

The Politics of Legislative Debate

Around the World

Book proposal by Hanna Bäck, Marc Debus, and Jorge M. Fernandes

Overview and Relevance

Debates play a central role in democracies around the world. There are many reasons why we should care about legislative debates. First, they help parties attract media attention and to claim credit for public policies (Eggers and Spirling 2014). Scholars of the US Congress have long recognised that politicians use legislative speeches to communicate with their constituents (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996). Second, legislative debates may influence the policy-making process in a significant manner. Indeed, some MPs may merely be convinced by the arguments advanced by fellow MPs and decide to vote in a specific manner considering legislative debate. Thus, speeches may be used by politicians to ‘win arguments’ or to persuade opponents. Third, some scholars, drawing on the work of Habermas (1996), suggest that a legislative debate may entail deliberation and ‘generate decisions that are better reasoned and informed, more public-oriented and consensual, and consequently more legitimate and effective’ (Bächtiger 2014: 149).

Furthermore, debates are also a privileged channel for ‘public communication which parties and their MPs exploit for electoral purposes’ (Proksch and Slapin 2015). Legislative speeches may be used to communicate policy positions not only within the party but also to other political parties. Martin and Vanberg (2008) focus on how debates are instrumental in coalition settings as a means by which partners justify the policy publicly comprises they have made in government. Debates

offer an inexpensive venting mechanism to signal dissent without facing the dire consequences of unilaterally changing or reneging on a coalition agreement.

Legislative debates further help us to measure intra-party conflicts and polarisation between parties and between social groups that parties represent. The latter is highly relevant given the rise of far-right and far-left populist movements whose cornerstone argument is that the political elite is not responsive to the preferences of the citizenry (Mudde 2007).

For all their importance in democratic legislatures, debates have remained overlooked in political science literature. There is neither a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundations of legislative debates, the methods to analyse them nor on the comparative patterns of legislative speechmaking across the world. By and large, the discipline lacks a comprehensive analysis of formal and informal rules of speechmaking whereby we can dwell on who speaks, who selects the speaker and why. Bächtiger (2014: 145) notes that ‘despite the central role of speech and debate in parliament, parliamentary speech has not figured prominently on the scholarly agenda in contemporary political science’. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Proksch and Slapin (2012: 520), who suggest that ‘debates remain an understudied form of legislative behavior’. To be sure, recent years have witnessed a growing interest in this topic. However, analyses that do focus on parliamentary debates have in no small extent been single or Small-N case studies, in which only a few parliamentary have been studies. For example, Proksch and Slapin (2012) focus on debates in the British House of Commons and the German Bundestag. Giannetti and Pedrazzani (2016) look at the Italian parliament while Bäck, Debus, and Müller (2014) analyse speechmaking in the Swedish case and Bächtiger and Hangartner (2010) study debates in the Swiss and German parliaments. Bäck and Debus 2016 work makes a comparative analysis of several European parliamentary democracies.

Our edited volume offers a comprehensive analysis of the politics of debate around the world. Our proposal makes several contributions to the field of comparative institutions. First, we cover recent theories, as well as state-of-the-art methods. Importantly, our proposal covers both parliamentary and presidential democracies, which helps to bridge a divide between regime forms in

institutional analysis. Second, our edited volume includes over 30 country-chapters in Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. Besides, the European Parliament and its patterns of speechmaking will be covered.

Methods chapters will have a twofold goal. First, to provide an inventory of how debate can be studied. This chapter will survey state-of-the-art techniques for the use of text-as-data. Furthermore, it will also discuss some of the most significant challenges in the field. For example, how to study speeches comparatively by dealing with the coexistence of a plethora of languages. Second, methods chapters will also provide a framework for country chapters and the methodological challenges and choices made to conduct the empirical analysis in this volume.

Country chapters will follow a rigid structure, which could be customised in specific cases, e.g., when the legislative rules or the structure of the party system provide highly interesting and substantial effects on the structure of parliamentary debates. Our case selection aims at maximising variation in institutional design, political culture, and geographical representativeness. Furthermore, we only consider countries above a minimum threshold of democracy (Polity 6).

Country chapters will tentatively be organised as follows. The first section deals with descriptive information about the debates. That is, offer reads the necessary information on the institutional design of the country – electoral system, party system, executive-legislative relations. The second section deals with formal and informal rules of legislative speechmaking, which will allow us to map the structures bounding actors’ preferences and incentives. The third section focuses on who speaks and how much at the individual level – that is, how the personal and positional characteristics of MPs influence how they take the floor. For example, gender, electoral list position, seniority. The fourth section turns to party-level features. Importantly, it will focus on how intra-party positions (e.g., party leadership, committee chair posts) influence legislative speechmaking. Most authors (90%) contributing to this volume have already collected the data needed for the analysis in the context of other projects, which gives us confidence in the smooth drafting of the chapters.

Structure of the edited volume

The edited volume will consist of 39 chapters, including

- Introduction, in which the relevance of the study of parliamentary speechmaking is outlined, both from a positive and normative perspective.
- Three theoretical chapters focusing on models of parliamentary speechmaking in presidential and parliamentary democracies.
- Two methods chapters that allow for a sophisticated analysis of legislative debates.
- Thirty-one empirical chapters in which the respective authors present both the institutional rules guiding legislative debates, and empirical patterns of legislative debates in countries from all regions of the world.

Market for the edited volume

Our edited volume is aimed at the broad community of political scientists working on political institutions. Specifically, it should be of interest primarily to scholars involved in research on legislatures and legislative behaviour. It should also be of interest for political scientists working on electoral systems, political parties, party organisation, government formation, coalition governance, and political socialisation and representation.

The subject of the book has an international appeal. Indeed, it goes beyond the usual regional divide, in that our worldwide coverage makes the volume of interest for scholars in all fields, Comparative Politics, American Politics, African Politics, Latin American Politics, and Asian Politics. Furthermore, our volume should also be of interest to Methodologists. Specifically, our volume should be of particular interest in strong markets, such as the US, UK, Germany, Nordic countries, and Japan. The book should have appeal to academic libraries around the world since books used for teaching purposes must generally be provided to a sufficient extent by the libraries. Chapters could be used as required reading for final year undergraduates and graduate courses on

a plethora of institutional-focused fields.

Secondary markets

As concerns academic associations that might be potentially interested in the book, the following ones are particularly relevant: American Political Science Association, Midwest Political Science Association, International Political Science Association; European Consortium for Political Research; European Political Science Association.

Timetable

- **Fall 2018:** Authors start drafting the chapters.
- **June/July 2019:** Conference in Mannheim bringing together editors and authors to present and discuss draft versions of the chapters.
- **September 2019:** Authors deliver final drafts to editors.
- **December 2019:** Manuscript delivered to Oxford University Press.

Table of Contents

Introduction Hanna Bäck, Marc Debus, Jorge M. Fernandes	Why is this volume needed, what does it aim to achieve and how is it organized
Theoretical Foundations Michael Laver Sven-Oliver Proksch and Jonathan Slapin Andrew Taylor	Theory - General Theory on Parliamentary Democracies Theory on Presidential Democracies
Methodological Challenges Christian Rauh Max Goplerud	Methods I Methods II
Country Chapters	
<i>Western Europe</i>	
Niels Goet	The Netherlands
Tapio Raunio	Finland
Christian Stecker, Jochen Müller, Andreas Blätte	Germany
David Willumsen	Denmark
Jack Blumeau	United Kingdom
Joan-Josep Vallbé	Spain
Daniela Gianetti and Andrea Pedrazzani	Italy
Wolfgang Müller and Marcello Jenny	Austria
Alex Herzog, Slava Mikhaylov, Liam Weeks	Ireland
Hanna Bäck and Royce Carroll	Sweden
Bjorn Høyland and Martin Søyland	Norway
Jorge M. Fernandes and Miguel Won	Portugal
Indridi Indridason and Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson	Iceland
Simon Hug et al.	Switzerland
Marina Costa Lobo and Yani Kartalis	Greece
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	
Or Tuttnauer	Israel
Cristina Bucur and Silje Hermansen	Romania
Allan Sikk (with co-author)	Estonia
T. Murat Yildirim	Turkey
Kamil Marcinkiewicz	Poland
<i>North America</i>	
Max Goplerud and David Gelman	USA
Christopher Cochrane	Canada
<i>Latin America</i>	
Eduardo Aleman, Juan Pablo Micozzi and Iñaki Sagarzazu	Chile
Jason Eichorst	Bolivia
Fabiano Santos and Fernando Guarnieri	Brazil
Alejandro Ecker	Argentina
Mónica Pachon	Colombia
<i>Asia and Oceania</i>	
Daniel M. Smith	Japan
Keith Dowding and Marija Taflaga	Australia
Moritz Osnabrügge	New Zealand
<i>Africa</i>	
Robert Mattes	South Africa
Michael Wahmann and T. Murat Yildirim	Malawi
<i>Transnational Parliaments</i>	
Miriam Sorace	European Parliament
Conclusion Hanna Bäck, Marc Debus, Jorge M. Fernandes	Comparative patterns, conclusions, future directions of research