

Presidentialism/Parliamentarism

Lesson 3

How Presidentialism Works

- Separate origin and separate survival of executive and legislature
 - Separate elections, fixed terms
- Assembly passes laws
- President also has powers
 - Name government
 - Some legislative powers
- Major policy changes require cooperation

Variations on presidentialism

- Legislative powers of president
 - Can issue decrees
 - Exclusive proposal rights (eg, budget)
 - Veto powers (line item, % to overrule)
- Reelection limits (1 term, 2 terms, none)
- Legislature involved in government
 - Approve ministers, recall/censure

Origin of Presidentialism and Parliamentarism

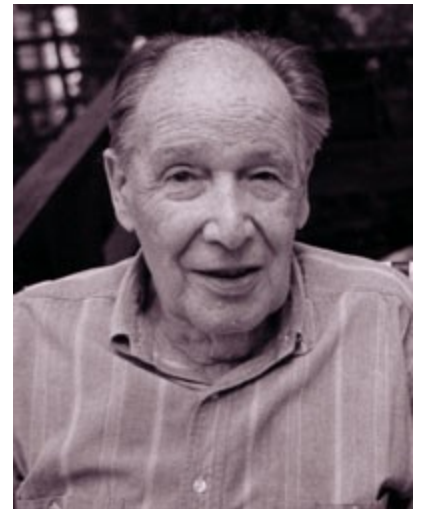
- England: Parliament emerges as check to monarch
- US: English system but without monarch
 - President stands in for monarch
- As England democratizes
 - Parliament gradually takes over King's governing council
 - Final result: parliamentary system

Spread of presidentialism and parliamentarism

- Most European countries adopt parliamentarism
 - Follow UK model
- Americas get presidentialism
 - Follow US model
- Other regions – often follow colonial power

Perils of Presidentialism (1)

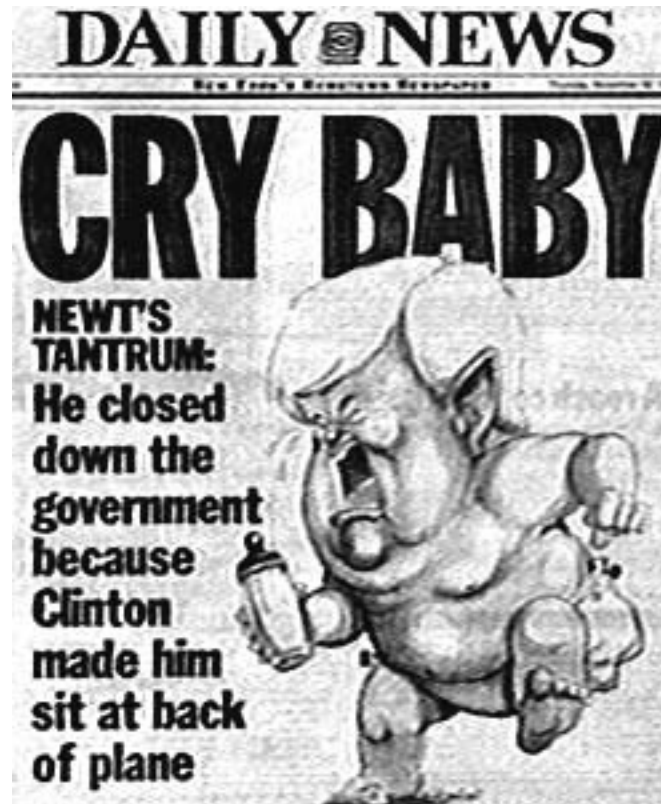
- Rigidity: can't deal with crisis
 - can't drop president if doing a bad job, loses confidence
- Zero-sum elections: only one winner
 - high stakes => conflict, polarization



Perils of Presidentialism (2)

- Style: monarchical tendencies
- Inexperienced leaders, outsiders
- Dual legitimacy & gridlock
 - what happens when president and assembly disagree

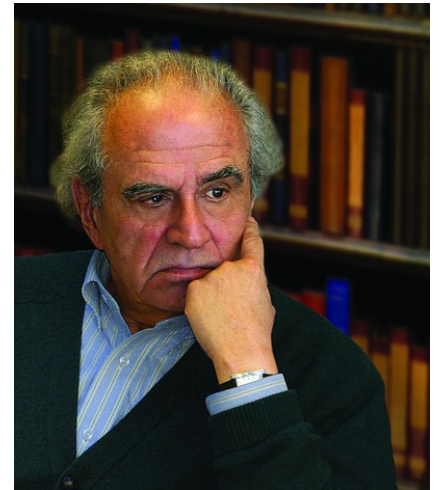
Government shutdown





Delegative Democracy

- President considers self embodiment of nation and governs as wishes
- Rules by decree, ignores assembly, courts
- Not responsive to public opinion
- Accountability only at election time
- Is this undemocratic?





In favor of presidentialism (1)

- Accountability: voters choose executive
- Leader responsible to whole nation
 - Discipline particularistic tendencies
- Stability: fixed term of office
- Checks and balances

- Presidentialism tries to solve tradeoff between efficiency and representativeness

In favor of presidentialism (2)

- Is president dangerous in divided society?
- Will only represent one group
- Horowitz: problem is not presidency but electoral system
 - President can provide unity in divided country
 - But need certain type of election: alternative vote or regional requirements (eg, Nigeria)

How to test?

- Of 22 advanced democracies, only 2 presidential
- Regression of democracy on presidentialism and controls
- What are the problems?

Where famous scholars go wrong – Al Stepan

Parliamentary (N=41)		Presidential (N=36)	
Bahamas	Israel	Algeria	Mozambique
Bangladesh	Jamaica	Angola	Niger
Botswana	Laos	Cameroon	Philippines
Burma	Mauritius	Cyprus	Rwanda
Chad	Nigeria	Congo	Syria
Dominica	Pakistan	Gabon	Taiwan
Fiji	Singapore	Ivory Coast	Tunisia
Ghana	Sri Lanka	Korea	Vietnam
India	Sudan	Madagascar	Zambia
Indonesia	...	Mali	...

Continuous Democracies 1980-1989

Parliamentary (N=15/41)		Presidential (N=0/36)
Bahamas	Nauru	
Barbados	St. Lucia	
India	St. Vincent	
Israel	Solomon Isl.	
Jamaica	Tuvalu	
Kiribati	...	

Another explanation?

- But maybe countries that choose presidential systems are already prone to instability
 - Why would they choose presidentialism?
- Does another factor cause both presidentialism and instability?

Also note

- Most successful cases of parliamentarism in small British colonies
- Maybe historical factors matter
 - 1st Reverse Wave: mostly parliamentary democracies fall
 - 2nd Reverse Wave: mostly presidential democracies fall

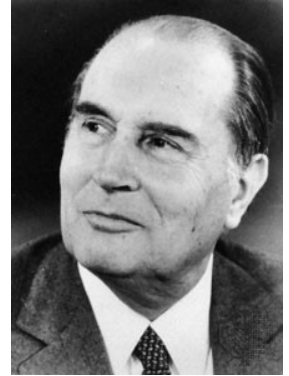
Better ways to test

- Difference-in-difference
 - Look at countries that changed systems and consider before and after
- 2SLS (two stage least squares)
 - estimate causes of presidentialism and then use predictions in second stage (also other instrumental variable techniques)
- Matching methods
 - Compare apples with apples: countries that are likely to have presidentialism (or parliamentarism) – some have it and others don't

Making presidentialism work

- Works best with small number of parties
 - President can have majority in legislature
 - “The difficult combination”
- Divided government a problem
 - Hold elections at the same time: coattails
 - Avoid midterm elections
- Limit decree powers
- More reelection
- Switching to parliamentarism worse?

A compromise?



- Semi-presidentialism
 - Elected president with some powers
 - But also government which needs to hold confidence of assembly
- How does it solve each of problems of presidentialism?
- French 5th republic – Who is in charge?
 - Problem of cohabitation

Types of parliamentarism

- Majoritarian type – Westminster
 - 2 parties, powerful PM, majority government, little opposition
- Party-controlled – Germany
 - 3-4 parties, coalitions but strong majority government
- Assembly government
 - Multiple parties, weak discipline, minority/surplus majority govts, short duration, PM first among equals

Parliamentarism rationalized

- Investiture vote
- Constructive vote of confidence or elections after no confidence
- Head of state role in formation
- Only PM elected, not cabinet
- Guillotine: confidence attached to laws
- Fewer parties
- Party discipline

Types of Political Systems

	Presidential	Parliamentary
Plurality Elections	United States Philippines	United Kingdom India
Proportional Representation	Latin America	Western Europe

Majoritarianism & Consensus

- Where do presidentialism/parliamentarism fit in Lijphart's scheme?
- Is presidentialism majoritarian?
 - Strong, unified executive
 - But only if weak legislature
- Is it consensus?
 - Separates power
 - But only if legislature strong