

Government Coalitions and Legislative Success Under Presidentialism and Parliamentarism

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Are government coalitions less frequent under presidentialism than under parliamentarism? Do legislative deadlocks occur when presidents do not form majoritarian governments? Are presidential democracies more brittle when they are ruled by minorities? We answer these questions observing almost all democracies that existed between 1946 and 1999. It turns out that government coalitions occur in more than one half of the situations in which the president's party does not have a majority, that minority governments are not less successful legislatively than majority coalitions in both systems, and that the coalition status of the government has no impact on the survival of democracy in either system. Hence, whatever is wrong with presidentialism, is not due to the difficulty of forming coalitions.

Our purpose is to examine a particular chain of reasoning concerning the alleged inferiority of presidential systems in generating effective governance.

While at least one view of the United States holds that *Divided We Govern* and while we have learned from Shugart and Carey that presidential systems differ in consequential ways,¹ the prevailing argument goes as follows: (1) parliamentarism and presidentialism are different: the former is a system of 'mutual dependence' and the latter of 'mutual independence' between the executive and the legislature;² (2) institutions shape incentives: presidentialism generates fewer or weaker incentives to form coalitions;³ (3) coalitions are difficult to form and rarely, 'only exceptionally', do form under presidentialism;⁴ (4) when no coalition is formed under presidentialism, a 'long-term legislative impasse' ensues,⁵

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¹ David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946–1990* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991); Matthew Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

² Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism Versus Presidentialism', *World Politics*, 46 (1993), 1–22, pp. 17–18; Juan J. Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference?' in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Venezuela, eds, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: The Case of Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins, 1994), pp. 3–87, at p. 64; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins, 1994), p. 181.

³ Scott Mainwaring, 'Presidentialism in Latin America', *Latin American Research Review*, 25 (1990), 157–79; Stepan and Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation', p. 20; Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, 'Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America', in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 1–34, at p. 33; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 181; The-fu Huang, 'Party Systems in Taiwan and South Korea', in Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu and Hung-mao Tien, eds, *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins, 1997), pp. 135–59, at p. 138.

⁴ Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy', p. 19.

⁵ Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 181.

‘there is no alternative but deadlock’,⁶ ‘the norm is conflictual government’.⁷ As a result, ‘the very notion of majority government is problematic in presidential systems without a majority party’,⁸ ‘stable multi-party presidential democracy ... is difficult’,⁹ ‘presidential systems which consistently fail to provide the president with sufficient legislative support are unlikely to prosper’.¹⁰

Now, parliamentarism and presidentialism are different and institutions do shape incentives. But which institutional features of the two systems shape the incentives relevant for coalition formation? What are these incentives? Is the difference in institutional rules sufficient to impede coalitions in presidential systems? Must legislative impasse, conflictive government, crisis of democracy or some other disaster occur when the president fails to form a coalition?

And is it true in fact that coalitions are exceptional in multiparty presidential systems? Is it true that when no coalitions are formed, presidents are legislatively unsuccessful? Is it true that democracy is threatened?¹¹

Let us look at presidential systems from the perspective of parliamentarism. The fact that minority governments survive under parliamentarism constitutes *prima facie* evidence that no majority wants to replace them: if it wanted to, it could and it would.¹² In the light of Austen-Smith and Banks,¹³ when the policy differences between the formateur party and some other parties which together would constitute a legislative majority are small, the formateur party governs as a minority, making the necessary policy concessions to other parties. Is there a reason to think that under identical conditions – the same distribution of seats and of policy preferences – minority governments would not enjoy the support of a legislative majority also under presidentialism?

The difference between the two systems is that under presidentialism the government cannot be replaced even if a majority of the legislature so wishes. Consider situations in which no party controls a majority of legislative seats and policy differences are large. One of two things can happen under parliamentarism: either one party offers enough portfolios to induce some other parties into a majority government coalition or an unscheduled election occurs, and the story repeats itself under new conditions. The difference with presidentialism is here: only the president can offer portfolios and other parties may reject this offer, say because they expect to do much better in the next election if they remain in the opposition. Then a minority president faces a hostile legislature and no one can do anything about it.

If this analysis is correct, some minority presidential governments must be identical to

⁶ Mainwaring and Scully, ‘Introduction’, p. 33.

⁷ Mark P. Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), p. 38.

⁸ The-fu Huang, ‘Party Systems in Taiwan and South Korea’, p. 138.

⁹ Mainwaring, ‘Presidentialism in Latin America’.

¹⁰ Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*, p. 38.

¹¹ Note that assertions to this effect are offered as inductive generalizations while being accompanied by exhortations to collect the data (see, for example, Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shuggart, ‘Conclusion: Presidentialism and the Party System’, in Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shuggart, eds, *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 394–439, at p. 396n.). These are generalizations from observations yet to be made.

¹² Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments: Cabinets and Legislatures in Parliamentary Democracies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹³ David Austen-Smith and Jeffrey Banks, ‘Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes’, *American Political Science Review*, 82 (1988), 405–22.

parliamentary minority governments in that they rule with the support of a legislative majority. But some minority governments that would not exist under parliamentarism survive under presidentialism. To put it differently, some presidential minority governments are there because presidents do not need to form coalitions but some because no one wants to ally with the president's party. Conditional on the distribution of seats and of policy preferences, we should thus observe fewer coalitions under presidentialism.

Minority governments supported by a legislative majority should be legislatively successful under both systems. They are not 'failures' of coalition formation, but a result of compromises about policies. Yet presidential minorities facing hostile legislative majorities fail to pass legislation. When the president's party likes the outcome of the legislative impasse, presidents willingly go down to defeat. But the president may want to pass legislation and still may be unable to do so when a legislative majority expects to gain more by opposing government's legislative initiatives. We should thus see minority governments to be generally quite successful legislatively but less successful under presidentialism.

Finally, given that minority governments need not indicate a failure of governance, there is no reason to expect that democracy will be threatened whenever presidents remain in a minority.

Our purpose is not more than to subject these hypotheses to systematic empirical tests. Having collected information about coalition governments in almost all democracies¹⁴ that existed at any time between 1946 and 1999, we compare the frequencies of coalition governments under pure parliamentarism and pure presidentialism.¹⁵ Then, for a smaller subset of countries, we study legislative success of governments, conditional on their coalition status. Finally, to test whether a failure to form coalitions indeed makes presidential democracies more brittle, we examine the probabilities that a democracy would fall as a function of the coalition status of governments.

WHICH INSTITUTIONAL FEATURES OF THE TWO SYSTEMS SHAPE THE INCENTIVES RELEVANT FOR COALITION FORMATION?

One difference between parliamentarism and presidentialism is obvious; indeed, definitional. Under parliamentarism, every government must enjoy the support of a parliamentary majority: the legislature can dismiss the government if it so wishes. Under presidentialism, it cannot. A prime minister can change at any time, with or without elections. This is not just an abstract possibility: Cheibub reports that 163 out of 291 prime ministers left office without elections between 1946 and 1995 in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.¹⁶ In contrast, a president remains the head of government even when he or she is opposed by a majority in a congress. Hence, as Linz does not tire of emphasizing, parliamentary systems enjoy flexibility not available to presidential ones. Yet one should not jump from chief executives to

¹⁴ Our definition of democracies is taken from Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For some countries data are not available. Throughout the analysis, we exclude the cases where coalitions are mandated by a pre-electoral pact of the parties (Switzerland throughout the period, Colombia between 1958 and 1974, and one year in Honduras).

¹⁵ Semi-presidentialism or 'mixed' systems are not considered here for reasons of space.

¹⁶ José Antonio Cheibub, 'Elections and Alternation in Power in Democratic Regimes' (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, 1998).

governments. Presidents serve fixed terms independently of their legislative support but they are free to form and to change government coalitions. President Sarney of Brazil, for example, ruled with the support of three different coalitions; his successor Fernando Collor formed four coalitions; when he was impeached, his vice-president, Itamar Franco, completed the term with the support of five distinct coalitions.¹⁷ Even if they do not include the chief executive, government reshuffles are frequent under presidentialism. If anything, students of Korea see excessive coalition instability.¹⁸ Indeed, Stepan and Skach report that ministers change more frequently under presidentialism than under parliamentarism.¹⁹ The rigidity of presidential systems need not extend to the composition of governments.

Secondly, even if each country has specific norms concerning the bargaining protocol, under parliamentarism any party can become the formateur while, conversely, every minority party can be excluded from government. Under presidentialism, only the president can be the formateur and the president's party, unless he or she is independent,²⁰ must be included in every portfolio coalition, regardless of the number of seats it controls. Parties that do not hold the presidency cannot offer portfolios.

Finally, the two systems differ in what happens when no single party controls a legislative majority and all attempts at forming coalitions fail: the 'reversion outcome'. Except for Norway, parliamentary systems facing a government crisis can revert to early elections, an event which occurs in about one in nine years (or about one in two legislatures). They may also tolerate non-partisan governments of 'caretakers' or 'experts'.²¹ Under presidentialism, the reversion outcome is that the president's party governs alone. The resulting policy, in turn, depends on the legislative powers of the executive. Presidential systems vary significantly with regard to the prerogatives of the president in initiating and vetoing legislation.²² At one extreme, the US system is unique in that the president has no formal power of legislative initiative. At the other extreme, in many presidential systems only the president can propose the budget and the legislature has limited or no amendment powers.²³

Hence, we need to distinguish at least two types of situations: (1) If the legislature can legislate – specifically, if the congress can initiate legislation, and the president cannot veto or a presidential veto can be overridden – the reversion outcome is the policy adopted by a majority of the legislature. (2) If the president has the monopoly of legislative initiative

¹⁷ Octavio Amorim Neto, 'Presidential Cabinets, Electoral Cycles, and Coalition Discipline in Brazil', in Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif, eds, *Legislative Politics in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Chan Wook Park, 'The National Assembly in the Newly Democratized Korean Polity' (paper presented at the XVIII World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Quebec, 2000).

¹⁹ Stepan and Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation'.

²⁰ Such instances are rare but they do occur. Independent presidents governed Chile in 1952–57, Guatemala 1993–95, Armenia 1991–94, Kyrgyzstan 1991–99, Russia 1991–99 and Ukraine 1991–99.

²¹ Austen-Smith and Banks, 'Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes' and Tasos Kalandrakis, 'General Political Equilibrium in Parliamentary Democracies' (paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, 1999) assume that reversion outcomes are particularly defined 'caretaker' or 'technical' governments.

²² Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*.

²³ Among nineteen Latin American presidential systems, the role of the Congress with regard to budgetary legislation is highly limited everywhere except for Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Paraguay. In all the other systems, the Congress can propose only those amendments that do not increase the deficit or the spending, and in several cases it can do so only with the approval of the president. (See Inter-American Development Bank, *Report on Economic and Social Progress in Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/IDB, 1997), p. 136).

or can veto without being overridden, the reversion outcome is some kind of status quo. Note that contrary to yet another widespread belief,²⁴ according to which failures to pass legislation require extra-constitutional mechanisms to break the impasse, almost all presidential constitutions specify what should happen in this eventuality.²⁵

WHAT ARE THE INCENTIVES TO FORM COALITIONS?

At the most general level, one may think that in either system each party would want to hold the largest possible number of government portfolios, would want to enjoy policies that are closest to its preferences, and would want to do as well as possible in the future. Consider a legislature composed of $j \in J$ parties, concerned with a single policy dimension on which they are characterized by ideal points x^j . Parties derive transferable utility from portfolios (and associated perks) and non-transferable utility from policy:

$$V_i^j(g, x) = g^j - (x_i - x^j)^2 + \rho^\delta V_{i+\delta}^j,$$

where g stands for the share of portfolios, $\sum_j g^j = G$ is the value for any party of holding all the portfolios, x is the actual policy outcome, $V_{i+\delta}$ is the continuation value, and $0 < \rho \leq 1$ is the, say monthly, discount rate. The quadratic form of policy in the utility function, while standard, is not innocuous, since it implies that if the policy were to deviate far from the ideal point of a party, this party would be willing to give up portfolios in exchange for bringing the policy closer. One justification for this formulation is that while parties are certain about the distribution of portfolios, they cannot completely assure themselves of policy outcomes and they are risk averse.

Note that the period before the next election, δ , is endogenous under parliamentarism, while with some exceptions it is fixed under presidentialism.²⁶ Hence, under presidentialism waiting for the next election is unpleasant for the opposition parties: in the meantime, they hold no portfolios. But if parties believe that they would benefit electorally by opposing the president, they may be willing to wait. Note that the continuation value can be quite large: if a party expects to win an absolute majority in the next election, it can be as large as G .

IS THE DIFFERENCE IN INSTITUTIONAL RULES SUFFICIENT TO IMPEDE COALITIONS IN PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS?

First, we need some definitions. Coalitions can be of two kinds: a government (portfolio)

²⁴ Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy'; Bruce Ackerman, 'The New Separation of Powers', *Harvard Law Review*, 113 (2000), 633–729, p. 645; Carlos Santiago Nino, 'Hyperpresidentialism and Constitutional Reforms in Argentina', in Arend Lijphart and Carlos H. Waisman, eds, *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 161–73, at pp. 168–9; Jonathan Hartlyn, 'Presidentialism and Colombian Politics', in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: The Case of Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 294–327, at p. 221.

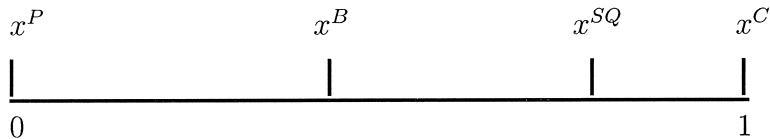
²⁵ If the Congress rejects the budget, the previous years' budget is enacted in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. If the Congress fails to approve the budget, the government's proposal is enacted in Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. Hence, a true paralysis, in which no budget exists, is possible only in Bolivia, Brazil and Honduras, where the government must submit a new budget and no status quo is constitutionally defined.

²⁶ In some presidential systems, the president can dissolve one or both houses of the legislature under qualified conditions, such as failure to pass the budget.

coalition is a set of legislators belonging to parties that hold cabinet posts,²⁷ while a legislative coalition is a set of legislators from different parties who vote together. If parties are disciplined, then every government coalition is a legislative coalition. Legislative coalitions may vary from one issue to another. Such variations may arise from the fact that parties may vote together on some but not all issues or from lack of party discipline among members.²⁸ Moreover, the two coalitions need not be coextensive. A party may not be a member of a portfolio coalition and yet vote with the government (or at least not vote against it) on some or all issues. This was true, for example, of the Danish Socialist People's party (SF) under Jens Otto Kraig's Social Democratic governments (1966–68, and 1971–72).²⁹ More importantly for us, under presidentialism a majority legislative coalition may oppose the portfolio government. Salvador Allende's Chile is a dramatic case in point.

While there are competing models of coalition formation under parliamentarism – Austen-Smith and Banks³⁰ initiated one line of analysis while Laver and Shepsle³¹ proposed an alternative view – studies of coalitions under presidentialism remain largely descriptive.³² Hence, we need to analyse the logic of coalition formation under presidentialism (see Appendix D).

Consider a legislature composed of three parties, P for 'presidential', B and C . With some loss of generality,³³ assume that the policy line is normalized to a unit, with $x^P = 0 < x^B < x^C = 1$ and that $V_r^{B+\delta}$ is not much larger than $V_r^{C+\delta}$, so that party B is cheaper for the president to buy than C . The ideal position of party B and the status quo policy can be anywhere between x^P and x^C . We will examine different cases, as well as situations with more parties.



²⁷ It is conceivable that a person may serve in a cabinet without committing his/her party's support. This is certainly the case in the United States. Elsewhere, to our best knowledge, participation in the government formally commits parties to co-operate with the chief executive on important issues. In Brazil, for example, Francisco Weffort did not receive the approval of his party (Workers' Party, PT) to assume the portfolio of culture and had to resign from the party before joining the government of President Cardoso. Hence, even if Weffort's participation in the government extended the political basis of the government, it did not commit PT to co-operation with Cardoso. Non-partisan cabinet members do not count for coalition purposes.

²⁸ Scott Mainwaring, 'Presidentialism, Multiparty Systems and Democracy: The Difficult Equation', *Comparative Political Studies*, 26 (1993), 198–228; and Neto, 'Presidential Cabinets, Electoral Cycles, and Coalition Discipline in Brazil' claim that, as distinct from parliamentarism, under presidentialism participation in a portfolio government does not bind legislators to support the president. Yet the only empirical claim in favour of this hypothesis is due entirely to a rather blatant misclassification of Poland as a presidential regime. See John M. Carey, 'Getting Their Way, or Getting in the Way? Presidents and Party Unity in Legislative Voting' (paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, 2002). Note that even if party discipline were generally lower under presidentialism, the effect on coalitions would be indeterminate: it would depend on which parties, government or opposition, are less disciplined.

²⁹ Kaare Strom, *Minority Governments and Majority Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 106

³⁰ Austen-Smith and Banks, 'Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes'.

³¹ Laver and Shepsle, *Making and Breaking Governments*.

³² David Altman, 'Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival of Multiparty Presidential Democracies: Uruguay 1989–1999', *Party Politics*, 6 (2000), 259–83; Grace Ivana Deheza, 'Gobiernos de Coalición en el Sistema Presidencial: America del Sur' (doctoral dissertation, Florence, European University Institute, 1997).

³³ Due to the fact that P may occupy the middle position in policy space. In such cases, the presidential party governs alone and enjoys a legislative majority.

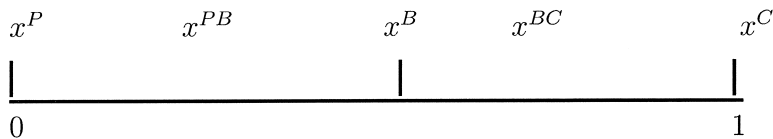
Consider now the process of coalition formation. Under parliamentarism coalitions result from formal negotiations among parties. These negotiations entail a distribution of portfolios and often commit parties to an explicit programme, ‘a platform of the government’, like the coalition agreement between Austria’s Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People’s Party (ÖVP) in 1987.³⁴ Under presidentialism, this process is more unilateral: the president may just invite the cabinet members of parties other than his or her own. However, common programmes also exist under presidentialism. For example, the *Carta a los Argentinos* of the *Alianza* coalition between the Radical party (UCR) and the FREPASO in Argentina.

Since what matters for us is only whether coalitions are formed, rather than which ones, we need not enter into the details of the process by which governments are formed. In both systems, some party – typically the largest one under parliamentarism and always the president’s party under presidentialism³⁵ – considers whether or not to invite another party or parties into a government coalition. This party offers portfolios and policy, so that the offers are $\{g^j, x\}$. Then the recipient party decides whether or not to accept. If the current formateur fails to form a coalition under parliamentarism, then another party gets a chance, while under presidentialism the process ends if no party accepts the president’s offer.

The outcomes under presidentialism depend on the institutional features of the specific system, centrally the allocation of legislative powers (see Appendix D):

(1) If the legislature can legislate and

(i) x^B is far from x^P , then a *PB* majority portfolio coalition is formed with policy at x^{PB} .

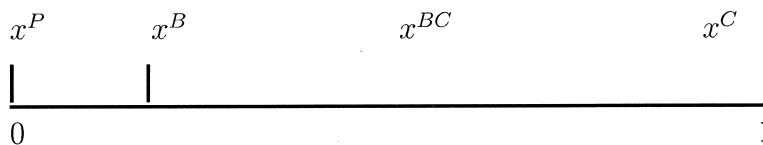


The intuition is the following. If the legislature can legislate, then the opposition can set policy at some point $x^B \leq x^{BC} < x^C$, which is far away from the president’s ideal point. Even if party *C* is willing to set policy at x^B , the president does not like this outcome. Hence, to bring policy closer, the president offers party *B* portfolios in such a way that party *B* weakly prefers policy x^{PB} and portfolios to policy x^B without them.

³⁴ Kaare Strøm and Wolfgang C. Müller, ‘The Keys to Togetherness: Coalition Agreements in Parliamentary Democracies’, *Legislative Studies*, 5 (1999), 255–82; Strøm and Müller studied coalition agreements in thirteen European countries between the end of the Second World War and 1996. Of the 223 coalition governments in their sample, 136 were based on an identifiable coalition agreement. They also found that this proportion increased with time.

³⁵ The prime minister belongs to the largest party in 85 per cent of years. Under presidentialism, the president is the formateur regardless of the legislative size of his or her party. Yet in 76 per cent of years the president also belongs to the largest party.

(ii) B is close to P , then government is a minority and the policy is x^B .



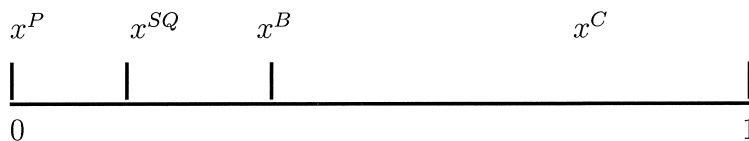
When x^B is close to x^P , the president does not mind policy x^B and offers this policy. In turn, party C cannot induce B into a legislative coalition at any point other than x^B , so that the policy is x^B while the government is a presidential minority. As under parliamentarism, this minority government does not represent any kind of a ‘failure’: while the government is a portfolio minority, it enjoys a legislative majority and the equilibrium policy is to its liking.

(2) If the president has a monopoly of legislative initiative with regard to major policies, such as the budget, internal security or foreign affairs, or can sustain a veto, so that the reversion outcome is x^{SQ} , and

(i) $x^{SQ} \notin (x^P, x^B)$, then the outcomes are the same as when the legislature can legislate. (Just replace x^{BC} by x^{SQ} above.) If x^B is distant from x^P , which implies that x^{SQ} is even farther, the president wants to avoid the status quo policy. The president must compensate B for not getting x^{SQ} policy and for its continuation value. Hence, the president sets the policy at x^{PB} and offers sufficient portfolios for party B to accept entering into the portfolio coalition. In turn, if x^B is close to x^P , a presidential minority government again enjoys the support of a legislative majority. Indeed, if the status quo policy is sufficiently distant from the ideal policy of B , the president’s party gets legislative support for its ideal point x^P .

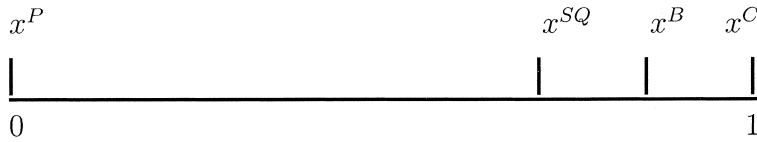
(ii) $x^{SQ} \in (x^P, x^B)$, then government is a minority and the policy is x^{SQ} .

Now the president is defeated in the legislature and no legislation is passed. Hence, this is a ‘legislative paralysis’. But the political consequences are different depending on the location of the status quo. If x^{SQ} is close to the president – in the extreme case it may be the president’s ideal point – the president’s party governs as a minority, is defeated in the legislature, but enjoys the policy outcome. And if party B also likes the status quo, say the previous year’s budget, it votes against president’s proposals if it expects to gain electorally by showing itself to be in opposition, while enjoying the policy as well. Hence, while speeches are ardent, they are just smoke covering an underlying consensus. Not every outcome that looks like ‘legislative paralysis’ is one.



Yet it is also possible for the status quo to lie far away from the president’s ideal policy and still to prevail. Now the president would want to alter the status quo but cannot. Both B and C prefer the status quo to any policy closer to the president and both may suffer electoral costs by co-operating with the president. Hence, either B does not accept any portfolio offer that leaves the president in office or its portfolio price for entering a coalition

is too high for the president. This is a true impasse: the president would like to alter the status quo but his proposals are defeated and the government is supposed to implement policies that it does not like.



Note that this situation could not transpire under parliamentarism, where parties *B* and *C* could form a majority portfolio coalition without *P* and legislate to their liking.

To conclude, we should expect that some minority governments occur under presidentialism for the same reason they transpire under parliamentarism: no majority wants to replace them because enough parties get policies they like. Yet some minority governments survive under presidentialism when a portfolio coalition would have been formed under parliamentarism. Hence, controlling for the distribution of seats and of policy preferences, government coalitions should occur in both systems but should be more frequent under parliamentarism. We should also expect that parliamentary governments should be more successful legislatively than presidential ones. Under the assumption of complete information, about which more below, bills proposed by parliamentary governments should never be defeated. But under presidentialism, government proposals may be defeated in the legislature even if everyone knows that they are being rejected only because a majority likes the status quo policy.

ARE COALITIONS RARE IN MULTI-PARTY PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS?

Coalitions are made of parties. The need and the opportunity for forming coalitions depends on the partisan distribution of seats in the legislature. We will refer to any period in which this distribution remains the same as a ‘situation’. Note that these situations may change as a result of an election but may also result from splits or mergers of parties.³⁶ But whatever the reason, a new distribution of seats creates new opportunities for coalition formation: hence, the starting point of analysis must be the distribution of seats. All together, we observed 498 distinct situations under parliamentarism and 218 under presidentialism. They lasted, respectively, 1,632 and 669 years, which implies that on the average a distribution of seats remains almost the same: 3.28 years under parliamentarism and 3.07 years under presidentialism.

Of those situations, a single party held a majority of seats in 215 cases (43.2 per cent) under parliamentarism and in 121 instances (55.5 per cent) under presidentialism. The latter number includes divided governments: situations in which the majority party is not that of the president. Divided government, however, is almost exclusively an American peculiarity: of the twenty-three instances of divided government, sixteen occurred in the United States.³⁷ Indeed, we suspect that much of the talk about legislative deadlocks under

³⁶ Situations can also change as a result of movement of individual legislators across parties. Unfortunately, our information does not capture these cases unless the changes are major.

³⁷ Two occurred in Colombia and the Philippines and one in Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and El Salvador.

presidentialism originates from reading or, as Mayhew would argue, misreading the American experience.³⁸ We will concentrate, therefore, on situations in which no party controlled a majority of seats, so that a majority government can result only from forming a coalition. There were 283 such situations under parliamentarism (56.8 per cent) and ninety-seven under presidentialism (44.5 per cent).

To analyse the outcomes, we classify them by the coalition status of the government, by which we mean the incidence of majority coalitions, minority coalitions and single-party minority governments. Note that we are not counting coalitions: if two distinct majority coalitions were formed or if a different minority party governed alone under the same situation, they are counted as a single coalition status.

In some situations, the coalition status of the government remained the same during its entire duration. Among the ninety-seven presidential minority situations, there were forty-five during which a single party governed alone during the entire period (in one instance it was a different party), there were eighteen situations in which a minority coalition governed during the entire period (in one instance the coalition changed), and twenty-eight situations in which a majority coalition existed as long as the situation did (in three cases these were different coalitions). In two situations there were both majority and minority coalitions, in three there were minority coalitions and single-party governments, and in one there was a majority coalition and a single-party government. Hence, all together ninety-one out of ninety-seven presidential minority situations were characterized by a stable coalition status of the government, while the coalition status changed in six. Parliamentarism exhibits somewhat more of a flux: whether one wants to call it flexibility or instability is a contentious issue. Among the 283 minority situations, there were sixty-two in which a single-party government ruled during the entire period, thirty-six in which there was always a minority coalition, and 147 in which a majority coalition was always in office, for the total of 245 stable situations. In seventeen situations, majority and minority coalitions coexisted, in ten there were minority coalitions and single-party governments, in nine majority coalitions coexisted with single-party rule, and in two situations there was a majority coalition, a minority coalition, and a single-party government. These patterns are summarized in Figure 1.

Armed with these numbers, we can examine the capacity of the two systems to generate coalitions and majority governments out of minority situations. The first result is that some kind of a coalition existed at least during a part of the time in 221 parliamentary minority situations, which is 78.1 per cent, and in fifty-two presidential situations, or in 53.6 per cent. Hence, coalitions emerge more frequently under parliamentarism, but they are far from exceptional under presidentialism. Not all coalitions, however, add up to a majority of seats. Parliamentary coalitions more frequently reach a majority: 79.1 per cent of parliamentary coalitions are majoritarian, while only 59.7 per cent of presidential ones reach majority. As a consequence, majority coalitions existed under parliamentarism during at least some part of 175 minority situations, 61.8 per cent, and under presidentialism during some part of thirty-one situations, or 32.0 per cent.

If one is willing to make a somewhat heroic assumption that the distribution of policy preferences among parties is the same, one can quantify the difference between the two systems. Under parliamentarism, minority governments survive because no majority wants to replace them. Such governments rule during at least some part of 136 parliamentary minority situations, 48.1 per cent, in contrast to sixty-nine such situations, 71.1 per cent,

³⁸ Mayhew, *Divided We Govern*.

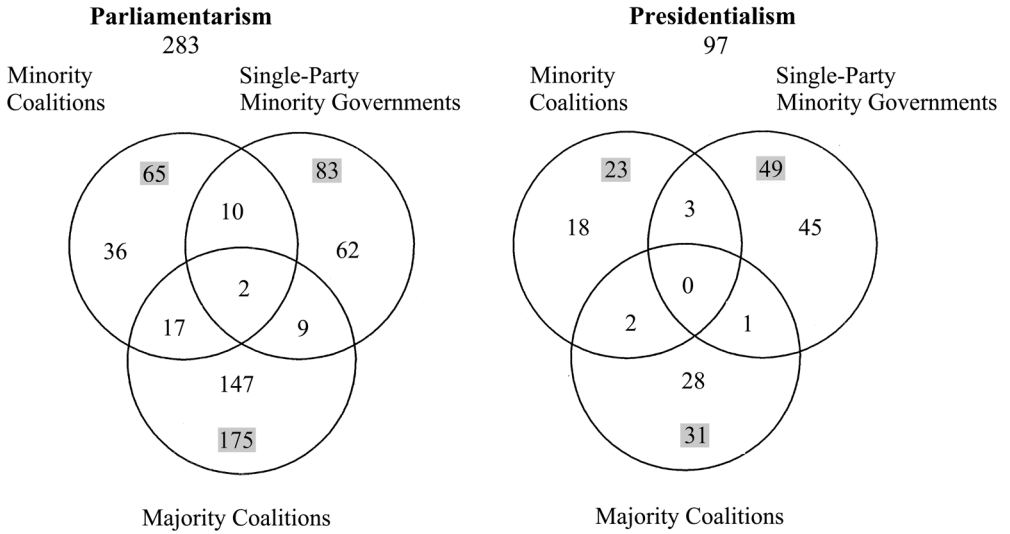


Fig. 1. Distribution of coalition governments under parliamentarism and presidentialism

under presidentialism. If the distribution of seats and of preferences were the same, there would be equally many minority governments supported by legislative majorities under both systems. Hence, under these assumptions, in 23 per cent of minority situations, presidential systems are ruled by governments that would not survive under parliamentarism. To this extent, therefore, Linz is correct to argue that presidential systems are rigid: governments stay in office even when a majority of the legislature would want to replace them. Whether this is a calamity is a different matter, studied below.

To examine the effect of fractionalization, consider separately the situations in which the plurality party has fewer than half but more than a third of the seats and those in which it has fewer than a third. Contrary to a widespread view,³⁹ we are led to believe that the effect of increased fractionalization is indeterminate in both systems unless we know the distribution of party preferences (see Appendix I). Assume that portfolio coalitions are formed in both systems when the formateur party (the largest plurality under parliamentarism, the president's party under presidentialism) has policy preferences distant from the party closest to it in policy space. When the formateur party is close in policy space to some other party (or parties) with which it together holds a majority, then it has no incentives to offer portfolios to other parties. This implies that coalitions are less (more) frequent in a more fractionalized legislature if other parties are farther (closer) to the president in policy space. For an intuition, consider a particular example. Suppose in a three-party legislature there is a party close in policy terms to that of the president, so

³⁹ Mainwaring, 'Presidentialism, Multiparty Systems and Democracy'; Mainwaring and Scully, 'Introduction', p. 33; Mainwaring and Shuggart, 'Conclusion'; Arturo Valenzuela, 'The Crisis of Presidentialism in Latin America', in Scott Mainwaring and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *Politics, Society, and Democracy: Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 121–39, at p. 124.

TABLE 1 *Coalitions and Majorities as a Function of Fractionalization*

Seat Share	Parliamentarism		Presidentialism	
	Coalitions	Majorities	Coalitions	Majorities
≤ 0.5	0.78	0.62	0.54	0.32
0.33–0.5	0.68	0.60	0.45	0.30
≤ 0.33	0.93	0.68	0.75	0.36

that no portfolio coalition is formed. Suppose now that the party closest to the president divides into a pro-president and anti-president wing and that now a legislative coalition against the president would be majoritarian. Now the president has an incentive to offer portfolios to anti-presidential parties, to bring the policy closer to his or her own policy position.

In fact, we discover that high fractionalization is conducive to coalitions under both systems. Indeed, the effect is so strong that even majority coalitions are more frequent when the legislature is more fractionalized. Table 1 presents the results.

Coalitions are less frequent in both systems when the largest party holds between a third and a half of the seats. The explanation suggested by extending the logic of Austen-Smith and Banks⁴⁰ is that when there are more parties it is more likely that a legislative coalition would choose policies farther away from the peak preference of the formateur. The formateur, wanting to avoid this outcome, is then more prone to sacrifice portfolios to bring policies closer to its preferences. Another explanation may be that when the formateur party holds a share of seats close to a majority, it can rely on the indiscipline of the opposition on particular issues and obtain a legislative majority without sacrificing portfolios. Yet another possibility is that when there are only three parties, each has a better chance of getting the big prize of becoming the formateur in the next election, by winning the plurality or the presidency. Note that if the presidency is a bigger prize than plurality under parliamentarism,⁴¹ the incentive for the non-presidential parties to oppose the president and to wait for the next election is particularly high.

To sum up, government coalitions are less frequent, although not exceptional, under presidentialism. About half of the time, the president's party holds a majority of seats, so that coalitions are not necessary. When the president's party does not control a majority of seats, coalitions occur more than half of the time and they are more likely to occur when the legislature is more fractionalized. Presidential coalitions tend to have fewer seats, so that only about six in ten among them reach majority. In the end, presidential systems are ruled by majority governments in 59 per cent of situations, 66 per cent if we ignore divided governments, as compared to 78 per cent under parliamentarism.

⁴⁰ Austen-Smith and Banks, 'Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes'.

⁴¹ Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy', p. 18.

ARE MINORITY GOVERNMENTS UNSUCCESSFUL LEGISLATIVELY?

The time has come to ask ‘So what?’ The entire focus on coalition formation is predicated on the assumption that minority governments are legislatively less successful and that various deleterious consequences follow. Yet we have learned from Ström that minority governments are a normal way of life under some parliamentary systems and no disasters occur.⁴² Indeed, as von Beyme observed, ‘Scandinavian parliamentary systems, with frequent minority governments, are hardly less efficient than other systems. Otherwise, these countries would not be at the top of the ladder in terms of welfare and liberal lifestyle.’⁴³ So what are the grounds to think that minority governments constitute calamities under presidentialism?

Under standard assumptions, no bills initiated by parliamentary governments should ever be defeated in the legislature. In practice, however, even parliamentary governments experience legislative defeats. One reason may be incomplete information. Saiegh explains government defeats in the following way. Suppose that some members of the government coalition whose districts oppose a particular proposal vote against it and, in turn, some members of the opposition whose districts like the proposal vote for it. The government observes the partisan distribution of the legislature but is uncertain about the preferences of districts. Since legislative defeats are politically costly, the government sends a proposal to the legislature if it expects to win. But it makes mistakes and some proposals are defeated.⁴⁴

Moreover, since parliamentary governments risk losing the confidence of the legislature when they are defeated,⁴⁵ such governments should be more careful in proposing legislation. Presidents can be more reckless: if they do not mind the status quo, they can initiate bills expecting to be defeated to embarrass the opposition.⁴⁶ Given this selection bias, we should observe a higher rate of legislative success under parliamentarism even when governments control a majority of seats in the legislature.⁴⁷ But, in addition, some presidential minority governments fail in the legislature because the opposition prefers the status quo policy to government proposals, even when they are backed by offers of portfolios.

⁴² Ström, *Minority Governments and Majority Rule*.

⁴³ Klaus von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy: Democratization, Destabilization, Reconsolidation, 1789–1999* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 117.

⁴⁴ Sebastian M. Saiegh, ‘Government Defeat: Coalitions, Responsiveness and Legislative Performance’ (doctoral dissertation, Department of Politics, New York University, New York, 2004).

⁴⁵ In some parliamentary systems there is a slack between defeating the government on particular issues and voting it out of office. This slack arises when (1) the opposition can vote the incumbent government out of office only if it simultaneously votes in a new government (the ‘constructive vote of non-confidence’ in Germany), (2) the parliament controls the legislative agenda through committees and can simply decide not to consider the government’s proposals (Italy after the reform of 1971, Portugal until 1988), or (3) the government and the opposition agree that the government does not legislate (Denmark between 1982 and 1988). Under such conditions, legislative defeats of the government do not cause it to fall, so that the opposition may simultaneously prefer to retain the government and defeat it on particular issues.

⁴⁶ Steven Matthews, ‘Veto Threats: Rhetoric in a Bargaining Game’, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 104 (1989), 347–69; Daniel Ingberman and Dennis A. Yao, ‘Presidential Commitment and the Veto’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 35 (1991), 357–89; Tim Groseclose and Nolan McCarty, ‘The Politics of Blame: Bargaining before an Audience’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (2001), 100–19.

⁴⁷ We owe this observation to John Londregan.

TABLE 2 *Legislative Success of the Executive*

Coalition status	Parliamentarism	Obs.	Presidentialism	Obs.
All	80.15 (13.92)	335	62.63 (20.30)	214
Single majority	89.12 (10.17)	107	71.57 (17.78)	55
Coalition majority	76.07 (10.89)	122	51.31 (19.71)	33
Coalition minority	78.25 (17.21)	26	53.03 (21.25)	20
Single minority	79.28 (8.92)	45	61.34 (17.94)	84

Notes: 'All' includes 'Super majority' and 'Divided government' situations. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

Using a new dataset compiled by Saiegh,⁴⁸ we examine the proportion of legislative initiatives of the executive that are approved by the legislature. Note that government bills can die in the legislature in different ways: they can get stuck in a committee, can be moved by a committee to the floor but not come up for a vote, or they can be defeated by a vote. Some bills can also be amended. These details depend on the legislative procedures of each country and we cannot distinguish between them here. All we know is the proportion of bills sent by the executive that become laws.

Parliamentary governments are more successful legislatively than presidential ones under every coalition status (see Table 2). The fact that they are more successful when they constitute majorities is most likely due to selection bias. But what is most startling is that single-party minority governments are at least not less, perhaps more, successful legislatively than coalitions, even majority coalitions.

Single-party minority governments are not as successful under presidentialism as under parliamentarism, but they perform surprisingly well. Clearly, legislative paralysis must be a relatively rare phenomenon: among the countries for which we have information, single-party presidential governments failed to pass one-half of their proposals only in Costa Rica in 1986–89 and 1996–98, in Ecuador in 1979–80 and 1990–91, and in Uruguay in 1988–89. Most single-party minority presidential governments appear to be supported by a majority of the legislature. Since Strom's seminal book this has been the standard wisdom with regard to parliamentarism.⁴⁹ Yet this finding flies in the face of all the talk about 'legislative impasse', 'deadlock', or 'conflictive government' under presidentialism.

Hence, the very motivation for the concern with coalition formation appears to be misplaced. Minority governments legislate at least as successfully as majority coalitions. They cannot be viewed as 'failures' of coalition formation. Indeed, governments are least successful legislatively when partisan policy positions are so polarized that portfolios must be traded in exchange for policy compromises and the resulting government coalitions are internally divided in their policy preferences. Single-party minority governments are formed in both systems when partisan policy distances are smaller; hence, they are more successful legislatively. True paralysis – the minority coalition in Chile between 1970 and 1973 is the prime example – is possible under presidentialism, but it is rare. Salvador Allende's attempt at a 'constitutional' transition to socialism was beset by governmental ineffectiveness. In July 1971 the Popular Unity party's proposal to expropriate copper from the Gran Minería was ratified unanimously by both chambers of the National

⁴⁸ Saiegh, 'Government Defeat'.

⁴⁹ Strøm, *Minority Governments and Majority Rule*.

Congress; but this was the only major reform Allende was able to effect through new legislation. Later in 1971 negotiations to nationalize a number of important economic activities turned sour, and the opposition’s rather passive resistance in Congress evolved into more aggressive lines of action. As De Vylder notes, during the next two years opposition parties ‘continued to block all bills – even the most harmless ones – presented by the government, but they also tried to enforce completely new legislation’.⁵⁰ In turn, Allende would veto these proposals knowing that the opposition did not have enough votes to override them. On top of this situation, the rightist Christian Democrats were confident that economic hardship, anarchy and instability would favour them in the 1973 congressional elections.⁵¹ It was the combination of all these factors that led to an almost constant deadlock between the executive and legislative powers.⁵²

IS DEMOCRACY MORE LIKELY TO DIE UNDER MINORITY GOVERNMENTS?

Having analysed a dataset which includes all democracies for which data are available between 1946 and 1999, we conclude that the Cassandra views with which we began are not only ungrounded but also largely false. Government coalitions are less frequent under presidentialism than under parliamentarism, but the difference is one of degree, not of kind. Highly fractionalized legislatures turn out to promote coalitions in both systems. Single-party minority governments are not less successful in the legislature than coalition governments, minority or majority. Legislative paralysis appears to be a rare phenomenon.

TABLE 3 *Observed Probabilities that a Democracy Would Die in a Particular Year*

Coalition status	Parliamentarism	Presidentialism
All	0.0135 (1,632)	0.0419 (669)
Coalitions	0.0085 (709)	0.0483 (207)
Single party	0.0173 (923)	0.0390 (462)
Majority	0.0116 (1,298)	0.0461 (412)
Minority	0.0210 (334)	0.0350 (257)
Super majority	0.0128 (78)	0.0189 (53)
Single majority	0.0167 (717)	0.0451 (266)
Divided government	—	0.0408 (49)
Coalition majority	0.0040 (503)	0.0645 (93)
Coalition minority	0.0234 (128)	0.0492 (61)
Single minority	0.0194 (206)	0.0306 (197)

Notes: ‘Coalitions’ include ‘Super majority’ situations. The number of observations of each category is shown in parentheses.

⁵⁰ Stephan De Vylder, *Allende’s Chile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 82.

⁵¹ Arturo Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes, Chile* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 77.

⁵² Arturo Valenzuela, ‘Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile’, in Linz and Valenzuela, eds, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*; Peter Siavelis, *The President and Congress in Postauthoritarian Chile: Institutional Constraints to Democratic Consolidation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

These conclusions do not exonerate presidentialism. Przeworski *et al.* report that, even if one considers the conditions under which they originate and function, presidential democracies have shorter lives than parliamentary ones.⁵³ We find the same: presidential democracies are more brittle than parliamentary ones (see Table 3). Their expected life is about twenty-four years, while the expected life of a parliamentary democracy is seventy-four years. But the reason is not that presidential democracies fail to generate coalitions. The observed probability that a presidential democracy would die is about the same whether or not the government is a coalition and almost the same whether or not it controls a majority of seats.

The fact is that presidential democracies are just more likely to die in all situations. Hence, whatever makes them vulnerable has little to do with coalition formation.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

The chain of explanation which almost everyone seems to have pursued is that (1) coalition formation is more difficult under presidentialism, (2) when no coalition is formed, a legislative stalemate ensues, and (3) given the legislative paralysis, extra-constitutional mechanisms are activated to break the political impasse. Yet we have shown that the difference in the frequency of coalitions, while favourable to parliamentarism, is not large and that the connection between coalitions and legislative success is at best dubious. Moreover, presidential democracies are equally vulnerable whether or not the government is a coalition. Hence, while the observation of the relatively shorter life of presidential democracy stands, the explanation fails. Linz must be right that something is wrong with presidentialism,⁵⁵ but we have not been very successful in discovering which of his hundred reasons is the real one.

APPENDIX I: COALITION FORMATION UNDER PRESIDENTIALISM

In this appendix, we extend the model of Austen-Smith and Banks to presidential systems.⁵⁶

Consider a three-party legislature, $j \in \{P, B, C\}$, where P stands for the president's party. No party holds a majority but no other assumption is made about their legislative size. As a notational convention, Party B is closer than C to P in policy terms.

What B and C can agree on depends on the agenda powers of the president. Hence, we need to distinguish between two situations:

- (1) If the legislature can legislate, non-presidential parties can form a legislative coalition $\{CB\}$ with the policy set at some point x^{CB} such that

$$x^B \leq x^{CB} \leq x^C.$$

- (2) If the legislature cannot legislate, the president makes a proposal that is voted up or down by the legislature.⁵⁷ All that non-presidential parties can achieve by uniting against the president is some status quo, x^{SQ} , which is different across presidential systems and policy areas.

⁵³ Przeworski *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*.

⁵⁴ It is still possible that democracy is threatened when the government is legislatively unsuccessful, regardless of its coalition status. Unfortunately, the observations of legislative success are too few to permit us to test this hypothesis.

⁵⁵ Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy'.

⁵⁶ Austen-Smith and Banks, 'Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes'.

⁵⁷ This is how Torsten Persson, Gerard Roland and Guido Tabellini, 'Separation of Powers and Political Accountability', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112 (1997), 1163–202, and Torsten Persson, Gerard Roland and Guido Tabellini, 'Comparative Politics and Public Finance', *Journal of Political Economy*, 108 (2000), 1121–61, model a generic presidential system. In fact, presidential powers of legislative initiative vary across particular

Since the algebra is the same, let the policy outcome when the president fails to form a portfolio coalition be $x^* \in \{x^{CB}, x^{SQ}\}$. Suppose no government coalition is formed. Then at the second stage, the portfolio allocation is $g^C = 0$, $g^B = 0$, $g^P = G$, and the policy outcome is x^* .

Assume that if non-presidential parties vote against the president, after the next election each gets a utility with present value $\rho V^k > 0$ while otherwise each gets $\rho V^k = 0$, $k \in B, C$. Then the utilities of parties at this stage are

$$\begin{aligned} U^P &= G - (x^* - x^P)^2, \\ U^B &= -(x^* - x^B)^2 + \rho V^B \\ U^C &= -(x^* - x^C)^2 + \rho V^C. \end{aligned}$$

Consider now the problem of the president at the first stage. The president considers whether to make an offer that would induce one of the parties to enter into a portfolio coalition. For simplicity, assume that offers made to Party C will be more costly to the president, so that the president's problem is

$$\begin{aligned} \max \quad & g^P - (x - x^P)^2 \\ \text{subject to} \quad & \\ G - g^P - (x - x^B)^2 & \geq \rho V^B - (x^* - x^B)^2, \\ 0 < g^P & \leq G, \\ & G \text{ large.} \end{aligned}$$

If $\rho V^B - (x^* - x^B)^2 \leq -(x^P - x^B)^2$, the first constraint does not bind, since B will support x^P even when $g^B = 0$. Hence, the president forms a minority government, $g^P = G$, with $x = x^P$. Otherwise, the solution⁵⁸ is:

$$\begin{aligned} x^{PB} &= \frac{x^P + x^B}{2}, \\ g^P &= G - (x^{PB} - x^B)^2 - \rho V^B + (x^* - x^B)^2, \\ g^B &= (x^{PB} - x^B)^2 + \rho V^B - (x^* - x^B)^2, \end{aligned}$$

with utilities

$$\begin{aligned} U^P &= G - 2(x^{PB} - x^P)^2 - \rho V^B + (x^* - x^B)^2, \\ U^B &= \rho V^B - (x^* - x^B)^2. \end{aligned}$$

We need to check, however, whether the president will want to make this offer, that is whether

$$G - 2(x^{PB} - x^P)^2 - \rho V^B + (x^* - x^B)^2 \geq G - (x^B - x^P)^2,$$

which implies that the president will want to form a portfolio coalition if

$$[(x^P - x^*) + (x^B - x^*)]^2 > 2\rho V^B.$$

Otherwise, the government will be a minority and the policy will be set by the legislative coalition of the opposition at x^* .

FRACTIONALIZATION AND COALITION FORMATION

We show that if more fractionalized legislatures are more (less) likely to generate parties distant from the ideal point of the formateur, portfolio coalitions are more (less) likely to occur when the number of legislative parties is large.

(F'note continued)

presidential institutions. Since in addition they think that they are describing 'US-style presidential systems' and the US system is unique in that the president has no formal power of legislative initiative, it is not easy to guess what they have in mind. In several presidential systems the Congress can propose only those amendments that do not increase either the deficit or the spending but only five systems approach the 'up-or-down' rule, in the sense that amendments can be offered only if the government agrees (Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Panama and Uruguay).

⁵⁸ The assumption that G is large guarantees that $g^B < G$.

Standardize the policy line to $x \in (0, 1)$, with $x^P = 1$. The legislature, composed of $j \in J$, parties has a hundred seats. The number of seats of Party j is S^j .

Consider first a three-party legislature with $S^P = 40$, $S^B = 30$, $S^C = 30$. Assume that new parties are generated by the following process:

- (1) Each new party places itself at the mid-point between the largest policy distance of any two adjacent parties (if any two intervals are the same, one party appears with a 50–50 chance), so that $x^{j+1} = \max_{j,k \in J} |x^j - x^k|/2$. The assumption is that, when the party system has low barriers to entry, parties fill the policy space.
- (2) Each new party takes $\sum_{j \in J} S^j (1 - |x^{j+1} - x^j|)/J$ from the existing parties. Here the assumption is that new parties divide voters with parties closer to them in policy space.

Let us apply these rules to some legislatures, assuming throughout that the value of opposing the president is $V = 0.1$ for all parties. Consider first a three-party legislature in which $x^B = 0.2$. Since the pivotal party is far from the president, $0.1 < 0.5(x^P - x^B)^2$, a portfolio coalition will be formed. Now a new party, PB , appears in the middle of the (x^P, x^B) interval, so that its ideal point is $x^{PB} = 0.6$. This party takes away seats from other parties as a function of the respective policy distances, and the distribution of seats in the $J = 4$ legislature is $S^P = 32$, $S^{PB} = 18$, $S^B = 24$, $S^C = 26$. Since the president still does not have a majority without B , a portfolio coalition is formed. Since now $x^P - x^{PB} = x^{PB} - x^B$, the fifth party appears in the middle of one of these two intervals. Suppose that it places itself between x^P and x^{PB} , with an ideal point at $x^{PPB} = 0.8$. The seat distribution in the $J = 5$ legislature is now is $S^P = 25.6$, $S^{PPB} = 15.5$, $S^{PB} = 12.6$, $S^B = 21.6$, $S^C = 24.7$. Since PB is now the pivotal party and it is close to the president, given the value of opposing the president, no portfolio coalition is formed, and the presidential party forms a minority government. Hence, in this case increased fractionalization makes a portfolio coalition less likely.

Consider, however, a three-party legislature in which B is close to the president, $x^B = 0.8$. Going through the same steps shows that no portfolio coalition is formed in the three-party and four-party legislatures. But if the fifth party is BCC , then the pivotal party in the $J = 5$ legislature is BC , with $x^{BC} = 0.4$ and this party is sufficiently far from the president's that a portfolio coalition is formed. Hence, fractionalization makes a portfolio coalition more likely.

APPENDIX II: DATA AND SOURCES

Countries were classified as democracies and dictatorships for each year between 1946 and 1999 according to rules spelled out in detail in Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990*. The cases of democracy were further classified as parliamentary, mixed or presidential and the latter were the ones used in the analysis.

Systems in which governments must enjoy the confidence of the legislature were classified as parliamentary; systems in which they serve on the authority of the elected president were classified as presidential; systems in which governments respond to both legislative assemblies and elected presidents were classified as mixed. The following three conditions unambiguously identify each of these regimes:

- (1) whether there is a president who is independently elected (either directly or indirectly);
- (2) whether the government is responsible to the assembly;
- (3) whether the government is responsible to the president.

The first condition is necessary but not sufficient to identify a presidential regime. Hence, all democracies with no independently elected presidents are classified as parliamentary. Given the existence of an independently elected president, assembly responsibility (the second condition) is necessary for identifying a 'mixed' regime. Hence, all democracies with independently elected presidents and no assembly responsibility were classified as presidential. Assemblies may affect either the formation or the survival of governments. The crucial aspect for assembly responsibility is survival; only when assemblies can withdraw support from the government at any point in its existence are governments really accountable to the assembly. Note that the nature of the executive – collective or not – is immaterial for the classification of the regime. Thus, Switzerland, for example, was classified as a presidential regime: the assembly does not affect the survival of the executive. For reasons indicated in the text (footnote 14), however, this country was not included in the analysis. Finally, the government can be responsible to the president either directly, as when the president can directly dismiss it, or indirectly, as when the president can dismiss the government by dissolving the assembly. Either form of responsibility is sufficient to characterize the regime as mixed (given, of course, the existence of an independently elected president and assembly responsibility). Cases

in which the president cannot dismiss the government and dissolve the assembly are classified as parliamentary democracies.

During the 1946–99 period we observed 189 spells of democracy (eighty-six parliamentary, seventy-five presidential and twenty-eight mixed) in 133 countries and these are displayed in Table A1.

TABLE A1 *Periods of democracy*

Parliamentary Democracies:		Presidential Democracies:		Mixed Democracies:	
Country	Period	Country	Period	Country	Period
Andorra	1993–99	Argentina	1946–54	Albania	1992–99
Antigua	1981–99	Argentina	1958–61	Armenia*	1995–99
Australia	1946–99	Argentina	1963–65	Brazil	1961–62
Austria	1946–99	Argentina	1973–75	C. Afr. Rep.	1993–99
Bahamas	1973–99	Argentina	1983–99	Comoros	1990–94
Bangladesh	1971–74	Armenia*	1991–94	Congo*	1992–96
Bangladesh	1991–99	Benin	1991–99	Croatia	1991–99
Barbados	1966–99	Bolivia*	1979–79	Finland	1946–99
Belgium	1946–99	Bolivia	1982–99	France	1958–99
Belize	1981–99	Brazil	1946–60	Haiti	1994–99
Bulgaria	1990–99	Brazil	1963–63	Iceland	1946–99
Canada	1946–99	Brazil	1979–99	Lithuania	1991–99
Cape Verde	1991–99	Cameroon	1960–62	Madagascar*	1993–99
Chad	1960–61	C. Afr. Rep.*	1960–61	Mali	1992–99
Czech Rep.	1993–99	Chile	1946–72	Mongolia	1992–99
Czechoslovakia*	1946–47	Chile	1990–99	Niger	1993–95
Czechoslovakia	1990–92	Colombia	1946–48	Niger	1999–99
Denmark	1946–99	Colombia	1958–99	Pakistan*	1972–76
Dominica	1978–99	Congo	1960–62	Poland	1989–99
Estonia	1991–99	Costa Rica*	1946–47	Portugal	1976–99
France	1946–57	Costa Rica	1949–99	Romania	1990–99
Germany	1990–99	Cuba	1946–51	S. Tome & P.*	1991–99
Ghana	1970–71	Cyprus*	1960–82	Somalia	1960–68
Greece	1946–66	Djibouti*	1977–81	South Africa	1994–99
Greece	1974–99	Dominican Rep.	1966–99	Sri Lanka	1989–99
Grenada	1974–78	Ecuador*	1948–62	Suriname*	1988–89
Grenada	1984–99	Ecuador*	1968–69	Suriname	1992–99
Hungary	1990–99	Ecuador	1979–99	Taiwan	1996–99
India	1947–99	El Salvador	1984–99		
Ireland	1946–99	Gabon*	1960–66		
Israel	1948–99	Ghana	1979–80		
Italy	1946–99	Greek Cyprus*	1983–99		
Jamaica	1962–99	Guatemala	1946–53		
Japan	1947–99	Guatemala	1958–62		
Kenya	1963–68	Guatemala	1966–81		
Kiribati*	1979–99	Guatemala	1986–99		
Korea, South	1960–60	Guyana	1992–99		
Laos PDR*	1954–58	Honduras	1957–62		
Latvia	1991–99	Honduras*	1971–71		
Lebanon*	1946–74	Honduras	1982–99		
Lesotho	1966–69	Indonesia*	1999–99		
Liechtenstein	1990–99	Korea, South	1963–71		
Luxembourg	1946–99	Korea, South	1988–99		
Macedonia	1991–99	Kyrgyzstan*	1991–99		
Malawi	1964–65	Malawi	1994–99		
Malaysia	1957–68	Marshall Is.*	1991–99		
Malta	1964–99	Micronesia*	1991–99		
Mauritius	1968–99	Namibia	1990–99		
Moldova	1996–99	Nicaragua	1984–99		
Myanmar*	1948–57	Nigeria	1979–82		

TABLE A1 *Periods of democracy—continued*

Parliamentary Democracies:		Presidential Democracies:		Mixed Democracies:	
Country	Period	Country	Period	Country	Period
Myanmar*	1960–61	Nigeria	1999–99		
Nauru*	1968–99	Palau*	1994–99		
Nepal	1991–99	Panama	1949–50		
Netherlands	1946–99	Panama	1952–67		
New Zealand	1946–99	Panama	1989–99		
Nigeria	1960–65	Peru*	1946–47		
Norway	1946–99	Peru*	1956–61		
Pakistan*	1947–55	Peru	1963–67		
Pakistan*	1988–97	Peru	1980–91		
Papua N. G.	1975–99	Philippines	1946–71		
Sierra Leone	1961–66	Philippines	1986–99		
Slovak Rep.	1993–99	Russia*	1991–99		
Slovenia	1991–99	Rwanda	1962–64		
Solomon Is.	1978–99	San Marino*	1992–99		
Spain	1977–99	Sierra Leone	1996–99		
Sri Lanka	1948–76	Suriname	1991–91		
St. Kitts/Nevis	1983–99	Switzerland*	1946–99		
St. Lucia	1979–99	Uganda	1980–84		
St. Vincent	1979–99	Ukraine*	1991–99		
Sudan	1956–57	United States	1946–99		
Sudan	1965–68	Uruguay	1946–72		
Sudan	1986–98	Uruguay	1985–99		
Suriname	1975–79	Venezuela	1946–47		
Sweden	1946–99	Venezuela	1959–99		
Thailand	1975–75	Zambia	1991–99		
Thailand	1983–90				
Thailand	1992–99				
Trin. & Tobago	1962–99				
Turkey	1961–79				
Turkey	1983–99				
Uganda	1962–69				
United Kingdom	1946–99				
Vanuatu	1980–99				
West Germany	1949–89				
Zambia	1964–72				
Zimbabwe*	1965–79				

* Countries for which no data on the coalition status of the government was included in the analysis. The reason for exclusion was one of the following: the partisan composition of the government could not be determined (e.g. Russia, Nauru); data on the partisan composition of the government were not available (e.g. Peru 1946–47 and 1956–61, Lebanon); data on the seat distribution in the legislature were not available (e.g. Ecuador 1948–62); coalitions were mandated by a pre-electoral pact among political parties (e.g. Switzerland, Colombia 1958–74, Honduras 1971).

Information on the partisan composition of the government and distribution of legislative seats was taken from the following sources:

General Sources: Arthur S. Banks, *Political Handbook of the World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, various years); Arthur S. Banks, Alan J. Day and Thomas C. Muller, *Political Handbook of the World 1997* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997); *Inter-Parliamentary Union* (Parline Database, <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp>); *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (London: Keesing's Limited, various years); *Library of Congress Country Studies* (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/csquery.html>); *Library of Congress Portals to the World* (<http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/portals.html>); *Regional Surveys of the World* (London: Europa Publications, various years); US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1999* (<http://www.usis.usemb.se/human/human1999/toc.html>).

Europe and OECD: Jan-Erik Lane, David McKay and Kenneth Newton, *Political Data Handbook, OECD Countries*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Parties and Elections in Europe* (<http://www.parties-and-elections.de/indexe.html>); Jaap Woldendorp, Hans Keman and Ian Budge, *Handbook of Democratic Government: Party Government in 20 Democracies, 1945–1990* (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1993); ZPC, *European Governments* (<http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00europa.htm>)

Africa: Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, *Political Regimes and Regime Transitions in Africa: A Comparative Handbook* (East Lansing: Department of Political Science, Michigan State University, 1996); Marion Doro, ed., *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents* (New York: Africana, various years); Shaheen Mozaffar, 'Africa: Electoral Systems in Emerging Democracies', in Josep Colomer, ed., *The Handbook of Electoral System Choice* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich and Bernhard Thibaut, eds, *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Asia and the Pacific: Rommel C. Banlaoi and Clarita R. Carlos, *Political Parties in the Philippines: From 1900 to the Present* (Makati City, Philippines: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 1996); Rommel C. Banlaoi and Clarita R. Carlos, *Elections in the Philippines: From Pre-Colonial Period to the Present* (Makati City: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 1996); Choe Yonhyok, *How to Manage Free and Fair Elections: A Comparison of Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom* (Goteburg: Goteburg University, 1997); Dieter Nohlen, Florian Grotz and Christof Hartman, eds, *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Latin America: Grace Ivana Dehesa, 'Gobiernos de Coalicion en el Sistema Presidencial: America del Sur' [Coalition governments in presidential systems: South America] (*doctoral dissertation*, European University Institute, Florence, 1997); Dieter Nohlen, ed., *Enciclopedia electoral Latinoamericana y del Caribe [Electoral encyclopedia of Latin America and the Caribbean]*. (San Jose, Costa Rica: Instituto Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 1993); *Political Database of the Americas* (<http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/english.html>); Arturo Valenzuela, 'Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile.'

Our indicator of legislative success is the proportion of legislative initiatives of the executive that are approved by the lower house of the national legislature. It is measured by the number of executive proposals approved in the lower house of the national legislature, divided by the total number of proposals introduced by the executive in a given period. The sample consists of 549 country-year observations for democracies around the world between 1946 and 2000.

The data on which this dataset is constructed are sometimes given on an annual basis, sometimes for a particular coalition, and at times for the entire term of a president or a legislature. To create annual observations, we apportioned the longer periods as shown in Table A2 to years taking as the criterion the state of affairs as of 31 December of each year.

Sources: Attila Ágh and Sandor Kurtan, *The First Parliament (1990–1994): Democratization and Europeanization in Hungary* (Budapest: Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies, 1995); Nizam Ahmed, 'In Search of Institutionalisation: Parliament in Bangladesh', in Philip Norton and Nizam Ahmed, eds, *Parliaments in Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 1999); Octavio Amorim Neto and Eric Magar, 'Veto Bargaining and Coalition Formation: A Theory of Presidential Policymaking with Application to Venezuela' (paper delivered at the XXII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Miami, 2000); Rudy B. Andrew and Lia Nijzink, 'Beyond the Two-Body Image: Relations Between Ministers and MPs', in Herbert Doring, *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995); Abdo I. Baaklini, *The Brazilian Legislature and Political System* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1992); Abdo I. Baaklini, *Legislative and Political Development: Lebanon, 1842–1972* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1976); Jean Blondel, *Comparative Legislatures* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973); Colin Campbell, *Canadian Political Facts 1945–1976* (New York: Methuen, 1977); Daniel Chasquetti, 'Multipartidismo, coaliciones y estabilidad democratica en America Latina' (Masters thesis, Universidad de la Republica, Montevideo, Uruguay, 2001); Argelina Cheibub Figueiredo, 'Government Performance in Multiparty Presidential Systems: The Experiences of Brazil' (paper delivered at the XVIII IPSA World Congress, Quebec City, 2000); Chong Lim Kim and Seong-Tong Pai, *Legislative Process in Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1981); Erik Damgaard, *Parliamentary Change in the Nordic Countries* (New York: Scandinavian University Press, 1992); Vincent Della Sala, 'The Italian Parliament:

TABLE A2 *Country-Periods Used to Create Annual Observations*

Country	Period
Argentina	1983–96
Australia	1975
Austria	1975, and 1985
Bangladesh	1973, and 1991–99
Belgium	1969–96
Brazil	1946–60, 1963, 1979–81, and 1983–98
Canada	1946–73
Chile	1990–93
Costa Rica	1958–69, 1975, and 1986–98
Denmark	1953–73, 1975, 1978–82, and 1986
Ecuador	1979–96
France	1946–57
Germany	1949–93
Greece	1978–82
Honduras	1990–96
Hungary	1990–93
Ireland	1985–87, and 1988–91
Israel	1975, and 1978–82
Italy	1948–52, 1954–56, 1958, 1960–61, 1963–73, 1975–96
Japan	1947–80, and 1988–97
Lebanon	1953–72
Malta	1975, and 1978–82
Netherlands	1978–82
New Zealand	1975, and 1978–82
Poland	1991–95
Portugal	1976–97
Russia	1996–99
South Korea	1960, 1963–67, and 1988–99
Spain	1979–81
United Kingdom	1946–78
United States*	1953–96
Uruguay	1985–99
Venezuela	1959–88

* These are executive-sponsored initiatives, even though they are not formally initiated by the president.

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