Does It Make a Difference?

Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy?

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Republic and the French Fifth Republic are analyzed; the paper by Stefano Bartolini,³ on cases of direct election of the head of state in Europe; the writings of Maurice Duverger and the new book by Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey,⁴ the differences between parliamentary, presidential, and semipresidential regimes have not attracted much attention from political scientists. These differences receive only limited attention in the two most recent works comparing contemporary democracies, those of Bingham Powell and Arend Lijphart,⁵ who has, however, written an excellent chapter on the implications of presidential regimes for this volume.

The neglect is largely due to the fact that with the outstanding exception of the United States, most of the stable democracies of Europe and the Commonwealth have been parliamentary regimes and a few semipresidential and semiparliamentary, while most of the countries with presidential constitutions have been unstable democracies or authoritarian regimes and therefore have not been included in comparative studies of democracy.⁶ Since many social, economic, cultural, and political factors appeared central in the analysis of the crisis and breakdown of democracy in those countries, we find practically no mention of the role of institutional factors in those crises. Only in the case of Chile has there been some reference to the conflict between President Allende and the congress in the analysis of the breakdown of democracy.⁷ It might or might not be an accident that so many countries with presidential regimes have encountered great difficulties in establishing stable democracies, but certainly the relationship between the two main types of democratic political institutions and the political process seems to deserve more attention than it has received. It would have been interesting to turn back to earlier debates of constitutionalists and intellectuals, particularly in Latin America, about presidentialism and parliamentarism.⁸ But we suspect they would not be particularly helpful for our present concerns because they would reflect, on the one side, admiration for the great American democratic republic and its presidential government, ignoring to some extent what Woodrow Wilson described as congressional government, and on the other, probably bitter criticism of French parliamentarism from the Latin American legal literature.

In my own work on the breakdown of democratic regimes, at the stage of correcting proofs I was struck in rereading O'Donnell's analysis of the impossible game in post-Peronist Argentina by the extraordinary difficulty of integrating or isolating the Peronists in contrast to the Italian communists, which in spite of all the strains in Italian democracy never led to comparable consequences. As a result I wrote a brief excursus on the political implications of presidentialism and parliamentarism that I expanded and that constitutes the basic theme of this essay.⁹ The ideas I intend to develop require further research using empirical evidence from different countries, particularly in Latin America but also the Philippines, South Korea, Nigeria, and perhaps Lebanon. The essays in this volume represent an important contribution in this direction. Further work on the problem would require research on the perceptions of both political elites and the public of presidents and legislatures in those regimes.

It is striking that most of the discussion of presidential government in classic works on democratic politics is limited to the United States and comparison between that country and the United Kingdom. There is practically no reference to long experience with presidential regimes in Latin America.¹⁰ This gap in the literature inevitably weakens my analysis in this essay. It should be taken as a stimulus for further and more systematic thinking and research.

**Presidentialism: Principles and Realities**

It has been argued that the terms presidentialism and parliamentarism each cover a wide range of political institutional formulas, and that the variety among those formulas is such that it is misleading to generalize about either term. Even two "pure" presidential systems like that of the United States and Argentina, despite the influence of the U.S. Constitution on the constitution Argentina adopted in 1853, are legally quite different—and even more so in practice—so that Carlos Nino contrasts the hyperpresidentialism of his country with a more balanced division of powers in the United States.¹¹ The same is probably even truer of parliamentary systems when we compare the gouvernement d'assemblée of the Third and Fourth Republics in France with the Kanzlerdemokratie of the Bundesrepublik.¹² There is the temptation in a debate about the two systems to turn to the extreme—and therefore most questionable—cases for or against the merits of each. As I will show, there are in modern democracies (even leaving aside the so-called semipresidential or semiparliamentary hybrids) some convergencies between the practices of presidentialism in conflictual multiparty systems (like Bolivia's) and parliamentary systems with a personalization of power or leadership similar to presidentialism when one party has an absolute majority or as in Germany with the "rationalized parliamentarism" of the Basic Law (the Bonn Constitution).

However, this should not obscure the fundamental differences between the two systems. All presidential and all parliamentary systems have a common core that allows their differentiation and some systematic comparisons. In addition, most presidential democracies are probably more similar to each other than the larger number of parliamentary democracies are alike, partly because all presidential democracies were inspired by the U.S. model and partly because the societies with such systems (with the outstanding exception of the United States) have some common characteristics. In parliamentary systems the only democratically legitimated institution is the parliament and the government deriving its authority from the confidence of the parliament, either from parliamentary majorities or parliamentary tolerance of minority governments, and only for the time that the legislature is willing to support it between elections and, exceptionally, as long as the parliament is not able to produce an alternative government.
Presidential systems are based on the opposite principle. An executive with considerable powers in the constitution and generally with full control of the composition of his cabinet and the administration is elected by the people (directly or by an electoral college elected for that purpose) for a fixed period of time and is not dependent on a formal vote of confidence by the democratically elected representatives in a parliament; the president is not the holder of executive power but the symbolic head of state and cannot be dismissed, except in rare cases of impeachment, between elections.

Two features stand out in presidential systems:

1. Both the president, who controls the executive and is elected by the people (or an electoral college elected by the people for that sole purpose), and an elected legislature (unimameral or bicameral) enjoy democratic legitimacy. It is a system of "dual democratic legitimacy."

2. Both the president and the congress are elected for a fixed term, the president's tenure in office is independent of the legislature, and the survival of the legislature is independent of the president. This leads to what we characterize as the "rigidity" of the presidential system.

Most of the characteristics and problems of presidential systems flow from these two essential features. Some other nondefining features of presidentialism are often associated with it and are discussed below, such as term limits or no reelection, automatic succession by a vice president, freedom in appointing and (even more) in dismissing a cabinet, sameness of head of state and head of government. One characteristic so normal that it is often included in the definition is that the presidency is a unipersonal office. There have been only two cases of directly elected pluripersonal "presidencies": the two-person Cypriot administration (1960-63) and the Uruguayan Colegiado (which governed twice—1918-33 and 1952-67). 13

Dual Democratic Legitimacy

The basic characteristic of presidentialism is the full claim of the president, to democratic legitimacy. Very often the claim has strong plebiscitary components although sometimes it is based on fewer popular votes than are received by many prime ministers in parliamentary systems holding minority cabinets that are perceived by contrast as weakly legitimated by the electorate. To mention just one example: Allende with a 36.2 percent plurality obtained by a heterogeneous coalition (1973) was certainly in a very different position from Adolfo Suárez with 35.1 percent of the vote (1979), as were the opponents Alessandri with 34.9 percent and Felipe González with 30.5 percent, and the less successful contenders Tomic with 27.8 percent and Fraga and Carrillo with respectively 6.1 and 10.8 percent. A presidential system gives the incumbent, who combines the qualities of head of state representing the nation and the powers of the executive, a very different aura and self-image and creates very different popular expectations than those redounding to a prime minister with whatever popularity he might enjoy after receiving the same number of votes. 14

The most striking fact is that in a presidential system, the legislators, particularly when they represent well-organized, disciplined parties that constitute real ideological and political choices for the voters, also enjoy a democratic legitimacy, and it is possible that the majority of such a legislature might represent a different political choice from that of the voters supporting a president. Under such circumstances, who, on the basis of democratic principles, is better legitimated to speak in the name of the people: the president, or the congressional majority that opposes his policies? Since both derive their power from the vote of the people in a free competition among well-defined alternatives, a conflict is always latent and sometimes likely to erupt dramatically, there is no democratic principle to resolve it, and the mechanisms that might exist in the constitution are generally complex, highly technical, legalistic, and, therefore, of doubtful democratic legitimacy for the electorate. It is therefore no accident that in some of those situations the military intervenes as "poder moderador."

It could be argued that such conflicts are normal in the United States and have not led to serious crisis. 15 It would exceed the limits of this essay to explain the uniqueness of American political institutions and practices that have limited the impact of such conflicts, including the unique characteristics of the American political parties that led many American political scientists to ask for a more responsible, disciplined ideological party system. 16 In my view, the development of modern political parties, in contrast to the American type of parties, particularly in socially or ideologically polarized societies, is likely to make those conflicts especially complex and threatening.

Without going into the complexities of the relationship between the executive and the legislature in different presidential regimes, 17 the relative dangers of predominance of one or the other, and the capacity to veto or stalemate decisions on legislation, there can be no doubt that presidential regimes are based on a dual democratic legitimacy and that no democratic principle can decide who represents the will of the people in principle. In practice, and particularly in developing countries with great regional inequalities in modernization, it is likely that the political and social composition and outlook of the legislature differs from that of the supporters of the president. The territorial principle of representation, sometimes reinforced by inequalities in the districts or the existence of a senate in federal republics, tends to give stronger weight in the legislature to representatives of rural areas and small towns of the provinces than to the metropolises. And it is easy to claim that the democratic credentials of representatives of backward areas are dubious and that these representatives are local oligarchs elected thanks to their clientelistic influences, their social and economic power. Independently of the truth of this claim and of the degree to which a democracy would disqualify voters who, rather than being influenced by trade unions, neighborhood associations, and party ma-
chines, are loyal to local notables, tribal leaders, priests, and even bosses, urban progressive elites are tempted to question the representativeness of those elected by them. In such a context, it becomes easy for a president encountering resistance to his program in the legislature to mobilize the people against the oligarchs, to claim true democratic legitimacy, deny it to his opponents, and confront his opponents with his capacity to mobilize his supporters in mass demonstrations. 18

It is also conceivable that in some societies the president might represent the more traditional or provincial electorates and might use that support to question the right of the more urban and modern segments in a minority to oppose his policies. In the absence of any logical principle to define who really has democratic legitimacy, it is tempting to use ideological formulations to legitimate the presidential component of the system and delegitimize those opposing him, transforming what is an institutional conflict into serious social and political conflicts.

The different “legitimacies” of a popularly elected president and a congress are already well described in this text of 1852:

While the votes of France are split up among the seven hundred and fifty members of the National Assembly, they are here, on the contrary, concentrated on a single individual. While each separate representative of the people represents only this or that party, this or that town, this or that bridgehead, or even only the mere necessity of electing some one of the seven hundred and fifty, in which neither the cause nor the man is closely examined, he is the elect of the nation and the act of his election is the trump that the sovereign people plays once every four years. The elected National Assembly stands in a metaphysical relation, but the elected President in a personal relation, to the nation. The National Assembly, indeed, exhibits in its individual representatives the manifold aspects of the national spirit, but in the President this national spirit finds its incarnation. As against the Assembly, he possesses a sort of divine right; he is President by the grace of the people.

Incidentally this is not the analysis of an institutionalist (or political psychologist) but of the “sociologist” Karl Marx in his “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.”19

Election for a Fixed Term: The “Rigidity” of Presidentialism

The second main institutional characteristic of presidential systems is the fact that presidents are elected for a period of time that, under normal circumstances cannot be modified: not shortened and sometimes, due to provisions preventing reelection, not prolonged. The political process therefore becomes broken into discontinuous, rigidly determined periods without the possibility of continuous readjustments as political, social, and economic events might require. The duration of the mandate of a president becomes an essential political factor to which all actors in the political process have to adjust, and this has many important consequences.

If I had to summarize the basic differences between presidential and parliam-

tary systems, I might point to the rigidity that presidentialism introduces into the political process and the much greater flexibility of that process in parliamentary systems. This rigidity might appear to the proponents of presidentialism as an advantage because it reduces some of the incertitudes and unpredictability inherent to parliamentarism, in which a larger number of actors, parties, their leaders, even the rank-and-file legislators, including those changing loyalties, can at any time between elections make basic changes, see to realignments, and above all, change the head of the executive, the prime minister. The search for strong power and predictability would seem to favor presidentialism, but paradoxically, unexpected events from the death of the incumbent to serious errors in judgment, particularly when faced with changing situations, make presidential rule less predictable and often weaker than that of a prime minister, who can always reinforce his authority and democratic legitimacy by asking for a vote of confidence.

The uncertainties of a period regime transition and consolidation no doubt make the rigidities of a presidential constitution more problematic than a parliamentary system, which permits flexible responses to a changing situation.

One of the presumed advantages of a presidential regime is that it assures the stability of the executive. This has been contrasted with the instability of many parliamentary governments, which undergo frequent crises and changes in the prime ministership, particularly in multiparty European democracies. It would seem that the image of governmental instability in the French Third and Fourth Republics, in Italy today, and more recently in Portugal has contributed to the negative image of parliamentarism held by many scholars, particularly in Latin America, and their preference for presidentialism. In such a comparison it is often forgotten that parliamentary democracies have been able to produce stable governments. Under their apparent instability, the continuity of parties in power, the reshuffling of cabinet members, the continuation of a coalition under the same premier, and the frequent continuity of ministers in key ministries in spite of cabinet crises tend to be forgotten. 20 It is also overlooked that the parliamentary system allows for removal of the prime minister who has lost control of his party or is involved in a scandal, whose continuation in office might create a serious political crisis. He might be replaced by his party, by the formation of a new coalition, or by the withdrawal of support of parties tolerating the minority government, without a major constitutional crisis. Unless parliamentary alignments make the formation of a democratically based government impossible, parliament with more or less difficulty and with more or less delay should be able to produce a new prime minister. In some cases of more serious crisis, there is always the alternative of calling for new elections, although they often do not resolve the problem but, as in Germany in the early 1930s, compound it.

In contrast, presidents are elected for a fixed term in office. The kind of changes that produce government crises and the substitution of one executive by another are excluded for that time. But this entails a rigidity in the political process that makes adjustment to changing situations extremely difficult, a leader who has lost the confi-
dence of his own party or the parties that acquiesced to his election cannot be replaced. He cannot be substituted with someone able to compromise with the opposition when polarization has reached an intensity that threatens violence and an illegal overthrow. The extreme measure of impeachment, which is in the constitutional texts, is difficult to use compared to a vote of no confidence. An embattled president is tempted to, and can, use his powers in such a way that his opponents might not be willing to wait until the end of his term to oust him. But there are no mechanisms to remove him without violating the constitution, unless he is willing to resign.21

Voluntary resignation under the pressure of party leaders and public opinion would be one way of avoiding the implications of the rigidity of the presidential mandate without the rumbling of tanks or violence in the streets. However, it is an unlikely outcome given the psychology of politicians. Moreover, in a presidential system, particularly one without the possibility of reelection, the incumbent cannot vindicate himself before the electorate. It is difficult for his former supporters to encourage him to take such a step, particularly when some consider a vice president, who would automatically succeed him, even less desirable than the incumbent (as in the Fernando Collor crisis in Brazil in mid-1992). After two years and ten months and the complete failure of his administration, President Siles Suazo resigned, preventing another breakdown of civilian rule. Pressure from the opposition parties, the MNR (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario) and the ADN (Alianza Demócrata Nacional), which had the majority in the congress, the hostility of the major business organizations, and rumors of a possible coup had reduced his mandate in a little more than a year. It was exceptional in Bolivian politics because instead of a coup, the crisis led to an election in July 1985 in which ADN gained 28.57 percent of the votes and MNR 26.42 percent (an election in which the trade union movement and the radical left advocated abstention or void voting). Paz Estenssoro of MNR was elected president, and a period of democratic stability was initiated. Suazo's resignation is today widely recognized as a patriotic act.

Even "voluntary" resignation under pressure is likely to generate a serious political crisis because the segment of the electorate that brought the president to power might feel cheated of its choice and rally publicly to the incumbent's support. It is difficult to imagine political leaders resolving the issue without bringing the people into the debate and without using the threat of nondemocratic institutions, like the courts, and, more frequently, of political intervention by the armed forces. The intense conflict underlying such crises cannot be contained within the corridors and smoke-filled rooms of the legislature, as the nonconfidence vote (or more often the threat of it) against a prime minister or a party leader can be.

Identifiability and Accountability

One of the positive characteristics attributed to presidentialism is accountabil-ity and identifiability. The voter in casting his ballot knows whom he or she is vot-

representatives of a party in a parliamentary system presumably does not know who the party will support to be prime minister, and if it is a multiparty system in which the party cannot expect to gain an absolute majority, the voter does not know what parties will form a governing coalition.

In reality neither of these statements is true or all the truth the voter would need to know in order to make a "reasonable" choice.

In presidential elections the voter may know much less about who will govern than the voters of a party in most parliamentary systems. The presidential candidates do not need and often do not have any prior record as political leaders. They may not be identified with a party with an ideology or program and, there may be little information about the persons likely to serve in a cabinet. The choice is often based on an opinion about one individual, a personality, promises, and—let's be honest—an image a candidate projects, which may be an image chosen by advisers (who are not necessarily politicians). This is even more the case in our age of "videopolitics."22

It may be argued that the voters of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) voted for Papandreou, the British Conservatives voted for Mrs. Thatcher, the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) voted for Felipe González, and so forth, although some might have voted for those parties in spite of their leaders or the other way around. Personalization of leadership is not exclusive to presidential politics. There is, however, a difference: leaders in parliamentary systems are not likely to have proposed themselves to the voters without having gained, and sometimes retained over many years, the leadership of their parties, either in power or in the opposition (something far from easy in the competitive world of politics). These leaders represent their parties. In addition, the voter knows that those who will form a cabinet will come from the party and, more often than not, are well-known leaders of the party with an accumulated experience in politics. A prime minister today is quite free in selecting his cabinet but certainly not as free as most presidents.

The argument that in a parliamentary system the voter does not know who will govern is not true in most cases because parties are identified with highly visible leaders. Those leaders appeal directly to the voters, and the campaigns increasingly are focused on the leader who aspires to be prime minister or chancellor. No Conservative voter could ignore that he was voting for Mrs. Thatcher, no PSOE voter that he was casting his ballot for Felipe González, no CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union) voter that Helmut Kohl would form the government. It could be argued that the party's parliamentary group or the notables of the party could remove the chosen leaders, that those who voted for Mrs. Thatcher, for example, had for the remainder of the legislature to accept Major as prime minister. But why would a party change leaders after the investment made in building them up, unless there is a feeling that they have proved inadequate? After all, the parliamentarians and party leaders have much to lose if the voters disapprove; they can be held accountable.

The indeterminacy of who will govern when coalitions are necessary in
multiparty systems, with some exceptions, this again is not true. Parties commit
to an alliance, such as the CDU-CSU-FDP (CSU, Christlich Soziale
Union; FDP, Frei Demokratische Partei) before the elections, and the voter for any
of those parties knows that a particular person will be chancellor and also that
unless one party wins an absolute majority (and even then) the government will
include representatives of all the parties in the coalition. This is particularly
interesting to those wanting a minor coalition party, such as the FDP, to have an influence.
Voters do not know the exact composition of the coalition cabinet—which cabinet
posts will go to which parties and leaders—but they know much more than voters
for a president in the United States or Brazil know. Parties in parliamentary systems
often have a well-known shadow cabinet, while a president-elect starts naming a
cabinet only after the election. The identifiability in presidentialism is of one person;
in parliamentary government most of the time it is of a pool of people and often
a number of well-known subleaders.

Let us assume a multiparty system, no absolute majority, no previous coalition
agreement. The voter still knows that the prime ministership will go to the leader (or
one of the top leaders) of the largest party and knows which are the likely coalition
partners of that party. The voter may not like one or the other of the parties, their
leaders, or their positions but is likely to know more about the possible cabinets than
voters for most presidents know. The voter for a major party hopes that it might govern
alone. The voter for a minor party (eligible to enter coalitions) knows it and its leader
will not govern alone but hopes that the vote will give it a greater share of power. After all only a limited number of coalitions are possible, and noncontiguous coalitions are exceptional. A Catalan nationalist voter for CIU (Convergència i
Unió) in a Spanish parliamentary election knows that this party will not form a government
but also that if no party has an absolute majority CIU representatives can
influence the formation of a government and might even enter it. The voter certainly
knows more about who and what to vote for than if he only had the choice between
two presidential candidates. Should CIU’s representative enter a coalition he disapproves
the party is more accountable than the party of a president who would disappoint Catalanist sentiments to which he might have appealed.

Accountability to the voters for performance is presumably enhanced by the fact
that a president is directly and personally responsible for policies—not the cabinet,
not a coalition, and not the leaders of the party that might have occupied the prime
minister’s office in a succession. Only one person is clearly identified as governing
for the entire period of a mandate. There are no confused or shared responsibilities.
So the argument goes.

Let us analyze this argument. First of all there is no way to hold accountable a
president who cannot be presented for reelection. Such a president can neither be
punished by the voters by defeat nor rewarded for success by reelection with the
same or a larger vote than in the previous election. A president who cannot be re-
elected is “unaccountable.”

This is the case in thirteen presidential systems (counting those that provide for
one or two interim terms) compared to six systems that have no limit on reelection
or a two-term limit. We could add to these the semipresidential (or premier-presi-
dential systems) of France and Finland, which do not limit reelection, and Portugal,
which has a two-term limit.

It could be argued that in the case of no reelection the party that supported
the election of the president would be held accountable, but in fact that party’s new
presidential candidate is the person accountable. He would try to identify with his
successful predecessor or to disidentify from him in case of failure. In a personalized
election this might be easier than when the voter has to support a party that has not
changed its leadership or has done so belatedly. Besides, it is partly unfair
to punish a party for the actions of a president who, after the election, could gov-
ern independently of its confidence.

When reelection is possible, the incumbent president who is perceived nega-
tively paradoxically can try, more or less successfully, to escape blame by shifting it
to the congress, particularly if it was dominated by the opposition but even if his
own party was in the majority. Just before the election he can propose legislation
that the congress rejects and can claim that if his policies had been approved he
would have been successful. A prime minister with a majority cannot play such
a game. The division of powers can therefore provide an alibi for failure. The con-
gress, even the president’s party in the congress, can play a similar game by blaming
the executive for not implementing policies it has approved or not submitting the
measures necessary to deal with problems.

In conclusion, accountability with separation of powers is not easy to enforce. In
a parliamentary system the party with a majority, or even a stable coalition of parties,
can easily be made accountable to the voters, as long as the voters do not exclude
in principle a vote for parties in the opposition.

The objection that in a parliament, parties, their leaders, and the prime ministers
they support cannot be made accountable is valid only under certain conditions:
when there are many unstable governments or shifting (and even contradictory)
coalitions, and when no party has played a central role in the coalition-making
process.

This might have been the case in the Third French Republic and in the “third
force” governments of the Fourth Republic. Even in such a fractionalized parlia-
dimentary system as the Italian, I surmise that the voters had not much doubt until
recently that the Democrazia Cristiana was responsible for governing and could have
been made accountable if a sufficient number of voters had considered poten-
tial alternative coalitions (which probably were impossible without the partici-
pation of the Communists). In addition, in the case of coalitions the minor parties
can be and have been held accountable for entering or not entering them, and the
major parties for including or not including the minor ones.

However, in many parliamentary systems parties can be made fully accountable.
This is true in Westminster-type majoritarian democracies, particularly when a two-party system has emerged, and also in multiparty systems with coalition or minority governments. Voters in such situations often have voted for parties committed to form a particular coalition. The parties campaign with such a commitment although the voters may give more or less weight in the process of policy formation to one or another member of the coalition (checking perhaps the threat of hegemonic rule by one party). This has been the case in the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, the coalition parties can be and have been made accountable in the next election. Obviously one party might break out of the coalition, even change sides for the next election, but voters can reward or punish it for its behavior.

Another problem in presidential systems is not to be ignored: even in the case of possible reelection, the voters have to wait for the end of the presidential term to demand accountability. A prime minister can be made accountable to the parliament and his own party by a vote of no confidence at any time; the party becomes accountable to the voters at the end of the period or even earlier should the leadership crisis in parliament or the governing party lead to anticipated elections.

Winner Take All

In a presidential election whatever the plurality gained the victorious candidate takes over the whole executive branch, while a leader aspiring to be prime minister whose party gains less than 51 percent of the seats might be forced to share power with another party or to constitute a minority government. With some 30 percent of the seats he could not form a noncoalition government, while a president with the same vote could (although he might have a hard time getting the congress to support his policies). The control of the executive in presidential systems is in principle "winner take all."

In addition it is "loser loses all" for defeated presidential candidates, who might end without any public office after the election and, unless they have strong positions as leaders of their party, might have gambled away all their political resources. Where is Michael Dukakis or Vargas Llosa today? The loser often loses all.

Adam Przeworski commenting on this point has written:

Linz (1984) has developed a number of arguments in favor of parliamentary, as opposed to presidential, systems. I am particularly persuaded by his observation that presidential systems generate a zero-sum game, whereas parliamentary systems increase total payoffs. The reasons are the following. In presidential systems, the winner takes all: He or she can form a government without including any losers in the coalition. In fact, the defeated candidate has no political status, as in parliamentary systems, where he or she becomes the leader of the opposition. Hence, in terms of the model developed above, under ceteris paribus conditions (under which \( W + L = T \) is the same in both systems), the value of victory, \( W \), is greater and the value of defeat, \( L \), is smaller under presidential than under parliamentary systems. Now, assume that political actors discount the future at the rate of \( r \) per annum. Under the presidential system, the term is fixed for some period \( t = \text{pres} \), and the expected value of the next round is \( p^{\text{pres}} (pW + (1 - p)L) \). Under the parliamentary system, the winner governs only as long as he or she can maintain sufficient support in the parliament, say for the period \( t = \text{parl} \), so that the expected value of the next round is \( p^{\text{parl}} (pW + (1 - p)L) \).

Elementary algebra will then show that unless the tenure expected under parliamentarism is notably longer than under presidentialism, the loser has a greater incentive to stay in the democratic game under parliamentarism.24

My critics, however, are right that with the division of powers a successful presidential candidate might not "take all" because his party might be in the minority in the congress. They are also totally right that when in a parliamentary system a disciplined party gains a majority or more of the seats, it is truly a "winner-take-all" situation. This is likely in a Westminster-type parliamentary system where single-member districts might assure a party a disproportionate number of seats in a culturally homogeneous country. As Maimwaring and Shugart put it, the purest examples of what Lijphart calls majoritarian democracy, in which the winner takes all, are parliamentary rather than presidential democracies.25 However, this is true only when a party is able to gain an absolute majority of seats, something that does not happen often.

Even when a party in a parliamentary democracy gains an absolute majority of seats—a "winner-take-all" situation, which is likely to happen in a Westminster-type democracy—the party leader or premier may not be in the same position as a president. To stay in office the prime minister has to pay attention to his supporters in the parliamentary party; rebellion of backbenchers or of the barons of the party can terminate his tenure. The fate of a powerful, once popular leader, such as Mrs. Thatcher, is paradigmatic. Mrs. Thatcher's party under the new leadership of John Major could win a subsequent election. Nothing similar could have happened when the failure of Alán García of Peru became apparent, and APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana) had to pay the price in the elections.

One of the possible outcomes of a presidential election is that the defeated candidate loses all. This is likely, and probably desirable, for the "amateur" challenger without party support. But it also is likely in a two-party contest. The defeated candidate, regardless of the number of votes obtained, is not likely to be considered a desirable candidate for the next presidential election and therefore probably will have lost his leadership position in the party. In fact, sometimes the defeated party is left leaderless until a candidate is nominated for the next election. Only in highly ideological and structured parties, or in some multiparty situations, do defeated presidential candidates retain a leadership position. Leaders of parties in parliamentary systems, however, are practically always assigned seats in the legislature and sometimes have the status of "leader of the loyal opposition" (although grow-
ing personalization in the campaigns might also lead to their resignation from leadership of the party).

No Reelection and Its Implications

The principle of no reelection or of no immediate reelection is not a defining characteristic of presidentialism, but it is clearly the predominant pattern. Shugart and Carey list eight countries (several of dubious democratic credentials) that allow no reelection, four with no immediate reelection, and one—Venezuela—with two interim terms. Among those allowing immediate reelection, five limit the presidency to two terms and six have no limit (including two semipresidential or, in their terminology, premier-presidential systems).26

The importance assigned to the no-reelection principle is reflected in the fact that the General Treaty of Peace and Amity signed by all Central American governments at Washington on February 7, 1923, provided that: “The Contracting Parties oblige themselves to maintain in their respective Constitutions the principle of non-reelection to the office of President and Vice President of the Republic, and those of the Contracting Parties whose Constitutions present such reelection, oblige themselves to introduce a constitutional reform to this effect in their next legislative session after the notification of the present Treaty.”27

The principle of no reelection in many countries has acquired a strong symbolic importance. The memory of lifelong rule by nondemocratic rulers, caudillos and dictators, led to demands of no reelection, like that of Madero against the Porfiriato in Mexico. Attempts to change constitutional provisions barring reelection, efforts to assure what the Latin Americans call continuismo, have mobilized public opinion and led to riots and coups not only in Latin America but South Korea.28

The prospect of reelection of an incumbent in the winner-take-all game often has united presidential hopefuls of quite opposite ideological positions, as some powerful Brazilian governors were united against Goulart.

The continuo support of the electorate for a particular party election after election, which we find in quite a few parliamentary democracies (Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Italy, India, and Japan) sometimes has assured permanence in the office of prime minister. But it has not led to a demand to limit the term in office and never to violent protest and regime crises comparable to those provoked by efforts of continuismo. This tells us something about the different political culture generated by presidentialism and parliamentarism. The stakes in theory are different although in practice parliamentarism might lead to greater continuity in office of highly respected party leaders.

Democracy is by definition a government pro tempore, a government in which the electorate at regular intervals can make those governing accountable and impose a change.29 The maximum time limit for any government between elections is probably the greatest guarantee against omnipotence and abuse of power, the last hope for those in the minority position. The requirement of periodic elections, however, in principle does not exclude the possibility that those in power might again obtain the confidence of the electorate. A turnover in power can also have dysfunctional consequences, because no government can be assured the time to implement promises, to carry through between the two elections major programs of social change, to achieve irreversible changes in the society. This is even more true when there is term limitation, as in many presidential systems. And all governments, democratic and nondemocratic, would like to assure themselves continuity over a long period of time.

The concentration of power in a president has led in most presidential regimes to attempts to limit the presidency to one or at most two terms. Those provisions have been frustrating for ambitious leaders, who have been tempted to assure continuismo legally. Even in the absence of such ambitions, the consciousness that there is time to carry out a program associated with one’s name is limited must have an impact on political style in presidential regimes. The fear of discontinuity in policies and distrust of a potential successor encourage a sense of urgency, of what Albert Hirschman has called “the wish of volubil condurare,”30 that might lead to ill-designed policies, rapid implementation, impatience with the opposition, and expenditures that otherwise would be distributed over a longer period of time or policies that might contribute to political tension and sometimes inefficacy. A president wants to be sure that he can inaugurate his Brasilia before leaving office, implement his program of nationalizations, and so forth. A prime minister who can expect his party or the coalition supporting him to win the next election is not likely to be under the same pressure; we have seen prime ministers staying in office over the course of several legislatures without any fear of dictatorship arising because removal could take place anytime without recourse to unconstitutional means. Term limits and the principle of no reelection, whose value cannot be questioned, mean that the political system has to produce a capable and popular leader periodically and that the political capital accumulated by a successful leader cannot be used beyond the leader’s term of office.

All political leadership is threatened by the ambitions of second-rank leaders, by their positioning themselves for succession, and sometimes by their intrigues. But inevitably the prospect of a succession at the end of a president’s term is likely to foster those tendencies and suspicions of them on the part of the incumbent. The desire for continuity, on the other hand, leads a president to look for a successor who will not challenge him while he is in office. Such a person is not necessarily the most capable and attractive leader. The inevitable succession also creates a distinctive tension between the ex-president and his successor, who will be tempted to assert his independence and his differences with his predecessor, even when both belong to the same party—a process that might become quite threatening to the unity of the party. The person who has been president, with all the power, prestige, and adulation accompanying that office, will always find it difficult to relinquish power.
and to be excluded from the prospect of regaining it in the case of failure of the successor. That frustration might have important political consequences, such as an attempt to exercise power behind the scenes, to influence the next presidential succession by supporting a candidate different from the one supported by the incumbent, and so forth.

When a president is barred from immediate reelection but can run again after an interim period, as in Venezuela, conflict is likely to develop between the incumbent and his predecessor of the same party. The case of Carlos Andrés Pérez and President Lusinchi, discussed by Michael Coppedge (chapter 12) comes readily to mind.

Certainly similar problems emerge in parliamentary systems when a prominent leader leaves the premiership but finds himself capable of and willing to return to power. But probably the need to maintain party unity, the deference with which such a leader is likely to be treated by other leaders of his party and by the successor, and the successor’s awareness of needing the cooperation of a powerful leader outside of government might facilitate an alternative positioning of the two leaders of the same party. The departing leader knows that he might be called back into office at any time, and his successor also knows that such a possibility exists. The awareness of both leaders that a confrontation between them might be costly to both creates a situation that very often leads to a sharing of power.

Political Style in Presidential and Parliamentary Democracies

The preceding discussion has focused on the institutional dimensions of our problem. Some of the legal provisions in presidential constitutions and some of the unwritten rules that differentiate the types of democracies have been referred to. Other aspects that need to be addressed are the way in which political competition is structured in a system in which the people directly elect the president, the style in which authority and power are exercised, the relations among a president, the political class, and the society, and the way in which power is likely to be exercised and conflicts to be resolved. Our assumption is that the institutional characteristics by which we have referred directly or indirectly shape the whole political process and the way of ruling.

Perhaps the most important implication of presidentialism is that it introduces a strong element of zero-sum game into democratic politics with rules that tend toward a “winner-take-all” outcome. A parliamentary election might produce an absolute majority for a particular party, but more normally it gives representation to a number of parties. One perhaps wins a larger plurality than others, and some negotiations and sharing of power become necessary for obtaining majority support for a prime minister or tolerance of a minority government. This means that the prime minister will be much more aware of the demands of different groups and much more concerned about retaining their support. Correspondingly different parties do not lose the expectation of exercising a share of power, an ability to control, and the opportunity to gain benefits for their supporters.

The feeling of having independent power, a mandate from the people, of independence for the period in office from others who might withdraw support, including the members of the coalition that elected him, is likely to give a president a sense of power and mission that might be out of proportion to the limited plurality that elected him. This in turn might make resistances he encounters in the political system and the society more frustrating, demoralizing, or irritating than resistances usually are for a prime minister, who knows from the beginning how dependent he is on the support of his party, other parties, other leaders, and the parliament. Unless the prime minister has an absolute majority, the system inevitably includes some of the elements that become institutionalized in what has been called consensus and sometimes consociational democracy.

Certainly there have been and are multiparty coalition governments in presidential systems, based on the need for “national unity,” but they are exceptional and often unsatisfactory for the participants. The costs to a party or joining others to save a president in trouble are high. If the endeavor succeeds, the president gets the credit; if it fails, the party is blamed; and the president always has power to dismiss the ministers without being formally accountable for his decision. Those considerations entered into the decision of Fernando Henrique Cardoso not to serve in the cabinet of President Collor in 1992.

In this context it is important to notice that when democracy was reestablished in two Latin American countries with presidential constitutions in difficult circumstances, the political leaders of the major parties turned to consociational types of agreements to obviate some of the implications of giving one party the entire authority associated with the presidency and the zero-sum implications for those not gaining that office. However the difficulty in forming true coalition governments in presidential regimes has led to more formalized and rigid arrangements. The Colombian Concordancia, a form of consociationalism, although democratically legitimized after being agreed to by the politicians, established a system that preempted the rights of the voters to choose which party should govern. To prevent the zero-sum implications of presidentialism, which were feared by the politicians, a system of dubious democratic legitimacy was chosen. The Venezuelan pacto de punta fija had the same purpose but not the rigid constitutionalization of the Colombian solution.

The zero-sum character of the political game in presidential regimes is reinforced by the fact that winners and losers are defined for the period of the presidential mandate, a number of years in which there is no hope for shifts in alliances, broadening of the base of support by national unity or emergency grand coalitions, crisis situations that might lead to dissolution and new elections, and so forth. The losers have to wait four or five years without access to executive power and thereby to a share in the formation of cabinets and without access to patronage. The zero-sum game raises the stakes in a presidential election for winners and losers, and inevitably increases the tension and the polarization.
Presidential elections have the advantage of allowing the people to choose directly who will govern them for a period of time. Many multiparty systems with parliamentary institutions leave that decision to the politicians. Presumably, the president has a direct mandate from the people. If a minimal plurality is not required and a number of candidates compete in a single round, the person elected might have only a small plurality: the difference between the successful candidate and the runner-up might be too small to justify the sense of plebiscitary popular support that the victor and his supporters might sincerely feel. To eliminate this element of chance the electoral laws sometimes require a minimal plurality for the victor and some procedure for choosing when no one reaches that minimum. These requirements might frustrate the supporters of the most successful candidate. More frequent is the pattern in which the election turns into a confrontation between two leading candidates, either in a first or a second round. Such a bipolar choice under certain conditions is likely to produce considerable polarization. One of the consequences in multiparty systems of the confrontation of two viable candidates is that before the elections, broad coalitions are likely to be formed in which extremist parties with some strength cannot be ignored because success might depend on even the small number of votes they might be able to provide. A party system gives these voters disproportionate presence among the supporters of the candidates. It is easy for the opponent to point to the dangerous influence of the extremists and the extremists have a possible blackmail power over a moderate candidate. Unless a strong candidate of the center rally wide support against those who engage in an alliance with extreme segments of the political spectrum and finds widespread support in the center that cuts into the more clearly defined alternatives, a presidential election can encourage centrifugal and polarizing tendencies in such an electorate.

Where there is great fear of polarization, the politicians may agree on a compromise candidate whom they respect and who does not generate antagonism. Such a candidate may be chosen more for his personal qualities than for the policies he advocates, and he is more likely to be a leader of a small than a large party. Such an option can serve the purpose of making a smooth transition to democracy, with its competition among parties and policies, of reequilibrating a system in crisis. However, it is very doubtful that such an ad hoc coalition of politicians would want to or could give the president it helped to elect full support to govern, to make difficult decisions that alienate many erstwhile supporters and run counter to their ideological commitments. This problem would be particularly serious in the late years of the mandate. A compromise president might therefore provide weak leadership and be left without support in the congress. Many of his former supporters may dissociate themselves from him (without paying the price of a government crisis, as in a parliamentary system) to prepare themselves for legislative elections and the next presidential election.

It can be argued that in a society where the bulk of the electorate places itself at the center of the political spectrum, shares basically moderate positions, agrees on the exclusion of the extremists, and differs only moderately between left of center and right of center, the potentially negative consequences of presidential competition are excluded. With an electorate of overwhelmingly moderate centrist leanings, anyone making an alliance or taking a position that seems to lean toward an extreme is unlikely to win an election, as Goldwater and McGovern discovered on election night. However, most societies facing serious social and economic problems probably do not fit the model of U.S. presidential elections. They are likely instead to be divided in their opinions about an authoritarian regime that had significant support at some point and to have parties that are perceived as extremist with strong organizations and considerable appeal.

In a single-round election, none of the leading candidates in a somewhat polarized society with a volatile electorate can ignore those forces with whom he would otherwise not be ready to collaborate without the very great risk of finding himself short of a plurality. Let us retain for our analysis the potential for polarization and the difficulty of isolating politically extremist alternatives disliked intensely by significant elites or segments of the electorate.

A two-round election with a runoff between leading candidates reduces the uncertainty and thereby might help to produce a more rationally calculated outcome, on the part of both the candidate and the voters. The candidates can point to their own strengths and calculate how much their allies can contribute to a winning coalition, and those tending more toward the extremes are aware of the limits of their strength. This in some ways would come closer to the process of coalition formation in a parliament in search of a prime minister.

The runoff election would seem, in principle, to be the solution in the case of multiparty presidential systems in which candidates might gain only small pluralities and in which, contrary to "rational" expectations, no broader coalitions are formed to obtain a majority. In a runoff in which only the two leading candidates are allowed to compete, one of them inevitably receives an absolute majority.

However, a number of dysfunctional consequences derive from this method of election:

1. In a highly fragmented system the two leading candidates might enjoy only small pluralities with respect to other candidates and might represent positions on the same segment of the political spectrum.
2. One of the candidates might be an outsider to the party system with no congressional party base.
3. The "majority" generated might not represent a politically more or less homogeneous electorate or a real coalition of parties.
4. The winner, although initially the choice of a small proportion of the electorate, is likely to feel that he represents a "true and plebiscitary" majority.
5. The expectation of a runoff increases the incentive to compete in the first run, either in the hope of placing among the two most favored or of gaining bargaining power for support in the runoff of one of the two leading contenders. Therefore, rather than favoring a coalescence of parties behind a candidate, the system reinforces the existing fragmentation.

**Excursus: What Difference Would Presidentialism Have Made in the Spanish Transition to Democracy?**

To illustrate this argument, let us assume that, in 1977 in Spain, the first free election after Franco had been presidential rather than parliamentary. In fact, of course, a referendum on political reform had called for a parliamentary monarchy, and the election was for a constituent parliament. But what would the implications of a presidential election at that juncture have been?

First, in the absence of a record of the distribution of preferences of the electorate, despite all the information provided by public opinion surveys, which politicians would have tended to disregard, the prevailing incertitude would have made it difficult to form coalitions. And certainly the potential front-runners would have been forced to form more than winning coalitions. Assuming that the democratic opposition to Franco would have united behind a single candidate, Felipe González, something that would not have been assured at the time, González would not have been able to run independently in the way he did in the parliamentary election, given the expectations that prevailed about the Communist strength and the more or less 30 percent of the electorate that Communists actually represented. A Popular Front image would have dominated the campaign and probably obliterated the identities of the different political forces from the extreme left to the Christian Democratic center and the moderate regional parties. As it was, these forces could maintain their identities in most districts, except for some senatorial elections.

The problem would have been even more acute for the Center Right, those who had supported the reforma and particularly the reforma pactada exit from the authoritarian regime. It is not sure that, in spite of the great popularity gained by the prime minister of the transition, Adolfo Suárez, he could have united and would have wished to unite all those to the right of the Socialists. At that point, many Christian Democrats, including those who in 1979 ran on the Unión de Centro Democrático ticket, would have been unwilling to abandon their political friends from the years of opposition to Franco. On the other hand, it would have been difficult for Suárez to present himself with the support of Alianza Popular, which appeared to be a continuist alternative to Franco led by former Franco cabinet members; nor does it seem logical that the AP would have supported a leader ready to legalize the Communist party.

Excluding the possibility that the candidate of the Right would have been

Manuel Fraga, later the accepted leader of the opposition, it would have been very difficult for Suárez to sustain in a presidential campaign his distinctive position as an alternative to any thought of continuity with the Franco regime. In fact, the campaign in 1977 of the UCD was directed as much against the AP as against the Socialists and given the incertitudes about the strength of the AP and the fears and hostility it generated on the Left, much of the campaign was centered on the AP’s leader, Fraga. This focus reduced the potential polarization between the longtime democrats “de toda la vida” and the neophytes of democracy who constituted an important part of the UCD. Inevitably, in a presidential election, the candidate of the Center Right and Right would have concentrated his attack on the dangerous supporters of the democratic left candidate, the role of the Communists and the peripheral nationalists among his supporters, and the compromises he would have made with them. The candidate of the Center Left and democratic left inevitably would have had to bring up his opponent’s continuity with the Franco regime, the importance among his supporters of unreconstructed Francoists, and the absence among his coalition partners of democrats of even the moderate center, those who after the election in 1977 and in the years of constitution making and the first constitutional government after the 1979 election would play a prominent role in supporting the Suárez governments, such as the moderate Catalanists.

There can be no question that a presidential election in 1977 would have been much more polarized than the parliamentary elections that took place on June 15. Should Prime Minister Suárez have rejected an understanding with the AP, or Fraga have rejected an alliance with the Suaristas based on his bloated expectations and his vision of a natural majority of the Right and a two-party system, the outcome would have been either highly uncertain or, more likely, a plurality for the leftist candidate. A leftist president with popular backing, even with a different outcome of congressional elections, would have felt legitimated to undertake the making of a more partisan constitution and radical changes in the polity and the society. He probably would have made more changes than the Socialist prime minister Felipe González would undertake in 1982. González had been a member of parliament for five years, and his party had governed municipalities. The more utopian left wing of his party had been defeated in a party congress, and the main goal of the 1982 campaign was to win votes in the center of the spectrum, where previous elections had shown the bulk of the electorate placed itself. In my view there can be no doubt that the process of transition and consolidation of democracy in Spain would have been very different and probably more difficult with a Socialist victory in 1977. Comments by Felipe González about what a victory of his party even in 1979 would have meant confirm this.

Let me caution that some of the negative consequences of polarization implicit in a presidential competition are not inherent to such a system and are not inevitable. They may be avoided when a massive consensus of the population favors moderate positions to the right and left of center and when the limited weight of the
extremes is quite apparent so that no one is particularly interested in alliances with them. This situation is likely when there is a consensus to isolate the extremes, or when they themselves opt for running alone in order to make their propaganda and their presence conspicuous. But I doubt that these conditions would be found in many societies in the process of democratization and consolidation of democracy.

The Ambiguities of the Presidential Office

I have been discussing some of the implications of presidentialism for the electoral process. Some might feel that the election is one thing and what the incumbent does after being elected with all the powers granted to him by the constitution is another. Why should he or she not be ready to overcome the polarization of the campaign, heal the wounds generated, offer the defeated an opportunity to collaborate, ignore and isolate the allies on the extremes of the spectrum, and become the president of all the people? Such a policy and style of governing cannot be excluded, but whether such a policy and style are chosen depends on the personalities of the leader and the opponents. Before an election no one can be assured that this will be the choice of the new incumbent, and certainly the process of political mobilization in a plebiscitary context is not likely to facilitate such a turn of events. Moreover, such a stance might weaken rather than strengthen the new president because it risks alienating the more extremist components of his coalition, who are still in competition with the dominant, more moderate party of the alliance in the congress and other arenas for the support of the electorate. The possibility that extremists might claim betrayal makes it difficult to ignore their demands. In addition, if such a stance is not reciprocated by the defeated candidates, the incumbent’s position is likely to be weakened. If a public offer has been made, a refusal may lead to a more intransigent stand identifying even moderate opponents with the least legitimate members of the coalition that supported his opponent and thus reinforcing the rhetoric generated during the campaign.

Some of the most important consequences of a presidential system for political style result from the nature of the office itself: the powers associated with it and the limits imposed on it, particularly those derived from the need for cooperation with the congress, which might be of a different partisan composition than the winning presidential coalition, and above all the sense of time that an election for a limited number of years with no right of succession often imposes on presidents.

The presidential office is by nature two-dimensional and in a sense ambiguous because a president is the representative of a clear political option, a partisan option, and of his constituency, sometimes in addition representing his party within the coalition that brought him to power. But the president is also the head of state.

The symbolic and deferential dimension of power—those aspects of authority that Bagehot saw represented in the monarchy and sometimes successfully incarnated by presidents in parliamentary regimes (as recently by Sandro Pertini in Italy, or by Theodor Heuss in the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany)—is difficult to combine with the role of the partisan politician fighting to implement his program. It is not always easy to be at the same time the president of all Chileans and the president of the workers, to be the elegant and well-mannered president in La Moneda and the demagogic orator at the mass rallies in a stadium. Many voters and key elites are likely to see the second role as a betrayal of the role of head of state, who is somewhat above party and a symbol of the continuity of the state and the nation that is associated with the presidency. A presidential system, by comparison with a parliamentary monarchy or republic with a prime minister and a head of state, does not allow a differentiation of these roles.

Perhaps the most important consequence of the direct relationship between a president and the electorate, of the absence of any dependency on politicians (to renew his power once elected by the threat of motions of no confidence and the need for confirmation of confidence), is the sense of being the elected representative of the whole people and thus the propensity to identify the people with one’s constituency and to ignore those voting for one’s opponents. The implicit plebiscitary component of presidential authority is likely to make the opposition and the constraints a president faces immediately in exercising his authority particularly frustrating. In this context, the president is likely to define his policies as reflecting the popular will and those of his opponents as representing narrow interests rejected by the people. This sense of identity between leader and people that encourages or reinforces a certain populism can be a source of strength and power, but it also can lead to ignoring the limited mandate that even a majority, not to say a plurality, can give to implementation of any program. It encourages certain neglect of, sometimes disrespect toward, and even hostile relations with the opposition. Unlike a president, a prime minister is normally a member of a parliament who, although sitting on the government benches, is still a member of a larger body where he is forced to interact to some extent as an equal with other politicians and leaders of other parties, particularly if he depends on their support as head of a coalition government or of a minority government. A president, given his special position as head of state, is not forced into such interactions; he is free to receive his opponents or not, and always in the context of his ceremonial status in the presidential palace.

One has only to observe the exchanges between the prime minister and the leaders of the opposition in the House of Commons, on one hand, and a president’s speech before the congress, on the other. Anyone who saw the memorable session in which Mrs. Thatcher presented her resignation will recognize the difference. Even a president facing a critical or hostile congress would not face a similar situation.

In addition, in a presidential system the defeated opponent and the leaders of the opposition occupy ambiguous positions. Although publicly leaders, because they do not hold an office and are not even parliamentarians, they cannot act with re-
spect to the president in the same way as the leader of the parliamentary opposition in Westminster.

The absence in a presidential system of a king or a president of the republic who can act symbolically as a moderating power deprives the system of a degree of flexibility and of mechanisms to restrain the exercise of power. A king or other symbolic leader can sometimes exercise a moderating influence in a crisis situation and can even, as a neutral power, facilitate a parliamentary rebellion against the prime minister and maintain contact with forces, particularly armed forces, that are ready to question the leadership of the prime minister. Even the presidents of legislative bodies who in a parliamentary confrontation between parties can exercise some restraints do not have such power over presidents; unlike a president, a prime minister sits on the government bench while the president of a legislative body presides over the chamber or the senate.

Given the inevitable institutional and structural position of a president, the people, that is, the people who support and identify with the president, are likely to feel that he has more power than he actually has or should have and to center excessive expectations on him. Moreover, they may express those sentiments if the president manipulates or mobilizes them against an opposition. The interaction between a popular president and the crowd acclaiming him can generate a political climate of tension and fear on the part of his opponents. The same can be said about the direct relationship a conservative president or a president with a military background can establish with the armed forces in his capacity as commander in chief. A president has many opportunities to interact with army leaders unencumbered by a prime minister or a minister of defense, one of whom would normally be present in a parliamentary monarchy or republic.

The Election of an “Outsider”

The personalized character of a presidential election makes possible, especially in the absence of a strong party system, the access to power of “outsiders.” We mean by this candidates not identified with or supported by any political party, sometimes without any governmental or even political experience, on the basis of a populist appeal often based on hostility to parties and “politicians.” The candidacy of such leaders might appear suddenly and capitalize on the frustrations of voters and their hopes for a “savior.” Such candidates have no support in the congress and no permanent institutionalized continuity (due to the principle of no reelection) and therefore find it difficult to create a party organization. Only in a presidential system can candidates like Fujimori or Collor de Mello aspire to power. The same is true for military leaders like Hindenburg, Mannerheim, Eisenhower, and Eanes, although the success of these men depended upon the support of political parties. Scott Mainwaring observes that in each of the four presidential elections between 1945 and 1960 in Brazil, one or both of the two top vote-getters were career officers who had no prior involvement with parties.

The “outsider,” a presidential candidate running without party support, even against parties, be it Fujimori, Tyminski (who won 23.2 percent of votes against the 40.0 percent of Wales), Aristide, Perot, or Chung Ju Yung (the founder of Hyundai) in South Korea, is not just the result of a particular crisis situation or of the ambition of particular individuals. There are structural reasons for such a candidacy.

If the purpose of a presidential election is to elect the “best” woman or man to the office and the individual voter has to make the choice, why should he or she think of parties? If voters can get sufficient information, or think they have gotten it, to make up their minds about the “personal” qualifications and positions of the candidates, they are presumably right in voting for a candidate irrespective of his links with a party. Voters feel that they do not need a party to tell them how to vote.

In the past this was difficult because no candidate, even one who did a lot of “whistle-stop” campaigning, could reach every voter. Today, perhaps in most countries, people can be reached through television. The “mediation” of parties, through presenting, endorsing, and supporting a candidate and organizing and financing a campaign, seem to be meddling and interfering in the relationship between the candidate and the voter. In some countries institutional changes recognize that fact: open primaries, registration of candidates rather than parties, funding of candidates by public means rather than parties, equal access to the media (either by law or by agreement of media managers) make parties less relevant in a presidential election. If in addition people are free to spend their own money to promote a candidacy and why should citizens be deprived of this right if the money does not come from a criminal activity? anyone may try to convince the citizenry of his or her personal qualifications for the office. After all we are supposed to vote for one person and for that person’s program or positions. Why should we submit ourselves to the decisions of politicians controlling a party if we, the “sovereign” people, can vote for our candidate directly?

In a world where, for reasons we cannot discuss here, politicians and parties are objects of relentless criticism, just and unjust, and rank very low in people’s confidence, amateur outsiders are favored. In fact, it is tempting to run “against” the parties, which as continuous organizations controlling legislatures and government can easily be made responsible for the problems of a society, both solvable and unsolvable.

In addition, the crisis—not the end—of ideological certitudes and identifications, the loss of traditional party identifications mediated by class and religious identities, in a fluid, socially and culturally increasingly homogenized society, makes for volatility in party loyalties and for weaker links between interest groups—even organized groups like trade unions—and parties. The development of “outsider” candidacies should not surprise us.

It could be thought that the candidacy of an outsider with no party support, no previous experience in political office, is a Latin American phenomenon, an unlikely event in a country with well-established, traditional parties, where even an
outider would have to win the nomination of a major party, even should the primaries make it possible for a relative unknown to gain the nomination. In fact, third-party candidates in the United States generally have been supported by a splinter group from one of the parties. However, the candidacy of Ross Perot in 1992 shows that in the context of dissatisfaction with the parties, constant criticism of Congress, and the wear of primary campaigns, an outsider can appeal directly to the electorate. In the age of television, someone with wealth and popularity in a presidential system can appeal directly to the voters without having to build a party, as he or she would in a parliamentary system.

Former U.S. vice president Walter Mondale states this difference between leadership selection in parliamentary and presidential systems: "Unlike a parliamentary system whose leaders are picked by peers who know them, we have developed a self-nomination system where almost anyone with ambition can run for President. A candidate is not required to pass any test; he or she does not need any organizational base of support; it is not even necessary for him or her to have been elected to office before." The problem with such patterns is that they are based on the initial fallacy that the "best" person in the office of the president—even if he or she had more power than presidents actually have—could govern without supporters in the congress, without a pool of persons with experience in office, without the support of politicians identified with his or her positions on issues. If we can accept the assumptions of the partyless presidential election, why not apply the principle (particularly in a system of single-member plurality elections) to all representative offices? In that case we could find ourselves with legislatures of homines and femine naves without prior commitments (except those made to their voters), who after election would have to aggregate their positions into something coherent to govern. We would be back at the first nineteen-century parliaments, where those elected had to discover their affinities by meeting in coffee houses or clubs and slowly inventing the political party.

If partyless elections seem like unsound ways of assuring good government, we might ask ourselves what kind of institutional arrangements favor them or make them less likely. I would suggest that presidentialism facilitates them and that parliamentarism makes it more difficult for them to prevail.

An institutionalized party system makes it difficult for outsiders to enter into a presidential competition and even more difficult to win the competition. The decreased institutionalization of parties after authoritarian rule in Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador, in contrast to Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile, supports this conclusion. However, one could also argue that the possibility and the incentives for outsiders to enter into the presidential competition have contributed to the arrest of or destroyedincipient institutionalization in Brazil and particularly in Peru. In September 1988, once the discredit of Alan García had become irreparable, if APRA could have replaced him with another leader (as the Conservatives in the United Kingdom did with Mrs. Thatcher), the party's crisis might have been limited. The not negligible institutionalization of parties in Bolivia and of cooperation among them since redemocratization might be threatened in the near future by the outsider, antiparty candidacy of Max Fernández.

Plebiscitary Leadership: Delegative Democracy

O'Donnell has noted that presidential elections, particularly in those cases that fit his model of "delegative democracy," are strongly individualistic but more in a Hobbesian than a Lockean variety; voters, irrespective of their identities and affiliations, are supposed to choose the individual who is most fit to take charge of the country's destiny. In his essay, "Delegative Democracy," he writes: "Delegative democracies are grounded on one basic premise: he or she who wins a majority in presidential elections (delegative democracies are not very congenial to parliamentary systems) is enabled to govern the country as he (or she) sees fit, and to the extent that existing power relations allow for the term he has been elected.

The plebiscitary character of many presidential elections, the polarization and emotionality surrounding them, the appeal beyond and sometimes above party, the sometimes uncontrolled promises made, lead often to extremely high rates of approval after the election. Approval may be as high as 70 and even 80 percent of the electorate. Such rates are not likely in parliamentary systems, in which voters identify with the parties of the opposition and the leader of the opposition continues to occupy a position of leadership. By contrast, the defeated presidential candidate often is reduced almost to the rank of a private person. The starting popularity ratings of a number of presidents and prime ministers show this pattern.

At the same time, failure and loss of support of a president is not cushioned by party loyalty. He or she is held personally responsible, and therefore we find drops in approval in the polls to very low levels, lower than most prime ministers on the way to defeat. Presidents suffer the wildest swings in popularity, as O'Donnell writes: "Today they are acclaimed as providential figures, tomorrow they are cursed as only fallen gods can be."

As examples of that dynamic in public opinion of presidents when they face difficult challenges, such as the economic crises in Latin America (inflation, the debt problem, and so forth), we might refer to opinion about Presidents Alfonsín of Argentina and Alan García of Peru. In May 1984, 82 percent of the population in greater urban centers expressed a positive opinion of Alfonsín. By August 1987 that figure had been reduced to 54 percent, and in April 1989, shortly before the May presidential election, to 36 percent. Even so, the president was always more favorably evaluated than the government, which moved from 45 percent in May 1984 to 27 percent in August 1987 and 9 percent in April 1989. Alan García, upon entering office in November 1985, enjoyed 90 percent approval; one year later in September 1986, his approval was 70 percent; in October 1987, it was 44 percent; in October 1988, 16 percent; and in January 1989 it reached a low point of 9 percent.41
In contrast, support for Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez never reached such high levels in spite of his role in the transition to democracy, but it also did not fall as vigorously. At the high point in April 1977 when the transition to democracy seemed assured, it was 79 percent, and before the June 1977 first free election it was 67 percent, although the vote for his party, the UCD, was only 34.7 percent. By October 1978 it had dropped to 50 percent, and by December 1979 to 35 percent. By June 1980 it had fallen to 26 percent. The drop reflected the internal crisis of the UCD, the impact of Basque terrorism, and the economic crisis, and it ultimately led to Suárez’s resignation in February 1981.

Approval of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer started in the last quarter of 1949 at 33 percent. By the end of 1950, it was 24 percent. It started to move up in 1951 and 1952, rose sharply in 1953 and reached 57 percent in the last quarter, moved down in 1954, rose again in 1955 to 55 percent, and then hovered over the next years a little above 40 percent (with a low of 41 percent in 1960). The founder of the Federal Republic of Germany never could attain the massive support that Latin American presidents enjoyed, but he never experienced a great drop either, although conditions were more favorable for him to do so.

General de Gaulle, despite his undeniable charisma in the period from July 1956 to his resignation in April 1969, also never reached the level of approval of the Latin American presidents. Only a few times did the practically monthly surveys of the Ifop show a positive response of more than 70 percent (a maximum of 74 percent often more than 60 percent. In 1963 it dropped a few times to between 43 and 48 percent and was at 54 percent in May 1968 and at 53 percent at the time of his resignation.

Are Presidential Governments Stable and Parliamentary Cabinets Unstable?

In the vast majority of presidential systems the president appoints his cabinet without congressional input, and the same is true for the dismissal of cabinet members. The “advise and consent” role of the U.S. Senate limits the president’s choice, but ultimately the choice belongs to the president and not to Congress. The president might not get the most wanted cabinet member, but he will get someone he wants. In Korea since 1987 the prime minister is proposed by the president and confirmed by the legislature. He then appoints his ministers, but he is not elected by the legislature, nor does he subsequently need its confidence. He remains the president’s prime minister. In the Philippines, cabinet nominations are subject to approval by the Congressional Commission on Appointments, consisting of the president of the senate and twelve members of each chamber, elected according to the proportional representation of parties in the chambers.

The power of approval in these cases does not make the legislature in any way responsible for the appointment, but it allows the legislature to frustrate the president. The U.S. “advise and consent” role is the exception rather than the rule. Korea (as of 1987), Nigeria, and the Philippines also deviate from the predominant pattern. Significantly two of these countries have experienced strong U.S. influence.

The free choice by a president of his collaborators, the opportunity to dismiss them whenever their advice becomes undesirable, and their incapacity in such a case to return to the parliament with an independent power base is likely to discourage strong-minded, independent men and women from joining a presidential cabinet and making a commitment to politics. In a parliamentary system, those leaving the cabinet might use their position as parliamentarians to question the policies of a prime minister in the party caucus, in legislative committees, and from the benches in the parliament. A president can shield his ministers from criticism much more than a prime minister, whose ministers may have to confront the parliament’s questions, interpellations, and censure, when the principle of division of powers is carried to its logical conclusion. Once more, practices and the relative positions of the congress and the presidency in a constitutional system can modify these implicit patterns, just as modern prime ministers and their cabinets are becoming more like presidents and their cabinets in presidential regimes.

It is often assumed that the freedom of presidents to appoint a cabinet without considering the demands of coalition parties or even powerful personalities or factional leaders in their own party assures greater cabinet stability. However, as Jean Blondel writes:

The U.S. shares a common characteristic with the other Constitutional presidential countries, even though these countries did not normally live continuously under this regime. Ministerial duration is short in America: among Atlantic countries only Finland, Portugal and Greece had a shorter average duration of ministers than the U.S.—which, on the other hand, with ministers lasting an average just over three years, scores only a little more than the bulk of the Latin American countries, and is precisely at almost the same point as Costa Rica. Constitutional presidentialism does therefore lead, even where it has operated effectively and without hindrance, to a lower ministerial duration; if the average ministerial longevity is under four years in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile and Peru, it is under three and a half years in Venezuela and scarcely over two years in Colombia both of which had an unbroken period of constitutional presidentialism since the early 1950s. The average duration of ministers in Chile between 1945 and the end of the Frei presidency in 1970 was only one and a half years, although Chile had then an unbroken series of regularly elected constitutional presidents.

Let it be noted that in many parliamentary regimes the prime minister or chancellor is also free to appoint his cabinet, that there is no investiture vote of the cabinet or approval of individual ministers, and that often the prime minister is voted into
office first and then proceeds to form his cabinet. However, and this is the difference from a presidential system, the parliament can deny the prime minister investiture or confidence if it disapproves of his cabinet. Certainly in coalition governments the partners have a decisive say in the composition of the cabinet.

It can be argued that the game of “musical chairs” among ministers in some par-liamentary cabinet governments, the cursus honorum in government offices culmi-nating in ministerial appointment, does not assure experience and competence, but it seems very doubtful that the almost total renewal of government with each new president appointing his men or women is better. The fact that in the United States since 1945—with the exception of Johnson’s retention of the cabinet after the assas-sination of Kennedy—only two cabinet members served under different presidents is striking and probably not exceptional in presidential systems. Besides, most presidential systems do not have highly trained and independent bureaucracies. They must rely on a government of “amateurs” with little time to become ac-Quainted with the machinery of government or with policies in process and their implementation. Moreover, the experience they acquire on the job is not available to their successors.

In addition the generally more collective decision making in parliamentary cab-inets provides all the ministers with some familiarity with a wide range of issues, so that when one finally becomes prime minister he or she cannot be ignorant of a series of issues. A state governor who gains the presidency has no reason to be familiar with foreign policy, to give just one example.

The position of ministers in parliamentary governments is quite different from that of ministers or secretaries in presidential regimes. Certain trends, however, are different. I am thinking of parliamentary systems with highly disciplined parties and a prime minister with an absolute majority or those that follow the model of the Kanzerdemokratie, in which the prime minister is free to select his cabinet without parliamentary approval. All this together with the tendency to personalize power in modern politics (particularly thanks to television) has reduced the sense of collective responsibility and the collegial nature of cabinet government, as well as the individual responsibility of ministers. However, in parliamentary systems when the prime minister is dependent on party coalitions or heads a minority government with parliamentary approval, his relation to the cabinet is likely to be clearly different from that of a president to his cabinet.

Presidents and Vice Presidents

Among the characteristics not essential to a presidential system but found in many presidential systems is the office of vice president.

One of the more complex issues surrounding a vice presidency is the provision for automatic succession in the case of death or inability of the president, which in some cases is complicated by the fact that the automatic successor is elected separately and can represent a different political option, coalition, or party than the president. Or he may have been imposed as the running mate by the presidential candidate without any consideration of his capacity both to exercise executive power and to gain the plebiscitary support the president had at the time of his election. Brazilian history provides an example of the first situation, most recently with the succession to the presidency of Sarney after Neves, and Argentina illustrates the second situation with the succession after Perón of María Estela Martínez de Perón. Presidentialism leads to a personalization of power, but a succession between elections can lead to the highest office someone to whom neither the voters, the party leaders, nor the political elite would, under normal circumstances, have entrusted with that office.

Conflicts between presidents and vice presidents have been frequent. We only have to think of Jânio Quadros and Goulart, Frondizi and Gómez, Alfonsín and Martínez, and most recently Corzón Aquino and Laurel (who went as far as conspiring against President Aquino).

The same rigidity we noted in the fixed terms of presidents continues when an in-cumbent dies or becomes incapacitated while in office. In the latter case, there is a temptation to hide the incapacity until the end of the term (a temptation that incidentally also appears sometimes in parliamentary democracies). In the case of death or resignation of the president for one or another reason, the vice presidency presumably assures an automatic succession without a vacuum of authority or an interregnum. However, succession by a vice president who completes the term, which has worked relatively smoothly in the recent history of the United States, sometimes poses serious problems. The problems are particularly acute when the constitution allows separate candidacies for president and vice president. Rather than a running mate of the same party and presumably the same political outlook as the presidents, the vice president may have been a candidate of a different party or coalition. In such a case, those who supported the president might feel that the successor does not represent their choice and does not have the popular democratic legitimacy necessary for the office. The alternative situation, which today is more likely—that president and vice president have been nominated in agreement—still leaves open the question of the criteria used in nominating the vice president. There are undoubtedly cases in which the vice president has been nominated to balance the ticket and therefore represents a discontinuity. In other cases the incumbent imposes a weak can-didate so that the vice president might not represent a potential challenge to his power, and in still others, the incumbent makes a highly personal choice, such as his wife. Nothing in the presidential system assures that the voters or the political leadership of the country, if they had been able to, would have selected the vice president to exercise the powers they were willing to give to the president. The continuity that the automatic succession in presidential systems seems to assure therefore is sometimes more apparent than real. In the absence of a vice president with the right of succes-sion, there is the possibility of a caretaker government until new elections, which are
supposed to take place at the earliest possible date. But it is not sure that the serious
crisis that might have provoked the need for succession would be the best moment
to hold a new presidential election.

The Party System and Presidentalism

Several authors have noted that most stable presidential democracies approach
the two-party system, according to the Laakso-Taagepera index, while many stable
parliamentary systems are multiparty systems. They also provide convincing
arguments that presidencies function better with two-party rather than multiparty
systems and describe the tension between multipartism and presidentialism.

Since with the exception of the United States, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Argentina,
Colombia, and in the past Uruguay, most presidential democracies in the Americas
(at least nine) are multiparty systems, it can be argued that there is no fit between the
institutions and the party system. It could be argued that these countries should or
could move toward a two-party system by “political engineering,” for example of the
electoral laws and other rules, but this seems doubtful. The Brazilian military regime
attempted to impose a two-party framework but was forced to give up the idea. The
electoral law enacted by Pinochet before leaving power had the same intent.
South Korea, with between three and four parties in the legislature and three main
contestants in the first free presidential election, has moved toward a two-party system
with the fusion in 1990 of the Democratic Justice Party led by Roh Tae Woo, the op-
opposition Reunification Democratic Party (RDP) led by Kim Young Sam, and the
New Democratic Republican Party of Kim Jong Pil (although the latent purpose
was to establish a dominant party system like that of Japan). It is questionable that
a system in which one of two parties enjoys a large majority and is assured of gain-
ing the presidency guarantees stability. The opposition minority, PDP (Party for
Peace and Democracy) led by Kim Dae Jung, will have little chance of sharing or al-
ternating in power. One might ask if a very polarized polity will not frustrate the op-
opposition and contribute to unstable politics as well as opportunities for corrup-
tion in the dominant party. The situation in the Republic of Korea (where the DJP
and the RDP together won 64.6 percent of the vote in the 1987 presidential election)
would have differed from that of the United States, Costa Rica, and Venezuela, where
on average the president’s party controls between 45.8 percent (U.S.) and 50.9
percent (Costa Rica) of the seats in the lower chambers. In the December 18, 1992,
presidential election, however, Kim Young Sam was elected with 42 percent of the
vote. His opponent, Kim Dae Jung, who gained 34 percent, announced his retire-
ment from politics. The billionaire founder of the Hyundai industrial group drew
about 16 percent. A two-party system seemed to emerge.

One of the paradoxes of presidential regimes in many Latin American democracies
(and the Philippines) is the complaint that parties are weak and lack discipline
and that representatives behave in parochial and self-interested ways. I say paradox
because these characteristics of parties and their representatives make it possible in

multiparty systems (in particular) for presidencies to work. A president without a
clear majority in a multiparty situation with ideological and disciplined parties
would find it difficult to govern, and even more difficult with an opposition major-
ity in the congress. It is the possibility of convincing individual legislators, of
producing schisms within the parties, of distributing pork barrels and forming
local clientelistic alliances that enables a president to govern and enact his program
without a majority. The idea of a more disciplined and “responsible” party system
is structurally in conflict, if not incompatible, with pure presidentialism (obviously
not with premier presidentialism or with the French semipresidentialism or semi-
parliamentarism.)

Presidents have to favor weak parties (although they might wish to have a strong
party of their own if it was assured a majority in the congress). The weakness of par-
ties in many Latin American democracies therefore is not unrelated to the presi-
dential system but, rather, a consequence of the system.

One might argue whether parties are essential to functioning democracies, but
certainly the history of democratization has been associated with the development
of parties and their legitimation. It is also true that nondemocratic regimes have
been based on hostility to multipartism either through establishing a monopoly or
a hegemonic “leading role” of a single party, attempting to create other forms of
representation, or the outright suspension or outlawing of party activity. In parlia-
mentary democracies even anti-party movements have to transform themselves into
parties to gain access to or a share of power, sometimes like the NSDAP (Na-
tional sozialistische deutsche Arbeiterpartei) to destroy democracy, sometimes to
participate in the parliamentary process and ultimately in government coalitions,
like a segment of the “Greens” in the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany.
The anti-party stance of some Latin American presidents would be largely fruitless
without building a party and searching for support across party lines. In Brazil,
presidents have constantly stressed that they are independent from and above
party; they have formed governments with ministers recruited from parties other
than their own, even when they have made their political career in one party. No
leader in a parliamentary system could win power by saying like Janio Quadros: “I
have no commitments to the parties that support me—the ideas that I sustain in
my campaign are mine alone.” Even Hitler constantly emphasized his commitment
to the “Movement.” When a presidential candidate can say, “Professional politi-
cians don’t do anything except perturb Brazilian life,” how can we expect the slow
and continuous building of democratic parties? Who can be surprised at the con-
stant party switching of Brazilian legislators when presidents switch parties (like
Sarney) or disregard their ties to parties that elected them?

Mainwaring in his excellent analysis of the Brazilian case concludes:

The question is why presidents have opted for supra- and anti-party tactics. In
part, the answer may be attributed to the individual styles of the different presi-
Presidentialism with Adaptations

The difficulties generated by the pure model of presidentialism have led in a number of Latin American countries to constitutional norms or political practices, to agreements among politicians or parties, that ignore or profoundly modify the principles of presidentialism. In some cases, as I will show, these practices have contributed to governability and prevented serious crises or the breakdown of democracy. However, in several cases they violate the spirit of presidential government, ignore or frustrate the wishes of the electorate, and have been outright undemocratic (although agreed to by democratically elected politicians) by limiting the choice of the voters. These patterns contribute to weakening the accountability we associate with democracy, particularly the accountability of political parties. They might also contribute to the cynicism of the electorate about parties and politicians, if not to its alienation and radical tendencies away from the mainstream of electoral politics (as in the case of Colombia).

Multipartyism or drift toward it in a number of countries with presidential systems can lead to two responses: (1) an exclusionary policy in which the two main parties attempt to prevent the entry of other parties by sharing power and modifying the rules of the game, as in Colombia, or (2) constitutional reforms directed toward "coparticipation" or toward quasi parliamentaryism, such as some patterns in Uruguay and Bolivia.

In Uruguay the complex political system has led after redemocratization to practices described by María Ester Mancebo as "from coparticipation to coalition."51 These practices have contributed to what might be called a "nonpresidential" style of politics. They should not, however, be confused with "coalition government" in parliamentary systems.

Guillermo O'Donnell52 independently and starting from a very different problem, has noted that Uruguay has a very different style of policy making from Argentina and Brazil. He asks why the Uruguayan government did not adopt its own Paquete, specially during the euphoria that followed the first stages of the Austral and the Cruzado. Was it because President Sanguineti and his collaborators were more intelligent, better economists or better informed than their Argentine, Brazilian, and Peruvian counterparts? Armed with this curiosity I went to Uruguay. There I found, with no little surprise, that some high officers of the Executive complained quite bitterly about the various constraints that Congress had imposed on the much higher degrees of freedom they would have liked to have in various matters, including indeed economic policy! It happens that in this case of redemocratization, although far from being the perfect institution that nowhere is, Congress effectively came back to work at the moment of democratic installation. Simply, because of constitutional restrictions and historical embedded practices, the President does not have the power to unilaterally decree things such as the paquetes of the neighboring countries. The President of Uruguay, for the validity of many of the policies typically contained in those paquetes, must go through Congress. In other words, the elements of secrecy and surprise that seem so fundamental to the paquetes are de facto eliminated. Furthermore, going through Congress means having to negotiate those policies, not only with parties and legislators, but also with various organized interests. Consequently, against the apparent preferences of some members of the Executive, the economic policies of the Uruguayan government were "condemned" to be incremental, rather inconsistent, and limited to quite limited goals—such as achieving the decent performance we have seen, not the heroic goals which the (first) paquetes heralded.

I must say that it was in Uruguay that I really learned about the difference of having or not having, as a network of institutionalized powers that texture the policy making process. Or, in other words, between representative and delegative democracy.

The Uruguayan "National Intonation" and "National Coincidence" were responses to the fact that the party winning the presidency had no majority in the two houses of the congress. In 1984 the Colorado had 41 percent of the vote and 42 percent of the seats, and in 1987 the Blancos had respectively 39 percent and 40 percent. This situation is likely in any multiparty system with an electoral system not favoring the largest party very disproportionately. Presidents Sanguineti and Lacalle both chose to respond to the situation as a parliamentary party leader would have done by expanding the "parliamentary base" of his government, although the strategies of the two men differed considerably, largely because the political contexts were different (transition and consolidation phases). The difference from a typical parliamentary coalition government was that the cabinet members were not leaders of the parties and that neither of the leaders who were the "addressees" of the "understanding" resigned the right to act as "responsible opposition." In a presidential system they were entitled to do so without causing the fall of the government. Those cabinets naturally did not receive an explicit approval in the congress. In policy making President Sanguineti had to use his veto power frequently.

Bolivia is another country in which the pure model of presidentialism in practice has been modified in ways that are more congruent with parliamantarianism.53 A presidential system assumes that a candidate or a party aggregates a broad basis of support, preferably a majority of those voting. The veto should eliminate or weaken minor candidacies. Before the elections the weaker parties should form
broad coalitions in order to improve the chances of the candidate closest to their views and ultimately to lead to a two-party format. This has not been the case in all of the presidential elections, with leading candidates gaining less than 30 percent of the vote. Loyalty to parties and leaders is a common pattern in this kind of electoral process, with candidates gaining more support than in the Congress among the three leading candidates. The resulting stalemates in presidential selection and the impossibility for a president of governing without making alliances are contributing to the frustration and considerable volatility of voters. In the future, the parties may have to change the rules to create a more stable system. The success of a populist candidate running against the parties. (Such a candidate might in turn be blocked by the stronger candidates in the congress.)

The last two elections the candidate with the largest plurality did not become president. In the first of these elections the runner-up Paz Estenssoro of the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) was chosen, and in 1988 the third in the running. Paz Zamora of the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario) won; he had the support of the second-place Banzer. This was on the basis of article 90 of the 1967 constitution, which establishes that:

If none of the candidates for the presidency or the vice presidency obtains the absolute majority of votes, the Congress will consider the three with the largest number of votes for one or another office and make an election among them. If none obtains a majority of the participating representatives in the first round of voting there will be successive votes among the two having obtained most votes until one obtains an absolute majority in a public and continuous session. The president so elected will have a fixed term of four years without being eligible until four years after the end of his mandate.

In a political situation so basically incongruous with an ideal presidential system, Bolivian politics has been moving in many ways as if it were parliamentary— with pacts (like the Pacto por la Democracia), multiparty governments, a congressional “vote of no confidence” leading to the resignation of President Siles Zuazo in 1985, but without many of the characteristics of a working parliamentary system. The parties making the system work do not explicitly assume responsibility for their actions, and voters cannot make them accountable at election time. The non-rejection principle leads to a reshuffling of the “coalitions” for or against each presidential election. For example, the ADN (Alianza Democrática Nacional) led by Banzer supported the Pacto por la Democracia and MNR president Paz Estenssoro and his policies in the difficult period of economic reform but, after the 1988 presidential elections, shifted its support to the Pacto Patriótico rather than to Sánchez de Lozada of the MNR, who had been the framers of the New Economic Policy (NPE) under Paz Estenssoro. The principle of “least distance” in coalition formation did not work.

In the July 1988 presidential election the leader of the ADN, the former dictator general Banzer, obtained 28.91 percent of the vote. He was closely followed by the historic leader of the MNR, Paz Estenssoro, with 26.44 percent, the MIR candidate with 8.95 percent, and the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de Izquierda (MNR1) candidate with 4.82 percent. Other candidates obtained 18.43 percent, and 12.99 percent of votes were blank or void. Since none of the candidates obtained a majority the election went to the congress, where Paz Estenssoro, the second-place candidate, obtained 94 votes from MNR, MIR, MNR1, and PDC members, while Banzer received only 51 votes.

In the 1988 election Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada of the MNR was ahead with 23.07 percent of the vote; he was followed by Banzer (ADN) with 22.7 percent, Paz Zamora (MIR) with 19.64 percent, and CONDEPA (Conciencia de Patria) with 10.99 percent and IU (Izquierda Unida) with 7.18 percent. The alliance between ADN and MIR gave the presidency to Paz Zamora.

While these last two presidential elections according to article 90 of the constitution were fully congruent with politics in a parliamentary system, they ran counter to the logic of presidentialism. Given the minority vote and the small margins between candidates, however, the “parliamentary” coalition making was not illogical. The system remained presidential because, once elected, the president held office for a full term without depending on the confidence of the congress. Introducing the possibility of a vote of non-confidence, preferably the constructive vote of no confidence, for a president elected by the congress, would transform the Bolivian system easily into a parliamentary one retaining the possibility of a popular presidential election should any candidate obtain an absolute majority.

The Myths of Presidential Leadership and Leaderless Parliamentary Democracy

One strong argument made in favor of presidentialism is that it provides for strong, personalized leadership. This argument ignores the fact that presidents very often are not strong leaders but compromise candidates. While their office endows them with considerable powers, the congress's obstruction might make their leadership impossible, and in the course of their mandate they might lose their capacity for leadership, as examples in recent Latin American history would show. My argument is that strong leadership can be found in many parliamentary systems.

We do not have to turn to the United Kingdom with its two-party system, which assured the leadership of Churchill and more recently of Margaret Thatcher. In continental multiparty systems Adenauer and De Gasperi were able to shape new democracies, and Willy Brandt with a coalition government managed to shift the policies of West Germany decisively. Nor can we ignore the opportunity for leadership enjoyed by Scandinavian prime ministers such as Branting, Tage Erlander, and Olaf Palme in Sweden, Gerhardsen in Norway, Kreisky in Austria, and Henri Spaak in Belgium, to mention some social democratic prime ministers. In the new
southern European democracies, a parliamentary system made possible the leadership of Adolfo Suárez, Felipe González, and even Calvo Sotelo after a coup attempt in 1981 in Spain, of Karamanlis and Papandreu in Greece, and now the prime ministership, with an absolute majority, of Cavaco Silva in Portugal. These have not been leaderless democracies, but at the same time the failure of Suárez and Calvo Sotelo did not endanger democratic institutions, nor were they endangered when conservatives and communists united to force Papandreou’s resignation.

I would argue that there is a certain convergence between parliamentary and presidential systems in the fact that, in many democracies, people increasingly vote for a party leader who can govern. They shift their support to the party that promises to sustain such a leader in power and withdraw it from a party that does not have an appealing leader to head the government. The weakening of ideological loyalties and rigidities, the erosion of “kept electorates” by a more homogenized class structure, the growing independence of voters with higher levels of education, and the use of the voti útil against minor parties allow strong leaders to appeal directly to the electorate at the same time as they strengthen the appeal of their party and with it their parliamentary base. In contemporary politics the use of television, which permits a leader to appeal directly to the electorate, reinforces that tendency perhaps even too much. Voters in contemporary parliamentary democracies increasingly vote for a party to assure that its leader forms a government, and they vote against the party whose leader does not enjoy their trust. Personalization of leadership makes contemporary parliamentary systems with leaders who know how to use it more similar to presidential systems but without some of the negative consequences I discussed at length in my analysis of presidentialism.

It puts some limit, however, on the capacity of an individual with no party base to appeal directly to the electorate, as shown by the failure of former president Eanes and his PRD (Democratic Renewal Party) and the difficulties that an attractive leader such as Suárez found due to the lack of a strong party’s support. In parliamentary systems, to improve a leader by means of a personal and mass media appeal such as we are seeing today in Brazil would be impossible. Contemporary parliamentary systems cannot be described as unable to produce leadership and stable governments, but they do this without losing the flexibility that I have highlighted as one of their advantages. In fact, they allow, as the long tenure of prime ministers in a number of parliamentary democracies shows, the possibility of continuity in leadership that the no-re-election principle excludes in many presidential systems.

Personalized, even charismatic, leadership is not incompatible with parliamentary democracy, but such a leader has also to gain the confidence of a party, of a cadre of politicians that will supply him with cabinet members, with leaders of parliamentary committees, and with a constant presence in society through elected officials such as governors and mayors. Such a leader in contrast to one in some presidential systems will not be isolated or surrounded only by his personal loyalist technocrats and friends. He or she will be both a national and a party leader and therefore will have more resources to use in governing effectively. I emphasize once more that this is a probability but that no system, either parliamentary or presidential, can assure capable leadership able to gain the confidence of a party and the nation.

Perhaps one of the main advantages of a parliamentary system is that it provides a much larger pool of potential leaders than a presidential system, though this is not true when, for example, a single party has a hegemonic position due to its majority. In a multiparty system in which leaders of all major parties have a reasonable expectation of becoming prime minister or of playing a leading role in the cabinet, the number of aspirants to leadership positions that will enter parliament is likely to be much larger than in most presidential systems. Moreover, in the parliamentary process potential leaders can gain a certain visibility between elections, unless the media are exceedingly controlled by the government. Different leaders can make their reputations in parliamentary debates, in motions of censure, votes of no confidence, and other public actions. The parliament is in some ways a nursery for potential leaders. In addition, the parliamentary system does not exclude leaders who have lost power; they are likely to sit on the benches of the opposition waiting for their turn, something that defeated presidential candidates often cannot do. In a parliamentary system the leader or leaders of the opposition can make a position clear to the electorate without having to wait for a presidential campaign, which, in any event, is relatively short. They can become visible and identifiable to the voters long before an election. It is no accident that in presidential systems the candidates often do not come from the legislature but have been governors of states where they had a home base of clienlistic links and where they made a reputation. This circumstance produces the important disadvantage that presidential candidates very often have little experience in foreign policy and macroeconomic problems and very weak ties to the legislatures that will have to support their programs and policies. This is true even for the United States and probably for other federal states like Brazil and Argentina.

Many studies have shown that political careers leading to top cabinet positions and ultimately the prime ministership are a function of a combination of loyalty and competence as well as length of time in parliament. Backbenchers can occasionally attack the party leadership and particularly the prime minister and his government, but biting too often is penalized. Even in those parliamentary systems that retain the principle of freedom of conscience of the MP, members who change party are a small minority, quite in contrast to the recent Brazilian experience (see chapter 8). Although the traitors are welcomed in another party they are distrusted and unlikely to make successful political careers, including, with a few notable exceptions, those who contributed to the disintegration of the UCD in Spain. While the incentive structure in parliamentary systems encourages party discipline and therefore consolidation of party organizations, presidential systems have no
such incentives for party loyalty (except where there are well-structured ideological parties). The president can provide personalized incentives to potential supporters, and the success of an individual legislator depends less on the performance of his party in power than on the strength of his more or less clientelistic ties with his constituency. That is why the United States Congress is today still one of the strongest legislatures and one in which individual members have great independence, although other factors, such as the sizable staff and resources that Congress provides to its members and the ideological diversity within the parties, contribute to the same effect.

Presidential systems can have strong parties, but the parties are likely to be ideological rather than government oriented. More often than not presidentialism is associated with weak, factionalized, and clientelistic or personalistic parties. We have only to think of the parties in Brazil, in the Philippines, and more recently in South Korea. Presidentialism might lead to the emergence of leaders, but it is unlikely to lead to parties able to govern with sufficient support in the congress, and very often those leaders will turn to nonparty cabinets of experts whose careers depend fully on their competence. In this context, I wonder to what extent the Peronist party can be happy with a cabinet of experts. Those who complain about the weakness of political parties and the poor quality of legislative leadership in some Latin American countries should perhaps look more seriously into the relationship between those conditions and the presidential system.

Presidentialism, Federalism, and Multiethnic Societies

It is sometimes argued that presidentialism is particularly appropriate for federal republics because the presidency can serve as a unifying symbol, especially in the absence of a monarch, and can represent the nation as a totality in a way a parliament cannot. This argument might sound plausible, and the powerful example of the United States, which combines federalism reflected in an influential senate and a presidency, seems to support it. However, we should not forget the huge number of democracies with a federal or quasi-federal structure that have parliamentary government, beginning with a country of the enormous social and cultural heterogeneity and extension of India. The Federal Republic of Germany is another example of combined federalism and parliamentarism, and in fact the Länder and their prime ministers have provided an important pool of candidates to the chancellory of the republic. Canada and Australia are two other vast federal countries with parliamentary governments. Divergent forms of government account for some of the practical differences between the United States and Canada, particularly their respective party systems. In spite of the strains between Quebec and English-speaking Canada, the parliamentary system probably has contributed to the unity of the country. Switzerland, which is probably the most federal country, not to say confederal, in Europe, has opted for a system that cannot strictly be called parliamentary, given its constitutional conventions, but that also is not presidential. Austria is another federal republic with a parliamentary system, although direct election of the president formally places it in the category of semipresidential or semiparliamentary. In addition, a number of quasi-federal regimes like the Estado de las Autonomias in Spain, the regionalized state in Italy, and the growing federalism in Belgium have developed with parliamentary systems. Certainly in Spain and Belgium the monarchy has served some of the integrative functions attributed to a presidency, and the same can be said about the governor general in the dominions, but the indirectly elected presidents of the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy have often been able to fulfill that same function without the powers normally attributed to a president in a presidential regime.

In some Latin American countries the heavy demographic weight and even greater political weight of some large states with large metropolitan areas would mean that a directly elected president would not be as representative of the whole federation as one in a country whose states were more equilibrated in population and resources. Therefore it would be doubtful to say that presidential systems serve national integration better than parliamentary systems.

One of the negative aspects of Latin American presidentialism has been the use of the power of intervention in the federal states, suspending or displacing authorities and appointing an intervenor with full powers. This practice is not inherent to presidentialism but is rather the result of certain constitutional provisions and their interpretation. Undoubtedly a central government, either a presidential or a parliamentary one, has to have some power to prevent actions by state authorities against the constitution or that represent a threat to public order. As the Argentine history shows, however, it seems dangerous to allow one person to make a decision to intervene without the possibility (except impeachment) of being held accountable by some representative body. This practice has contributed much to the weakness of federalism in a number of Latin American countries. A practice that has weakened federalism in Latin America even more is the appointment of governors by the president. This procedure contradicts any idea of federalism.

The direct election of governors and their unipersonal authority is an indirect consequence, again not necessary but likely, of presidentialism. Such a system creates an inequality of representation because, in the case of multiple competitors for the office, it may deprive the majority of citizens of any chance to participate in the executive of the State, and that executive is in no direct way accountable to the state legislature.

A theme that will become more important in debates about democracy will be how democratic processes either help to solve ethnic, cultural, communal-religious, and linguistic conflicts or exacerbate them. This is not the place to deal seriously with this enormously complex issue. Nor can we provide an answer to the question of presidentialism versus parliamentarism and these conflicts. We are handicapped because presidentialism has prevailed in societies that are relatively
integrated ethnically and in societies where the problems mentioned have not yet erupted. For the few cases in which presidentialism has been tried in multiethnic societies—Nigeria and Sri Lanka—the experience has been short lived.

Advocates of presidentialism argue that a president who is elected by a statewide electorate can serve as a symbol of integration in spite of ethnic divisions. The success of such symbolism obviously depends very much on the method of election chosen. A simple plurality in a single election, which might assure hegemony to the largest ethnic group, certainly would not work. The Nigerians have attempted to deal with the problem in their constitution by dividing the country into relatively large, ethnically homogeneous states and requiring that a presidential candidate gain at least 25 percent of the votes in two-thirds of the states of the Nigerian Federation to assure that he does not represent any particular ethnic group or narrow coalition. The candidate must, therefore, seek support all over the country. A union of any two of the three largest groups behind a single candidate would not be sufficient support to reach the required threshold. The distribution formula assumes a territorial concentration of groups—that is, a certain level of homogeneity within areas but heterogeneity among areas. Horowitz discusses the uniqueness of the Nigerian situation and some of the difficulties in applying Nigeria’s constitutional provisions elsewhere, specifically in South Africa, as well as the changes needed in the election of the legislature to complement the election of the president.

One might object that whatever procedure is used in the election, ultimately a unipersonal executive will have to come from one of the ethnic groups and will be perceived as identified with that group. In any conflict in which his group is involved it will be difficult to convince his opponents that he stands above ethnic interests (or to forgo allegging such partisanship). Should this happen and should he fail to solve the problem, the rigidity of the fixed term of office makes it once more difficult to replace the president or to rearrange supporting coalitions. If a president, elected by whatever method, chooses to form a cabinet that neglects or is perceived as neglecting the interests of minorities, the situation cannot be changed (unless the system is premier-presidential or presidential-parliamentary, in which case there are the problems to be discussed).

In a multiethnic society without an absolutely dominant group supporting one party and obtaining an absolute majority, a parliamentary system would offer the possibility of coalition formation and consociational type of agreements, which could provide a flexible response to ethnic conflict. Not only coalition governments but external support for minority prime ministers would provide incentives for negotiation, compromise, and power sharing. Cooptation of leaders of ethnic protest would be possible. Obviously if the political leadership is not committed to the survival of a multiethnic state but to its breakup or to the hegemony of one group by any means, no democratic institutions will be able to function, neither parliamentary nor presidential. Votes then become irrelevant, and clubs rule.

Presidentialism and the Military

One argument used sometimes in favor of presidentialism is that it provides the political system with a personalized leadership that the armed forces can identify with as their supreme commander; it would be more difficult to identify with a prime minister. Such a direct relationship has existed historically between the armed forces and the monarch, and we still find traces of it in European monarchies even after democratization in Europe in the years between wars and today in Spain. Sometimes this relationship has been dangerous to democracy, as in the case of Greece, but when the monarch has been committed to it, as the Spanish king Juan Carlos has been, it can be favorable to the stability of a democracy. Presidents both in presidential and semipresidential systems have been conceived as continuators of the traditional relationship between heads of state and armed forces. This has sometimes meant a strong tendency to elect generals to the presidency, not only in Latin America but in some European countries in the interwar years, such as Finland, Poland, the Weimar Republic with Hindenburg, and Portugal both before and after the Estado Novo.

It is not always clear to what extent such a direct relationship of the armed forces to the president, particularly when he himself is an army officer, has contributed to a weakening of civilian political leadership and political parties. The political practices of the Weimar Republic, in which the high command of the army had direct access to the president without mediation by the cabinet in a semipresidential, semiparliamentary regime, have not been seen by many scholars as contributing to the stability of German democracy. In Portugal similar practices led to a peculiar dyarchy of the parliament and the military, which grew out of a pact between the parties and the MFA (Armed Forces Movement). The initial constitution-making process, which limited the powers of the parliament, and the role of the moderate military in breaking with revolutionary threats gave the armed forces a place not reserved to them in most democratic constitutions. This situation has changed only with recent constitutional reforms. In that context, the directly elected president, himself a military man, had to play an important role.60 However, it is not assured that a civilian president in a presidential system can take the role of head of the armed forces better than the heads of the military hierarchy subordinated to the minister of defense and through him to the cabinet and the prime minister, as is the case in most democracies.

Undoubtedly, the personalization for a period of time of authority in a president who is both the head of government and the head of state—a symbolic point of reference for the nation when he enjoys widespread legitimacy and support—might be congruent with the value system of a military organization. But in the case of delegitimation and controversy surrounding the president, such a personalized relationship might prompt the military to take unconstitutional actions against the president. A less drastic response would be likely in the case of a less personalized
direct and permanent relationship, as in a parliamentary system, where a minister of defense mediates between a prime minister and the armed forces.

The Head of State in Parliamentary Regimes

In analyzing parliamentary regimes—except in biographical and sometimes journalistic writings—political scientists tend to neglect the role of the head of state: monarch, governor general in the British Commonwealth countries, and president in the republics. The role of heads of state is not irrelevant to our main theme because in presidential democracies this role and that of chief executive are not separated. Only if the head of state in parliamentary regimes is assumed to be a decorative figure would the absence of division between these roles in presidentialism be irrelevant. We have already noted some of the tensions generated by confusion of the roles of head of state—the dignified part of the presidential role—and chief executive and often party leader—the object of legitimate controversy and of attack by the opposition.

Without falling into a functionalist teleology—the notion that everything has to have a function, that monarchs and their “successors,” the presidents in parliamentary republics, cannot be simply survivals of times past—it seems justified to enquire into these roles. There is evidence that on occasion a king can play an important, perhaps decisive, role, such as that played by King Juan Carlos of Spain at the time of the February 23, 1981, coup attempt. One might object that the king was important on that occasion only because Spanish democracy was not consolidated and the monarchy represented a “backward legitimation” derived from the Franco legacy, but I surmise that something more was at stake. We should not forget that many of the constitutional parliamentary monarchies of Europe survived the crisis of democracy in the twenties and thirties. And if presidents in pure parliamentary republics were irrelevant, it would not make sense for politicians to put so much effort into electing their preferred candidate to the office.

This is not the place to develop a detailed analysis of the roles of heads of state, but we might suggest a few ranging from the apparently trivial to the politically important. A trivial one is the assumption of a large number of “representative” and ceremonial functions in the life of modern states, from receiving credentials of ambassadors to visiting foreign countries to inaugurating meetings and buildings. These activities consume time that, in the case of presidents, is subtracted from governing. Travel abroad for a number of purposes, for which Latin American presidents usually require congressional authorization, is also time consuming. Ceremonial activities of a king or head of state outside of the daily political battles can link the regime to groups that might feel flattered and otherwise alienated, such as intellectuals, artists, and last but not least the military. One advantage is that a non-partisan figure, if he or she is respected, makes it more difficult for public events to become occasions for delegitimizing protest.

Heads of state, perhaps because they are not pressed by daily business, can also keep informed, maintain contact with a wide range of persons, including the leading politicians, and convey their views privately but with some authority to prime ministers. In fact we know, from the example of Theodor Heuss and Chancellor Adenauer, how such a relationship can develop into one of trust and counsel. No one in a presidential system is institutionally entitled to such a role.

The head of state can play the role of adviser or arbiter by bringing party leaders together and facilitating the flow of information among them. He also can serve as a symbol of national unity in ethnically or culturally divided states; if he had executive functions, this would be difficult to do. This role is one of the important functions of the monarchy in Belgium.

The combination between neutral friend to the parties and their leaders competing for power and dispenser of information and advice is not easy to maintain, and not all heads of state are up to the task. We know little about how that role is performed since discretion surrounds the activities of monarchs and presidents of parliamentary republics. However, differentiating between the roles of head of state and prime minister can be an element favoring compromise, negotiation, and moderation.

Responses to the Critique of Presidentialism

Responses to the implicit critique of presidentialism in my writings have taken four basic directions: (1) admitting the arguments but citing the political culture of Latin America and the weight of tradition; (2) focusing on particular aspects of presidentialism that are not essential to it and are susceptible to reform; (3) favoring semipresidential, semiparliamentary systems; and (4) searching for innovative solutions.

There can be no question of the strength of the presidential tradition in Latin America, but to appeal to tradition could make any innovation impossible. In addition, in many countries the periods of democratic rather than authoritarian presidentialism have been short. Most presidents have been de facto governors deriving power from a coup rather than an election, or from a dubious election. The masses of people by themselves prefer a system they know to something unknown and not understood. It is the task of the elites to explain the earlier failures of presidentialism and their reasons for preferring another system. Even when people acknowledge the failure of presidentialism, as large numbers of Brazilians today do, they will not tend to choose parliamnetarism (as Brazilians will be able to do in the 1993 plebiscite) unless their political leaders choose it and advocate it publicly.

The second type of response has much advanced our understanding of presidential systems. There can be no question that specific constitutional or legal reforms (particularly of electoral laws) might improve presidential systems and facilitate governability. I agree with many of them, particularly those related to the
impact of the electoral cycle in presidential systems. Others, like a runoff election to avoid, in my view largely mechanically, a president with only minority support, seem more debatable.

The next section discusses, critically, the semipresidential, semiparliamentary regimes.

As to innovative solutions to the problems of presidentialism, I am not enthusiastic, although I confess I have tried to formulate some.

Semipresidential or Semiparliamentary Systems or Bipolar Executive

The success of the Fifth Republic in France has attracted the attention of scholars and politicians and has led to consideration of similar systems as an alternative to both presidentialism and parliamentaryism. Such a system has been described in the literature as a bipolar executive, a divided executive, a parliamentary presidential republic, a quasi-parliamentary and a semipresidential government, and most recently by Shugart and Carey as a premier-presidential system, indicating how different those systems can be both in theory and practice. The list of countries that have experimented with or instituted such regimes is fairly long, and all those who write about the regimes, particularly Maurice Duverger, agree that they function very differently. In fact, Arend Lijphart has argued that these systems are not syntheses of parliamentary and presidential systems but rather systems that alternate between presidential and parliamentary phases.

Basically, dual executive systems have a president who is elected by the people either directly or indirectly, rather than nominated by the parliament, and a prime minister who needs the confidence of parliament. Other characteristics not always found but often associated with dual executive systems are: the president appoints the prime minister, although he needs the support of the parliament, and the president can dissolve the parliament. This is a significant break with the principle of separation of powers. In presidential systems we find this power only in the 1980 Pinochet constitution of Chile, in Paraguay (which has no history of democratic government), in Uruguay (where it exists only in very special cases and has never been invoked), and in the 1979 Peruvian pseudoparliamentary constitution. In dual executive systems, to dissolve the parliament the president needs the agreement—the countersignature—of the prime minister, but since the president names the prime minister, he is likely to find someone who will support dissolution. It was this combination of presidential power to dissolve the Reichstag and freedom to appoint a chancellor who would countersign the dissolution that led, at the end of the Weimar Republic, to the fateful elections in which the Nazis gained strength and finally, in the semifree March 1933 election, a majority. Sometimes the president can bypass parliament by claiming emergency powers and calling for a referendum. Powers assigned to the president and the prime minister vary appreciably, both legally and even more in practice, but in contrast to the monarch or the pres-ident in parliamentary systems, the president in these systems is not a symbolic figure but enjoys potential if not actual power to affect policies and the governmental process.

These systems have emerged under very special and unique circumstances in quite different countries. Attention is mainly focused on the Fifth Republic, and it is often forgotten that one of the first democracies that experimented with this model was the Weimar Republic. It is surprising to find little attention paid to the way that democracy operated when dual executive systems are discussed today. Arguments for the introduction of such a system were first formulated by Max Weber. Hugo Preuss, the draft of the Weimar constitution, followed Weber, with some differences in emphasis. Dual executive systems used today are not very different from those formulated in Weimar Germany. Another outstanding example of such a regime is that of Finland, while three other cases—Austria after 1929, Iceland, and Ireland—have worked fundamentally as parliamentary systems even though they have some of the characteristics of semipresidential systems, by my definition. More recently Portugal, influenced by the French model, has attempted to introduce such a system, and semipresidential systems have been discussed in Latin America in the course of recent transitions, although they have not been institutionalized in constitutional reforms. Some elements of the Weimar experience were also influential in shaping the Spanish constitution of 1931. The contrast between Weimar and the Fifth Republic already tells us that the relationship between this type of system and the stability of democracy is not unambiguous. In all cases in which such a system has been introduced, particular historical circumstances contributed decisively to its enactment. It should not be forgotten that all European democracies in 1918 were constitutional monarchies, with the exception of Switzerland and France. At that point, the French Third Republic with its régime d’assemblée was not an attractive model, and therefore Germany, after abolishing the monarchy, turned to political innovation. Originally the aim of Max Weber and others was to establish a parliamentary monarchy after the British model. The impossibility of doing so and certain characteristics of the German party system, the federal character of the state, and concerns about leadership in Germany’s difficult international position led to a directly elected president without abandoning the parliamentary tradition already established. A strong leader was wanted for the new democracy, but full presidentialism with separation of powers, as in the United States, was not considered.

The 1919 German constitution, approved in Weimar, established a semipresidential, semiparliamentary system. The president was popularly elected for a seven-year term and could be reelected. He appointed and dismissed the chancellor, who selected the cabinet, although the Kanzler needed the confidence of parliament. With the signature of the chancellor, the president could dissolve the Reichstag. Should the chancellor refuse, the president could dismiss him and appoint another who would dissolve the Reichstag and call a new election, governing in the interim.