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Defining regimes with elected presidents

Any thorough analysis of presidential systems must first establish clear criteria for what presidentialism is. In this case, the task is especially critical because we shall later examine a number of variations on the institutional arrangements of presidential government, as well as proposals for modifications as yet untested.

The tasks of this chapter, then, are as follows: First, we provide a definition of presidentialism, drawing on the theoretical heritage of *The Federalist* and contrasting ours with other institutional definitions of the regime type. Next, we define premier-presidentialism in contrast to pure presidentialism.¹ We then discuss some hybrid regime types that exhibit combinations of qualities from both the presidential and premier-presidential types. Finally, we introduce a simple typology of regimes based upon two dimensions: (1) the degree of separation of powers, and (2) the nature of the cabinet. We return to this typology in greater detail in Chapter 8.

PRESIDENTIALISM ACCORDING TO ITS FOUNDERS: SEPARATE ORIGIN AND SURVIVAL

Beginning with *The Federalist*, the central defining characteristic of presidentialism has been the separation of legislative from executive powers. Indeed, this theme predates presidential government. The authors of *The Federalist* based much of their faith in the separation of powers on Montesquieu's arguments for legislative control over a king's ministers. Later, the idea of presidentialism as the separation of powers in a *republican* government is clearly delineated first in *The Federalist*, and this idea will remain central to our definition of presidentialism.

Nevertheless, by itself, the phrase "separation of powers" does not tell us much. Even in the United States, legislative and executive powers are not entirely separate. The presidential veto represents an executive intrusion in the legislative process, and the requirement of Senate ratification of treaties. Throughout this study, the term "presidential" regime refers to the "pure" type defined in this chapter; we do not use the term to encompass premier-presidentialism or various hybrids.

ties allows for legislative influence in the executive domain of foreign policy. Indeed, without such overlap, it would be difficult to imagine how one branch could check actions of the other. Along with the separation of powers, checks and balances were central to the conception of presidential government elaborated in *The Federalist*.²

If we were to define presidentialism as the absolute separation of executive from legislative power, then any veto requiring an extraordinary congressional majority for override would constitute a deviation from presidentialism. We argue that this is not the case. Powers are never entirely separate under presidentialism – nor were they intended to be. In fact, Madison's arguments in *The Federalist* suggest that the rationale for separating the sources of the *origin* and the *survival* of the executive and Congress was to ensure that each branch could impose checks on the other without fear of jeopardizing its own existence. Thus, separation in some respects serves to ensure interdependence – that is, checks – in others.

The critical distinction is between provisions pertaining to the origin and survival of the two branches and provisions pertaining to their actions. Regarding origin and survival, maximum separation is characteristic of presidentialism. But regarding actions, presidentialism seeks to protect mutual checks, which in turn requires that powers overlap considerably.

CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS: INSTITUTIONAL CRITERIA

The definition we use throughout this book when we refer to *presidential* government (or, at times, "pure" presidentialism), is the following:

1. the popular election of the chief executive;
2. the terms of the chief executive and assembly are fixed, and are not contingent on mutual confidence; and
3. the elected executive names and directs the composition of the government.

This three-part definition captures the essence of separate origin and survival of government (executive) and assembly in addition to specifying that the president be elected by voters (or an electoral college chosen by them for that sole purpose). We also identify a fourth criterion that, we maintain, logically follows from the above:

4. the president has some constitutionally granted lawmaking authority.

The latter criterion does not concern the formation and maintenance of powers, but if presidents do not have lawmaking power (such as a veto), then they are chief executives only in the most literal way: they execute laws the creation of which they had no way of influencing. Granting presidents lawmaking powers is a way of ensuring that the popular endorsement of a policy program through a presidential election can be translated into

² See especially *Federalist* No. 51.

actual policy output. There is only one regime that is fully presidential by the first three criteria yet fails to meet the fourth: Venezuela.

Having provided a working definition of presidentialism, we now review briefly some other contemporary definitions, in order to highlight ways in which our definition differs. In 1959, Douglas Verney offered a list of eleven criteria by which to distinguish presidentialism from parliamentarism, as well as from what he called "assembly government."³ But Verney's definition suffers from ambiguity and overlap among his criteria, and from the fact that he does not establish the primacy of any of them. In his book *Democracies*, Lijphart (1984:66-71) argues that two criteria are essential to presidentialism, while a host of others (some of which belong to Verney's list) are associated with – but not necessary for – presidential government. Lijphart's two essential criteria are that the chief executive shall:

1. not be dependent on legislative confidence, but rather shall sit for a fixed term; and
 2. be elected by popular vote.⁴
- In a recent essay, Lijphart (1989) identifies a third criterion, which he regards as essential to presidentialism as well:
3. a one-person executive.

Verney's conception of assembly (or convention) government is much more like parliamentarism than presidentialism. In effect, it is parliamentarism in which the assembly, rather than the cabinet, is dominant. His distinction between the two results primarily from the fact that he regarded the Westminster model as the prototype for parliamentary government, and was therefore forced to define another category for parliamentary forms that vary significantly from this model. We shall propose a somewhat different definition of the term "assembly regime" below. Verney's eleven criteria overlap considerably, so we have distilled Verney's institutional characteristics of presidentialism down to six:

1. the head of state is also the head of government;
 2. the president appoints the cabinet;
 3. legislative and executive personnel are distinct;
 4. the executive is not dependent on confidence of the assembly;
 5. the president cannot dissolve the assembly; and
 6. the assembly is the supreme branch of government. (Verney 1959: 39-57, 75-7)
- Students of democratic institutions may object that the formal election of the president by an electoral college (as in the United States, Argentina, and Finland) violates the principal of popular election for the president. Nevertheless, the election of members of an electoral college, who fulfill no other role than casting votes for president, is a vastly different phenomenon from the election of assembly members who also elect a head of government. It would be a mistake to equate the indirect election of a president, via an electoral college, with the selection of a head of government by the assembly. For this reason, we reemphasize the distinction between *popular* election and *direct* election for president. In most presidential systems, presidents are chosen by direct, popular election. Where an electoral college is chosen for the sole purpose of naming the president, without conferring or negotiating compromise candidates, then we still regard the election as popular, but not direct. In parliamentary and premier-presidential systems, where a prime minister must be approved by the assembly, the election of the head of government is neither popular nor direct.

Another way of saying this is that the electoral district magnitude – the number of seats elected in a district (Rae 1967) – for the executive equals one ($M = 1$), where the district is the entire nation. Lijphart's primary criticism of presidentialism is that it is inherently majoritarian, providing poor representation for minorities. Where $M = 1$, electoral disproportionality is bound to be high unless one candidate wins virtually all the votes. To *define* presidentialism by virtue of district magnitude, however, and then to argue that presidentialism generates majoritarianism, obscures the issue that majoritarianism is generated by electoral formula, and does not add much explanatory power to the definition of presidentialism. It also requires the classification as wholly distinct regime types systems such as Uruguay (1952-67) and Cyprus (1960-3), which have had popularly elected collegial executives while retaining separation of powers and checks and balances. If a regime has these latter features, we prefer to classify it as presidential, regardless of whether or not its elected executive is unitary or collegial.

In addition, to define presidentialism by the most majoritarian characteristic of most presidential systems seems inherently to contradict the spirit of the first two criteria described by Lijphart. Both of these criteria emphasize the relative independence of the legislative and executive branches. This independence is, as we shall see, essential to protecting the mutual checks in presidential systems – a distinctly antimajoritarian tendency. Thus, aside from the empirical problem of collegial executives, to define presidentialism by its unitary executive seems to be theoretically contradictory.

It could be that the contradiction over the number of persons constituting the elected executive is less a problem of definition than an indication of internal inconsistency in the regime type itself. Indeed, judging from the tensions between Madisonian and Hamiltonian conceptions of democracy evident in papers of *The Federalist*, this point is well taken.⁵ We shall explore in the chapters ahead many of the institutional tensions and perhaps contradictions in a wide array of systems generally classified as presidential. For the purposes of definition, however, we seek consistency in addition to generality, and we have chosen to embrace the Madisonian conception of presidentialism over the Hamiltonian.⁶ Madison's logic, we believe, generally prevailed over Hamilton's in shaping the first presidential constitution, and better reflects the themes of separation of powers with checks and balances that we deem to be illustrative of presidentialism across all cases.

⁵ While recognizing the problems of Lijphart's third criterion, we must also acknowledge his point. The overwhelming majority of presidential systems have had unitary executives, and this characteristic *does* generate majoritarianism in the executive. Indeed, because of the preponderance of single-member presidencies, criticisms of majoritarianism are central to the criticisms of presidentialism that we review in Chapter 3.

⁶ For an example of the contrast between the two, one could examine Madison's *Federalist* No. 51 versus Hamilton's *Federalist* No. 70.

In yet another effort to pin down the institutional nature of presidentialism Giovanni Sartori (1992) suggests as a third criterion that:

the president heads the cabinet, which he or she appoints.

Since the president, rather than the assembly, names the cabinet, this criterion implies that the entire executive is the president's domain, and is responsible to him or her. We regard this as a necessary defining characteristic of presidentialism, as it ensures consistency with the principle that the origin and survival of the executive should be separated from the influence of the assembly.⁷

In fact, the three criteria we have identified entail a complete description, in institutional terms, of this principle. These three criteria, in themselves, however, do not provide a complete definition of presidential government. As we have suggested, the rationale for separating the origin and survival of executive and legislative powers is to ensure the viability of mutual checks. In particular, Madison sought to temper the sweeping legislative authority of assemblies. An independent executive with no real law-making power, however, would pose no obstacle to parliamentary sovereignty. Therefore, in defining presidentialism we must add the criterion that the elected executive must have some lawmaking authority. We do not offer a more specific description of this lawmaking authority because, as we shall see, the authorities of the executive vary widely among presidential systems, and there is no single legislative power common to all independent executives. We shall see, moreover, that when the executive and assembly are of different political tendencies, this overlap in lawmaking authority can generate legislative deadlock in presidential systems; and it is where deadlock becomes chronic that presidentialism as a system has been subject to the most severe criticisms.

We prefer the definition of presidentialism given at the start of this section because it clarifies the major point distinguishing presidentialism from other regime types that feature popularly elected presidents, as well as from parliamentarism: the separation of origin and survival. Moreover, it clarifies who is responsible for the executive: the president, hence the term *presidential government*, while in parliamentary regimes, it is parliament that is responsible for the composition of the executive. We now turn to defining the other type that we shall devote considerable attention to in this book, premier-presidentialism.

7 As we discuss in Chapters 5 and 7, there have been a few examples of otherwise presidential systems in which cabinet ministers were directly accountable to the assembly. The dramatically different performance of these regimes from pure presidential systems has prompted many observers to label them parliamentary, notably in the cases of Chile 1891-1924, Brazil 1961-3, and even Cuba in the 1940s. We share the consensus that these regimes were not purely presidential, but we shall consider whether they are most accurately classified as parliamentary, or as hybrid systems.

PREMIER-PRESIDENTIALISM

A premier-presidential regime is, as its name implies, one in which there is both a premier (prime minister), as in a parliamentary system, and a popularly elected president. The credit (or blame) for first characterizing some regimes as "semipresidential" and describing the constitutional characteristics of these regimes belongs to Maurice Duverger,⁸ Duverger's concern is primarily with the nature and performance of the French Fifth Republic. He describes this regime as alternating between presidential and parliamentary phases, according to whether the assembly majority supports the president or not, instead of as an intermediate institutional arrangement somewhere between presidentialism and parliamentarism. Duverger does not characterize the Fifth Republic as purely presidential nor as purely parliamentary in either phase; but he prefers the concept of alternation between phases to that of an intermediate regime type for France. Yet the term "semipresidential" implies a regime type that is located midway along some continuum running from presidential to parliamentary. We find such an implication misleading, owing to the special characteristics such regimes exhibit. For the other European cases he discusses, there appear to be less distinct regime phases, although Duverger does not address this point. As we have stated, we consider such systems neither intermediate nor alternating regime types. Thus, what Duverger refers to as semipresidential, we designate premier-presidential.

Despite our differences with Duverger, we recognize his definition as concise and generalizable. Under premier-presidentialism:

1. the president is elected by popular vote;
2. the president possesses considerable powers; and
3. there also exist a premier and cabinet, subject to assembly confidence, who perform executive functions (Duverger 1980:161).

Our first criterion is the popular election of the chief executive, but, unlike under presidentialism, the president under premier-presidentialism is not necessarily the "chief" executive, but rather must coexist with a premier, who is head of the government. As we shall see, the relative status of each office within the executive may vary both across and within regimes.

Our second criterion is that the president has some political powers. The distinction with presidentialism here is that in premier-presidential systems, presidential powers are not necessarily legislative. There may be authorities such as submitting a bill to the electorate instead of to the assembly or referring legislation for judicial review. The presence of other legislative powers, such as veto or unilateral decree, might well lead the

8 The first explicit definition of semipresidentialism published in English, that we are aware of, is Duverger (1980). Nogueira (1986) also provides a theoretical discussion of semipresidentialism.

president into conflict with the rest of the executive itself, which is dependent on assembly confidence. Such powers, however, have existed and do exist in some premier-presidential regimes. More typical – and consistent with the regime type – are powers relating to the formation of governments, such as nominations for ministerial portfolios in addition to the premier, as well as nonministerial appointment powers. Typically, presidents in premier-presidential regimes have the power to dissolve the assembly. The important point here is that premier-presidentialism does not guarantee a legislative check by the president on the cabinet or the assembly. There is, however, one presidential power that moves a regime outside of the category of premier-presidentialism: the power to dismiss ministers unilaterally. Such power would contradict the third criterion of the definition, namely, the dependence of the cabinet on the assembly.

OTHER REGIME TYPES

We have defined two ideal types of democratic regimes with popularly elected presidents. Real-world regimes come in a variety of shadings and variations on these types. While it would be pointless to identify numerous types in an attempt to encompass all imaginable variations on the criteria of separation of powers and presidential authorities, nonetheless there are significant cases that clearly do not meet the criteria of either definition we have presented. The most common type is one in which both the president and the parliament have authority over the composition of cabinets. If the president both appoints and dismisses cabinet ministers, and if the ministers are subject to parliamentary confidence, we have another distinct type of regime. We designate such regimes, of which there have been several, *president-parliamentary*. Just as the names presidential and parliamentary for common regime types identify what elected institution has authority over the composition of the government, and just as the term “premier-presidential” indicates the primacy of the premier as well as the presence of a president with significant powers, so does the term “president-parliamentary” capture a significant feature of the regime: the primacy of the president, plus the dependence of the cabinet on parliament. Such a regime is defined thus:

1. the popular election of the president;
2. the president appoints and dismisses cabinet ministers;
3. cabinet ministers are subject to parliamentary confidence;
4. the president has the power to dissolve parliament or legislative powers, or both.

The definition captures two senses in which these regimes represent neither of our two ideal types, presidentialism and premier-presidentialism. First, these president-parliamentary regimes provide equal authority to dismiss members of the cabinet, unlike the other types. In either a

presidential or a premier-presidential regime, while both president and assembly may play a role in cabinet formation, by nominating or confirming candidates for ministerial positions, only one of the powers may dismiss ministers. The importance of this asymmetry of dismissal powers, alongside possibly shared appointment powers, will become clear in Chapter 6. The second feature captured by this definition is the lack of independent survival of assembly and executive powers, despite the great authority of the president over the cabinet. In a presidential regime, maximum separation of both origin and survival is the norm; under a president-parliamentary system, the ability of the parliament to censure ministers means that the survival of executive power is not separate. This latter point is obviously true in a premier-presidential system as well, but the difference is that under the latter type, it falls to the parliamentary majority to reconstitute the government after a censure, albeit in a process usually initiated by presidential nominations. Under president-parliamentary regimes, presidents themselves reconstitute the government, subject, of course, to the possibility of further censures. Moreover, many of these president-parliamentary regimes provide for the power of dissolution in addition to the powers over cabinets, thus meaning that separation of survival is nonexistent.

In Chapter 8, after we have discussed the various dimensions of presidential power, it will be possible to rate each regime according to the powers of presidents and the degree to which separation of survival characterizes each system. For now, we can provide a schematic that suggests where these regime types would be located in a two-dimensional space (Figure 2.1). There are two axes, one concerning the authority that presidents have over the composition of cabinets, the other concerning the degree to which the survival of assembly and executive are separated. In the upper right, with maximum presidential cabinet authority and maximum separation, we have the ideal-type presidentialism. In the lower left, with a minimum on both dimensions, we have the ideal-type premier-presidentialism, in which the president's powers are restricted to calling new elections to determine the makeup of the parliament that alone determines the composition of the cabinet. Slight deviations from these corner-points do not necessarily render the regime a wholly different regime type. For example, we have already defined a regime in which the president has some leeway in making the initial recommendation for premier or in which her or his powers of dissolution are restricted as premier-presidential. Similarly, a regime that requires assembly confirmation of presidential cabinet appointments would still be presidential.

The more significant deviations are those that would place a regime near the upper left. A regime with minimal separation of survival but maximum presidential authority to name and remove cabinets is a distinct regime type. As we shall see in Chapter 8, many regimes that are encountered in

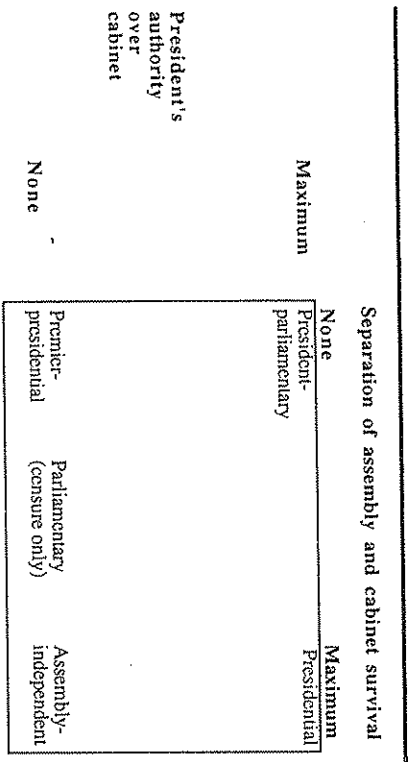


Figure 2.1. A typology of democratic regimes in two dimensions

this region have experienced serious crises over the authority of presidents and parliaments.

The lower right corner of Figure 2.1 also needs to be addressed, although only briefly. Maximum separation of survival combined with no presidential role in naming or dismissing cabinets would be an approximation of the Swiss regime: an executive chosen by the assembly but not removable by it. The obvious qualifier is that Switzerland has no elected president as head of state, but such a president would have no power over composition of the government anyway, thus (hypothetically) such a regime would be located at that part of the figure. We shall have little to say about this rare combination of powers, except to provide a contrast to presidentialism (see Chapter 5). We propose to call such regimes *assembly-independent*, to indicate the source of executive power, as well as the lack of mutual confidence of assembly and executive.

Even parliamentary regimes are encompassed in these two dimensions. Normally, parliamentary government is contrasted with presidential "separation of powers" systems as an opposite, in which the survival of the assembly and executive are mutually dependent. In parliamentary government, however, there is no president, or at least none with real powers. Thus, there is nobody from whom the assembly might *require* separation, except, of course, the cabinet, which in most but not all parliamentary systems is permitted to dissolve the assembly. The cabinet, however, is a mere agent of the assembly to begin with. So, unlike assembly-independent systems, the survival of the assembly and cabinet between scheduled elections is not inviolate. Yet no institution outside the assembly itself may

shorten the mandate of the assembly, as is the case under a typical premier-presidential regime. Thus parliamentary regimes are located at the midpoint of the dimension of separate survival.

CONCLUSION

We have now provided straightforward definitions for both presidential and premier-presidential government, the two forms with which this book is principally concerned. Our discussion, moreover, has generated a schema for locating these regime types that is generalizable to hybrid systems, as well as to parliamentary government itself. The task of establishing definitions is important so that key terms are clarified early, but we now move on to the more difficult and interesting job of evaluating the performance of different types of regimes.

Criticisms of presidentialism and responses

Having defined what presidentialism is, as well as what other types of regimes have popularly elected presidents, we now turn to the scholarly debate about the merits of presidential regimes. In this chapter we concern ourselves primarily with the ideal type of presidentialism that we defined at the beginning of Chapter 2. We address the criticisms of this regime type, then offer responses. Our purpose here is to determine whether it is even worth considering presidentialism as a viable option for democracies, especially new democracies. For, if scholars such as Di Palma (1990) are correct that regimes with elected presidents are "dangerous," especially for new democracies, then there would be little point in considering possible advantages of such regime types. In short, we do not find the criticisms of presidentialism, which have been launched in a nearly one-sided debate thus far, to be unassailable. After responding to these criticisms as they relate directly to pure presidentialism, we turn to the ways in which premier-presidentialism addresses the criticisms, and perhaps offers remedies for some of presidentialism's more dubious qualities.

THE CASE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT

The myriad criticisms brought against presidentialism have been elaborated in various combinations in a number of recent essays criticizing the system.¹ We understand presidentialism's problems, as described in the current literature, to fall into three broad categories. The fundamental deficiencies of the system are its:

1. temporal rigidity;
2. majoritarian tendencies;
3. dual democratic legitimacies.

Temporal rigidity

The first group of problems, those of temporal rigidity, refer to the set length of presidential, and congressional, terms. Although most presiden-

¹ Mainwaring (1989, 1992a) presents the best current synthesis of the arguments in two essays on presidentialism, multiparty systems, and democracy in Latin America.

tial constitutions make provisions for impeachment, they are invariably unwieldy procedures, requiring large extraordinary majorities, which formally can be used only when there is evidence of malfeasance or disregard for constitutional procedure on the part of the chief executive. In sum, presidents are elected for a fixed period, from four to six years, and cannot be removed for political reasons. While constitution builders promoted such a provision as generating stability in the executive, critics of the system argue that it is politically crippling – and the critics have a strong case.

The principal dilemma presented by the set presidential term is what to do with a highly unpopular chief executive; or even one who may enjoy some popularity but who faces stiff majority opposition in congress (Mainwaring 1992a; see also Linz 1987). Such presidents are unlikely to be able to initiate and pursue effectively their legislative programs. They may be at constant loggerheads with the majority of members of the assembly, who are attempting to pursue a rival legislative program. These presidents may even be widely repudiated by the majority of citizens. But they are heads of government (as well as heads of state) until their fixed terms expire, barring impeachment or extra-constitutional removal. Without the option of a no-confidence vote, presidential systems have no institutionalized means of removing an unpopular – and possibly feckless – chief executive.

The opposite manifestation of the same problem occurs when a highly popular and competent president must step down at the end of a fixed term. Where constitutions forbid reelection (at least immediate reelection), as in most of Latin America, the country is faced with the ironic problem of deciding between losing an effective government and tampering with the constitution. Most presidential systems – and even each party that hopes to compete at the highest level – must generate a viable national leader every four or five years (Linz 1987:3-1). Critics of presidentialism point out that this is a substantial, and unnecessary, burden to place on the system.

The problem of temporal rigidity in presidentialism is not restricted to the executive's term. Assemblies, too, are elected for fixed terms, and as with presidents their terms cannot be shortened for political reasons. The problem just described of a weak president can alternatively be described as one of an intransigent congress. Unlike many parliamentary systems, presidential systems do not afford the head of state the alternative of dissolving congress and calling new congressional elections, even in cases in which a new president with strong popular support is elected to face a hostile congress elected at an earlier date.

The inability of the assembly to remove the executive and of the executive to remove the assembly prevent either branch from resolving political crises based on fundamental mutual opposition. In systems where presidents cannot be reelected, moreover, they are effectively lame ducks immediately on taking office (Mainwaring 1992a). The date of their demise – while it may be years away – is known. And for a legislator disinclined to

compromise with the executive on legislation, the certainty of this date might be enough to turn stubbornness to intransigence.

Majoritarianism

Another group of problems associated with presidentialism is caused by the majoritarian tendencies within most presidential systems. The various manifestations of this presidential majoritarianism have been most central in analyses of Lijphart (1989), Lijphart and Rogowski (1991), and Linz (1987).

The majoritarian critique seems odd at first glance, in light of the Madisonian rationale for presidentialism as a system that offers the best protection against the tyranny of factions – be they of the minority or of the majority.² The critics of presidential majoritarianism, for their part, are concerned with the effects of electoral disproportionality – both in the executive and in the assembly – which distort the accuracy of representation in the system and can contribute to political extremism. Even majoritarianism may be an insufficient description of the extent to which presidentialism distorts the proportional representation of voters' choices in the executive, where $M = 1$. Adherents of PR will point out that no presidential election – even the biggest landslide – begins to approximate a proportional representation of voter preferences. Since the winner by definition wins 100% of the seats when only one seat is at stake, deviation from proportionality (Loosemore and Hanby 1971) is 100% minus whatever share of votes the victor received. If the presidential election is a multicandidate affair, deviation may be 60% or even higher. Even in a two-candidate race, deviation is seldom lower than 40%. Then the result is that the head of state and of government may accurately represent only a minority of voters.

Not only is the balance of voter preferences distorted in the person of the presidents themselves, but the composition of the cabinet will likely reinforce the effect, rather than temper it. Unlike parliamentarism (and premier-presidentialism), which encourages compromise among parties in the construction of executive coalitions,³ presidentialism does neither. Within the cabinet, the president is by no means first among equals, as the prime minister ostensibly is (Lijphart 1989:4). Even in those few cases where cabinet members are subject to congressional approval for appointment, they can be dismissed only by the president. They are generally members of her party, or nonpartisan experts, but less often are opposition

² See especially *Federalist* No. 10.

³ In parliamentary executives, deviation from proportionality is thus unlikely to be as high as in presidential systems. However, given that cabinets are small compared to assemblies and that many parties may be shut out of the cabinet, deviation is still higher than the corresponding figure for parliament as a whole.

partisans. In most presidential systems, they cannot be members of the assembly, thus reducing the potential for the congressional opposition to participate in shaping the executive agenda.

Finally, as Lijphart and Rogowski (1991) have convincingly argued, minority representation in presidential cabinets is characterized by tokenism, or "descriptive representation." Blacks, Hispanics, and women in U.S. cabinets, for example, have tended not to be aggressive supporters of the political agenda promoted by the minority groups to which they belong. Rather they have generally been moderate and acquiescent to the programs of their presidents.⁴ Because of the dominance of presidents over the rest of the cabinet, and the paucity of constraints on their ability to choose ministers, minority representation is more symbolic and less meaningful in presidential than in parliamentary systems.

Lijphart contends that this lack of meaningful representation in cabinets hinders the ability of presidential systems to resolve conflicts based on multiple or deep political cleavages – those divisions that mark plural societies. Below, we examine the obstacles to consensus politics *between* the assembly and executive in presidential systems. At any rate, Lijphart's argument is that the disproportionality of representation within the executive makes politics based on consensus *within* that branch less likely in presidential than in parliamentary systems. It is important to note, however, that at the core of the majoritarian criticism of presidentialism is the presupposition that $M = 1$ for the executive. This point is viable for the vast majority of presidential systems, but, as argued above, it is not essential to the nature of presidentialism.

Because of the exclusive nature of the unitary executive, the importance of capturing the presidency becomes paramount, dwarfing all other electoral goals for parties in presidential systems. This is what Linz (1987:13-15) describes as the "winner-take-all" nature of presidentialism. The high stakes, and the certainty that control of the executive will not be open to question again for a set period, raise the tension of electoral politics. In the wake of presidential elections, moreover, the winners have no reason to try to make amends with the losers. The ultimate prize has been secured, and those who contributed to the victory are clamoring for compensation, perhaps patronage or cabinet positions. The losers, moreover, have no reason to try to cooperate with the new incumbent. There is little to be gained, given the exclusive nature of presidential executives.

In addition to these manifestations of majoritarianism in the executive, the representation in the assembly of parties not winning the presidency

⁴ Polsby (1983) has argued that American party and electoral reforms of the late 1960s and 1970s have increased the feasibility and the incentives for presidents to rely on "descriptive representation" of minorities in their cabinets; and for cabinet members in general to act more as personal ambassadors of the president than as representatives of distinct group interests. See also Pitkin (1967).

can be dampened when assembly and presidential elections occur concurrently or in fairly close succession. The effects of electoral cycles will be developed fully in Chapters 10 and 11. For now, the point is that the relative timing of presidential and assembly elections can benefit the president's party in congress considerably. This phenomenon reinforces Linz's argument regarding the urgency of presidential elections. Evidently, the winner takes all of the executive, and depending on the timing of congressional elections, can expect to take more than her share of congress as well.

We do not universally condemn the pull of presidentialism on assembly elections. In countries with multiple, factional, and personalized parties, the impetus to coalesce for presidential competition may counteract the tendency toward fragmentation. The point for now is that those who concur with Lipjhart on the desirability of consensual over majoritarian democracy have lodged serious complaints against presidentialism. To the extent that certain institutional designs in presidentialism may generate a congress dominated by the president's party, it is majoritarian. Even where the timing of congressional elections prevents this effect, the unitary executive in most presidential systems is highly majoritarian.

Moreover, in addition to distorting representation, this phenomenon can inspire a false sense of popular mandate (Blondel and Suárez 1981:63-5; Suárez 1982:137). Although presidents may be elected with a mere plurality of the votes – and even a small one, as Salvador Allende was in Chile in 1970 – those who are personally dominant over a homogeneous cabinet are likely to develop an inflated notion of the support for a presidential program and the inevitability of its implementation. This is both a function of and a contributor to presidentialism's majoritarian problems. The nature of elections and of the executive branch generates the false sense of mandate, and the misperception in turn inhibits cooperation and consensus-building between president and opposition, both within the government and without, according to these critics.

Dual democratic legitimacy

The remainder of the criticisms against presidentialism share common roots in the existence of the separate and competing claims to democratic legitimacy made by assembly and executive. These claims are based on the first two defining criteria of presidentialism. Because both the assembly and executive are popularly elected, both can claim a unique popular mandate. Moreover, because the tenure of members of each branch is unaffected by relations with the other, the need for cooperation between president and the congress is not urgent. This category of criticisms is the most central in that the problems generated by temporal rigidity and majoritarianism become practically irresolvable when presented to institutions that lack built-in incentives to achieve compromise (Mainwaring 1989).

In the first place, presidents in multiparty systems who do not have majority party support in congress have far less incentive to seek and maintain lasting coalitions in congress than do parliamentary executives. The success of any given piece of legislation may depend on putting together a majority coalition, but the survival of the executive does not. For this reason, coalition building in many presidential regimes tends to be piecemeal, and the incentives for cooperation offered to congresspersons particularistic (Stockman 1985; Birnbaum and Murray 1987; Kaminsky 1989; Jacobson 1990; Mainwaring 1992a). Since the need for presidents to cultivate support in the assembly is not as pressing as for prime ministers, presidents tend to be less receptive to dissatisfaction with the executive than prime ministers do, thus increasing the chance of political crisis.

A complicating factor here is that the electoral process in presidential systems facilitates the selection of "political outsiders" as chief executives. While this is particularly dramatic in the United States, where primary elections determine party nominees, it is true as well where parties are less subject to grass roots pressures. Direct election of the executive dictates first and foremost that candidates have widespread popular appeal, even at the expense of political experience. Moreover, presidential aspirants who are well known independent of any leadership position in party or government can run for highest office with the support of parties formed expressly for the purpose of conducting presidential campaigns. As a result, we can expect presidents to have less political experience than prime ministers.⁵

Data presented by Suárez (1982) supports this proposition, at least as regards Latin America. Examining aggregate data on heads of state and government around the world between 1940 and 1976, Suárez found that Latin American presidents had on average far less ministerial experience than leaders in the Atlantic democracies. Adherents of parliamentarism regard this as a disadvantage, in part because of the lack of experience, but also because political outsiders are likely to be less disposed than "insiders" to coalition building in the assembly.

In addition to producing leaders who are unable or unwilling to cooperate with congress, the system's dual democratic legitimacies generate no incentives for members of the assembly to seek rapprochement with the executive, according to the critics. For representatives of parties other than the president's the logic of opposition is clear, and no different from that of opposition members in parliamentary systems: There is nothing to gain

⁵ The 1990 presidential election in Peru is perhaps the most striking manifestation of this tendency ever. The novelist Mario Vargas Llosa exemplifies the phenomenon of a nationally known figure who assembles a party that is purely a personal vehicle to achieve the election of an individual to the presidency. Even more remarkable, however, was the rise of the eventual winner, Alberto Fujimori, whose "party" was no less personalistic, and whose platform was even more dramatically defined by its single-minded opposition to, and contrast with, traditional Peruvian politics.

from cooperation with the executive. Even for congresspersons from the president's own party, however, the separation of powers weakens incentives to support the president, and can create incentives to oppose him.

Valenzuela (1989b) argues that presidentialism fostered polarization of the Chilean party system in congress. His logic is that even members of congress from the president's own party have less to gain than to lose through unconditional loyalty to the president. This is especially true in systems where the president cannot be immediately reelected. Although members of congress have an interest in their own party retaining the presidency, the success of the incumbent does not guarantee this; nor does his or her failure preclude it. Congresspersons from the president's own party, then, do not have an overwhelming incentive to support a lame duck. On the other hand, while the president may not have an election pending, the congressperson does. Dips in presidential popularity, in particular, prompt congresspersons to distance themselves as much as possible from the chief executive. The result, according to Valenzuela, is polarization in the assembly, both among parties, as opposition congresspersons attack the president, and within parties, as the president's own party members try to stake out some space far enough from the president that they can divorce their political fates from hers or his.⁶

This is an argument that presidential systems generate weak – or at least vulnerable – executives. Still, the case is not incompatible with Lijphart's charges of presidential majoritarianism. The paradox of presidentialism is that, while its majoritarian characteristics create great expectations for the potency of the executive, the competing incentives within the system prevent these expectations from being realized (Moore 1987; Lijphart 1990a:76–7; Mainwaring 1992a).

In a further argument that combines the themes of temporal rigidity and separate democratic legitimacies, Linz suggests that presidentialism suffers, in effect, from too much electoral accountability. Because it is so difficult to build support coalitions for the executive after presidential elections, he points out, these coalitions must be presented before the election, offering to the voters the choice of providing the president with a congressional majority. But once the electoral decision is made, according to Linz, political leaders are left with less room to maneuver, to make “deals difficult to defend in public but that might be necessary” (Linz 1987:33).

Linz wants to allow room for coalition building away from the public spotlight. But the same process can equally be described as private deal-making by political elites. The argument is less than compelling in that it implies a proclivity toward elitist politics and dismisses the principle of

⁶ The literature on midterm elections in the United States examines at length the proposition that voters cast congressional ballots based on presidential performance, and that congressional candidates position themselves accordingly. See Campbell et al. (1964); Kennell (1977); Erikson (1988).

accountability. Furthermore, the critics of presidentialism take aim primarily at systems in which reelection is prohibited. Proponents of such a rule argue that the lame duck president should not be constrained by short-term electoral considerations in pursuing the national interest. Indeed, we see no reason to believe that parliamentary leaders should be any more willing to take action that is “difficult to defend, but necessary” than should a president barred from reelection.

At any rate, the critics of presidentialism rightly point out that the difficulties of building and sustaining support for the president's legislative agenda pose a serious problem for effective government. The principle of separating legislative from executive powers as a check against the abuse of either can go awry when neither branch is able to exercise power effectively. This dilemma prompts the question of whether a president lacking congressional support would pose a problem if legislative initiative rested primarily in congress. If coalition building is not primarily an action taken by the executive to coordinate the congress, then the disincentives to cooperation between the two branches should not present a problem. The evidence from the United States seems to support this proposition. The U.S. Congress has functioned most of the time since World War II with opposition majorities. It is not the most decisive and effective legislative body imaginable, but it has avoided chronic deadlock with the executive. Further, the Chilean Congress was, for much of the twentieth century, one of the most independent and activist of Latin America's assemblies. Although minority presidents were a regular phenomenon in Chile, immobilism and deadlock did not reach crisis levels until the 1970s.⁷ The evidence is not conclusive; but it is suggestive that the critics of presidentialism might qualify their attack on the separation of powers, to direct it at those systems in which congresses are primarily reactive, rather than initiative (Mainwaring 1992a). Such a qualification would then direct attention to the question of whether the problem of presidential immobilism could be alleviated by strengthening congresses, a topic to which we devote considerable attention in Chapters 5, 7, 8, and 9. However, where multiple parties exhibit substantial ideological differences, confrontations between congress and a president who perforce represents only one political tendency may be chronic.

The last criticism of presidentialism we shall address holds that chronic legislative-executive conflict presents dangers far greater than that of deadlock: it invites rule by executive decree (Mainwaring 1992a) and regime instability – even military coups.

⁷ Indeed, one could argue that, had the Eduardo Frei government not obtained a constitutional weakening of the Chilean Congress, the center-right opposition in the early 1970s might have curbed Allende's program, and possibly even prevented the crisis of 1973 from escalating to the point where the military was able to seize power with substantial civilian support. These points are addressed in Chapter 9.

The case that immobilism invites rule by decree is straightforward and is supported by the example of Colombia in the years during and after the National Front (Hardyn 1989:16-18). Intense factionalism in a congress with limited powers of legislative initiative made coalition building virtually impossible, even though both major parties nominally supported the Front's common presidential candidate at election time. Owing to their inability to secure support in the congress for their legislative programs, Colombian presidents ruled by decree under the State of Emergency as a matter of course throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Vásquez 1979).

Some authors have extended the criticism of presidential immobilism to conclude that the executive's inability to maintain consistent support has directly caused regime instability and encouraged military coups. Scott (1973:290) argued that civilian political elites would encourage and welcome military intervention in the face of congressional-presidential immobilism. Furthermore, using worldwide data from 1940 through the 1970s, Suárez (1982) demonstrates that Latin American governments have endured for less time on average than those in other parts of the developing world, and that these presidencies have had an inordinate proportion of unconstitutional transitions of power. He goes on to argue that in at least three cases - the overthrows of Presidents Fernando Belaunde in Peru, João Goulart in Brazil, and Salvador Allende in Chile - congressional-presidential deadlock was the primary factor triggering the military coups. Valenzuela's (1978) account of polarization and crisis in Chile under Allende certainly supports Suárez's thesis.

PRESIDENTIALISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM

The suggestion that presidential democracy is prone to breakdown, leading to authoritarian government, is the most troubling of all the criticisms leveled by adherents of parliamentarism. Before offering a defense of presidentialism, then, we suggest reconsidering the logic by which presidentialism is tied to authoritarianism. Two points, in particular, need to be addressed:

1. the difference between presidential constitutions that are formally democratic but fail, and those in which formal presidential dominance over other actors precludes workable checks and balances to begin with; and
2. the question of whether parliamentary democracy has in fact performed as well relative to presidential democracy as parliamentarism's adherents have claimed.

One key criticism of presidentialism stems from a failure to differentiate presidential constitutions developed in an authoritarian context from those in which power is less concentrated in the executive. A fundamental criticism of presidential systems concerns the extent of presidential powers and the independence of presidents from party and assembly. Lijphart (1989) is

especially clear on this point when he argues that parliamentary cabinets are necessarily more collegial than presidential cabinets. Even a prime minister who appears to exercise dominant power over his or her colleagues, as did Margaret Thatcher in Britain, is ultimately responsible to the party. The Conservative Party's removal of Thatcher from office in November 1990 after some of her erstwhile cabinet colleagues publicly criticized her policies only underscores the point. Under a presidential system, on the other hand, the cabinet, and especially the head of government, is not responsible to other elected officials for survival.

Even in an authoritarian context, a formally parliamentary constitution may allow the party to retain significant political power over the authoritarian head of government. Thus, where a party organization matters, formal parliamentary rules may be expected. Indeed, the Communist systems of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union before 1990 were generally parliamentary in form. That this feature from time to time worked is shown by the replacement of such leaders as Nikita Krushchev and Edward Gierek by their own parties.

More personalized authoritarian systems where party either does not exist or is less developed, such as those of Chile under Augusto Pinochet and Paraguay under Alfredo Stroessner, have tended to be presidential. In Mexico, where the official party is not a mass party in the Leninist model but rather was created as a means of circulating the top leadership among several competing caudillos (Craig and Cornelius 1991), a presidential system was adopted. And, tellingly, when Mikhail Gorbachev sought a way to protect his political power from elements of the party that he feared might want to replace him, he opted for a presidential constitution. In each case just mentioned, not only was executive power protected from party and assembly by means of presidentialism, it was also given significant powers over legislation.

This latter point, the extent of legislative powers in the hands of the president, affects the policy content of a presidential system's legislative process more than the degree to which executives are responsible to their own parties. Additionally, the more the president is given substantial legislative authority, the more the outcome of conflicts between the assembly and executive is skewed in favor of the latter. Further, many presidential democracies have inherited constitutions from an authoritarian period and those constitutions were developed at the service of a dictator. This has also been the case in some transitions where new constitutions have not been written.⁸ Wherever such resulting democratic regimes prove troublesome, we have further evidence for our proposition that it is the balance of presidential-congressional powers, more than presidentialism per se, that

⁸ See Geddes (1990) for a discussion of transitions in Latin America in which new constitutions were written versus those in which an existing or prior constitution was retained.

has hampered democratization in many countries. In Chapters 7 and 8, we undertake a systematic analysis of the many possible ways of arranging the relative powers of presidents and assemblies, and the implications of such arrangements for the balance of powers.

From this postulated affinity of dictators and constitutions with strong presidential powers, then, flow some of the exaggerated criticisms of presidential political powers in the *democratic* context. Precisely because a presidential constitution allows the head of government to be sheltered even from his own party and can be – *but need not be* – designed as well to give superior legislative powers to the president, authoritarianism and presidentialism have tended to go together. However, the category denoted by the term presidential *democracy* includes wide variation in the extent to which presidents have legislative powers. No criticism of authoritarian tendencies in presidential democracy is adequate without reference to authoritarian legacies that remain in many presidential constitutions in the form of superior legislative powers accorded the executive.

IS PRESIDENTIALISM ESPECIALLY PRONE TO BREAKDOWN?

The criticisms of presidential democracy that we have reviewed are more than simply arguments about the quality of democracy. Indeed, even Linz, perhaps the harshest of the current critics of presidentialism, concedes that direct election of the executive is highly democratic. So does Lijphart (1984). Rather, as we have noted, the critics tend to express their arguments in terms of the likelihood of stable democracy. Parliamentary democracy, because it does not suffer from maladies such as temporal rigidity and competing claims to legitimacy and because it has the vote of confidence to resolve interbranch conflicts, is more conducive to stable democracy, the critics say. Interbranch conflicts under presidentialism are likely to be resolved through coups or other nondemocratic measures. Thus, according to critics, presidential systems are especially prone to breakdown.

Mainwaring (1992a) provides a list of stable democracies, where stability is defined in terms of longevity, that appears to be a clear vindication of the argument that presidential systems are inimical to the continued functioning of democracy. He lists thirty-two democracies that, as of 1991, had been democratic for at least twenty-five years. Of those countries, twenty-three (72%) are parliamentary. But is this the final word on the relationship between regime type and democratic longevity? We should like to try a different approach. Rather than take a “snapshot” of democracies as of a specific date, we shall look at democratic failures throughout the twentieth century.

Why should our method be a more reliable measure of the proclivity (or lack thereof) of different democratic regime types to break down? There are two basic reasons, both of which stem from historical observations. The first

historical reason is that there have been two waves of breakdowns of democracy in this century, one between World War I and World War II and the other in the 1960s. The first wave claimed mostly parliamentary regimes (and no true presidential regimes). The second claimed mostly, but not exclusively, presidential systems. Of the three paperback volumes containing case studies on *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Linz and Stepan 1978) that were originally published, only the volume on Europe between the wars was out of print by 1990. Apparently there is not as much of a market for studies of failures in an earlier period – when the failed regimes happened to have governments based on parliamentary confidence – as there is for the contemporary period, when several Latin American presidential systems broke down.

The second historical reason that our method of counting breakdowns is more valid than counting twenty-five-year-old (or older) democracies as of one point in time is that there have been three waves of democratization in this century (cf. Huntington 1991). The first was in the aftermath of World War I. The second occurred after decolonization in the post-World War II period (and extended up to the early 1960s). The third began in the 1980s and continues into the 1990s. Of these, only the third wave has given birth mostly to presidential (and some premier-presidential) democracies. Thus the method of counting successes, as Mainwaring does, cannot take account of new presidential democracies that, for all we know, might prove to be long-term successes, any more than it can account for failures (whether presidential or parliamentary) in earlier periods.

We have, in Table 3.1 compiled a list of democratic failures. We define a failure as a breakdown that led to a *replacement* of the regime by a nondemocratic regime. We thus do not count cases in which there was a brief lapse of democratic authority that was followed by either a new democratic constitution or a renewal of the former one. Such cases are not regime failures and replacements, but rather what Linz (1978) calls “cases of reequilibration.” Cases of reequilibration include both presidential and parliamentary systems that suffered crises: Chile in 1925 and 1933, France in 1958, and India in 1972. In the Chilean cases and in France, democratic authority was restored in less than a year. And in India, there an election led to the ruling party’s defeat despite emergency rule, there was never a break in the constitutional order. Indeed, in these cases arguably democracy (of whatever institutional form) reemerged stronger from the crisis. Another criterion we have used is to count only those cases in which at least two consecutive general elections were held before the breakdown. In so doing we avoid ambiguous cases in which one election was held under the watchful eye of a departing colonial power or as a mere “demonstration” for foreign consumption (Herman and Brodhead 1984). If such an election was followed by another and only subsequently by a breakdown, we count it.

Table 3.1. Breakdowns of democratic regimes in the twentieth century by regime type

Parliamentary systems	Presidential systems	Other types
*Burma 1962	*Argentina 1930	Austria 1933 (premier-presidential)
*Estonia 1934	*Bolivia 1964	*Ecuador 1962 (president-parliamentary)
*Fiji 1988	*Brazil 1964	Germany 1933 (pres.-parl.)
Greece 1936	*Chile 1973	*Korea 1961 (pres.-parl.)
Greece 1967	*Colombia 1953	*Peru 1968 (pres.-parl.)
*Guyana 1978	*Cuba 1954	*Sri Lanka 1982 (pres.-parl.)
Italy 1922	*Guatemala 1954	
*Kenya 1969	*Korea 1972	
Latvia 1934	*Nigeria 1983	
Lithuania 1926	*Panama 1968	
*Nigeria 1966	*Philippines 1972	
*Pakistan 1954	*Uruguay 1973	
*Pakistan 1977		
Portugal 1926		
*Sierra Leone 1967		
*Singapore 1972		
*Somalia 1969		
Spain 1936		
*Surinam 1982		
*Thailand 1976		
*Turkey 1980		

*Third World cases

We have identified twelve presidential regimes and twenty-one parliamentary regimes that have broken down in the twentieth century. Additionally, we identify six other types that have broken down. Except for the premier-presidential regime of interwar Austria, these six "other" breakdowns were all president-parliamentary regimes.

Our greater number of parliamentary failures than presidential failures is hardly what one would expect from reading most of the comparative literature. Perhaps parliamentary regimes have received more credit than they are due as means to resolve political conflicts. Some refinement of the sample needs to be made, however. For example, if parliamentary regimes were far more common, especially in the Third World where the success of any type of democracy has been minimal, then our simple counting of breakdowns might obscure a greater rate of presidential breakdowns.

Table 3.2 shows democratic regimes that have not broken down in the twentieth century or, for newer regimes, that have passed the threshold of two elections that we referred to above. Included are only those countries with at least 200,000 population, to avoid microstates. The table lists twelve presidential systems, twenty-seven parliamentary, and eight other types,

Table 3.2. Countries that have held at least two democratic elections without breakdown, as of 1991

Parliamentary systems	Presidential systems	Other types
Australia	*Argentina	Austria (premier-presidential)
*Bahamas	*Brazil	*Bolivia (assembly-independent)
*Barbados	*Colombia	*Ecuador (president-parliamentary)
Belgium	*Costa Rica	Finland (premier-presidential)
*Botswana	*Dominican Republic	France (premier-presidential)
Canada	*El Salvador	Iceland (premier-presidential)
Denmark	*Guatemala	*Peru (president-parliamentary)
Cernany	*Honduras	Portugal (premier-presidential)
Greece	*Senegal	Switzerland (assembly-independent)
Ireland	United States	
Israel	*Uruguay	
Italy	*Venezuela	
*Jamaica		
Japan		
Luxembourg		
*Malaysia		
Malta		
Netherlands		
New Zealand		
Norway		
*Papua New Guinea		
*Solomon Islands		
Spain		
Sweden		
*Trinidad and Tobago		
*Turkey		
United Kingdom		

*Third World cases

indicating that parliamentary regimes are more common. The breakdown rate is higher for presidential regimes, 50.0%, compared to 43.8% for parliamentary regimes.

When we consider only Third World cases, however, we find that just over half (52.2%) of the presidential regimes in the less developed countries have broken down, while a higher percentage (59.1%) of the parliamentary regimes have. A remarkable fact revealed by the tables is the extent to which presidentialism is a Third World phenomenon, as only the United States is a developed nation with a presidential regime. Also striking is that most of the presidential failures from Table 3.1 reappear as democracies subsequently in Table 3.2. Among the parliamentary failures in the Third World, on the other hand, only Turkey reappears. While we shall not attempt to provide a theoretical justification for this observation, which could simply be spurious, it does indicate that the parliamentary failures in the Third World have tended to be irreversible, at least as of

1991. More importantly, parliamentarism has not fared any better in the Third World than has presidentialism; arguably, it has fared worse.

Indeed, we find no justification for the claim of Linz and others that presidentialism is inherently more prone to crises that lead to breakdown. Nor is it our purpose to stand that argument on its head and argue that parliamentarism is inherently prone to breakdown. On the other hand, these caveats about the link between regime type and regime breakdown does not mean that institutional choice does not matter; some presidential democracies that broke down might have survived had they been parliamentary (Chile in 1973, perhaps). It is also possible that some failed parliamentary democracies might have survived had they been presidential instead (the first republics of Nigeria and Pakistan, perhaps). Some crises may be so severe that no constitutional system could endure (perhaps the Weimar Republic).⁹ Our central point here is that the argument against presidentialism has often been expressed universalistically, as if presidentialism as a regime type were prone to breakdown, while parliamentarism contained conflict-regulating mechanisms that would ordinarily shield it from breakdown. The historical evidence presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 suggests that the critics of presidential systems should rethink their case.

The presence of so many young democracies in our list of failed parliamentary systems might appear to be stacking the deck against that regime type. Ironically, however, much of the criticism of presidentialism and support for parliamentarism centers around the superior appropriateness of a parliamentary system for new democracies (Di Palma 1990; Mainwaring 1992a). So a list that includes young democracies is hardly inconsistent with the critics' means of conceptualizing the problems and choices at hand. There is also a theoretical reason for not excluding new democracies, as long as they have survived long enough to hold a second general election. Conceptually we agree with Di Palma that a lengthy period of "habitation" (Rustow 1970) is not necessary to prove the "consolidation" and "legitimacy" of a democracy. Once a transition to a democratic regime is complete, the new institutions either obtain what Di Palma calls "behavioral compliance" or they do not. Among new democracies, cases of both regime types have failed to obtain the behavioral compliance of political elites. Indeed, some of the new presidential democracies established since around 1980 have already outlived several of the young parliamentary systems that failed in the 1960s or earlier.

The critics of presidentialism might counter that the failures of parliamentarism in the 1920s and 1930s were concentrated in one region and resulted from international circumstances, such as economic disaster and the imposed peace of the Treaty of Versailles. However, as we foreshad-

⁹ However, Adolf Hitler three times ran for the presidency and lost. He was ultimately appointed chancellor because only a cabinet headed by him could count on parliamentary confidence, which the Weimar constitution required.

owed above, a similar argument resting upon regional concentration of breakdowns and international determinants can be made for Latin America in the 1960s (Therborn 1979). Besides, the proponents of parliamentarism have not framed their case in terms of anything other than the domestic political process and the ability of the regime to handle pressures, whatever the source of those pressures.

To be fair, Linz (1987) has stated his defense of parliamentary democracy in terms of other institutional choices besides the basic choice of parliamentarism or presidentialism that can affect the chances for stable democracy. Specifically, he cites the adoption of electoral systems less conducive to party system fragmentation and the constructive vote of no-confidence when comparing the interwar German and Spanish regimes to those countries' current systems. We wholeheartedly agree that other choices besides the basic regime type matter. We simply argue that, to be fair to presidential democracy, the critics should recognize that choices within presidential democracy as well can make a difference. Neither parliamentary nor presidential democracy is a unified regime type. Nor, as we have argued, do these commonly recognized types constitute an exhaustive typology. Indeed, that is one of the principal points of this book. Before going on to discuss institutional choices within presidential democracy that may be more or less conducive to democratic success, let us first address the question of why one might favor *any* variant of a presidential system.

IN THE PRESIDENT'S DEFENSE

The criticisms of presidentialism have been discussed at length and refined in a number of recent analyses. Defenses of presidentialism, on the other hand, have been few and far between.¹⁰ We should reemphasize that our defense of presidentialism is not meant to imply that we regard presidentialism in all cases to be a superior regime type to parliamentarism. Indeed, we acknowledge most of the criticisms of presidentialism reviewed above as penetrating. Nor do we reject the common empirical assertion that presidential institutions, as they have been realized, have often performed poorly. Much of our project in the chapters ahead will consist of discussing the variations in institutional arrangements found within the presidential regime type, as well as premier-presidentialism and other forms. In some cases, we shall suggest alternative arrangements that might mitigate problems of less successful systems. At any rate, for now our discussion remains abstract; the only qualities of the presidentialism we discuss here are those outlined at the beginning of this chapter. We suggest four areas in which

¹⁰ Hartlyn (1989) offers intermittent and strictly qualified praise of Colombia's National Front as a consociational adaptation of presidentialism. Rather than a defense of presidentialism, however, Hartlyn's response to the system's critics is that even parliamentarism would not have prevented the conflicts that made the National Front necessary.

presidentialism offers at least potential advantages over parliamentary democracy. In some respects, these advantages can be understood to reflect merely the flip side of presidentialism's deficiencies. For example, vetoes built into the legislative process can be defended as protection against the capricious use of state power, rather than attacked as the roots of immobilism. Broadly, then, in response to the advocates of parliamentarism we offer the following ideal-type advantages of presidentialism. What presidentialism provides, to a degree that parliamentarism does not, is:

1. accountability;
2. identifiability;
3. mutual checks; and
4. an arbiter.

Accountability

Accountability describes the degree and means by which elected policymakers are responsible to citizens. The more straightforward the connection between the choices made by the electorate at the ballot box and the expectations to which policymakers are held, the greater accountability. Accountability is closely related to concepts such as retrospective voting (Fiorina 1981), or "throwing the rascals out." Under these conceptions of electoral connection between constituents and government, voters need not be able to assess prospectively the policy directions with which they wish to endow a mandate on the government (Riker 1982a). Rather, voters need only have the opportunity to impose sanctions on elected officials at the next election. Officials can be expected to anticipate such sanctions if they stray too far from voters' wishes between elections (Eulau and Prewitt 1973; Pennock 1979). As Powell (1989) has observed, this form of accountability is weakened if governments tend to change between elections, and especially if the government changes shortly before an election, as happens frequently in parliamentary systems.¹¹ Under such circumstances, the responsibility for policy in the interelection period is less clear, making it difficult for voters to know whom to hold accountable on election day.

On the principle of maximizing direct accountability between voters and elected officials, presidentialism is clearly superior to parliamentarism, since voters vote directly for an executive that cannot be removed by shifting coalitions in the assembly. However, the principle itself is not universally accepted. Linz's argument regarding the inflexibility of political alliances in presidential systems and the advantage for members of congress to be able to make deals that are difficult to defend before the electorate is a direct contradiction of the principle of accountability. As we have stated, we are not convinced of Linz's case. Without wandering

¹¹ Strom (1990:75) notes that only 49% of the governments in his sample of parliamentary regimes were formed near elections.

into an extended analysis of whether the electorate – or any particular electorate – is capable of exercising the kind of citizen control implied here, we simply suggest that the principle of maximized opportunity for accountability is complementary with the principles of representative democracy. The debate between presidentialism and parliamentarism is over the most effective institutional means of maintaining representative democracy. Therefore, the direct election of the executive by the electorate, and the accountability of the president to the public that this entails, will be considered an advantage of presidentialism.

In addition to its direct relationship to executive accountability, presidentialism clarifies the motivations behind the votes of individual legislators on important issues.¹² Where legislative voting does not have implications for government survival, a legislator or a party leadership can be held directly accountable for votes on legislation.

Identifiability

An aspect of the connection between voters and the electoral outcomes that is related to accountability is the degree to which voters can identify before the election the likely alternative governments that may emerge after the election. The concept of identifiability is closely linked to theories of democratic government that call on voters to be able to provide a policy mandate for their elected representatives (Ranney 1962). Unlike accountability, which requires only that voters be afforded clear governmental responsibility in order to punish or reward their representatives retrospectively, maximizing identifiability requires that voters have an opportunity to make a clear prospective choice.

Strom (1990) has developed an indicator of "identifiability" for his sample of stable parliamentary democracies. The indicator can run from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating that in 100% of a given regime post-World War II elections the resulting government was identifiable as a likely result of the election at the time voters went to the polls. The average of all Strom's sample is .39, meaning that far more than half the time voters could not know what government they were voting for. Yet, under a parliamentary regime, voting for MP or party list is the only way voters can influence the choice of executive.

Among parliamentary systems there is a great range of identifiability scores (Strom 1990:75). Not surprisingly, systems with only two major parties, such as Canada and Britain, have scores of 1.00. Those with a clear left-right divide, such as Sweden (1.00), Norway (.83), or Ireland (.83)

¹² Of course, under list PR systems, the relationship between voter and representative will always be less than clear. This is a function not of presidentialism or parliamentarism but of ballot structure and electoral formula. The point remains, however, that where accountability is possible under presidentialism, it becomes more difficult under parliamentarism.

also score high. But multiparty systems without a two-bloc format tend to be far lower, with extremely low figures for some, such as Belgium (.10), Israel (.14), and Italy (.12).

In presidential systems, identifiability is bound to approach 1.00 in most cases. As we shall see in Chapters 10 and 11, even in multiparty systems, if the president is elected by plurality rule, ordinarily only two "serious" presidential candidates compete in the election for chief executive.¹³ Thus, if we value the ability of voters to be able to know which alternative executives are likely to emerge out of an election, presidentialism appears superior to most variants of parliamentarism.

To this argument one might respond that while voters in a typical two-candidate presidential race know what their alternatives are, their range of choice is sharply restricted. A vote for a minority viewpoint is effectively "wasted" in the vote for executive in a presidential system, while in a parliamentary system, a minor party may be able to play a role in cabinet formation. On the other hand, such a party may be shut out entirely due to the preferences of leaders of major parties. We could sum up this trade-off by indicating that, given multiparty competition for the assembly, a parliamentary system is good at allowing voters, with their range of partisan options, to know what they are asking for, but presidentialism makes it clearer what they are getting. We do not wish to claim that voters are universally able to make use of prospective voting, but we suggest that democratic constitutions ought to give voters the opportunity to do so.

Later, we discuss some institutional variations on regimes with popularly elected executives – specifically, premier-presidentialism, collegial presidencies, and modifications to the electoral cycle – which are potential ways to enhance both the advantages of accountability and identifiability, on the one hand, and the ability to make a vote for a minor party that is meaningful from the standpoint of policy output.

Mutual checks

In much the same way that it clarifies the relationship between representative and constituent, presidentialism clarifies the stakes between legislator and executive on any given issue. Following the logic above, members of the assembly freed from the threat of a vote of confidence can ratify or check executive initiatives based on the merit of the legislation itself rather than on the survival of the government. Of course, it is precisely this independence of the assembly that generates the problem of immobilism. Is legislative independence an advantage or a flaw? The critics of presidentialism unanimously see it as a drawback, although Mainwaring (1992a) qualifies this position somewhat in his argument that presidentialism is

¹³ In Chapter 10 we propose an electoral method, the "double complement rule," which safeguards plurality rule against the possibility of very narrowly endorsed victors.

particularly inappropriate in multiparty democracy, where minority presidents are the rule. Still, the flip side of immobilism is rule by consensus in the sense that one party is prevented from ruling alone; where a president lacks a majority in congress, consensus may be favored, provided the balance of powers is conducive to compromising.

If, on the other hand, the president's party, or a stable coalition supporting him or her, has a majority in congress, assembly independence – by a distinct advantage of presidentialism. Under such conditions, we do not expect immobilism. Moreover, it is under such conditions that parliamentary systems exhibit quasi-majoritarian characteristics. The incentive not to jeopardize the survival of the government pressures members of parliament whose parties hold executive office not to buck cabinet directives. The opposition will unlikely be able to solicit any defectors from among the majority to oppose the cabinet. The ability to coerce parliamentary majorities, then, can render the bloc of opposition votes in parliament meaningless. On the other hand, if the ability of parties to influence legislation from outside the cabinet is high (e.g., as in Belgium and Italy), we tend to find lower scores of identifiability and the most unstable executives (Strom 1990:73). Either condition – the impotence of the opposition, or cabinet instability – can be regarded as a drawback to parliamentary democracy.

In contrast, by reducing the coercive capacity of the executive over members of the assembly majority, presidentialism preserves the viability of the opposition, without necessarily endangering stability – provided the executive can solicit some defections on particular votes. Insofar as we share Lijphart's preference for consensual government over majoritarianism, we regard this characteristic as an advantage of presidentialism. At the same time, Mainwaring's point is well taken. Presidentialism without a presidential majority can be problematic. The question becomes, Is it possible to preserve the congressional check under majority conditions, while providing for the resolution of deadlock in the absence of a majority?¹⁴ This is a question to which we turn later in the chapter.

On the subject of mutual checks, it is worth pointing out that presidentialism fortifies the executive check over the assembly as well as the reverse. Where legislative initiative lies predominantly in the executive, this is not so much an issue. However, in systems where assemblies are dynamic, such as the United States and Chile until the reforms of the late 1960s, this check can be critical. The logic is straightforward, as follows.

¹⁴ Requiring a constructive vote of no-confidence may well free up legislators from the parties in cabinet to oppose cabinet initiatives occasionally – provided they are confident that no alternative cabinet can be offered to defeat the current government. However, in two cases that use this format, West Germany and Spain, the cabinet has the authority to make any proposal before the parliament an ordinary vote of confidence, thus making the whip as effective as it can be in any parliamentary system. Only votes of no-confidence initiated in the assembly must be "constructive."

Where executive survival is based on assembly confidence, the executive is in no position to resist assembly initiative. In those parliamentary systems in which there are fragmented party systems and considerable initiative in parliament, the potential for coercion of the executive by the assembly is clear and is the key reason for frequent cabinet crises. Under presidentialism, on the other hand, use of the veto to resist assembly majorities does not jeopardize the executive's tenure. In sum, under conditions in which mutual checks do not threaten presidentialism with immobility, they act to prevent majoritarianism, and should be regarded as advantages of the system.

Arbiter

Turning on its head the criticism that presidents have no means of enforcing discipline on members of congress, some authors have suggested that the president might serve as an above-partisan arbiter of political conflict.¹⁵ In a sense, this approach seeks a silver lining in the fact that the executive cannot threaten legislators with a crisis of government stability in order to secure support, as a prime minister can by declaring a given measure before parliament to be a matter of confidence.

The arbiter president resembles Neustadt's (1960) *ad hoc* bargainer, or *cajoler*. It is precisely the distance from congressional alliances which the separation of powers ensures that allows the president to act as a moderator of dispute in order to secure a legislative agreement. This distance, taken to its extreme, implies both a lack of influence, and perhaps as result, a lack of fetter. Because presidents serve a fixed term and often are not eligible for reelection, they will allegedly not be averse to making concessions even on issues central to the party platform, especially if the alternative is no compromise, and ultimate deadlock.

There are two primary problems with this view. The first is that to expect presidents to act in a nonpartisan manner under any circumstances is not entirely realistic. It is true that presidents are less bound by partisan constraints than are prime ministers, but their independence is not complete. Most are, after all, the leaders of major – if not majority – congressional parties. The second problem is that the case for the president as arbiter is, in effect, a celebration of presidential weakness and, at the extreme, compromises accountability. Weakness over legislation itself is not necessarily a bad thing. The Madisonian perspective, for example, prefers a weak president. The problem is that arbitration will be most needed under pure presidentialism at times of regime crisis, when support for and stature of the presidency is lowest (Valenzuela 1989a:15).

Basically, the scenarios are as follows: When the president has majority

¹⁵ See Karl (1986:213) and Valenzuela (1989a:19); also Neustadt (1960).

support, there should be no need for an arbiter. Congressional support for executive initiatives should be regular, although the congressional check remains viable. When the president has no majority, the arbiter is the role of last recourse. A president's separation from entanglement in assembly alliances should make her or him a better arbiter than would be a minority prime minister.¹⁶ If the president may stand for reelection, accountability can still be preserved.

To this point, we have established a working definition of presidentialism, reviewed the central criticisms leveled against presidential systems, and outlined some tentative advantages of such systems over parliamentarism. We stress once more that the criticisms of presidentialism are not directed entirely against what we regard as the criteria that define presidential government, but rather against many of its associated characteristics, such as the unitary executive, the tendency to generate presidents who face hostile congressional majorities, or the ineligibility of the president for reelection. At the same time, we acknowledge that many of the criticisms directly address the core elements of presidentialism. Therefore, let us consider another regime type – premier-presidentialism – that retains some of the advantages of presidentialism, while showing the potential to diminish some of presidentialism's defects.

HOW PREMIER-PRESIDENTIALISM ADDRESSES THE CRITICISMS OF PRESIDENTIALISM

In order to assess the potential advantages of premier-presidentialism, we return to the framework constructed to review the criticisms and defenses of presidentialism. We consider in turn the issues of temporal rigidity, majoritarianism, dual legitimacies, mutual checks, and the viability of the president as arbiter and as head of state.¹⁷ Using both the criticisms and the defense of presidentialism as points of contrast, we hope to illustrate the potential virtues as well as the ambiguities of premier-presidentialism. In the following chapter, we shall undertake brief case studies of the performance of premier-presidential government in five countries. We suggest there that

¹⁶ Ultimately, the case for the president's potential as arbiter is far more compelling under premier-presidential systems. In such systems, the president without majority support enjoys at least equal distance from involvement in partisan alliances as under pure presidentialism; yet the provision for the formation of a government in opposition to the president establishes a safety valve short of regime breakdown by which political crisis can be quelled.

¹⁷ It seems straightforward that the accountability of the president to the electorate should be equal in premier-presidential systems to that in presidential systems. For this reason, we will not review the accountability argument separately in this section. The question of the incentives for legislative support of the president is considered in the section on mutual checks.

the performance of premier-presidential systems has been largely attributable to the institutional arrangements unique to each system.

Temporal rigidity

Presidential terms under premier-presidentialism are generally fixed, as under presidentialism.¹⁸ The problem of a president facing an opposition assembly, however, is not defined by the same temporal rigidity as under pure presidentialism, for two reasons. In the first place, the president is not necessarily the head of government. When an assembly will not support a government of the president's party or coalition, the president must name a prime minister to form an opposition government, as François Mitterrand acceded to Jacques Chirac in France in 1986. Moreover, it is not required that the president should dominate the prime minister – and so, indirectly, the cabinet – under premier-presidentialism, even when he or she enjoys a legislative majority. If the prime minister rather than the president is the leader of the principal governing party, for example, then the president's fixed term of office does not imply the potential for crises of temporal rigidity. But even if presidents do dominate the executive, a potential midterm loss of legislative support will not portend crisis if they name an opposition cabinet that enjoys assembly support, and they are capable of exercising the constitutional powers of the presidency while ceding control over the cabinet to an opposition prime minister.

The second means of avoiding the problems of fixed terms in several systems is to provide the president the authority to dissolve parliament and call new elections. This provides the chief executive the opportunity to appeal to the voters for a sympathetic assembly, and may be particularly appropriate when a new president faces an opposition assembly elected at an earlier date.¹⁹

Majoritarianism

The problem of majoritarianism in presidential systems is mitigated under premier-presidentialism primarily by the nature of the premier-presidential

18 In Austria and Iceland, extraordinary assembly majorities of two-thirds and three-fourths, respectively, can call for plebiscites on the continuation in office of the president (Iceland, Art. 11; Austria, Art. 6, Sec. 6). We know of no cases in which these provisions have been exercised. In addition, in some premier-presidential systems (France, for example) presidents may resign and call for presidential elections before their term is complete. Nevertheless, while these provisions could mitigate the problem of temporal rigidity found in pure presidential systems, the more important characteristic of premier-presidentialism in this respect is the provision for assembly confidence in the cabinet.

19 Of course, as Chapters 11 and 12 illustrate, this particular scenario can be avoided by synchronizing assembly and executive terms.

cabinet. Because the cabinet is subject to parliamentary confidence,²⁰ it will not be as narrowly representative of the president's interests as will a presidential cabinet – unless of course, there is majority support in parliament for the president's narrow interests. But under such conditions, we would expect cabinets in parliamentary regimes to be highly majoritarian as well. Thus, if we can expect a given party to enjoy dominance in a parliamentary cabinet, we can also expect it to enjoy dominance in a premier-presidential cabinet.

Dual legitimacies

Premier-presidentialism replaces the problem of competing legitimacies between the assembly and the executive with the potential problem of competing legitimacies within the executive itself (Pierce 1990). We address this dilemma in later chapters as we discuss the dangers of cohabitation. For now we consider the advantage of premier-presidentialism in providing an institutionalized means of resolving legislative deadlock between the president and assembly. The replacement of the president as head of government with a prime minister with legislative confidence has been discussed already. Only a couple more points have to be made on this subject.

First, it is worth noting that even a majority president will have a greater incentive under premier-presidentialism than under pure presidentialism to anticipate and accommodate the demands of his or her coalition, since a president's status within the executive depends so directly on the coalition's cohesiveness (Suleiman 1981:98–103). This consideration may temper the danger of an exaggerated sense of mandate, for which presidentialism has been criticized.

Second, while political outsiders can still be elected president under premier-presidentialism, the prime minister enjoys constitutional protection from dominance by the president. Thus, when the president is not the leader of the prime minister's party, we expect the prime minister to be able to act relatively independently. Provided that the responsibilities accorded the heads of state and of government are clearly distinguished, an outsider in the presidency should not present the problems associated with such scenarios under presidentialism. The strict separation of powers is reduced under premier-presidentialism by the requirement of parliament-

20 Of course, cabinet nominees in the United States are subject to Senate approval as well. Cabinets in premier-presidential systems are invariably more subordinate to assembly preferences than are those in the United States, since they are subject to collective rejection, which can be imposed ex-post as well as ex-ante and because the U.S. president retains the right to dismiss ministers. See our discussion in Chapter 6.

ary confidence for the government. Among other things, this requirement ensures that the head of government's level of political expertise will be sufficient to satisfy the political insiders in parliament.

Mutual checks

If presidents were provided a veto, then their check against a legislative majority would be no different under premier-presidentialism than under presidentialism. However, as already noted, most premier-presidential regimes do not provide for a veto that requires an extraordinary majority to override. The relationship between premier-presidentialism and the legislative check on the executive, however, is less clear. Certainly, the requirement of parliamentary confidence in the government implies a check of some sort. But we have noted that the same requirement constrains, rather than fosters, legislative independence from the executive under pure parliamentarism. Do we have reason to expect that the majority of legislators who support a government under premier-presidentialism will be any more likely to vote their consciences to oppose cabinet initiatives?

The answer must be a qualified no. No, because the logic of parliamentary voting still applies under premier-presidentialism. Legislators in the majority coalition still face a disincentive to jeopardize cabinet stability. We qualify the answer because the disincentive may not be so great under premier-presidentialism as under parliamentarism. If the president dominates the prime minister, then the vote of no-confidence threatens this position, but not the president's continuance as head of state. To the extent that significant political authority is retained even by a minority president, then independent opposition by legislators to government initiative does not connote such high stakes as under parliamentary regimes.

Despite this conjecture, there is little evidence that legislators under premier-presidentialism actually demonstrate more independence than their parliamentary counterparts. During the first years of the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle relied on shifting majorities to build support for various legislative proposals (Wood 1968:103-4; Pierce 1990). But by the mid-1960s, as partisan divisions under the new regime became clear, so too did discipline improve – at least among the main party in a given majority coalition. Similarly, Kaminsky (1989:28-9) finds that Mitterrand relied on shifting majorities on budget legislation in his second term, but the support of Socialists was dependable. On the other hand, Suleiman (1980:103-4) points out that Giscard d'Estaing was abandoned by the Gaullists in 1976 when he attempted to pass a major reform of capital gains tax laws over their objections. Legislators of parties peripheral to the majority coalition, then, seem to be more inclined to vote independently. This is often true as well under pure parliamentarism.

Arbiters

When presidents dominate a premier-presidential system, it is because they enjoy majority support in the assembly. Under these conditions, it would seem, the need for an arbiter to cultivate legislative support for executive proposals ought to be minimal. Nevertheless, students of premier-presidentialism have observed that when the president dominates the executive, the prime minister becomes something of an arbiter, or as Duverger (1980:184) describes it, chief of staff. Provided that the president and prime minister share a similar political agenda, then the prime minister acts as the executive liaison to the assembly. Suleiman (1981:121) points out that the prime minister may also serve at times to shield the president from political harm. If the executive's economic policies fail, for example, the president can sacrifice the prime minister, provided the president can credibly stick the PM with the blame.

While the prime minister may play the arbiter's role when the president enjoys an assembly majority, the president can serve as arbiter of partisan conflicts under divided government. When presidents face an opposition government, or when they are not the party leader, they are necessarily removed somewhat from the partisan politics of legislative coalition-building. It is precisely this distance that can allow the president to arbitrate partisan disputes (Lijphart and Rogowski 1991).

First, and perhaps most important, the president has the prerogative of naming the prime minister who will form a cabinet. The president-arbiter can use his or her discretion in choosing among whichever candidates could form viable governments to seek concessions from the future prime minister, and possibly to ensure a broad representation of interests in the cabinet.²¹ In the second place, minority presidents can rely on whatever formal powers are granted them constitutionally to influence the outcomes of legislative struggle, including (in some systems) referring government legislation to judicial review or referendum. Finally, where presidents are accorded the authority to dissolve the assembly, they may use this leverage to pressure prime ministers to accept compromise with coalition partners or face the electorate. As we shall see in the next chapter, this means of presidential arbitration has been used effectively in premier-presidential systems such as Finland and Portugal, but destructively in president-parliamentary systems such as the Weimar Republic.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has weighed theoretically the advantages and disadvantages of presidentialism and premier-presidentialism, based on their institutional

²¹ See Duverger (1980:169-70) on the role of Austrian Socialist presidents in cabinet formation during the 1950s and 1960s.

characteristics. In particular, we have reviewed the central criticisms of presidentialism made by proponents of parliamentarism, and have offered a series of responses suggesting that the basic principles of presidential government may be worth preserving. We argue that presidentialism offers the advantage of allowing the clearest possible choice to voters as to the constitution of the executive. The checks and balances inherent in presidentialism are also desirable when majoritarian rule is opposed.

We have provided some arguments for why both presidentialism and premier-presidentialism might be desirable as a format for representative democracy, but we have yet to explore empirically the performance of these regime types. This is the project we begin in Chapter 4, briefly considering the performance of premier-presidential institutions in a number of countries, and contrasting these regimes with president-parliamentary regimes.

The premier-presidential and president-parliamentary experiences

INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding with our analysis of the relationship between presidents and assemblies more generally, we now consider the performance of premier-presidential government as well as a few systems that we deem president-parliamentary. Such a task is necessary in order to illustrate more clearly the nature of the regime types, and their distinction from both presidentialism and parliamentarism. This is so particularly because premier-presidentialism and president-parliamentarism have been discussed infrequently in the comparative literature, and may be unfamiliar to many readers. When students of democratic institutions have spoken of premier-presidentialism (what others have called "semipresidentialism"), they have rarely shared a specific, common idea of its institutional structure. And, of course, regimes that we define as president-parliamentary have been described a number of ways: as presidential, semi-presidential, parliamentary, and as hybrids. In Chapter 2, we provided definitions that we believe are exhaustive and generalizable for all these regime types. We begin here with a general discussion of the thorniest institutional problem that is, in effect, built into premier-presidential government — the possibility of a divided executive.

Where the president and the cabinet are of opposing parties or blocs, premier-presidential government faces a challenge somewhat similar to that of presidentialism under divided government. The specific tensions among political adversaries, the dangers to regime stability, and the potential means of resolving those threats, however, are all different under premier-presidential and president-parliamentary as opposed to presidential systems. The theoretical discussion of divided executives will be followed by examinations of premier-presidential and president-parliamentary regime performance. We begin by discussing some of the more well-known cases of these regime types: France under the Fifth Republic, Finland, and Portugal, as well as Sri Lanka since 1979 and Weimar Germany. As we shall see, although the latter two cases have been identified as premier-presidentialism (semipresidentialism) elsewhere, a careful examination of the formal bal-