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## The West Wing

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I am in the process of watching all episodes of West Wing, a show I wasn't able to catch when it first aired. Interestingly, for a television show, the Constitution comes up fairly often. In an episode from 2005, one of the President's advisors, while working with a Law Professor and a committee from Belarus that was looking to draft its own Constitution said the following: "Your country has a history of brutal dictatorship, I don't think a strong executive is such a good idea... Half the faculty at Yale Law describes the American Presidential system as one of this country's most dangerous exports... It is a recipe for constitutional breakdown." Granted, this is a fictional show, but I am curious as to whether that sentiment regarding the Presidential system is held, widely or not, at Yale Law.

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[Joel Kovarsky](#) · 17 hours ago 🔒

That makes for great theater, and that quote shows up all over the web, including here: <http://parliamentum.org/2011/09/29/presidentialism-vs-parliamentarism-in-the-west-wing/> . Aaron Sorkin is now the main writer and developer of "The Newsroom," and is it ever obvious, given the dialog. More to your point, from that link:

"Professor Juan Linz of Yale University has written extensively on the merits of parliamentarism as a means of ensuring constitutional stability and preserving the rule of law in The Failure of Presidential Democracy. The presidential system results in a constitutional breakdown more easily than would a parliamentary system in emerging democracies because of the deadlock inherent in the separation of powers. In a country that lacks the civic virtue and liberal political culture of the United States, that kind of deadlock leads to constitutional crises, and even military intervention, and thus the breakdown of constitutional government, as many of the presidential systems in Latin America demonstrate."

Some people have written that our most dangerous export is democracy, but maybe that is too far from our course here (and I am not an advocate for the position).

Juan Linz, the professor mentioned in the blog post, died 1 Oct. 2013. Maybe someone there knows more of his opinions and if he ever responded to the ideas expressed in the episode.

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