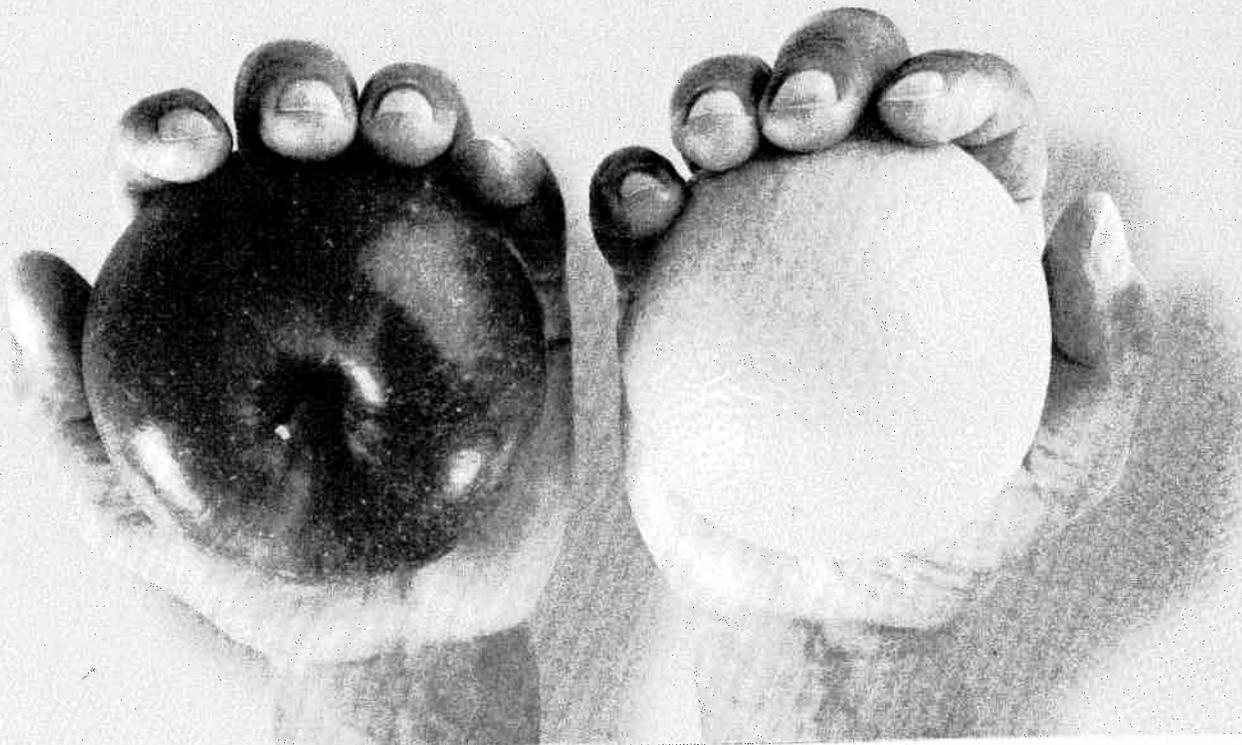


PRINCIPLES OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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are more likely to be stacked against regional parties if the president's power is large relative to that of other political actors and if presidential elections occur at the same time as regional ones (Hicken, forthcoming).

Electoral laws can also be written to discourage the emergence and success of regional identity-based parties. As we saw in Chapter 12 and as we noted earlier in this section, for example, preferential voting systems such as the alternative vote should encourage political parties to make broadly based centrist appeals beyond their core set of supporters, because their electoral success is likely to depend on the transfer of preference votes from other groups. In effect, preferential voting systems attempt to weaken or even transcend the political salience of regional as well as ethnic identities (Horowitz 1985, 1991; Reilly 1997, 2001). As a result, they are likely to discourage the emergence and success of parties that focus their campaigning on a particular identity (regional or ethnic) group. An alternative strategy to penalize regional parties would be to impose cross-regional vote requirements that force parties to compete in a certain number of regions and to win a certain percentage of the vote in these regions if they wish to be elected to the federal government. Russia, Indonesia, and Nigeria have explicitly adopted such cross-regional voting laws in an attempt to prevent identity-based parties from forming (Brancati 2004). Overall, it appears that incongruent and asymmetric federalism can help reduce ethnic conflict and stabilize democracy in countries with geographically concentrated ethnic groups. But this might be the case only if it is combined with institutional mechanisms designed to prevent regionally based identity parties from dominating the subnational governments.

PRESIDENTIALISM AND DEMOCRATIC SURVIVAL

To finish this chapter, we bring our discussion back to the question that dominated Part II of this book: why are some countries democratic, whereas others are not? In Chapters 6 and 7 we examined economic and cultural explanations for the emergence and survival of democracy. Having studied at some length the different institutions that democracies can adopt, we are now in a position to look at a third set of explanations for the survival of democracy: institutional explanations. Institutional approaches to democracy ask the following question: if democracy emerges, are there institutions, or combinations of institutions, that make the survival of democracy more or less likely? Although many institutional choices are thought to affect the prospects of democratic survival, one that has generated an enormous literature in comparative politics is the choice of whether to adopt a presidential or parliamentary form of democracy (Linz 1990a, 1990b, 1994; Shugart and Carey 1992; Mainwaring 1993; Stepan and Skach 1993; Jones 1995; Gasiorowski 1995; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Przeworski et al. 2000; Bernhard, Nordstrom, and Reenock 2001; Cheibub 2002, 2007; Valenzuela 2004). It is on this institutional choice that we focus in this section.

Considerable historical evidence suggests that democracy is less stable in presidential regimes than in parliamentary ones. Indeed, Przeworski et al. (2000, 129) present evidence

showing that the expected life of democracy under presidentialism (twenty-one years) is about three to five times shorter than it is under parliamentarism (seventy-three years). This type of evidence has led some to talk of the “perils of presidentialism” (Linz 1990a). For many years comparative politics scholars have debated whether the fragility of democracy in presidential regimes is really due to something inherent in the structure of presidentialism itself or not, and, if so, what this might be. Answers to these questions are important because, despite the historical pattern showing that democracy is less likely to survive in presidential regimes, many new democracies have adopted presidential constitutions. Indeed, as Figure 11.2b in Chapter 11 illustrates, the percentage of democracies with presidential constitutions has recently doubled from 16 percent in 1978 to 32 percent in 2002. If the survival of democracy is inherently problematic in presidential regimes, this does not bode well for some of these newly democratic countries. In what follows, we suggest that some presidential democracies, specifically those with multiparty systems, are more unstable than others. As we go on to note, though, ongoing economic development around the world is making all presidential democracies more stable than they were in the past.

The Perils of Presidentialism

What are the consequences of presidentialism and parliamentarism for how the executive and legislative branches make policy? The first thing to note is that presidents are different from prime ministers. Unlike prime ministers, presidents fuse the symbolic attributes of the head of state with the pragmatic powers of the head of government. This creates “an aura, a self-image, and a set of broader expectations which are all quite different from those associated with a prime minister, no matter how popular he might be” (Linz 1990a, 53).⁴⁶ Supporters of presidential democracy argue that presidents provide an important check on the legislature that does not exist in parliamentary democracies. They point out that whereas presidents are accountable to the nation as a whole, legislators are typically elected by only a subset of the electorate and thus have particularistic interests that may run contrary to the interests of the nation as a whole. Having a president, it is claimed, can help to ameliorate and discipline the particularistic tendencies of legislators.

Shively (2001) summarizes what are commonly thought to be five of the main consequences of presidentialism. First, presidentialism is thought to lead to a situation in which policymaking power is concentrated in the hands of the president. At first glance, this claim might seem counterintuitive, given that presidentialism is typically thought of as a mechanism for the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of the government. But the president, through his ability to appeal directly to voters and fuse the powers associated with the head of state and head of government, is able to wield a degree of

46. Linz (1990a) traces this characterization of the presidential role back to the nineteenth-century constitutional scholar Walter Bagehot.

power unavailable to most prime ministers, who, by comparison, are "first among equals" in the legislature. Second, presidentialism is thought to make it difficult for citizens to identify who is responsible for policies; that is, it is thought to produce low clarity of responsibility. In effect, the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches in presidential democracies allows each to blame the other when outcomes are bad and each to engage in credit claiming when outcomes are good. Third, presidentialism is thought to make it difficult for policy to be made quickly. In presidential democracies, new legislation in response to exogenous changes in a country's environment must work its way through the legislature and be accepted by the president before it can be enacted. Such negotiations are often protracted because, unlike in parliamentary democracies, a presidential government can face a legislature controlled by parties that do not support the president's legislative goals; as we saw in Chapter 11, a parliamentary government cannot survive without the support of a legislative majority.

Fourth, presidentialism is thought to produce a pattern of executive recruitment very different from that found in parliamentarism. In many parliamentary democracies, prime ministers tend to be selected from the leadership of a party's legislative delegation. As we illustrated in Chapter 13, membership in that leadership is typically restricted to parliamentarians who have worked their way up from lowly "backbench" positions by gaining policy expertise, honing their debating skills, and demonstrating their loyalty to the party. In contrast, presidential candidates are often drawn from outsiders who are seen to be free from commitments to the party elite.⁴⁷ Significantly, this means that presidential candidates are also frequently free of legislative experience and policymaking expertise. Fifth, presidentialism is thought to make it difficult to produce comprehensive policy. As we have already mentioned, the policymaking process in presidential democracies typically involves complex bargaining between the executive and legislative branches of government. A result is that some policies in presidential systems get adopted simply because they are crucial to gaining acquiescence from another branch of government on an unrelated matter. In contrast, because, by definition, the cabinet in a parliamentary democracy enjoys the confidence of the legislature, it is thought that parliamentary governments have a better chance of putting together comprehensive, rationalized, legislative programs.

As you might imagine, most of these purported consequences of presidentialism are viewed as liabilities. To be fair, though, it is important to recognize that many of these purported consequences are not unique to presidentialism—they occur in some parliamentary systems as well. For example, parliamentary democracies that have coalition governments are also likely to experience difficulty in (a) making policy quickly, (b) locating responsibil-

47. In presidential democracies, it is possible for complete political outsiders to win the presidency. This is precisely what happened when the academic and TV presenter Alberto Fujimori surprisingly won the 1990 presidential elections in Peru. The election of such a candidate to the "equivalent" position of prime minister in a parliamentary democracy is almost unthinkable.

ity for policy, and (c) making comprehensive policy. Indeed, we often hear people make the case that presidentialism, far from being a cause for concern, is, in fact, the solution to these problems in parliamentary democracies. Rather than talk about the “perils of presidentialism,” some scholars choose to focus on the “problems of parliamentarism.”

The problems of parliamentarism are, perhaps, best illustrated by the French Fourth Republic (1946–1958). As many scholars have noted, the French Fourth Republic was characterized by high levels of **immobilism** and government instability (Rioux 1989). In the twelve

Immobilism describes a situation in parliamentary democracies in which government coalitions are so weak and unstable that they are incapable of reaching an agreement on new policy.

years of its existence, the French Fourth Republic witnessed twenty-four different governments under sixteen different prime ministers (Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2004). A consequence of this instability was that French governments were unable to deal with the main issues of the day, particularly those having to do with its colonies in Indochina and Algeria. Much of the problem lay with the Fourth Republic's proportional electoral system that helped to produce a highly fragmented and polarized legislature. For example, roughly 30 percent of the seats in the National Assembly regularly went to parties on the extreme right (Gaullists and Poujadists) and the extreme left (Communists) that were not viewed as viable government coalition partners. This meant that the five or six small moderate parties that existed in the center of the policy space were forced to try to build legislative majorities from the remaining 70 percent of seats, something that proved extremely difficult. Governments typically had to choose between immobility—doing nothing and remaining in power—and attempting to push forward with their legislative program, which normally resulted in their quick removal from office. In May 1958 a majority of legislators in the National Assembly eventually voted themselves and the constitution out of existence, and delegated power to General Charles de Gaulle to write a new constitution. One of the goals of de Gaulle's new constitution was to concentrate power in the hands of a strong president so that he could override the stalemates that dogged the Fourth Republic and rule in the interest of the nation at large. For de Gaulle, a stronger president was the solution to the problems of parliamentarism as exhibited in the Fourth Republic.

Other parliamentary systems have experienced the same sort of chronic government instability and immobilism that plagued the French Fourth Republic. For example, another well-known case of a country characterized by endemic cabinet instability is postwar Italy. Between 1948 and 1991, the average duration of an Italian cabinet was less than a year (Merlo 1998). As with the French Fourth Republic, many scholars put this cabinet instability down to a proportional electoral system that helped to create highly fragmented and polarized legislatures. These legislatures, in turn, made it difficult for party leaders to form stable government coalitions or get much done. Explanations of immobilism nearly always start with the use of proportional electoral systems. As Rustow (1950, 116) put it, PR, “by facilitating cabinet crises, parliamentary stalemates, and legislative inaction, will tend to prevent any exercise of power whatever.”

We should recall at this point, though, that a focus on government instability can often lead us to overstate the actual amount of political instability in a country. As we noted in Chapter 11, for example, government instability need not imply a lack of political or portfolio experience among cabinet ministers (Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2004, 2008).⁴⁸ Consider the case of Italy again. Although postwar Italy has been ruled by shifting and unstable government coalitions, there has always been a great deal of political continuity just below the surface. For example, the Christian Democratic Party, the largest party in parliament for most of the postwar period, participated in every cabinet from 1948 to 1992 in coalition with a rotating set of junior partners comprised of the Liberal, Republican, Social Democratic, and Socialist Parties. As several scholars have noted, each new cabinet was essentially composed of the exact same people from the previous cabinet. According to P. A. Allum (1973, 119), “behind the façade of continuous cabinet crises, there [was] a significant continuity of party, persons, and posts” in postwar Italy. Scholars of French politics make an almost identical argument in regard to the government instability in the French Fourth Republic. In short, it is important to remember that cabinet instability in parliamentary democracies need not imply ministerial instability. More significant, *cabinet* instability, as we will see, does not imply *democratic* instability either.

So where does this leave us? Are the dangers of parliamentarism greater than the dangers of presidentialism, or vice versa? Although the examples of immobilism in the parliamentary democracies of postwar Italy and the French Fourth Republic are somewhat illustrative, ransacking history for supportive cases in favor of one’s favorite or most hated institution is not good scientific practice. As a result, we will now turn our attention to a more systematic analysis of how presidentialism and parliamentarism affect democratic survival.

Stepan and Skach (1993) claim that the prospects for the survival of democracy are worse under presidentialism than under parliamentarism. They argue that the reason for this can be traced to the fact that the essence of parliamentarism is *mutual dependence*, whereas the essence of presidentialism is *mutual independence*. In a parliamentary democracy, the legislative and executive branches are mutually dependent. On the one hand, the government needs the support of a legislative majority to stay in power. On the other hand, the government can dissolve the legislature by calling new elections. In other words, the government and the legislature cannot continue to exist without the support of the other in a parliamentary democracy. In a presidential democracy, in contrast, the executive and legislative branches are mutually independent. Both the legislature and the president have their own independent sources of legitimacy and their own fixed electoral mandates. The legislature cannot remove the president from office and the president cannot remove the legislature.

48. By “political experience” we mean the amount of experience that ministers have in any cabinet portfolio. And by “portfolio experience” we mean the amount of experience that ministers have in a specific cabinet portfolio.

Stepan and Skach (1993) argue that the mutual dependence of parliamentarism encourages *reconciliation* between the executive and legislative branches, whereas the mutual independence of presidentialism encourages *antagonism* between them. In presidential democracies, this antagonism, which can arise when the president is faced by a legislature dominated by opposition parties, can lead to legislative deadlock. With no constitutional mechanism to resolve the deadlock, politicians and citizens in presidential democracies may look to the military to break the stalemate. In contrast, if deadlock occurs between the executive and legislative branches in a parliamentary democracy, there are constitutional means for resolving the crisis. Either the legislature can pass a vote of no confidence and remove the government, or the prime minister can dissolve the parliament and call for new elections. It is the existence of these constitutional means in parliamentary democracies for resolving deadlock situations that is thought to be at the heart of why democratic stability is greater in parliamentary democracies than in presidential ones.

Stepan and Skach (1993) present an impressive array of facts to support their claim that democratic consolidation is more likely in parliamentary democracies than in presidential ones. They begin by asking how many of the countries that became independent democracies between 1945 and 1979 were able to sustain democracy throughout the 1980s. In Table 15.6a, we list the names of all eighty countries that became independent democracies between 1945 and 1979. We also list whether they adopted a parliamentary, presidential, or mixed form of democracy. As you can see, countries that became independent in the post-World War II period were about as likely to adopt parliamentarism (forty-one) as they were to adopt presidentialism (thirty-six). In Table 15.6b, we list the names of those countries that were continuously democratic from 1979 to 1989 and the form of democracy that they had. Of the eighty countries that became independent democracies in the postwar period, only fifteen were continuously democratic through the 1980s. Incredibly, all fifteen of these countries had adopted parliamentarism; none of the thirty-six countries that adopted presidentialism managed to sustain democracy during the 1980s.

Lest a focus on newly independent countries be a source of bias, Stepan and Skach next present evidence from all countries that experienced democracy between 1973 and 1989 but that were not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).⁴⁹ They wanted to know how many non-OECD countries that experienced democracy for at least a year between 1973 and 1989 were able to sustain it for a continuous ten-year period. Their data are shown in Table 15.7. As you can see, countries that experienced democracy for at least a year between 1973 and 1989 were about as likely to adopt parliamentarism

49. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is essentially a club of rich democracies set up by the Allied powers after World War II. Stepan and Skach focus on non-OECD countries because it is in poor countries that democracy is most unstable and that institutional choice is arguably most important for the survival of democracy. This last point is one that we return to at the end of this section.

TABLE 15.6

Democratic Survival in Newly Independent States after World War II

a. Form of Democracy Adopted

Parliamentary <i>N</i> = 41		Presidentialism <i>N</i> = 36	Mixed <i>N</i> = 3
Bahamas	Mauritius	Algeria	Madagascar
Bangladesh	Nauru	Angola	Malawi
Barbados	Nigeria	Benin	Mali
Botswana	Pakistan	Burkina Faso	Mauritania
Burma	Papua New Guinea	Cameroon	Mozambique
Chad	St. Lucia	Cape Verde	Niger
Dominica	St. Vincent	Central African Rep.	Philippines
Fiji	Sierra Leone	Cyprus	Rwanda
Gambia	Singapore	Comoros	Sao Tomé
Ghana	Solomon Islands	Congo	Seychelles
Grenada	Somalia	Djibouti	Syria
Guyana	Sri Lanka	Equatorial Guinea	Togo
India	Sudan	Gabon	Taiwan
Indonesia	Suriname	Guinea	Tunisia
Israel	Swaziland	Guinea Bissau	Vietnam (N)
Jamaica	Tanzania	Ivory Coast	Vietnam (S)
Kenya	Trinidad and Tobago	Korea (S)	Yemen (S)
Kiribati	Tuvalu	Korea (N)	Zambia
Laos	Uganda		
Malaysia	Western Samoa		
Malta			

b. Continuously Democratic Countries, 1979–1989

Parliamentary <i>N</i> = 15/46		Presidentialism <i>N</i> = 0	Mixed <i>N</i> = 0
Bahamas	Nauru		
Barbados	Papua New Guinea		
Botswana	St. Lucia		
Dominica	St. Vincent		
India	Solomon Islands		
Israel	Trinidad and Tobago		
Jamaica	Tuvalu		
Kiribati			

Source: Data are from Stepan and Skach (1993, 8–9).

TABLE 15.7

Democratic Survival in Fifty-three Non-OECD Countries, 1973–1989

	Parliamentary	Presidential
Democratic for at least one year	28	25
Democratic for ten consecutive years	17	5
Democratic survival rate	61%	20%

Source: Data are from Stepan and Skach (1993, 11).

(twenty-eight) as they were to adopt presidentialism (twenty-five). Of those countries that managed to sustain democracy for a continuous ten-year period, though, almost none had a presidential form of democracy. By comparing “democratic experimenters” with “democratic survivors,” we can calculate a “democratic survival rate.” As Table 15.7 illustrates, the democratic survival rate for parliamentary regimes is three times that for presidential regimes.

Although these simple comparisons suggest that there is something to the notion that presidentialism imperils democratic survival, they say almost nothing about why this might be the case. In other words, they say very little about the causal link between regime type and democratic survival. Recall, though, that Stepan and Skach do provide a potential causal story for the results in Tables 15.6 and 15.7. Specifically, they argue that presidentialism is more likely to lead to the kind of deadlock between the executive and legislative branches that invites extraconstitutional behavior. Thus, an observable implication of their theory is that military coups should be more common in presidential democracies than in parliamentary ones. Is this actually the case in the real world? In Table 15.8 we present data on the frequency of military coups collected by Stepan and Skach in the same fifty-three non-OECD countries as before. As you can see, military coups are more than twice as likely in presidential democracies as they are in parliamentary ones. Whereas 40 percent of the non-OECD countries that adopted presidentialism experienced a military coup between 1973 and 1989, just 18 percent of the countries that adopted parliamentarism did. This higher coup rate in presidential regimes is exactly as Stepan and Skach (1993) predict.

TABLE 15.8

Military Coups in Fifty-three Non-OECD Countries, 1973–1989

	Parliamentary	Presidential
Democratic for at least one year	28	25
Number that experienced a coup	5	10
Coup susceptibility rate	18%	40%

Source: Data are from Stepan and Skach (1993, 12).

Although these simple statistics are quite illustrative, it is probably the case that some factors that cause democracies to fail are also associated with the choice to adopt parliamentarism or presidentialism in the first place. This raises the concern that it may be these other factors, and not presidentialism per se, that lead to the collapse of democracy. In other words, the failure to take account of these other factors might lead us to overestimate the true effect of regime type on democratic survival. Recognizing this concern, Stepan and Skach attempt to deal with it by leaning on the work of a Finnish political scientist named Tatu Vanhanen.

Recall from Chapter 6 that modernization theory predicts a strong association between democracy and societal development. In an attempt to evaluate modernization theory, Vanhanen (1991) constructed an index of democratization—a measure capturing the level of democracy in a country—and what he calls an index of power resources—a measure capturing the level of societal development in a country.⁵⁰ If modernization theory is accurate, then countries with a high score on the power resource index should also have a high score on the democratization index. Indeed, this is exactly what Vanhanen finds. Although Vanhanen finds a strong association between the power resource index and the democratization index, the fit is certainly not perfect. Some countries, for example, score significantly higher on the democratization index than their level of modernization, as revealed by the power resource index, would predict. Similarly, some countries score significantly lower on the democratization index than their level of modernization would predict. Stepan and Skach label those countries that score surprisingly high on the democratization index as “democratic overachievers.” And they label those countries that score surprisingly low on the democratization index as “democratic underachievers.” In Table 15.9, we present data from Stepan and Skach (1993) showing whether the democratic overachievers and underachievers are presidential or parliamentary democracies.

Stepan and Skach interpret the comparison of democratic overachievers and underachievers in Table 15.9 to mean that, after taking account of a set of modernization variables thought to influence democratic survival, parliamentary systems are five times more likely

TABLE 15.9

Democracy Underachievers and Overachievers by Regime Type

	Parliamentary	Presidential
Overachievers	31	10
Underachievers	6	12
Ratio of overachievers to underachievers	5.17	0.83

Source: Data are from Stepan and Skach (1993, 10).

50. Vanhanen's (1991) index of power resources combines six factors related to modernization: the percentage of urban population, the percentage of the population in nonagricultural occupations, the percentage of students in the population, the literacy rate, the percentage of land in family-owned farms, and the degree of decentralization of nonagricultural economic resources.

to be democratic overachievers than they are to be democratic underachievers; in contrast, presidential systems are slightly more likely to be democratic underachievers as they are to be democratic overachievers. A different way to look at the data is that democratic overachievers are about three times more likely to be parliamentary regimes as they are to be presidential ones; in contrast, democratic underachievers are about twice as likely to be presidential regimes as they are to be parliamentary ones. Overall, the evidence in Table 15.9 provides strong support for the claim that the prospects of democratic survival are lower in presidential systems than they are in parliamentary systems even after controlling for other factors that affect the survival of democracy.

We now briefly present some new statistical evidence to further support this conclusion. In Chapter 6 we used data provided by Przeworski et al. (2000) on 135 countries from 1950 to 1990 to examine how economic factors, such as a country's status as an oil producer, its wealth, and its economic growth, affect the probability that it will remain democratic. We can use the same data to examine whether the choice of parliamentarism or presidentialism also affects the probability of democratic survival. The results of our analysis using a dynamic probit model are shown in Table 15.10.

TABLE 15.10 Effect of Regime Type on Democratic Survival

Dependent variable: Probability that a country will be a democracy this year if it was a democracy last year.

Independent variables	1946–1990	1946–1990
Presidentialism	-0.58*** (0.14)	-0.32* (0.16)
GDP per capita		0.0002*** (0.00005)
Growth in GDP per capita		0.04*** (0.01)
Oil producer		-0.12 (0.28)
Constant	2.22*** (0.10)	1.29*** (0.18)
Number of observations	1584	1576
Log-likelihood	-170.85	-142.15

Source: Data are from Przeworski et al. (2000).

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

* = greater than 90% significant.

** = greater than 95% significant.

*** = greater than 99% significant.

Recall that the coefficients indicate the direction in which the explanatory variables affect the probability that a democracy remains democratic. Thus, a positive coefficient indicates that an increase in the explanatory variable in question increases the probability of democratic survival, whereas a negative coefficient indicates that an increase in the variable reduces the probability of democratic survival. Recall also that the standard error beneath the coefficient essentially tells us how confident we are in our results. We tend to be more confident in our results the smaller the standard error is relative to the coefficient. Typically, as a rule of thumb, we claim that we can be 95 percent confident that the coefficient is correctly identified as being either positive or negative if the coefficient is bigger than twice the size of the standard error. If the coefficient is much larger than twice the size of the standard error, then we become even more confident. To save the reader from doing this calculation in their heads, authors often use stars next to the coefficient to indicate their confidence in the results. In Table 15.10, one star indicates that we are over 90 percent confident in our results; two stars that we are over 95 percent confident; and three stars that we are over 99 percent confident in our results. No stars next to a coefficient indicates that we cannot be confident that this variable has any effect on the probability of democratic survival.

So what do the results tell us? In line with the evidence presented by Stepan and Skach (1993), the coefficient on presidentialism is negative and significant. This indicates that democracies with presidential regimes are less likely to remain democratic than democracies with nonpresidential regimes. This is the case even when we take account of the economic factors thought to affect democratic survival that we examined in Chapter 6. At this point you might be wondering exactly how much a country's regime type matters for the survival of democracy? For example, how much less likely would it be for a non-oil-producing democracy with average GDP per capita (\$3,494) and an average growth rate (2.24 percent) to remain democratic if it adopted presidentialism rather than parliamentarism? It is possible to answer this question using the results in Table 15.10 (although we do not show exactly how to do this here). The answer is that a democracy with the characteristics outlined above would be 50 percent more likely to collapse into dictatorship if it adopted presidentialism rather than parliamentarism. As this example illustrates, regime type is a very important determinant of democratic survival.

The Difficult Combination: Presidentialism and Multipartyism

So far, the empirical evidence suggests that the prospects for democratic survival are greater in parliamentary democracies than in presidential ones. But recall our earlier discussion of immobilism in the French Fourth Republic. As you will remember, de Gaulle argued that concentrating power in the hands of a president was the key to solving the problems of highly fragmented legislatures, government instability, and immobilism in the French Fourth Republic. De Gaulle's belief that we should call upon a "strong man," such as a president, who can bring the country together in moments of crisis is quite widespread. As we now suggest, this has important implications for any causal connection between presiden-

tialism and democratic survival. Specifically, if presidentialism is adopted in moments of crisis, then presidential regimes may fail at a higher rate than parliamentary regimes, not because there is something inherently problematic about presidentialism, but simply because presidentialism tends to be adopted in difficult circumstances.⁵¹ One way to think about this is that presidentialism is like a hospital for ailing polities. We would not want to say that “hospitals kill people” just because large numbers of people die in hospitals. If people who go to the hospital are, on average, in poorer health than those who do not, then the explanation for high mortality rates in hospitals is likely to have more to do with the fact that people in a hospital are very sick than it does with the fact that they are in a hospital. Maybe the same is true for presidentialism. Until we can convince ourselves that countries that adopt presidentialism are the same as countries that adopt parliamentarism, studies such as Stepan and Skach’s run the risk of overstating the deleterious effects of presidentialism.

The standard way to address this issue is, to continue our metaphor, to find a measure of “poor health” and include it as a control variable in an analysis of the relationship between mortality and being in a hospital. With one exception, we know of no empirical analysis that has adopted this approach when examining the relationship between presidentialism and democratic survival.⁵² This may, in part, be because the analytical problem before us is probably more complicated than the one suggested by our hospital metaphor. For example, the factors that cause death in humans—cardiovascular diseases, parasitic diseases, respiratory diseases, and so on—affect those in a hospital and those not in a hospital the same way. But it may be the case that some factors that are “dangerous” for democracy are dangerous only in parliamentary regimes or only in presidential ones. If this is true, and presidential and parliamentary regimes are different sorts of organisms that process factors such as legislative fragmentation in fundamentally different manners, then it may prove extremely difficult to measure the underlying health of a regime independently of its status as a presidential or parliamentary system.

The work of one political scientist, Scott Mainwaring, suggests that presidential and parliamentary democracies *do* process political factors differently. In particular, it suggests that they process legislative fragmentation differently. Whereas legislative fragmentation always increases the likelihood of instability, the instability that is produced in parliamentary democracies is different from that produced in presidential ones. Specifically, legislative frag-

51. We owe this insight to an impromptu remark from a New York University undergraduate student during a class on comparative politics that we were teaching. Shugart (1999) makes a similar argument claiming that presidentialism tends to be adopted in large and complex societies with highly unequal income distributions and great regional disparities. Shugart argues that it is these inhospitable conditions rather than presidentialism itself that makes it difficult to sustain democracy.

52. The exception is Cheibub’s (2007) analysis of presidentialism and democracy. He argues that what has made presidential regimes more fragile than parliamentary ones is that presidential regimes are more likely to emerge in countries in which the military has traditionally had a strong political role. As Cheibub demonstrates, any democratic regime, parliamentary or presidential, is more likely to fail in countries with a strong military tradition than in countries without such a tradition. This leads him to conclude that presidential democracies are more likely to fail not because they are presidential but because they are more likely to be adopted in difficult circumstances—when the military has a strong political presence.

mentation increases the likelihood of *cabinet instability* in parliamentary systems, whereas it increases the likelihood of *democratic instability* in presidential systems. The work by Mainwaring (1993) ultimately suggests that if legislative fragmentation is viewed as a political ailment in parliamentary democracies, as, say, critics of the French Fourth Republic like de Gaulle and others claim, then presidentialism could well be a form of medicine that is worse than the disease.

Why is legislative fragmentation likely to lead to such different outcomes in parliamentary and presidential democracies? One reason is that legislative fragmentation is more likely to lead to legislative deadlock in a presidential regime than in a parliamentary one. Legislative deadlock in a presidential democracy occurs when a legislative majority opposed to the president is large enough to pass bills in the legislature but not large enough to override a presidential veto. As we have already seen, legislative fragmentation increases the chances that the president's party will not command a legislative majority and, hence, the chances that legislative deadlock will occur. But why is legislative fragmentation more likely to lead to legislative deadlock in presidential systems than in parliamentary systems? The answer is that in a parliamentary democracy, the head of government, the prime minister, serves at the pleasure of the legislature and is, therefore, obliged to form a cabinet made up of a coalition of parties that *does* command a legislative majority. As we saw in Chapter 11, presidents do sometimes form coalitions (Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh 2004; Amorim Neto 2006; Cheibub 2007).⁵³ The key difference, though, between parliamentary and presidential democracies is that when legislators vote against a president's legislation in sufficient numbers the legislation is blocked, but when legislators vote against a prime minister's legislation there is a good chance that the government will fall. In other words, a coalition government in a parliamentary democracy implies a legislative coalition, whereas this presumption is not the case in presidential democracies.⁵⁴ A consequence of this is that legislative fragmentation is much more likely to produce deadlock in a presidential democracy than it is to produce immobilism in a parliamentary democracy.

The problem of legislative deadlock created by legislative fragmentation in presidential democracies tends to be exacerbated by the way presidents are recruited to office. As we noted earlier, presidential candidates are often political outsiders who have relatively little policymaking expertise or experience dealing with the legislature. One of the main reasons for this is that presidents tend to be directly elected by the people and, therefore, have less need to build links with legislative actors than prime ministers do. A consequence of this, though, is that presidents tend to lack the necessary skills or experience to build legislative

53. Although presidents do sometimes form coalitions, coalition governments are less common and minority governments are more common in presidential democracies than in parliamentary ones (Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh 2004; Amorim Neto 2006; Cheibub 2007).

54. As Mainwaring (1993, 221) puts it, "the extension of a cabinet portfolio does not necessarily imply party support for the president, as it does in a parliamentary system."

coalitions to resolve deadlock situations when they arise. Even when they do manage to build a coalition, it has been argued that coalition partners in presidential regimes have acute incentives to distance themselves from the president's policy goals. One reason for this is that they expect to run against the president in a winner-take-all contest in the next election and they want to be able to criticize his policies (Coppedge 1994, 168). In contrast, prime ministers tend to be individuals who have worked in the legislature for many years, who have gained enormous amounts of policy expertise, and who have been schooled in the art of coalition building. A result of this is that prime ministers are often better placed than presidents to build legislative coalitions to resolve deadlock situations when they emerge. Thus, according to Mainwaring (1993), presidential democracies are not only more apt than parliamentary democracies to have executives whose policy programs will be consistently blocked by the legislature, but they are also more apt to have executives who are less capable of dealing with problems when they arise.

When legislative deadlock does occur, it is much more likely to lead to democratic instability in presidential democracies than in parliamentary ones. If legislative deadlock occurs between the executive and legislative branches in a parliamentary regime, then there are constitutional means for resolving the crisis. Either the legislature can pass a vote of no confidence and remove the government, or the prime minister can dissolve the parliament and call new elections. As Mainwaring (1993, 208) notes, though, in presidential democracies, "there are no neat means of replacing a president who is enormously unpopular in the society at large and has lost most of his/her support in the legislature." Thus, the absence of a vote of no confidence may ensure the stability of the head of government in presidential regimes, but it introduces a rigidity that can threaten democratic stability by encouraging frustrated elites or masses to call for the removal of the president, or the dissolution of parliament, as a way to break the deadlock (Linz 1994). Although there are some circumstances under which political actors can accomplish this within the bounds of some presidential constitutions, the solution to deadlock is more likely to be extraconstitutional in presidential regimes than in parliamentary ones. As this argument makes clear, legislative deadlock is more likely to produce *democratic* instability in presidential democracies; if and when immobilism occurs in parliamentary democracies, it is more likely to produce *cabinet* instability.

Earlier, we presented evidence suggesting that democracy was more fragile in presidential regimes than in parliamentary ones. An important implication of Mainwaring's argument, though, is that democracy should be more fragile in some presidential regimes than in others. Specifically, his argument implies that democracy should be more fragile in (perhaps only in) presidential democracies that are characterized by high levels of legislative fragmentation than in those characterized by low levels of legislative fragmentation, because legislative fragmentation increases the likelihood of deadlock, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of democratic instability. When legislative fragmentation is low, the likelihood of deadlock and, hence, democratic instability will also be low.

To evaluate his claim that presidential democracies will be unstable particularly (or only) when legislative fragmentation is high, Mainwaring (1993) examines all countries that experienced uninterrupted democracy for the twenty-five-year period between 1967 and 1992. Although twenty-four parliamentary regimes were able to sustain democracy during this period, just four presidential regimes were able to do so: Colombia, Costa Rica, the United States, and Venezuela. Mainwaring wanted to know what made these presidential regimes different from other presidential regimes. His answer was that they all effectively had two-party systems, as illustrated in Table 15.11; none of them had multiparty systems. At the time of his writing in 1993, Mainwaring argued that only one multiparty presidential regime had historically managed to sustain democracy for a twenty-five-year period. And this exception was Chile, a democracy, begun in 1932, that experienced a dramatic "death" in 1973 when a military coup overthrew the Socialist president Salvador Allende and replaced him with the dictator General Augusto Pinochet. Allende had been elected in 1970 with a slim plurality of the vote (35.3 percent) and was immediately beset with problems from every side in the country's highly fragmented and deeply polarized legislature.⁵⁵

In Table 15.12, we use data from Mainwaring (1993, 205–207) to calculate a democratic success rate for parliamentary regimes, multiparty presidential regimes, and two-party presidential regimes. Democratic success is defined here as a sustaining of democracy for an uninterrupted twenty-five-year period at any time between 1945 and 1992. The information in Table 15.12 suggests that democratic consolidation is possible in two-party presidential regimes but not in multiparty presidential regimes. Interestingly, the democratic success rate for two-party presidential regimes (0.50) is almost as high as the democratic success rate for parliamentary regimes (0.57). These results provide strong evidence that it is the combination of presidentialism and multipartism rather than just presidentialism that is inimical to democracy. Indeed, Mainwaring refers to the combination of presidentialism and multipart-

TABLE 15.11 Presidential Regimes that Sustained Democracy from 1967 to 1992 and Their Party System Size

Country (year)	Effective number of legislative parties
Colombia (1986)	2.45
Costa Rica (1986)	2.21
United States (1984)	1.95
Venezuela (1983)	2.42

Source: Amorin Neto and Cox (1997, 169–170).

55. We are generally reluctant to invoke the "exception that proves the rule," but if this hackneyed phrase ever applies, this seems to be the case.

TABLE 15.12

Regime Type, Party System Size, and Democratic Consolidation, 1945–1992

Regime type	Democratic success rate
Multiparty presidentialism	1/15, or 0.07
Two-party presidentialism	5/10, or 0.5
Parliamentarism	25/44, or 0.57

Source: Data are from Mainwaring (1993, 205–207).

Note: The democratic success rate refers to the percentage of countries that were able to sustain democracy for an uninterrupted twenty-five-year period at any time between 1945 and 1992.



La Moneda, the Chilean presidential residence, under ground and air attack by Chilean armed forces during the September 11, 1973 coup d'état that led to the ruthless dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. The democratically elected Socialist president Salvador Allende is thought to have committed suicide during the palace siege.

tism as “the difficult combination” for precisely this reason.

It is worth noting that Stepan and Skach (1993) also provide evidence in support of Mainwaring’s conjecture in their own analysis of presidentialism and democratic survival. Although they do not make too much of it, they provide data on the size of party systems in those countries that became independent after 1945 and that managed to sustain democracy during the 1980s. These data are shown in Table 15.13. As you can see, long-lived multiparty parliamentary regimes are not particularly rare but long-lived multiparty presidential regimes are.

The data presented thus far seem to support Mainwaring’s claim that it is not presidentialism per se that imperils democracy but rather presidentialism combined with a

highly fragmented legislature. There are, however, a couple of reasons to be concerned about our approach up to this point. First, the scholarly work that we have examined so far has imposed some fairly arbitrary cut-offs on the data. Why, for example, should we consider a democracy long lived if it survives at least twenty-five years instead of, say, at least twenty-four years or twenty-six years, as Mainwaring does? Why should we consider continuous democratic rule for ten years (in the 1980s) a natural measure of “democratic consolidation” as Stepan and Skach do? Why should we classify countries as having multiparty systems if they have an effective number of legislative parties greater than 2.9? Second, we have made no attempt to take account of other factors that might be associated with democracy, regime

TABLE 15.13

Consolidated Democracies by Regime Type and Party System Size

Constitution	Effective number of legislative parties	
	Fewer than three	Three or more
Parliamentary	23	11
Mixed	0	2
Presidential	5	0

Source: Data are from Stepan and Skach (1993, 8–9).

Note: The numbers in the table refer to those countries that became independent after 1945 and that sustained democracy for a continuous ten-year period from 1979 to 1989.

type, and party system size. We now end our discussion of the supposed “difficult combination” with a brief presentation of statistical results meant to address these concerns.

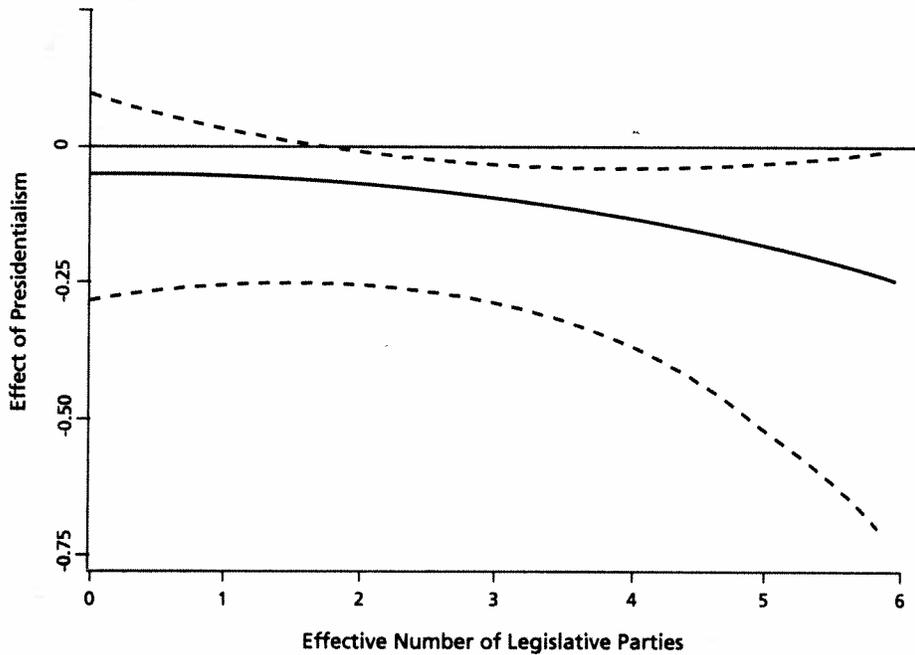
Earlier in this section, we estimated a dynamic probit model to examine the effect of presidentialism on the probability of democratic survival, taking into account such economic factors as wealth, economic growth, and oil production (Table 15.10). We now modify this model in such a way that it also tests to see whether the effect of presidentialism on the probability of democratic survival varies with the size of the party system. Recall that Mainwaring’s hypothesis is that presidentialism will have a stronger negative effect on the survival of democracy when the party system is large than when the party system is small. Indeed, presidentialism may have no negative effect on the survival of democracy at all when the party system is sufficiently small. Because our hypothesis is a conditional one—the effect of presidentialism varies with party system size—the interpretation of our empirical results is a bit more complicated than it was earlier in the section (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006). Because it is easier to show the relevant information for testing Mainwaring’s hypothesis in the form of a figure than in a table of results, we turn to Figure 15.11.

In Figure 15.11, the vertical distance between the gray horizontal line and the solid black downward-sloping line indicates the estimated effect of presidentialism on the probability of democratic survival for any given effective number of legislative parties.⁵⁶ The downward slope in the solid black line indicates how the effect of presidentialism on the probability of democratic survival changes with the effective number of legislative parties. The important point to notice is that the line starts off close to, but below, zero, and becomes more and

56. Figure 15.11 is based on a dynamic probit model that takes account of GDP per worker, growth in GDP per worker, and a country’s status as an oil producer. A qualitatively similar figure is obtained if we use GDP per capita and growth in GDP per capita as our proxies for wealth and economic growth. Party system size is measured by the effective number of legislative parties. Data come from Przeworski et al. (2000) and cover 135 countries from 1950 to 1990. In Figure 15.11, we plot the effect of presidentialism on the probability of democratic survival for the specific case in which a country is not an oil producer, its GDP per worker is \$14,468, and its growth in GDP per worker is 2.41 percent; this is the “average democracy” in our sample.

FIGURE 15.11

Effect of Presidentialism on the Probability of Democratic Survival across Different Levels of Legislative Fractionalization



more negative as the effective number of legislative parties increases. This tells us that the effect of presidentialism on democratic survival is always negative and that this negative effect becomes stronger—that is, increasingly negative—as the effective number of legislative parties increases.

The solid downward-sloping line shows the direction of the effect of presidentialism on democratic stability (negative) but not whether this effect is statistically significant or not. To know whether the effect is statistically significant, we need to look at the dashed curved lines on either side of the solid downward-sloping line. These dashed lines represent the upper and lower bounds of what political scientists call the “95 percent confidence interval.” Together, these dashed lines indicate how certain we are that we have correctly identified the effect of presidentialism on democratic survival as being negative. When the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval are on either side of the gray horizontal line drawn through the zero point on the y-axis, then we cannot reject the possibility that presidentialism has no effect on democratic survival. This situation is equivalent to a coefficient’s having no stars in the table of results presented earlier in the section (and elsewhere in the

book). When the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval are both below the zero line, though, as occurs when the effective number of legislative parties is greater than 2, then we can be 95 percent confident that presidentialism has a negative effect on continued democratic survival. To sum up, Figure 15.11 demonstrates that presidentialism has a significant negative effect on continued democratic survival once the effective number of legislative parties is greater than about 2. This significant negative effect grows larger as the effective number of legislative parties increases.⁵⁷ This is exactly as Mainwaring predicts. We should remind the reader at this point that Figure 15.11 is generated by a model that takes account of economic factors such as wealth, oil production, and economic growth.

Summary

In this section we examined, and found considerable support for, an argument that says that presidential constitutions make successful democratic consolidation more difficult than parliamentary constitutions, particularly when the legislature is highly fragmented. The key weakness of presidentialism appears to be its inability to find legal ways out of executive-legislative deadlock, something that is more likely to occur when the legislature is highly fragmented. It is possible to put this finding in a broader perspective by comparing it with the analysis of veto players than we did in the last chapter. In Chapter 14 we discussed various arguments about the effect of multiple veto players on policy stability. All else equal, it was argued, an increase in the number of veto players is expected to make it more difficult to change the status quo policy. This was particularly true if the veto players held diverse policy preferences. What we characterized in the last chapter as policy stability induced by veto players is equivalent in many ways to what we have referred to in this chapter as deadlock or immobilism. The father of modern veto player theory, George Tsebelis, has conjectured that although large numbers of veto players with diverse preferences may encourage policy stability, they may also encourage political instability (Tsebelis 1995, 322). The Mainwaring claim that multipartism and presidentialism form a “difficult combination” for democratic consolidation can be interpreted in light of veto player theory. If Tsebelis is correct that an increased number of veto players leads to policy stability, which in its extreme form manifests itself as “deadlock,” then we should expect presidentialism and parliamentarism to affect the type of political instability that ensues.

In other words, multiple veto players leads to policy stability (deadlock), but the form of political instability that results depends on a country’s constitution. As we have already argued, if the constitution is presidential, then policy stability or deadlock is likely to encour-

57. If we were to extend the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals in Figure 15.11 further to the right, they would indicate that presidentialism no longer has a statistically significant negative effect on continued democratic survival when the effective number of legislative parties is slightly greater than 6.1. This is little comfort for presidential democracies in general, however, because only about 3 percent of the presidential observations in our sample have a party system larger than this.