

Data were gathered during 2015 and 2016. Mikal Rian assisted with the collection of the data.

Vice-Presidents in Latin America (VPILA)

Maintained by: Fredrik Ugglå, Stockholm University.

Brief description: the database contains data on the two leading tickets in every presidential election, plus additional data on substitute vice-presidents. Apart from election results, it contains data on the personal and partisan background of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, as well as information on possible interruptions to their periods in office.

Years covered: 1978–2016.

Countries covered (since year): Argentina (1983), Bolivia (1980), Brazil (1985), Colombia (1991), Costa Rica (1978), Dominican Republic (1978), Ecuador (1979), El Salvador (1984), Guatemala (1985), Honduras (2005), Nicaragua (1990), Panama (1994), Paraguay (1993), Peru (1980), Uruguay (1984).

Number of cases: 114 presidencies and 220 combinations of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

Variables: country; year; presidential candidate's name; vice-presidential candidate's name; presidential candidate's party; presidential candidate's age; vice-presidential candidate's party prior to election campaign; relationship between presidential and vice-presidential candidate; vice-presidential candidate's age; electoral system; election results; number of candidates in presidential election; party fragmentation; party fragmentation in previous election; other information on president/vice-president; information on possible second vice-president.

Main sources: local newspapers; Dieter Nohlen (ed.): *Elections in the Americas*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Manuel Alcántara and Flavia Freidenberg (eds.), *Partidos Políticos de América Latina*, 3 vols. (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad, 2001); Alcántara, 'Elections in Latin America 2009–2011'; Gallagher, 'Election Indices Dataset'.

Data were gathered during 2016 and 2017.

⁵⁸See <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/constituciones-hispanoamericanas-0/> (last access 26 Sept. 2018).

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Spanish abstract

Los vicepresidentes en América Latina con frecuencia se han encontrado en el centro de turbulencias políticas. Para evitar conflictos con el ejecutivo, por lo tanto, la mayoría de países latinoamericanos han implementado fórmulas para elegir presidentes y vicepresidentes unidos en una boleta electoral. Aun así, es común para los candidatos presidenciales escoger compañeros de fórmula de otros partidos con el fin de construir alianzas y atraer un grupo de votantes mayor. Sin embargo, la presencia de estos vicepresidentes 'externos' pareciera que incrementa el riesgo de una interrupción presidencial en general y procesos de *impeachment* en particular. Entonces, argumentamos que aunque con frecuencia se pasa por alto la institución de la vicepresidencia, esta merece atención como una posible variable que puede contribuir a explicar crisis gubernamentales y sus resultados en América Latina.

Spanish keywords: vicepresidentes; presidentes; presidencias interrumpidas; *impeachment* presidencial; constituciones

Portuguese abstract

Vice-presidentes na América Latina com frequência se encontram no centro de turbulências políticas. Para prevenir conflitos no poder executivo, a maioria dos países latino-americanos implantaram fórmulas para eleger presidentes e vice-presidentes em uma única cédula eleitoral. Mesmo assim, é uma prática comum para candidatos presidenciais escolherem vices de outros partidos a fim de construir alianças e atrair um número maior de eleitores. Contudo, a presença de vice-presidentes 'externos' parece, no geral, aumentar o risco de interrupção presidencial e particularmente processos de *impeachment*. Sendo assim, argumentamos que a instituição vice-presidencial, frequentemente negligenciada, merece atenção por ser a variável e possível explicação pelas crises de governo e seus resultados na América Latina.

Portuguese keywords: vice-presidentes; presidentes; presidências interrompidas; *impeachment* presidencial; constituições

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