INTRODUCTION

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This book addresses two fundamental issues. First, it addresses the current debate regarding the liabilities and merits of presidential government. Does presidentialism make it less likely that democratic governments will be able to manage political conflict, as many prominent scholars have argued recently? Our contribution to this debate is to interject skepticism that presidentialism has *generally* contributed significantly to the problems of democratic governance and stability, although we recognize that it may have done so in specific cases. These questions about the general desirability of presidentialism have been at the core of a first generation of recent comparative studies of presidentialism that essentially began with Juan Linz's seminal critique of this regime type.

Second, we examine variations among different presidential systems, the implications of these variations for executive–legislative relations, and their consequences for democratic governance and stability. In Chapter 1 and the Conclusion, as well as the nine country chapters, we argue that presidential systems vary in important ways, above all according to (1) the constitutional powers accorded to the president and (2) the kind of parties and party system. We also explore how these variations in presidential powers and the party system affect the performance of presidential democracy. We believe that the first generation of (recent) comparative studies of presidentialism did not always pay sufficient attention to these issues. While we recognize the important contributions of this first generation of comparative studies, we believe that these questions on variations among presidential systems and their implications should form the core of a new generation of studies. These issues receive paramount attention in this book.

Presidentialism has become the subject of a lively intellectual and political debate since the mid-1980s. Politically, this debate has been fueled by the succession of transitions to democracy that swept southern Europe, Latin America, central Europe, Asia, and Africa. Political leaders sought ways to design institutions so as to increase the prospects for consolidating new democracies. Especially in Latin America, many questioned whether presidentialism had been a significant contributing factor to past democratic failure, given that presidential systems have overwhelmingly predominated in a region beset by many democratic breakdowns.

The debate about presidentialism has had considerable political visibility in several Latin American countries because scholars and political actors became convinced that formal political institutions can help or hinder efforts to construct stable democracies. For the first time in decades there has been serious debate about modifying presidential systems or even switching to parliamentary government. This debate went farthest in Brazil, where there was a realistic possibility that the Constitutional Congress of 1987–88 would vote to institute a so-called semipresidential government, in which a prime minister elected by the legislature and a popularly elected president would share executive power. A referendum on the system of government was held in Brazil in 1993, again creating a real possibility of a switch to a semipresidential format. Early surveys showed a significant lead for the reform proposal in Brazil, though presidentialism ultimately won easily.

Even where there has been less chance of a move away from presidentialism, concern about how it has worked and efforts to reform it have burgeoned. Argentine President Raúl Alfonsín (1983–89) formed a high-level commission to produce proposals on constitutional reforms, including a switch to parliamentary government. Colombia adopted a new constitution in 1991, partly to rectify presidential–congressional disharmony. Constitutional reforms involving executive–legislative relations have also been debated in the Chilean legislature. In Bolivia, the Congress engaged in discussions about changing to a parliamentary system when it revised the constitution in 1993. It is significant, however, that all of the reforms that contemplated shifts away from presidentialism have been defeated.

Intellectually, the debate about presidentialism was sparked by the conviction that institutional arrangements have an autonomous impact in shaping politics and that the choice of a presidential, parliamentary, or some other system is of fundamental importance. The landmark contribution that fostered much of the subsequent debate was Juan Linz's seminal essay "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" Origi-

nally written in 1984, the essay argued that presidential systems are inimical to constructing stable democracies.[1]

Linz's argument spawned an extensive debate,[2] albeit one in which in many countries' partisan opinions have often overshadowed careful research. In part because the policy implications of this debate have been so obvious and salient that careful academic work has sometimes taken a back seat, in part because of the long-standing neglect of presidentialism by comparative political scientists and sociologists, a great deal remains to be done.[3] This book addresses that lacuna.

In the academic debate, critics of presidentialism have dominated and have added to the set of problems that Linz identified with this regime type. Our volume recognizes the importance of the criticisms of presidentialism but stresses that there is no universally best form of government. Different conditions – including party system and levels of social conflict and economic development – may make one form of government fit better in one country, while another form would be more suitable elsewhere.

Three important unifying themes run throughout the volume. The first is skepticism regarding the dominant viewpoint that presidentialism is usually a problematic regime type. This theme is taken up most explicitly in Chapter 1 and the chapter by Faundez on Chile, but it runs throughout the rest of the chapters as well.

Second, the volume shows that presidentialism comes in different varieties and that these variations can be as important as the broad differences between parliamentarism and presidentialism. This theme is particularly important because of the tendency in the debate to focus on the contrast between parliamentarism and presidentialism and the concomitant tendency to pay less careful attention to differences among presidential systems. We develop this point in Chapter 1 and the Conclusion, where we attempt to conceptualize the major dimensions along which presidential systems vary, and it is at least implicit in every chapter in the volume.

The third theme is that the way presidentialism functions depends upon the broader institutional arrangements – especially the president's legisla-

1 The essay circulated widely in unpublished form in English for several years, though it was published in Spanish, Portuguese, and several other languages. An abridged English version appeared in Linz (1990). For the definitive English version, see Linz (1994). For significant antecedents to Linz's contribution, see Loewenstein (1949), Trigueiro (1959), Blondel and Suárez (1981), and Suárez (1982).

2 Among other contributions, see Linz and Valenzuela (1994), Mainwaring (1993), Riggs (1988), and Shugart and Carey (1992).

3 By contrast, there is an extensive literature on the U.S. presidency.

tive powers and the party system – as well as, of course, upon societal conditions. All of the authors pay close attention to how institutional combinations function in different national settings. For example, Carey insists that the constitutional lifetime prohibition against presidential reelection, the prohibition against immediate congressional reelection, and the power of presidents over patronage are fundamental factors in shaping how presidentialism functions in Costa Rica. Mainwaring argues that the combination of a fragmented party system, undisciplined parties, and federalism have shaped Brazilian presidentialism. The other authors underscore similar examples of the importance of the broader institutional setting for how presidentialism functions – and for how well it functions. The interaction between presidentialism, presidential powers, and the party system is developed more fully in this volume than in the extant literature.

Although the chapters in this book have policy implications, they are above all scholarly analyses, based on extensive research, that provide detailed examinations of presidentialism in different national settings. The essays do not generally advocate one set of institutional arrangements over another. They do, however, suggest that the choice of a system of government is important and that presidentialism has encountered some specific problems in various countries. This scholarly focus is not unique, but it is distinctive on an issue in which political interests and passions have often – and understandably – played a key role.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the debate about presidentialism. We review the criticisms that have been launched against presidentialism. We acknowledge the poor historical record of presidentialism in sustaining democracy but argue that this is due in part to the tendency of this regime type to have been adopted in a series of countries that face numerous obstacles to democratization. Moreover, we argue that, alongside its liabilities, presidentialism also has some distinct advantages.

Chapter 1 then discusses variations in presidents' legislative powers; we argue that these variations constitute a fundamental divide among presidential systems. We distinguish between two forms of legislative powers that may be provided for in the constitution: proactive and reactive. Proactive legislative powers enable a president to enact new legislation of his or her preference without the prior consent of the legislature. Reactive powers permit the president to block legislative proposals that he or she does not like. We then show that there is significant variation among the countries covered in this volume in the presidents' constitutional powers in the legislative arena. Finally, we argue that a president's ability to accomplish a policy

agenda depends on the interaction between such constitutionally accorded powers and what we term the president's *partisan powers*, that is, the extent to which the president's party holds a reliable majority in the legislature.

Chapter 1 is followed by nine country studies on eight different countries (with two chapters on Chile). Our selection of cases involved three somewhat overlapping criteria. We wanted to include the major countries of the region, and accordingly we have covered the four largest (by population) Latin American countries: Brazil, Mexico,[4] Colombia, and Argentina, as well as the sixth (Venezuela) and seventh (Chile) largest. We wanted to ensure coverage of most of the handful of countries (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela) with extensive democratic history in the region; among this subset, only Uruguay is not represented in the volume. Finally, we wanted to include cases that were theoretically and comparatively interesting. This accounts for the inclusion of Bolivia, which deviates rather markedly from "pure" presidentialism in the means by which presidents are selected.

To underscore our argument that presidentialism comes in different varieties, we have grouped the chapters according to dominant features of presidentialism in these Latin American countries. Our first two chapters deal with Brazil and Colombia, countries in which presidents have enormous constitutional powers to set the policy agenda or even to rule by decree but surprisingly little actual ability to accomplish their agendas, owing to low partisan powers (i.e., lack of reliable political support in congress). Presidents in these countries have consistently resorted to attempts to circumvent congress, with deleterious consequences for institution building. Then we have chapters on three countries in which presidents are not constitutionally granted the sweeping decree powers that we find in Brazil and Colombia, but in which presidents generally enjoy copartisan congressional majorities. This group of countries includes Venezuela, where parties have been very disciplined, but only some presidents have held legislative majorities; Costa Rica, perhaps the most successful presidential democracy outside the United States, and Mexico, where presidential control over the Congress has gone to its logical extreme in the form of an authoritarian regime.

Our next chapter concerns Argentina (since the return to democracy in 1983), which, besides being a large and important country, is theoretically interesting because of conflicts over presidential powers that ultimately culminated in a major revision of the constitution in 1995. We then present two chapters that capture very different constitutional orders in one of the

4 We address the inevitable question about why we are including Mexico in a book on democracy later on in this Introduction.

countries that has most animated the debate over presidentialism: Chile. Finally, we have a chapter on the unusual constitutional format that may have assisted the consolidation of democracy in Bolivia under very difficult conditions.

Focused on the case of Brazil, Scott Mainwaring's chapter argues that the combination of presidentialism and a multiparty system tends to create problems for democracy. Several features of the Brazilian electoral system have encouraged the formation of a fragmented multiparty system in which no popularly elected president since 1950 has had a majority in Congress. The situation of permanent minority presidentialism easily leads to executive–legislative stalemate. Because of the fixed electoral timetable of the presidential system, there are no institutionalized means of dealing with this situation of presidents who lack stable congressional support. This problem is exacerbated by the malleable character of the catchall parties. When presidents are popular, politicians of all stripes and colors support them, but when they lose favor, they often have difficulty retaining legislative support. As a result, presidents have problems formulating and implementing policy during difficult times, and they are forced to govern in an ad hoc fashion and to circumvent democratic institutions, especially congress and parties.

Ronald Archer and Matthew Shugart's analysis of Colombian presidentialism also focuses on fragmentation in the Congress, but in the context of a two-party system rather than a multiparty system. Although Colombian presidents have been portrayed as dominant due to their substantial formal powers, they have regularly had problems garnering enough support even within their own parties to make lasting policy changes. Each president from 1974 to 1990 had a comprehensive package of economic, political, and social reforms rejected or, in a few cases, passed in piecemeal form. The reform packages were all intended to cultivate the growing urban population by such measures as professionalizing the delivery of public services, but because Congress is disproportionately rural and tied to patronage networks, such reforms have failed. Thus, Colombia presents a paradox: expansive constitutionally granted presidential powers, reformist presidents, but little ability to accomplish reform. Furthering the paradox, a new constitution adopted in 1991 that reduces presidential powers somewhat was initiated by the president himself, using his emergency powers. Archer and Shugart argue that the great powers accorded to the president in the constitution must be understood within a framework that considers what constitutes the interests of Colombia's traditional party bosses. These powers are part of the means by which patronage-seeking politicians delegate most national policy making to the executive, but these politicians have numerous means to

prevent the use of these powers against their own patronage-driven needs. The new constitution, the authors conclude, may not improve the situation, since the means by which members of Congress are elected have not been changed sufficiently to eliminate the scramble for patronage as a primary concern.

The next chapter deals with Venezuela, one of the oldest democracies in Latin America, but which has hit hard times of late. Brian Crisp notes that the constitution gives the president of Venezuela such limited powers that he or she could be marginalized from the legislative process. Nonetheless, most presidents have appeared quite powerful because they have generally had large legislative contingents and their parties are always highly disciplined. Moreover, they have made effective use of a series of nonlegislative powers, such as the ability to establish high-level consultative commissions that incorporate favored interest groups into the executive branch. Throughout most of the Venezuelan democratic regime's existence since 1958, two large parties have dominated. However, recent economic dislocations and political scandals have led to a disruption of the party system, which in turn has made governability difficult and led the president to try to accrue more powers.

John Carey's chapter deals with a case of quite weak presidential legislative powers, but one in which presidents nonetheless often appear powerful because their parties usually enjoy legislative majorities. Presidentialism has functioned in Costa Rica in such a way that it has been largely free of the usual pathologies that critics of presidentialism attribute to the regime type. The Costa Rican system is relevant not only because of its successful democratic record, but also because of an unusual institutional provision (and one that has been attracting a lot of attention in the United States in recent years): congressional term limits. Members of Congress cannot be immediately reelected; presidents are restricted to a single term. Carey argues that term limits make a party's presidential candidate enormously powerful over the party's delegation in the Costa Rican Congress once the candidate for the next term has been chosen in a primary election held near the middle of the incumbent's term. The candidate's power stems from the fact that if the party wins the next election, it is this future president who will have the ability to appoint former Congress members to political positions. Without this power of appointment, political careers would be practically impossible in Costa Rica, given the ineligibility of all incumbents for reelection. This desire of members to see their party's presidential candidate win the next election fosters a collective incentive to work on behalf of the party, but the possibility of policy differences between the incumbent and the future president and the selection of that potential next

president in an open primary mean that party discipline is usually not so great that presidents can count on automatic support from deputies of their party. Thus, the Costa Rican Congress is able to make more effective use of its formal powers to act as a check on the presidency than is the case in most Latin American presidential systems.

Mexico is not normally analyzed in the context of democracies, and its inclusion in this book does not imply that we consider the regime to be democratic. We include the case for several reasons. First, for the United States, it is the most important Latin American country, and indeed one of the most important countries in the world. Second, as of the 1994 elections, Mexico appears to be moving in a democratic direction, even if it does not yet fully qualify as democratic. And finally and most importantly, for theoretical reasons the Mexican case is fascinating: It allows us to think about the interplay between a president's constitutional powers and his or her partisan powers. As Jeffrey Weldon's chapter shows, the authoritarian dominance of Mexican presidents is largely rooted in the institutional incentives of Mexico's brand of presidentialism. Like Costa Rica, Mexico has term limits on its members of Congress, who cannot serve consecutive terms, as well as a lifetime one-term limit on the presidency. However, the consequences of this are very different from those in Costa Rica because presidents in Mexico have long been the undisputed leaders of the only party that has had a realistic chance of winning elections, given its enormous resource advantage and its ability to manipulate election outcomes. As in Costa Rica, political careers in Mexico depend not on representing a constituency, but on winning an appointment administered by the president. However, unlike in Costa Rica – where there is both intraparty competition (primary elections) and interparty competition – in Mexico the president designates his or her own successor as head of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and presidential nominee, thereby ensuring continuity from one administration to the next. Thus, no ruling-party deputy has any incentive to oppose the president. In other words, Mexican presidents derive their apparent dominance not from the presidential constitution, but from their overwhelming partisan powers. Weldon examines the early years of the Mexican Revolution to show that before the formation of a hegemonic party, presidents often appeared relatively weak, a situation that cannot be ruled out in the future as the PRI becomes weaker.

Argentina is a case in which presidents have substantial powers both in the constitution and within the party system. Presidents in the post-1983 period have not consistently had congressional majorities, but they have enjoyed the support of a disciplined major party. In his analysis of Argentine presidentialism, Mark Jones argues that the dominance of the two major

parties, the disciplined character of these parties, and federalism helped the system achieve democratic stability even in the face of the severe economic problems weathered under President Alfonsín (1983–89). On the other hand, Jones points to other institutional features that allowed presidents – especially Menem – to adopt a sometimes cavalier attitude toward democratic institutions. President Menem (elected in 1989 and reelected in 1995) extensively used decrees of "urgent necessity" to broaden his legislative powers, leading to a situation in which he effectively bypassed the legislature to implement key parts of his program. Jones shows that this stretching of constitutional powers was possible because Peronist majorities permitted him to "pack" the Supreme Court with pliant justices. The result has been an unusually dominant executive for a democratic presidential system.

We have two chapters on Chile because of the considerable difference in constitutional design between the two widely separated democratic periods and because some of the most important theorizing about democratic breakdown and presidentialism has focused on this case. Julio Faundez's chapter deals with the period from 1933 until the military coup of 1973. Faundez argues that although presidentialism is frequently blamed for the collapse of democracy, the presidential constitution proved adaptable through several difficult decades during which Chilean democracy was considered a success story by Third World standards. When democracy collapsed, it was not because of the constitutional form, but because of extreme polarization brought about by the urgent tasks confronting Chilean society – tasks that previous governments, which were coalitions of several parties, had been unable to handle. It is questionable whether coalitions under parliamentarism would have been any more effective than the coalitions that were formed under presidentialism, especially during the 1950s when the party system was exceedingly weak and fragmented. Faundez shows that Chile's form of presidentialism, by giving the president a veto, led to more moderate policy outcomes in some instances than could have been achieved by parliamentary majorities alone and that a 1970 amendment providing for delegation of decree powers to the president actually restrained the use of decrees rather than opened the door to presidential dominance.

Peter Siavelis's chapter concerns the current democratic regime in Chile since the defeat of military leader Augusto Pinochet in his bid to extend his term via a plebiscite in 1988. Siavelis notes that the transition to democracy occurred within the context of a constitution originally drafted for Pinochet's benefit. That constitution calls for extreme concentration of powers in the president's hand, such that the legislature is marginalized from policy making. Moreover, the outgoing regime imposed an electoral system intended to reduce the number of parties and to overrepresent conservative

interests allied with the military regime. Despite these obstacles, the regime functioned well during the term of its first democratically elected president and Congress. However, the smooth functioning of post-transition politics is more a result of the consensual nature of the transition itself than of any long-term trends. Despite the electoral system's incentives, the number of parties has not been reduced from the period before military rule; rather, parties have simply formed electoral coalitions while keeping their separate organizations and congressional identities. Moreover, the presidential term has been changed back to six years. Thus, the same electoral incentives that predominated before 1973, when parties seeking to maximize their chances in midterm elections would frequently desert the president, may return in the future. Unless presidential powers are reduced, future governability may be less smooth than it has been since 1989.

Our last country chapter is on a system that deviates from "pure" presidentialism. Eduardo Gamarra examines the performance of Bolivia's democracy since the military returned to the barracks in 1982. In Bolivia, presidents have tended to be selected through assembly negotiations rather than directly through the popular vote. It is this process, and the assembly coalition building it requires, that Gamarra sees as both the strength and weakness of the Bolivian system. As long as sufficient resources existed to supply coalition partners with white-collar patronage, the coalitions that supported executives in the late 1980s remained stable and disciplined. As demands for patronage have grown, however, coalitions have destabilized. Gamarra rejects the contention that parliamentary government would improve the quality of Bolivian democracy; but he does suggest that, without electoral reform, demands for patronage will overtax the means available for presidents to satisfy coalition partners.

In the Conclusion, we examine the interaction between presidentialism and the party system. We argue that two key features of the party system are fundamental to understanding how presidentialism functions in different contexts: the "effective" number of parties in the legislature and the degree of party discipline. With a high effective number of parties, no party controls a majority in the legislature, so some form of coalition government is necessary. If the president's party does not control a significant share of legislative seats, it often becomes difficult for the president to assemble a stable legislative coalition that will enable him or her to accomplish some meaningful policy goals. We also argue that a moderate degree of party discipline facilitates predictability in executive–legislative relations. We show how party and electoral legislation shape the number of parties and their degree of discipline. We argue that interbranch relations are likely to be smoother if presidents either have a large party backing them or at least