Divided Government, Deadlock and the Survival of Presidents and Presidential Regimes

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Introduction[1]

Of the 133 transitions to and from democracy that occurred in the world between 1946 and 1996, 59 took place in Latin America.[2] Early theorizing on the causes of political instability in the region has tended to focus on structural variables -- the degree of dependency, the level of inequality, poverty, and so on -- which supposedly created conditions that were conducive to the demise of democratic regimes. Recent research has moved away from this focus on economic and social conditions and has concentrated instead on the impact of institutional features on the survival and operation of democracy in Latin America. Stimulated by the formulations first advanced by Juan Linz (1994),[3] the breakdown of democratic regimes and the alleged "crisis of governability" of new democracies have been attributed to presidentialism, which, in combination with permissive electoral systems and weakly institutionalized political parties produce divided governments, deadlocks, institutional paralysis and, ultimately, the breakdown of democratic institutions.

Yet, Latin American democracies, all of which are presidential, survive in many countries, even as governments implement policies aimed at radically restructuring their economies. This fact suggests that we need to take another look at arguments that attribute to presidentialism a causal impact on regime instability in Latin America. Or at least that we need to reconsider the causal mechanisms that are allegedly responsible for presidentialism's relatively poor performance.

The purpose of this paper is to do so by examining empirically the factors that, according to the prevailing view, should account for variation in the performance of presidential regimes. The goal is to probe whether the factors usually identified as the reasons for presidentialism's (poor) political and economic performance are capable of explaining, as they should if they were indeed important, observed variation in the outcomes produced by presidential regimes. Performance is understood here in a narrow sense. I am primarily concerned with longevity of presidential regimes and the survival of presidents and their parties in office. I also examine some aspects related to economic performance under presidential regimes. There are several other aspects of performance that are potentially interesting but which are not examined in this paper.

The paper is based on data for all presidential and mixed regimes between 1946 and 1996. Due to variation in the availability of data, particularly of economic data, many analyses are based on

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[2] This represents 44.4% of all transitions, concentrated in 23 countries. The remaining 74 transitions were spread among the other 166 countries. These numbers come from Alvarez et al. (1996) and the author's update.

[3] See also Linz (1990a; 1990b).

slightly different samples, covering a shorter period of time and/or a smaller set of countries. The primary focus of the paper is on pure presidential regimes. Often, however, mixed systems are included in order to assess whether their presence modifies what is found for pure presidential regimes. It can be anticipated here that, despite some significant institutional features regarding presidential veto and term limits, the inclusion of mixed systems does not modify any of the findings about pure presidential regimes. The appendix contains a brief discussion of the criteria utilized to classify the regimes, a list of the countries included in the data set and the definition of other variables used in the analysis.

The paper is organized as follows. The next session assesses the extent to which presidential regimes are characterized by divided government and examines the impact of partisan and electoral variables on the incidence of divided government. The following session does the same for "deadlock" situations. Next, the impact of divided governments and deadlock on the survival of presidential regimes is examined, followed by an analysis of their impact on the accountability of presidents with respect to economic outcomes. The paper concludes by situating the findings in the context of the debate about the merits of presidentialism relative to parliamentarism, and suggesting ways in which research on this issue could be advanced.

Divided Government in Presidential Regimes

Conventional wisdom concerning presidential regimes suggests that they are prone to deadlocks between executives and legislatures, which would explain their high degree of instability and relatively poor economic performance. The absence of mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts between the president and congress within the existing constitutional framework generates incentives for actors to search for extra-constitutional means of resolving their differences. At the same time, by frequently generating situations in which decisions cannot be made, it prevents governments from dealing with important economic issues. Thus, executive-legislative relations in presidential regimes are thought to be characterized by conflict and deadlock, with important repercussions for the very survival of the regime and its economic performance.

Studies of the performance of presidential regimes tend to *postulate* the negative consequences of divided governments and deadlock for the performance of presidents and presidential regimes, and then proceed to study the conditions that are more likely to produce divided government and deadlock.[4] Valuable as they are in helping understand the institutional conditions that are more likely to produce presidents with legislative majorities (the type of electoral system, the number of parties, and the electoral cycle are the most important variables identified in this literature), these studies offer little evidence to the effect that divided government and deadlock are frequent in presidential regimes, or that these regimes' performance is indeed affected by the (allegedly) pervasiveness of divided governments and deadlock. Demonstrating, for instance, that proportional representation systems, multipartism or non-concurrent elections are more likely to

[4] For examples, see Jones (1995a), Mainwaring (1993), Carey (1997) and Mainwaring and Shugart (1997).

produce presidents who lack a legislative majority is not, however, sufficient empirical grounds to conclude either that proportional systems, multipartism or non-concurrent elections, or that the divided governments they are likely to produce, are bad for the performance of presidential regimes. Electoral systems, party systems and electoral cycles may indeed affect the president's legislative support and produce divided governments. Whether they induce deadlock, or affect performance, however, is another question.

In this section I examine the incidence of divided government and deadlock in presidential democracies. Divided government is defined as the situation in which the party of the sitting president does not control a majority of seats in Congress.[5] Divided government is a frequent occurrence in presidential regimes: in about 61% of the years the party of the president did not control a majority of seats in Congress. This rate is lower if we only consider pure presidential regimes (58%), particularly in unicameral systems (48%). Still, almost half of the years in these systems were of divided government.

As suggested by Mainwaring (1993) and others, the president's legislative support is associated with the number of political parties. The frequency with which the party of the president does not hold a majority in Congress increases markedly with the number of effective parties: in pure presidential regimes it goes from 38.67% of the years when there is no more than two parties, to 41.01% when there are two to three parties, 89.43% when there are three to four parties, 90.38% when there are 4 to 5 parties, to almost all the years when there are more than five parties.

*** Table 1 here ***

The timing of presidential and congressional elections also seem to affect the likelihood of divided government. Table 2 shows that unified governments are more frequent when presidential and congressional elections coincide (54.22%) than when they do not coincide (60.26%) or are held alternately concurrently and non-concurrently (65.57%). Note, however, that this is not due to a larger number of parties in systems with non-concurrent or alternating presidential and legislative elections. Even though expectations are that the number of parties, and hence the likelihood of divided government, will be higher when presidential and congressional elections do not coincide, this is not what we observe in this data. As we can see in table 3, the frequency with which we observe two-party systems is higher when presidential and congressional elections are not concurrent. At the same time, systems with two to four parties are more frequent when elections coincide than when they do not coincide. As a matter of fact, when presidential and legislative elections are not simultaneous, either because they are never held at the same time, or because they alternate, the frequency of cases first decreases and then increases as the number of parties increases. Thus, even though the timing of presidential and legislative elections matters for the occurrence of divided governments in presidential regimes, the reason why it does needs to be

[5] This definition is similar to Shugart (1995), except that I take into consideration both houses of Congress in bicameral systems. Thus, in such systems, the government is divided if the party of the president does not control a majority of seats in at least one of the houses.

further investigated.[6]

*** Tables 2 and 3 here ***

Finally, divided government is more frequent when legislative elections are held under proportional representation systems.

*** Table 4 ***

It seems, thus, that, as suggested by comparative analyses of presidentialism, proportional representation, multipartism, the timing of presidential and congressional elections, and divided government are all interconnected in presidential democracies. Note, however, that the arguments go beyond ascertaining this relationship. It is not only that presidents do not control a majority of seats in congress under some conditions, but that when they do not, deadlock and stalemate are likely to characterize executive-legislative relations thus affecting the regime's performance. So the issue at stake is whether, as claimed by Linz and others, presidential regimes are likely to produce stalemate.

Deadlock in Presidential Regimes

In the comparative literature, it is often assumed that whenever the presidency and congress are controlled by different parties deadlock will occur. Several analyses of presidentialism use divided government as an indicator of deadlock. This, however, is not entirely accurate. Whereas unified governments are obviously unlikely to generate deadlock, it is not necessary that divided governments will lead to deadlock: when the opposition controls enough votes to override presidential vetoes the government is divided; yet, since the bills preferred by the opposition are likely to become law, there will be no deadlock. Thus, before we proceed, we need to identify the situations in which conditions for deadlock actually exist.

Assume a situation in which there are two parties, the party of the president and the opposition. *P* is the share of seats held by the party of the president and *O* is the share of seats held by the opposition. Legislation is passed by votes of at least *M* members of congress and, in the case of bicameral systems, bills have to be approved in both houses. Under these conditions we can distinguish the situation in which the party of the president controls a majority of seats in congress, and hence congress passes bills that are the ones preferred by the president, from the

[6] This analysis employs a crude measure of electoral cycle. Cox (1997:210), for example, provides a more refined measure of proximity of presidential and legislative elections, which would allow us to gauge with more precision the impact of electoral cycle on presidential majorities and the number of parties. The measure employed here, however, is sufficient to establish that, as expected, the timing of electoral and presidential elections is related to the frequency with which presidential parties control a majority of seats in Congress. This is all that is needed in the context of this analysis.

situation in which the party of the president does not control a majority of seats in congress. When this is the case, congress approves bills that are not the ones preferred by the president, either because it reflects the preferences of the opposition, or because it reflects some compromise that had to be struck between the houses in bicameral systems so that the bill could be approved. In these situations, if constitutionally allowed, the president vetoes the bill. Presidential vetoes can be overridden by at least V members of Congress. Thus, $0<M\leq V<100$.

This setup defines four possible situations in terms of executive-legislative relations:

(1) $P<(100-V)$ and $O\geq V$
(2) $(100-V)\leq P<M$ and $M\leq O<V$
(3) $M\leq P<V$ and $(100-V)\leq O<M$
(4) $P\geq V$ and $O<(100-V)$

Under (1), congress passes bills preferred by the opposition and these bills are likely to become law: even if the president vetoes the bill, the opposition has the votes to override the presidential veto. In these cases we can say that the opposition "rules." Under (3) and (4) Congress passes bills preferred by the president, the president signs the bills and they become law. In these cases we can say that the president "rules." It is only under (2) that deadlock can occur: congress passes bills preferred by the opposition, the president vetoes these bills and the opposition does not have enough votes to override the presidential veto. There is a stalemate between congress and the president, and, as suggested by several commentators, there is no constitutional solution to this stalemate. This is the situation that should make presidential regimes the most vulnerable since both the president and the opposition would have an incentive to seek extra-constitutional solutions to the stalemate.

Thus, in general, conditions for deadlock are present only if the president is likely to veto a bill and the opposition does not have enough votes to override the presidential veto. We need, therefore, to assess the frequency of these situations in presidential regimes. Empirically, such situations depend on five factors:

- On the distribution of seats in Congress or, more specifically, on the share of seats held by the party of the president (P);
- On whether the president has veto power;
- On the type of congressional majority necessary to override the presidential veto (the location of V with respect to M);
- On whether the system is unicameral or bicameral;
- On whether in bicameral systems veto override is by a vote in each chamber separately or in a joint session of both chambers;

Table 5 presents the distribution of cases (country-years) of both presidential and mixed systems according to the last four factors listed above. Note, to begin with, that there is only a handful of cases in which the president has no veto powers: 4.7% and 5.5% in presidential and mixed

systems, respectively. The bulk of these cases come from Switzerland, but they also include the Congo (1992-96), Croatia (1991-96), Kyrgyzstan (1991-92), Peru (1956-61 and 1963-67), Romania (1990-96), Russia (1991-92), South Africa (1994-96), Sri Lanka (1989-96), Suriname (1988-89 and 1991-96), and Uganda (1980-84). At the same time, only Cyprus grants veto powers to the president without allowing Congress to override it: all 38 cases in this category come from this country. The bulk of the cases in pure presidential regimes (81.7%) are those in which the president has veto powers and congress can override the presidential veto by a super-majority, either of two-thirds (the most common situation) or of three-fourths. In 8.4% of the cases although presidents can veto legislation, veto override can be achieved with the same majority that passed the legislation in the first place. These situations are also common in mixed systems (39.4%), although the most frequent situation is the one in which disagreement between congress and the president regarding legislation is decided either by a Constitutional Court or by referendum (42.8%).

*** Table 5 here ***

Now, in some of the situations represented in table 5 deadlock between the president and congress will not occur, regardless of the share of seats the party of the president controls in congress. This is obviously true for the cases in which the president has no veto powers, congress cannot override the presidential veto, or disagreements between the president and congress are resolved by referendum: if presidents cannot veto legislation, whoever controls a majority of seats in congress "rules;" if presidents can veto legislation but congress cannot override the presidential veto, the president has the final world and no impasse emerges; if disagreements are referred to a third party, deadlock will not occur. Deadlock will not occur either in unicameral systems in which presidential veto can be overridden by an absolute majority in congress. In these cases, to use the symbols defined above, $V=M$, thus defining a situation that is functionally similar to the situations in which presidents cannot veto legislative bills. In these cases, whoever controls the congress, either the president or the opposition, "rules." If the president's party does not hold a majority in Congress, the same majority that approved a bill in the first place may override the presidential veto. Together these situations represent a small share of the years of pure presidential regimes observed since 1946: 14.58%. They constitute, however, 83.47% of the cases of mixed regimes, mostly due to the fact that, in these systems, impasses between the president and congress are frequently resolved by a third party.

The remaining cases are more complex and deadlock may or may not emerge, depending on the share of seats controlled by the party of the president and, in bicameral systems, on whether veto override requires a separate vote in each house or a joint vote in both houses.

- When veto override is by a majority vote in each of the houses of a bicameral system (line 2A), deadlock will emerge if the party of the president controls a majority of seats in only one of the houses. In these cases, the president will veto the legislation but the opposition, lacking control in one of the houses, will not be able to override the presidential veto.

- When veto override is by a majority vote in a joint session of both houses, deadlock will emerge only if, lacking control in one of the houses, the party of the president also holds less than 50% of the seats in the joint congress. In this case, the president will veto the legislation, and the opposition will lack enough votes to override the veto. However, if the party of the president holds more than 50% of the seats in a joint meeting of both houses, deadlock will not emerge, even if it does not control one of the houses.

- When veto override is by a two-third majority in a unicameral system, deadlock will occur only if the party of the president controls more than 33.3% but no more than 50% of the seats.

- When veto override requires a two-thirds majority and the system is bicameral, deadlock situations will depend both on the share of seats held by the party of the president and on whether the vote is to be taken in each chamber or in a joint session of both chambers. Table 6 illustrates the possible scenarios when the vote is to be taken in each chamber separately. Here, deadlock may be pervasive. Deadlock is unlikely to occur only if the opposition holds more than two-thirds of the seats in both houses, or the party of the president holds more than 50% of the seats in both houses. All the other cells in table 6 represent situations in which deadlock is likely to occur.

*** Table 6 here ***

- If the system is bicameral and veto override is at two-thirds in a joint session of both houses, deadlock conditions will exist if the party of the president does not control a majority in both houses but controls more than 33.3% of the votes in the joint congress. In these cases, the president will veto legislation, but the opposition will not control enough votes in the joint congress to override the presidential veto.

- Finally, in the cases in which veto override requires a three-fourths majority, deadlock conditions are analogous to the cases in which the requirement is a two-thirds majority, except that the cut-off points change from 33.3% to 25%.

These are thus the situations in which deadlock can emerge in presidential regimes. They depend on the constitutional provisions regarding presidential veto and its override, the number of legislative chambers and the distribution of seats in congress. The variable DEADLOCK was created to indicate these cases. It is coded 1 for all the cases in which deadlock or stalemate between the president and congress is likely to occur, as specified above, and 0 for the cases in which it is not likely to occur, either because the president “rules,” or because the opposition “rules.”

We are now in a position to assess more precisely the relationship between divided government and deadlock. As stated above, not all cases of divided government are conducive to deadlock. Conditions for deadlock are, by definition, absent from governments in which the party of the

president controls a majority of seats in congress. If we consider both pure presidential and mixed regimes we find that, when governments are divided, conditions for deadlock are as likely to be present as they are to be absent. If we only consider pure presidential regimes, conditions for deadlock are more likely (61.50% of the cases), although by no means certain. Thus, we cannot assume that deadlock is necessarily induced by divided government.

*** Table 7 here ***

Table 7 also allows us to examine the impact of electoral and partisan variables on the occurrence of deadlock. As we can see, the number of effective parties, the coincidence of presidential and legislative elections, and the electoral system have no systematic impact on the probability that deadlock will occur. Thus, whereas the probability that presidential governments will be divided increases with the number of effective parties, with non-concurrent presidential and legislative elections, and with legislative elections held on the basis of proportional representation, this does not mean that the probability of deadlock will also increase. Again, divided government is not synonymous with deadlock situations, and hence the factors that induce one do not necessarily induce the other.

There are two possible objections to the way deadlock situations are being identified in this analysis. The first has to do with multipartism. Returning to the four possibilities for executive-legislative relations defined above, we can see that multipartism does not affect situations (3) and (4): if the president's party controls more than *M*, congress will pass bills that the president will sign into law, regardless of the number of parties different from the president's party that exists in congress. However, with multipartism, it becomes difficult to assess situations in which $P<M$ (i.e., situations (1) and (2)). Here, *O* is likely to contain a subgroup of parties (O_p) that may support the president. Whether a stalemate will occur depends, of course, on the size of O_p, which cannot be assessed with the available information.[7] Thus, in general, under multiparty regimes stalemate could also occur under situation (1), which above was defined as a situation in which the opposition "rules," characterized by the absence of deadlock. If we were to define multipartism by the presence of more than two effective parties and were to consider nothing but the share of seats held by the party of the president, the number of deadlock situations would increase by 150

[7] Comparative data on the partisan basis of presidential governments are scarce. Part of the reason has to do with the fact that the dominant view of presidentialism implies that coalition governments are unlikely in these regimes and, when they exist, they are precarious if not absolutely meaningless. A few analysts, like Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) for example, have attempted to assess the partisan composition of presidential governments by measuring the legislative seats held by the parties that participated in the coalition that supported the president at the elections. They, however, recognize the limitation of this measure to indicate the size of the coalition of parties that support the president in congress, ultimately concluding that the share of seats held by the party of the president is a better measure of the president's legislative support (p.403). To my knowledge, only very recently have some analysts focused their attention on governing coalitions in presidential regimes. See, for example, Amorin Neto (1998).

in unicameral systems and 84 in bicameral systems. However, we know that deadlock situations also depend on the constitutional provisions regarding the presidential veto and the conditions for its override. Taking this into consideration reduces the number of additional cases of deadlock to only 58, bringing the incidence of deadlock situations in presidential regimes from 24.55% of the time to 30.55%. This change has no impact on the analysis presented above. Thus, even if we were to abandon the assumption that parties different from the party of the president are in the opposition, deadlock situations in presidential regimes would occur in less than one-third of the time and would be unrelated to the occurrence of divided government, as well as the electoral and partisan variables that induce the emergence of divided government.

The other objection to the way deadlock has been defined here has to do with party discipline. The measurement of deadlock situations adopted in this analysis assumes disciplined parties. With undisciplined parties the whole exercise unravels since the idea that there is such a thing as "the party of the president" or "the opposition" simply does not make sense: party labels do not predict anything about how members of congress will behave.

Assessing the degree of party discipline comparatively is quite complex and here I would like to argue that the assumption of party discipline is at least as plausible and analytically useful as the alternatives, which consist of either inferring discipline from electoral and partisan legislation, or postulating that the constitutional design of presidential regimes are compatible with only very minimal degrees of party discipline.

The most common way to deal with the issue of party discipline comparatively is to classify countries in terms of the permissiveness of their electoral and party legislation: party discipline is considered to be low in systems where the legislation is more permissive from the point of view of the individual candidate; that is, where the electoral and party legislation do not provide the party leadership with mechanisms to control their rank-and-file. The problem with this approach is that party discipline is a behavioral concept and, for this reason, cannot be inferred from electoral and partisan legislation: what matters is whether party labels are good predictors of how members of congress will vote.[8] And we know that party labels can be very good predictors of congressional behavior even in situations of highly permissive electoral and partisan legislation. As Limongi and Figueiredo (1995) and Figueiredo and Limongi (1999) have shown, Brazil, arguably the presidential system with the most permissive party legislation, has considerably high levels of party discipline. Classificatory schemes based on electoral legislation, therefore, are not a good way to assess the degree of party discipline of a system.

As for the second alternative, the issue is whether we have reasons to expect party discipline to be weaker under presidential regimes than under other constitutional designs. Part of the case about

[8] Mainwaring and Shugart (1997), for instance, base the "party discipline component" of their index of president's partisan powers on three aspects of party and electoral legislation: selection of candidates, the order in which candidates are elected, and the way votes are counted for candidates and their parties.

the difficulties faced by presidential regimes is made on the grounds (sometimes implicit) that party discipline in parliamentary regimes is inherently higher. There are two reasons why this is so. First, governments in parliamentary regimes depend on their party's capacity to enforce discipline and pass legislation in order to exist; there is, so to speak, a "majoritarian imperative" in parliamentary regimes that is absent in presidential regimes. Second, individual members of parliament have an incentive to vote the party line in order to avoid bringing the government down and risk losing their seats.

In my view, however, these arguments excessively simplify the operation of parliamentary regimes, assuming that governments always have to hold a majority of seats in Parliament and that the consequence of government dissolution is invariably an early election. Neither, however, is true. Strom (1990) was probably the first to point out that minority governments in parliamentary regimes are not an anomaly, but rather a frequent occurrence that can be explained in terms of the goals of political actors. Indeed, according to his and other counts, about one-third of governments in parliamentary regimes are formed even if they control less than 50% of the seats. My own counting (Cheibub 1998), based on data for 21 industrialized parliamentary regimes between 1946 and 1995 show a similar proportion of cases. During this time, 31% of the elections in these countries produced minority governments (more frequently in proportional representation systems -- 38% -- than in majority-plurality systems -- 13%). At the same time, in 24% of all the years in these countries governments held less than 50% of the seats (again much more frequently in proportional representation systems than in majority-plurality systems: 30% against 7% of the time). Thus, not only are governments in parliamentary regimes frequently formed with less than a majority of seats, they are not, as Strom has forcefully demonstrated, accidents or pathologies of some political systems.[9]

The relevance of this observation for a study about presidential regimes is that it demonstrates that the "majoritarian imperative" is not really an imperative. The frequency and rationality of minority governments violate, as Strom (1990:7), again, puts it, "the expectation that [in parliamentary regimes] executive and legislative coalitions are identical." A significant share of prime ministers have to build coalitions around specific issues, much in the way presidents have. There is nothing that suggests that these coalitions have to be of disciplined parties (or parties taken to be disciplined by the lesser degree of permissiveness of the existing electoral and party legislation).

As to the argument about early elections, the calculus of the individual legislator under parliamentarism cannot be entirely connected with the risk of election for the simple fact that early election is not the necessary consequence, or even the most frequent consequence, of a government dissolution. My data on 21 industrialized parliamentary democracies from 1946 to 1995 (Cheibub 1998) show that 163 out of 291 (56%) prime ministers observed during this

[9] See also Laver and Schofield (1998) for a discussion of minority governments in European parliamentary regimes and for an argument for the inappropriateness of the “majoritarian imperative” for the analysis of these systems.

period changed without an election taking place; that the party controlling the premiership changed 62 out of 162 times (38%) again without an election taking place; that the partisan composition of the government -- a "weak" notion of alternation in power -- changed 125 out of 274 times (46%) without elections; and that the major party in the government -- a "strong" notion of alternation -- changed 24 out of 101 times (24%) with no elections. And note that these figures somewhat underestimate the frequency of government dissolution without elections since they only consider the cases in which a change in the composition of the government occurred; cases in which the government is formally dissolved but the same prime minister or parties form a new government are not counted.

The frequency of government changes in the middle of the electoral term obviously vary with the type of electoral system, the number of parties and the type of government (coalition or single party) (Cheibub 1998); but the bottom line is that elections are far from being the necessary outcome of government dissolution in parliamentary regimes. What these observations imply, in my view, is that as much as parliamentarism is not sufficient for us to infer the incentives of individual members of parliament to vote along party lines and support the government, presidentialism per se is not sufficient for us to infer the behavior of presidents in building coalitions and the incentives of parties and individual members of congress to participate in them. We need to know more about how presidents build coalitions and how these coalitions are kept together. Meanwhile the best that can be done is to assume that presidents command the support of those members of congress that belong to their own party.

To summarize, thus, we find that although frequent, divided government is not the overwhelming condition of presidential regimes. As suggested in the literature, divided government is associated with proportional representation systems, with multipartism, and with systems in which presidential and legislative elections do not coincide. Deadlock situations, however, or situations that are potentially conducive to a stalemate between congress and the president, are not inherent to divided governments, and do not depend on the number of parties, on the timing of presidential and congressional elections, or on the type of electoral system regulating congressional elections. This, however, relies on a more imprecise measurement since it assumes both that presidents govern only with the support of their own parties and that parties are disciplined.

Divided Government, Deadlock, and the Survival of Presidential Regimes

Do divided governments and the stalemate they are supposed to generate affect the performance of presidential regimes? There are several arguments suggesting that, through a variety of roads, they do. To begin with, to the extent that divided governments and deadlock spell government paralysis, they are likely to produce relatively bad economic and social outcomes which, in turn, may produce instability and undermine the legitimacy of the regime itself. If this does not directly lead to a change of regime, it is likely to lead to at least a change of government, implying a relatively high rate of leadership turnover which, in turn, may affect the survival of the regime as a whole. Divided government and deadlock also provide incentives for dissatisfied actors to search for extra-constitutional solutions to the paralysis they induce. This is so because there is no

constitutional principle that can be invoked as a way out of paralysis. Finally, accountability, allegedly one of the high points of presidential regimes when compared to parliamentary regimes[10] is negatively affected by divided government and deadlock.

How are these expectations supported by the data? In this section I examine the survival of presidential regimes as a function of divided government and deadlock situations. In the next section I will examine the impact of these variables on accountability of presidents and their parties with respect to economic outcomes.

As indicated in table 8, between 1946 and 1996 there were 91 presidential regimes (including mixed), of which 42 "died," that is, changed into a non-presidential type of political regime, and 49 were in place as of December 1996. The vast majority of the presidential regimes that "died" became dictatorships; only Bangladesh in 1991 changed the constitutional framework of its democratic regime, abandoning a mixed system for a pure parliamentary regime.[11]

*** Table 8 here ***

Table 9 presents the transition probabilities of presidential regimes as a function of divided government, deadlock situations, the electoral systems for congressional elections, the timing of presidential and legislative elections, and the number of effective political parties. If the arguments about divided government and deadlock are correct, presidential democracies should face higher risks of dying when the presidency and congress are controlled by different parties, when conditions for deadlock between the president and the congress are present, when presidential and legislative elections do not coincide, when the electoral system is proportional, and when the number of parties is large. Yet, with the qualified exception of multipartism, to be discussed below, none of this is true. Presidential regimes are as likely to die when governments are divided as when governments are unified. The difference between deadlock and no deadlock situations is small and in favor of the former: whereas one in every 23 presidential regimes die when there is no deadlock, one in every 28 regimes dies when there is deadlock. The difference in transition probabilities between plurality and proportional systems is also negligible. Concurrent elections do reduce the chances that a presidential regime will die. This effect, however, as will be seen below, does not survive statistical analysis.

*** Table 9 here ***

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[10] Shugart and Carey (1992) but see Cheibub and Przeworski (1999).

[11] In general, democratic regimes are very resilient in their form of government. The only other changes occurred in Brazil in 1961 (from pure presidential to mixed) and 1963 (back to pure presidential), which in this data set does not appear as a change, and in France with the inauguration of the Fifth Republic in 1958, when a mixed system replaced the parliamentary regime of the Fourth Republic.

The story with the number of political parties is somewhat more complex. It is not, contrary to Mainwaring (1993) and Jones (1995a), multipartism per se that affects the survival of presidential regimes. In presidential democracies high risks are associated with situations of very low pluralism, or situations conducive to moderate pluralism, which as Sartori (1976) suggested, are the ones in which there are between 2 and 5 relevant political parties. Presidential democracies with more than 5 effective parties, the cases that tend to be conducive to "polarized pluralism" in Sartori's typology, have an expected life considerably higher than the presidential democracies with less than 5 effective parties: 95 years against 21.

The way the data are grouped does make some difference. For instance, if we use 3.5 as the cut-off point (the number that Mainwaring and Shugart 1997 believe matter for the functioning of presidential regimes), we find that, indeed, one in thirty-two presidential democracies dies when there are less than 3.5 effective parties and one in thirteen dies when there are more than 3.5 parties. There is, however, too much aggregation in this number as we find, for example, that the hazard rate of presidential democracies is even higher when the number of effective parties is between 3.5 and 5, reducing drastically when the number of parties is higher than 5. Thus, in the analysis that follows "weak" pluralism is defined as the situations in which the number of parties is up to 3.5; "moderate" pluralism as the situations in which the number of parties is higher than 3.5 but lower than 5; and "strong" pluralism as the situation in which the number of parties is higher than 5. To repeat, presidential democracies are at higher risks when pluralism is moderate.

Why should moderate pluralism affect the survival of presidential democracies so strongly? One possibility would be that, somehow, moderate pluralism reduces the share of seats controlled by the president thus making stalemate more frequent and making it more difficult for presidents to govern. This seems to be partly confirmed by the data. If we consider unicameral and bicameral systems separately and, in the latter, the support for the president in the lower and the upper houses, we find that the share of seats held by the party of the president reaches one of the lowest points when the number of effective parties is around 3.5 and 4.5, after which the support for the president increases. Note, however, that the share of seats held by the party of the president falls sharply when there are more than 5 effective parties, even though the hazard rates in these cases are, as we have seen before, the lowest. Note also that 3.5 effective parties does not represent the point at which presidents cease controlling a majority of seats in Congress. According to table 10, this happens when the number of effective parties is 2.5. Thus, the higher hazard rates of systems with a moderate number of political parties cannot be entirely accounted for by the fact that the party of the president does not control enough seats in congress.

*** Table 10 here ***

One alternative explanation would have to do not so much with the share of seats controlled by the party of the president, but rather with the distribution of strength of the three largest parties as indicated by the number of seats they hold. What may be difficult for presidential regimes -- and for that matter any democratic regime -- is the existence of three political forces of relatively equal strength, each of which attempting to implement its own program either alone or in alternating

coalitions. Pluralism, in such cases, will be moderate, with the number of effective parties hoovering between 3 and 4. More importantly, compromises may be difficult as they would be inherently unstable: agreements among any two parties could be undermined by counter-offers from the third one.

Although not conclusively, the available data suggest that this hypothesis at least makes sense. Table 11 summarizes a couple of traits of party systems in presidential regimes. The goal is to present measures that could help characterize the distribution of party strength without, of course, being correlated with the number of effective parties. "Party Structure 1" is simply the sum of seats held by the three largest parties in Congress, while "Party Structure 2" is this sum weighted by the share of seats of the largest party. This last measure is an index of equiproportionality among the three largest parties, at least in the range of cases in which the largest party gets more than 30% of the votes: in this range, the closest this number is to one, the more concentrated the distribution of strength among the three largest parties is; the closest it is to three, the more evenly divided are the seats held by the three largest parties. As we can see in the table, the three largest parties are likely to hold an equal share of seats in moderate and strong pluralism (number of effective parties > 3.5) than in weak pluralism. The closest the distribution of seats among the three largest parties gets to being equal is when the number of effective parties is between 4 and 5. Note that the figure for strong pluralism is contaminated by the large number of cases in which the largest party holds less than 30% of the seats. If we exclude these cases, we find that the index for “Party Structure II” drops from 2.46 to 1.81, almost identical to the average value for weak pluralism. In moderate pluralism, however, the average is 2.12, suggesting that, in comparison to the other situations, moderate pluralism is more likely to be characterized by three strong political parties.

*** Table 11 here ***

Statistical analysis strongly confirms the findings suggested by the descriptive transition probabilities of table 9. Divided government is found to have no statistically significant effect when a model of survival of presidential democracies is estimated. This remains true even after controlling for the type of electoral system, by the electoral cycle, by the number of effective parties, by the level of economic development (as indicated by real per capita income), by the presidential systems of Latin America and by the presence of the United States in the sample. The same is true with deadlock situations: survival models reveal no statistically significant effect on the probability that presidential regimes will continue in place.[12] Thus, the expectations generated

[12] These effects are robust to model specification: they do not change if hazard rates are modeled as being constant, monotonically increasing or decreasing, or changing directions; it is also robust to sample heterogeneity. Note, in addition, that these results, contrary to the figures presented in table 9, do take into consideration the fact that a number of regimes were still in place when observations ended. Coefficients are omitted due to space considerations. They can be obtained from the author by request.

by the comparative literature regarding the survival prospects of presidential regimes under divided government and conditions of deadlock are refuted by both descriptive and statistical evidence.

To conclude, we can say that part of the effects of institutional factors on presidentialism commonly postulated in the comparative literature can be observed empirically: the electoral system, the timing of elections, and the number of parties affect, as expected, the legislative strength of presidents and the likelihood that we will observe divided governments. These governments are more frequent in proportional representation systems, when presidential and legislative elections do not coincide, and when the number of parties is large. The conclusion drawn from the existence of these effects, however, is not warranted by the data: neither the type of electoral system nor the timing of presidential and legislative elections has any impact on the survival of presidential regimes; the number of parties, in turn, matters for the survival of presidentialism, but not in the way postulated in the literature (what matters is not multipartism per se but whether pluralism is moderate) and probably not for the reasons postulated (moderate pluralism affects survival of presidentialism not because of its effect on the president's legislative support, but most likely because of the distribution of strength among the three largest parties). Most importantly, none of these factors affect the likelihood of deadlock situations which, contrary to all expectations, does not have a negative effect on the survival of presidential regimes. It seems, thus, that there must be other mechanisms operating in presidential regimes that allow them to survive under conditions that presumably make them doomed.

Divided Government, Deadlock and Accountability in Presidential Regimes

Even if the regime is not affected by the political conditions under which it exists, presidents could be affected by them. One way in which this could occur is that presidents may be more or less accountable with respect to economic outcomes depending on the kind of support they may have in Congress.

Governments are "accountable" if citizens can discern whether governments are acting in their best interest and sanction them appropriately, so that those incumbents who satisfy citizens remain in office and those who do not lose it. In general presidential regimes are considered to be more accountable than parliamentary regimes on the grounds that they allow for more clarity of responsibility.[13] Under divided government and deadlock, however, this is not true; in these cases, it is more difficult for voters to identify and punish those responsible for the policies implemented

[13] See Powell (1989) for a discussion of the relationship between "clarity of responsibility" and accountability and Powell and Whitten (1993) and Whitten and Palmer (1996) for an analysis of the relationship between “clarity of responsibility” and accountability in parliamentary democracies. For an argument about the superiority of presidentialism on the grounds of accountability see Shugart and Carey (1992). See, however, Cheibub and Przeworski (1999) for contrary evidence concerning presidentialism and Cheibub (1998) for contrary evidence concerning "clarity of responsibility."

(or not implemented) by the government and hence to hold governments accountable.

As defined here, governments are accountable if the probability that they survive in office is sensitive to government performance: otherwise they are not accountable. Specifically, accountability can be characterized by the derivative of "hazard rate" with regard to the outcomes that were generated during some number of past years, where the hazard rate is the conditional probability that, having been in office for some duration t=0,1,2,... incumbents lose office at (t+dt), $dt \rightarrow 0$. Presidents are accountable with respect to economic outcomes if their hazard rate increases, and the probability of surviving in office falls, when economic performance declines.

Note that here the primary question is not about the impact of economic performance on the survival of presidents in office. Neither is it about the impact of divided government and deadlock on the survival of presidents.[14] Since the interest here is on the impact of divided government and deadlock on accountability of presidents, the question is about the impact these variables have on the relationship between economic performance and the survival of presidents in office. To the extent that divided governments and deadlock situations blur responsibilities and make accountability more difficult, we should observe a stronger impact of economic performance on the survival of presidents once they are controlled for.

Before we proceed, there is one point that needs to be made. In a way the question of electoral accountability of presidents makes no sense given a feature common in presidential regimes. In order for elections to induce accountability, voters should be able to punish governments when they perform badly *and* to reward governments when they perform well. Yet, this last condition is absent in the vast majority of presidential regimes. Only 18% of the presidents in pure presidential regimes were in systems with no restrictions for reelection; another 18% were in systems where they could be reelected once. If we exclude Switzerland (where the presidency is collective) and those who were already serving their second term, and hence could not face elections anymore, we find that the proportion of presidents that could be reelected is 28.3%. During the 1946-96 period, the probability that a president would be constitutionally prevented from being reelected was 0.6433. To think of accountability of presidents, therefore, is problematic since more than 70% of all presidents could not have been reelected even if voters wanted to reelect them.

We need, therefore, to take the existence of term limits into account in order to examine the impact of divided government and deadlock on accountability of presidents. Since in the majority of cases presidents will have to leave office regardless of their performance, it will not be surprising if we find that economic performance has no impact on their survival in office.[15]

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[14] Both questions are interesting in themselves and something will be said about the second one below.

[15] Note, incidentally, that this is a plausible explanation for the difference in performance observed between presidential and parliamentary regimes by (Przeworski et al. 1996). The relatively poor record of presidential regimes could be due to the fact that presidents, apart from

There are two ways to take care of the problem of term limits in studying accountability under presidentialism. First we can treat the presidents that are constitutionally barred from reelection as cases of "censoring," in the sense that we cease to observe them for reasons that are exogenous to the process that we want to investigate (other "censored" cases are presidents that remained in office after December 31, 1996, and presidents who died of natural causes while in office). In this case the term limit issue is resolved statistically, with no substantive meaning. Second, we can use the survival of presidential parties in office, and not of presidents, to analyze accountability in presidential regimes. Since it is individuals and not political parties that are barred from reelection, voters can, if they wish, keep parties indefinitely in office. The downside of this solution is that presidents are assumed to care about having a member of their own party succeed them in the same way that they care about being reelected. But whether this assumption is true may depend on the specific type of term limit stipulated by the constitution. When presidents have to wait one term to run again their best strategy could be to be succeeded by a weak member of the opposition.

Table 12 presents the coefficients for the impact of divided government, deadlock and several economic variables (GDP growth, per capita growth, inflation and growth of private consumption) on the survival of presidents and presidential parties in office. Due to data availability, the results are based on different samples, the size of which is indicated in the table.

The results regarding the relationship between economic performance and survival are unambiguous: the chances that presidents stay in office are not affected by economic performance, even if we take into consideration the fact that many of them are constitutionally prevented from seeking reelection. This finding is robust: nothing changes if we control for level of economic development (as indicated by real per capita GDP), for the presence of the United States, Latin American countries or Ex-Soviet republics in the sample.[16] It does not change either if instead of considering current economic conditions, we consider economic conditions in the previous year. Most importantly, controlling for the cases of divided government or those in which deadlock situations exist makes no difference: presidents go on, with their chances of remaining in office unaffected by economic conditions their countries experience. The same is true of the parties of presidents, suggesting either that the lack of accountability with respect to economic outcomes we observe among presidents is not entirely due to the popularity of term limits in these regimes, or that the goals of presidents and their parties do not always coincide.

The real surprise in table 12 is the positive effect of divided government and deadlock on the survival of presidents. This effect, again, is robust to all sorts of controls and alternative estimations, suggesting that they are indeed real. I will leave the examination of the reasons behind this finding for future work. For now what matters is that, again, contrary to much of what

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personal idiosyncrasies, have no incentives to perform well.

[16] Switzerland and Uruguay from 1952 to 1966 are excluded from this analysis because of their collective executives.

is implied in the comparative literature, presidents do not necessarily suffer in their chances of remaining in office when they do not control the legislature or when a situation conducive to deadlock exists.

To summarize, we find that the probability that presidents, and their parties, survive in office is hardly affected by current economic performance, even if we control for situations that should, at least in principle, make it harder for voters to punish the incumbent electorally. From the point of view of this work what matters to retain is that presidents who do not control a majority of seats in the legislature or who are facing deadlock situations are not any less likely to survive in office, or any less accountable in the sense defined here, than their colleagues who face a better legislative environment.

Conclusion

In the comparative literature, divided government and deadlock have been singled out, implicitly or explicitly, as the reasons for the relatively poor performance (longevity) of presidential regimes when compared with parliamentary regimes. Indeed, we do know that parliamentary democracies tend to last considerably longer than presidential democracies: the probability that a presidential system would die during any particular year between 1950 and 1990 was 0.0477; the probability that a parliamentary system would die was 0.0138. Although apparently small, these probabilities translate into expected lives equal to 73 years for parliamentarism and 21 years for presidentialism. We also know that this difference between parliamentarism and presidentialism is not due to the wealth of countries in which these institutions were observed, to their economic performance, nor to the social conditions under which they emerged. Neither is it due to any of the political conditions under which they functioned (Przeworski et al. Forthcoming).

The findings reported in this paper reaffirm this last point. If it were the paralysis generated by divided government and deadlock that explained the relatively poor performance of presidentialism when compared to parliamentarism, we should find that the survival of the regime, of the president, or of both, would be threatened when presidents face a congress in which he or she does not control a majority, or when a deadlock between the president and congress may emerge. Yet, what we find is that these circumstances generally make no difference for the survival of presidential regimes or of presidents in office. When they do make a difference, it is in the opposite direction. The comparative literature is correct in relating electoral and party variables to the likelihood of divided government: characteristics of the electoral and party systems do affect the level of support for the president in Congress and hence the likelihood of divided governments. However, neither divided government nor the factors that make it more likely to occur, affect the probability that deadlock situations will occur. And, most importantly, neither divided government nor deadlock affect negatively the longevity of presidential regimes, or the survival in office of presidents and their parties. Further analysis is needed in which different aspects of performance are considered, particularly economic outcomes produced under presidential rule and legislative output. My suspicion, however, is that not much will change as a result of more data or more sophisticated statistical techniques.

I would like to conclude by offering two possible explanations for the variation in performance among presidential regimes and, ultimately, for the differences in performance between presidential and parliamentary regimes. These are preliminary hypotheses that contain some normative implications but which still require empirical validation. Here, I just want to offer them for discussion.

The first explanation has to do with the fact that presidents rarely change because they are defeated in elections. Most of them leave office because they are required to do so by constitutionally imposed term limits. Recall that over 70% of the changes of presidents observed between 1946 and 1996 were necessitated by term limits: voters could not reelect the incumbent even if they had wanted to. In turn, whenever incumbent presidents could run and did, a large proportion of them won reelection. Among 22 presidents who faced reelection without impending term limits between 1950 and 1990, only 14 were not reelected, and of those only six can be counted as real defeats by incumbents.[17] Hence, given that incumbent won in 8 and lost in 6 elections, their odds of being reelected were 1.3 to 1. Just for reference, the odds of reelection for prime-ministers during the same period was 0.66 to 1 (Cheibub and Przeworski 1999).

It appears, therefore, that presidentialism gives an excessive advantage to the incumbents when they are legally permitted to run for reelection and, in turn, to prevent the incumbents from exploiting this advantage, it obligates them to leave office whether or not voters want them to stay. What may thus happen is that either incumbent presidents use their advantage to stay in office despite voters' dissatisfaction with their performance, or they are legally forced to leave office despite their high degree of support. In either case, there is a temptation to proceed in an extra-legal way: either some groups of civilians turn to the military to throw the president out of office, or the president, counting on this support in the population, illegally retains office. The latter was clearly the case of Ferdinand Marcos in 1965 and may have been the case of Alberto Fujimori in 1990. Moreover, by removing the possibility of electoral rewards, term limits may also remove the president’s incentive to perform well.

Unfortunately analysis of this issue is hindered by the very dearth of cases of presidents who are not constitutionally barred from reelection. The little evidence that exists (based on separate, preliminary work by the author) suggests that the existence of term limits may, indeed, affect the performance of presidential regimes. But the point to be emphasized here is that this is not an inherent feature of presidentialism. It may be true that presidents, if left unencumbered, may use

[17] In the Dominican Republic in 1978, when Joaquín Balaguer lost to Antonio Guzmán Fernández; in Nicaragua in 1990, when Daniel Ortega Saavedra lost to Violeta Chamorro; in the US in 1977, when Gerald Ford lost to Jimmy Carter and 1981, when Carter lost to Ronald Reagan; and in the Philippines in 1953, when Elpidio Quirino lost to Ramon Magsaysay, as well as in 1961, when Carlos Garcia lost to Diosdado Macapagal. In all the other cases the incumbent, for various reasons, did not run. These include, for example, Lyndon Johnson in 1969 in the US, Salvador Jorge Blanco in 1986 in the Dominican Republic, Nereu Ramos in Brazil in 1956, Hector Campora in Argentina in 1973.

their office for their own electoral advantage. And it is also true that such behavior, at least its excesses, should be inhibited. Constitutional term limits, however, may be just too blunt an instrument and one that imposes too high a price. There may be other instruments that accomplish similar goals of limiting presidential electoral advantage without generating incentives for extralegal action or interfering with the operation of accountability mechanisms. Examples include strict regulation of campaign finance and procedures, public funding of campaigns, free access to media and the strengthening of agencies that oversee campaigns. These are devices that will limit the ability of presidents to use the office for undue electoral advantage and yet will not remove their incentives to perform well with an eye to being reelected.

The second possible explanation for variation in the performance of presidential regimes may be located in a set of variables that have received very little attention in comparative research. Consider that the main indicator of presidential legislative support used in this work -- the share of seats held by the party of the president -- is limited in terms of the information it conveys about the president's actual capacity to obtain support in congress. Presidents everywhere do form governing coalitions, parties do merge with one another, and legislators do change parties in the middle of the term. Moreover, presidents do have legislative powers, and legislatures do operate according to rules and procedures, both of which affect these actors' ability to approve their preferred legislation. Thus, the share of seats obtained by the party of the president at elections, a function of electoral and partisan variables, is far from being sufficient for conveying the entire picture regarding the degree of legislative support the president can count on. What this suggests is that, if presidential regimes fail, they do not fail because the president does not control enough seats to impose, so to speak, his or her own policy agenda. As we have seen, whether the president control or does not control congress makes no difference for the survival of the regime. What may matter is the presence or the absence of some of the factors just mentioned above which allow presidents with very little legislative support to work with congress, or prevent presidents with a majority of seats in congress to have legislation passed. It is to these variables -- particularly the ones that regulate the internal workings of congress and the relations between the executive and the legislative -- that we should shift our attention in order to understand the performance of presidential regimes. This, however, raises again, but now at a different level, the issue of the trade-off between "representation" and "governability," so central in the debate about presidentialism and parliamentarism.

Much of the discussion about presidentialism has implicitly assumed the existence of a trade-off between representation and governability. This is what is behind several defenses of parliamentarism and their suggestion that presidential regimes perform better when representation is more restricted: when voters are faced with fewer choices, presidential majorities are more likely to be produced, and the regime will have a better performance (see, for examples, Mainwaring(1993), Stepan and Skach (1993) and Lamounier (1994).

This way of reasoning, however, is problematic. As Figueiredo and Limongi [, 1995 #45; ,1999 have shown with their study of Brazil, government performance cannot be accounted for by an exclusive focus on electoral and partisan variables: the post-1988 governments in Brazil have

performed reasonably well, at least in terms of being able to implement the president's legislative agenda, in spite of the fact that the electoral and partisan legislation are among the most permissive in the world. The explanation they offer also involves limits to representation: the ability of recent Brazilian presidents to approve their legislative agenda and the existence of highly disciplined parties in Congress are the product of mechanisms that essentially make the preferences of individual legislators irrelevant -- these are the power the president has to control the legislative agenda and the power congressional party leaders have to control the way information flows to individual legislators. These are institutional features that limit representation and, in this sense are non-democratic: they enhance “governability” at the expense of “representativeness.”

It seems, therefore, that there are at least two ways in which representation and governability can be traded-off: one that limits representation by limiting the variety of views that can enter the political process: restrictive electoral and party legislation reduces the number of parties, increases the likelihood that governments will obtain substantial legislative support, thus increasing “governability;” another that is permissive at the level of the variety of views that can enter the political process, but that limits the role that individual representatives have in deliberation and decision-making. In the first model, the one that informs most of the discussions about presidentialism and parliamentarism, the price to be paid is the limitation of the number of interests that find their way into the political system; in the second model, a large number of interests are allowed to enter the political system, but they are less effective in terms of decision-making. Both systems may work and this is probably why we do not find, statistically, that the share of seats held by the party of the president affects the regime's performance. But the question remains as to whether these systems are ultimately equivalent in the effectiveness with which interests are represented in the political process.

Even though presidential regimes seem to be more frail than parliamentary regimes, we do not really know why. The reasons that are usually highlighted in the comparative literature -- divided government and deadlock -- could not account for the differences we observe since they do not affect presidential regimes in the way suggested by this literature. Most importantly, the separation of powers that defines presidentialism is not invariably associated with conflict, divided governments and “deadlock.” If there are reasons why we may want to have a presidential system -- and I believe that there may be some -- then the issue becomes one of finding the institutional mechanisms that can correct some of its excesses without preempting its operation.

Appendix

This paper uses a subset of a data set that classifies political regimes for 189 countries between 1946 and 1996. Countries were first classified as democracies and dictatorships for each year during this period according to rules spelled out in detail in Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi [, Forthcoming #55]. The cases of democracy were further classified as parliamentary, mixed, or presidential. These types of democracy are defined as follows. Systems in which governments must enjoy the confidence of the legislature are "parliamentary"; systems in which they serve at the authority of the elected president are "presidential"; systems in which governments respond both to legislative assemblies and elected presidents are "mixed."[18]

In parliamentary systems the legislative assembly can dismiss the government, while under presidential systems it cannot.[19] Some institutional arrangements, however, do not fit either pure type: they are "premier-presidential," "semi-presidential," or "mixed," according to different terminologies. In such systems, the president is elected for a fixed term and has some executive powers but governments serve at the discretion of the parliament. These "mixed" systems are not homogeneous: most lean closer to parliamentarism in so far as the government is responsible to the legislature; others, notably Portugal between 1976 and 1981, and some of the post-Soviet Republics (including Russia) grant the president the power to appoint and/or dismiss governments (Shugart and Carey 1992).

The primary focus of the paper is on pure presidential regimes. Many analysis are also performed on a sample including the mixed systems in order to assess whether their presence modifies what is found for pure presidential regimes. In spite of significant institutional differences between the two systems regarding term limits and presidential veto, which significantly affects the occurrence of deadlock, the inclusion of mixed systems does not modify any of the findings reported for presidential regimes.

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[19] This criterion coincides almost perfectly with the mode of selection of the government: by legislatures in parliamentary systems, by voters (directly or indirectly) in presidential systems. For a review of the differences, see Lijphart (1992).

[20] The Chilean 1891-1925 democracy does not fit this classification. While it was popularly called "parliamentary," this is a misnomer. The Chilean lower house frequently censured individual ministers but could not and did not remove the government or the chief executive, the president. In parliamentary systems, except for some early rare cases, the responsibility of the government is collective.

The cases of pure presidentialism are the following:

Benin, 1991-1996
Cameroon, 1960-1963
Congo, 1960-1962
Djibouti, 1977-1982
Gabon, 1960-1967
Ghana,1979-1981
Malawi,1994-1996
Nigeria,1979-1983
Rwanda, 1962-1965
Sierra Leone 1996
Uganda,1980-1985
Zambia,1991-1996
Costa Rica,1949-1996
Dominican Republic,1966-1996
El Salvador,1984-1996
Guatemala,1946-1954
Guatemala,1958-1963
Guatemala,1966-1982
Guatemala, 1986-1996
Honduras,1957-1963
Honduras,1971-1972
Honduras,1982-1996
Nicaragua,1984-1996
Panama,1949-1951
Panama,1952-1968
Panama,1989-1996
United States,1946-1996
Argentina,1946-1955
Argentina,1958-1962
Argentina,1963-1966
Argentina,1973-1976
Argentina,1983-1996
Bolivia,1979-1980
Bolivia,1982-1996
Brazil,1946-1964
Brazil,1979-1996
Chile,1946-1973
Chile,1990-1996
Colombia,1946-1996
Ecuador,1948-1963
Ecuador,1979-1996
Guyana, 1992-1996
Peru, 1946-1948
Peru,1956-1962
Peru,1963-1968
Peru,1980-1992
Suriname, 1988-1990
Suriname, 1991-1996
Uruguay,1947-1973
Uruguay,1985-1996
Venezuela, 1946-1948
Venezuela,1959-1996
Bangladesh,1986-1991
South Korea,1963-1972
South Korea,1988-1996
Philippines,1946-1972
Philippines,1986-1996
Switzerland, 1946-1996
Armenia, 1992-1996
Kyrgyzstan, 1991-1996
Namibia, 1990-1996
Ukraine,1991-1996
Cyprus, 1960-1996

The cases of mixed regime are:

Central African Republic, 1993-1996
Comoro Islands, 1990-1995
Congo, 1992-1996
Madagascar, 1993-1996
Mali, 1992-1996
Niger, 1993-1995
Somalia, 1960-1969
South Africa, 1994-1996
Haiti, 1991-1992
Haiti, 1993-1996
Mongolia, 1992-1996
Pakistan, 1972-1977
Sri Lanka, 1989-1996
Finland, 1946-1996
France, 1958-1996
Iceland, 1946-1996
Poland, 1989-1996
Portugal, 1976-1996
Romania, 1990-1996
Albania, 1992-1996
Croatia, 1991-1996
Lithuania, 1991-1996
São Tomé o Príncipe, 1991-1996

The variables used in the analysis are the following:

Political Variables:

DIVIDED: Coded 1 when the party of the president does not control more than 50% of the seats in the legislature in a unicameral system; or when it does not control more than 50% of the seats in at least one of the chambers in a bicameral system; 0 otherwise.

DEADLOCK: Coded 1 when conditions for deadlock between the executive and the legislative exists; 0 otherwise. The coding of this variable takes into consideration the constitutional provisions regarding presidential veto and its override by the legislature, the number of chambers and the share of seats controlled by the party of the president in each chamber. The coding procedure is discussed in detail in the body of the paper.

EFFPARTY: Number of effective political parties, defined as 1/(1-F), where F=Party Fractionalization Index.

COINCIDE: Variable coded 0 when presidential and legislative elections do not coincide; 1 when they alternate (coincide and do not coincide); 2 when they always coincide.

PROP: Variable coded 0 when legislative elections are held under a plurality system; 1 when they are held under a proportional representation system; 2 when they are mixed, either because they adopt different formulas when there are multiple tiers or because they use different formulas in different parts of the country.

BICAMER: Dummy variable coded 1 when the system is bicameral, 0 otherwise.

PLOWER: Share of seats held by the party of the president in the lower house.

PUPPER: Share of seats held by the party of the president in the upper house.

PRESLGST: Dummy variable coded 1 when the party of the president is the largest in the lower house, 0 otherwise.

LGSTPS: Share of seats held by the largest party in the lower house.

LGSTPS2: Share of seats held by the second largest party in the lower house.

LGSTPS3: Share of seats held by the third largest party in the lower house.
VETO: Dummy variable coded 1 when the president is constitutionally allowed to partially or totally veto legislation; 0 otherwise.
OVERRIDE: Constitutional provision for legislative override of presidential veto, coded 0 if no override; 1 absolute majority; 2 if 3/5 majority; 3 if 2/3; 4 if 3/4 majority; 5 if decision is by constitutional court or referendum.
PTLTYPE: Presidential constitutional term limit, coded 0 if no constitutional restriction; 1 if president has to wait one term for reelection; 2 if president has to wait two terms for reelection; 3 if president can only serve a maximum of two terms; 4 if president can only serve a maximum of three terms; 5 if no reelection is ever allowed.
TERMLIM: Dummy variable coded 1 when the current president is constitutionally prevented from seeking reelection, 0 otherwise.
FLAGC: Dummy variable coded 1 for the first year of each country, 0 otherwise.
FLAGR: Dummy variable coded 1 for the first year of each regime (and each country), 0 otherwise.
FLAGPR: Dummy variable coded 1 for the first year of each presidential spell (and each country), 0 otherwise.
FLAGP: Dummy variable coded 1 for the first year of each spell of presidential party (and each year), 0 otherwise.
RSPELL: Regime spell, successive number.
PRSPELL: Presidential spell, successive number.
PSPELL: Presidential party spell, successive number.
PRESH: Dummy variable coded 1 when there is a change of president, 0 otherwise.
PARTYH: Dummy variable coded 1 when there is a change of presidential party, 0 otherwise.
ENTRYPR: Mode of entry in power (president), coded 0 if non-constitutional entry; 1 if constitutional entry resulting from elections; 2 if constitutional entry not resulting from elections (nomination by parties, interim presidents, etc).
EXITPR: Mode of exit from power (president), coded 0 if president is still in power by December 1996;1 if by death; 2 if by assassination while in office; 3 if constitutional exit due to elections; 4 if constitutional exist not due to elections; 5 if non-constitutional due to coups; 6 if non-constitutional due to consolidation of incumbent power.
ENTRYPR: Mode of entry in power, presidential parties.
EXITP: Mode of exit from power, presidential parties.
REGTRANS: Dummy variable coded 1 for the year before a regime transition (to dictatorship) took place, 0 otherwise. Note that it codes the year before the transition occurs. Hence, correlates of regime transition are lagged with respect to the transition.
AGEPR: Number of years the president has been in power.
AGEP: Number of years the party of the president has been in power.
AGER: Number of years the political regime (as coded by REG) has been in place.

Economic variables:
G87: GDP per capita, PPP, growth (annual %). Growth of GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP).

GDPNL87G: GDP growth (annual %). Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant 1987 local currency.
INFCPIG: Inflation, consumer prices (annual % change).
VCONSPCG: Private consumption per capita growth (annual %).

The coding of presidential regimes was based on Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi and Przeworski (1996) and updated by the author. Information on distribution of legislative seats, constitutions and electoral systems was taken from Banks (1993; 1997), Nohlen (1993). Morrison, Mitchell and Paden (1989), Bratton and Van de Walle (1996), Jones (1995b; 1997), Kurian (1998), Blaustein and Flanz (1971-), Carey, Amorin Neto and Shugart (1997) and Peaslee (1970). A number of more specific sources were also consulted: Choe (1997), Lande (1989), McGuire (1995), Choe (1997), Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) and Carlos and Banlaoi (1996). In addition, the following web sites were consulted: "Constitution Finder" (http://www.urich.edu/~jpjones/confinder/const.htm); "Elections Around the World" (http://www.agora.stm.it/elections/elections.htm); "Parline Database" (http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch/asp). Economic data was extracted from World Bank (1997).

Table 1: Frequency of Divided Government in Presidential Regimes by the Number of Effective Political Parties

	% Divided Government	
Number of Effective Parties (EP)	All Regimes	Pure Presidential
EP≤2	38.07	38.67
2<EP≤3	42.72	41.01
3<EP≤4	90.00	89.43
4<EP≤5	94.12	90.38
EP>5	98.92	98.11
All	61.38	58.08

Table 2: Frequency of Divided Government in Presidential Regimes by the Timing of Presidential and Congressional Elections

	% Divided Government	
Presidential and Congressional Elections:	All Regimes	Pure Presidential
Non-Concurrent	67.26	60.26
Alternate	65.57	65.57
Concurrent	55.31	54.22
All	61.01	57.68

Table 3: Timing of Presidential and Congressional Elections by the Number of Effective Parties

Number of Effective Parties (EP)	Presidential and Congressional Elections					
		Non-Concurrent		Alternate		Concurrent
	All	Pure Pres.	All	Pure Pres.	All	Pure Pres.
EP≤2	36.76	23.67	33.82	40.83	29.41	35.50
2<EP≤3	32.15	22.87	8.85	10.24	59.00	66.89
3<EP≤4	50.75	23.32	3.02	4.51	46.23	69.17
4<EP≤5	74.28	58.11	4.29	8.11	21.43	33.78
EP>5	70.63	63.16	9.79	14.74	29.47	22.11

** Entries are the proportion of year in each category.

Table 4: Frequency of Divided Government in Presidential Regimes by Electoral System Regulating Legislative Elections

Electoral System	All Regimes	Pure Presidential
Majority-Plurality	51.72	47.55
Pure Proportional	64.64	59.36
Mixed	64.10	80.00
Pure Proportional + Mixed	64.61	60.40
Total	61.71	57.52

Table 5: Distribution of Cases (Country-Years) by the Number of Chambers, Presidential Veto and Conditions for Veto Override

PURE PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS (N=727)

		UNICAMERAL		BICAMERAL	
		VETO	NO VETO	VETO	NO VETO
1.	No Override	38	-	0	-
2.	Absolute Majority	34	-	27	-
2A.	Separate Chambers	-	-	18	-
2B.	Joint Chambers	-	-	9	-
3.	2/3 Majority	214	-	335	-
3A.	Separate Chambers	-	-	251	-
3B.	Joint Chambers	-	-	84	-
4.	3/4 Majority	0	-	45	-
4A.	Separate Chambers	-	-	4	-
4B.	Joint Chambers	-	-	41	-
5.	Third Party or Referendum	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL	286	23	407	11

MIXED SYSTEMS (N=236)

		UNICAMERAL		BICAMERAL	
		VETO	NO VETO	VETO	NO VETO
1.	No Override	0	-	0	-
2.	Absolute Majority	83	-	10	-
2A.	Separate Chambers	-	-	5	-
2B.	Joint Chambers	-	-	5	-
3.	2/3 Majority	29	-	0	-
3A.	Separate Chambers	-	-	0	-
3B.	Joint Chambers	-	-	0	-
4.	3/4 Majority	0	-	0	-
4A.	Separate Chambers	-	-	0	-
4B.	Joint Chambers	-	-	0	-
5.	Third Party or Referendum	56	-	45	-
	TOTAL	168	8	55	5

Table 6: Possible Scenarios Regarding Executive-legislative Relations in a Bicameral Setting with a Two-third Veto Override Requirement to Be Voted Separately in Each Chamber

Share of Seats Held by the Party of the President in the: Lower House:	0-33.3%	33.3%-50%	>50%
Upper House:			
0-33.3%	Possible Veto; Opposition overrides	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in the lower house	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in lower house
33.3%-50%	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in the upper house	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in either house	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in either house
>50%	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in the upper house	Possible veto; Opposition cannot override in either house	No veto

Table 7: Frequency of Deadlock Situations in Presidential Regimes by Divided Government, Number of Effective Parties, Electoral Cycle and Electoral System

	% Deadlock Situations	
	All Regimes	Pure Presidential
Unified Government	0.00	0.00
Divided Government	49.48	61.50
Number of Effective Parties (EP)		
EP≤2	31.69	37.91
2<EP≤3	28.44	32.85
3<EP≤4	29.47	41.60
4<EP≤5	20.29	32.88
EP>5	3.85	6.10
Electoral Cycle		
Nonconcurrent	8.33	15.79
Alternate	54.10	54.10
Concurrent	32.51	33.85
Electoral System		
Majority-Plurality	27.78	37.16
Proportional	23.22	29.67
Proportional+Mixed	22.56	29.23

Table 8: Distribution of Spells of Presidential Regimes (Pure and Mixed), Presidents, and Presidential Parties by Mode of Exit and Average Duration*

Mode of Exit	Regime	Presidents	Party
In Place as of December 31, 1996	49 (20.02)	49 (3.49)	49 (5.67)
Death (Natural, Accidents, Suicides)	-	11 (3.27)	5 (4.80)
Assassination	-	3 (3.00)	-
Constitutional: Elections	-	129 (5.05)	89 (6.31)
Constitutional: Not Elections	1	19 (3.05)	13 (5.77)
Non-Constitutional: Overthrown	30 (7.50)	30 (3.83)	30 (4.43)
Non-Constitutional: Consolidation	11 (10.27)	11 (4.09)	11 (4.55)
All less in place as of 12/31/1996	42 (8.16)	203 (4.51)	148 (5.70)
All	91 (14.55)	252 (4.31)	197 (5.70)

* Age in years in parentheses.

Table 9:Transition Probabilities by Various Institutional Features

	Pure Presidential	Presidential and Mixed
Unified Governments	0.0427	0.0444
Divided Governments	0.0470	0.0426
No Deadlock Conditions	0.0430	0.0342
Deadlock Conditions	0.0348	0.0336
Electoral System:		
Plurality	0.0427	0.0426
Proportional	0.0391	0.0316
Proportional+Mixed	0.0371	0.0297
Electoral Cycle:		
Nonconcurrent	0.0506	0.0337
Alternate	0.0504	0.0503
Concurrent	0.0376	0.0386
Number of Effective Parties (EP)		
$EP \leq 2$	0.0592	0.0637
$2 < EP \leq 3$	0.0239	0.0206
$3 < EP \leq 4$	0.0752	0.0502
$4 < EP \leq 5$	0.0541	0.0357
$EP > 5$	0.0105	0.0140
$EP \leq 3.5$	0.0383	0.0362
$2 < EP \leq 3.5$	0.0283	0.0231
$3.5 < EP \leq 5$	0.0748	0.0488
$EP > 5$	0.0105	0.0140

Table 10: Average Share of Seats Held by the Party of the President in Congress by the Number of Effective Parties (EP)

	UNICAMERAL		BICAMERAL			
			LOWER HOUSE		UPPER HOUSE	
	All	Pure Presidential	All	Pure Presidential	All	Pure Presidential
EP						
1<EP≤1.5	63.15	84.25	76.83	79.42	75.13	76.59
1.5<EP≤2	68.78	67.15	53.30	52.99	55.51	56.52
2<EP≤2.5	55.23	56.83	52.76	51.95	56.37	56.02
2.5<EP≤3	46.11	47.99	44.04	43.69	49.01	49.01
3<EP≤3.5	37.64	38.57	40.85	41.50	49.83	46.85
3.5<EP≤4	30.75	30.75	34.00	33.54	40.28	42.20
4<EP≤4.5	32.56	34.66	34.59	26.81	25.39	25.14
4.5<EP≤5	27.64	45.44	54.12	59.66	48.60	49.97
EP>5	22.49	22.29	49.32	57.28	23.39	16.42

Table 11: Party System Characteristics by Number of Effective Parties (EP)

	ALL		PURE PRESIDENTIAL	
EP	Party Structure I	Party Structure II	Party Structure I	Party Structure II
1<EP≤1.5	92.06	1.17	91.98	1.16
1.5<EP≤2	95.12	1.47	97.09	1.50
2<EP≤2.5	92.97	1.69	93.99	1.73
2.5<EP≤3	90.92	1.92	91.31	1.93
3<EP≤3.5	87.58	2.12	87.84	2.10
3.5<EP≤4	79.40	2.16	79.09	2.22
4<EP≤4.5	78.79	2.09	75.58	2.11
4.5<EP≤5	73.49	2.43	74.30	2.48
EP>5	61.88	2.41	60.90	2.46
EP>5 (less LGSTP<30)	63.57	1.78	66.34	1.81

Table 12:Effect of Divided Government, Deadlock and Economic Conditions on the Survival of Presidents and Presidential Parties in Office*

PRESIDENTS

Type of Sample (N)	Alone	Controlling for: Divided Government	Deadlock
Divided Government (664)	0.2767439 0.0779	--	--
Deadlock (718)	0.3131824 0.0686	--	--
Inflation (548)	0.0003360 0.7906	0.0000218 0.8609	0.0000406 0.7527
Per Capita Growth (320)	0.0017170 0.9832	0.0003556 0.9674	0.0000603 0.9929
GDP Growth (476)	-0.0130600 0.3721	-0.0150031 0.4865	0.0127234 0.3255
Consumption (418)	-0.0030024 0.7864	-0.00171722 0.8884	0.0018875 0.8801

PRESIDENTIAL PARTIES:

Type of Sample (N)	Alone	Controlling for: Divided Government	Deadlock
Divided Government (664)	-0.2366619 0.0252	--	--
Deadlock (718)	-0.1902367 0.1883	--	--
Inflation (548)	-0.000469 0.6088	-0.0000239 0.6657	-0.0000546 0.5157
Per Capita Growth (320)	-0.0011261 0.9295	0.0001295 0.9785	-0.0004897 0.9562
GDP Growth (476)	-0.0153365 0.3894	0.00459801 0.7305	0.0083779 0.6128
Consumption (418)	-0.0038281 0.7830	0.00501239 0.6078	0.0032676 0.8204

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* Dependent variable is the log of age (in years) of presidential administrations and the log of duration (in years) of presidential parties in office. For each variable, the first row is the estimated coefficient of a Weibull survival model, the second is z=coefficient/standard error, and the third is P[|Z|≥z].

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