Starting from recent analyses that have argued that presidentialism is less favorable for building stable democracy than parliamentary systems, this article argues that the combination of a multiparty system and presidentialism is especially inimical to stable democracy. None of the world's 31 stable (defined as those that have existed for at least 25 consecutive years) democracies has this institutional configuration, and only one historical example—Chile from 1933 to 1973—did so. There are three reasons why this institutional combination is problematic. First, multiparty presidentialism is especially likely to produce immobilizing executive/legislative deadlock, and such deadlock can destabilize democracy. Second, multipartism is more likely than bipartism to produce ideological polarization, thereby complicating problems often associated with presidentialism. Finally, the combination of presidentialism and multipartism is complicated by the difficulties of interparty coalition building in presidential democracies, with deleterious consequences for democratic stability.

PRESIDENTIALISM, MULTIPARTISM, AND DEMOCRACY
The Difficult Combination

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Choices of political institutions matter. Institutions create incentives and disincentives for political actors, shape actors' identities, establish the context in which policy-making occurs, and can help or hinder in the construction of democratic regimes. And among all of the choices regarding institutions, none is more important than the system of government: presidential, semipresidential, parliamentary, or some hybrid.

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Choices of political institutions are especially important during transitions to democracy. In consolidated democracies, these institutions are usually well entrenched and are infrequently modified. Political actors have learned to accommodate themselves to these institutions, and they design their strategies accordingly. During transition periods, actors have greater opportunity to design or redesign institutions. It is no coincidence, therefore, that recent transitions to democracy in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere have generated renewed debate about what political institutions are most likely to further the objectives of democracy and development.

Considering the importance of the system of government, little serious scholarship on presidentialism outside the U.S. was produced between the 1960s and the mid-1980s. More recently, however, this has started to change. In a seminal article that has circulated widely in unpublished form since 1985, Linz (in press) argued that presidential systems have inherent weaknesses that make them less favorable to sustaining democracy than parliamentary systems.[1] Since then, the debate about presidentialism has become a significant issue related to newly democratizing nations.

Rather than addressing general problems or strengths of presidential systems, as Linz did, or specific case studies, as several other analysts have done, this article focuses on a sizable subcategory of presidential systems: those in multiparty democracies. I argue that the combination of presidentialism and multipartism makes stable democracy difficult to sustain. Since many presidential democracies have multiparty systems, the argument has broad implications for scholarship and for the political debate about institutional choices in new democracies.

The article examines the poor record of presidentialism in sustaining democracy for at least 25 consecutive years. Only 4 of 31 stable democracies have presidential systems, in spite of the abundance of such systems. The article then briefly notes some weaknesses commonly associated with presidentialism: the rigidity associated with the fixed term, executive/legislative deadlock, and a greater likelihood that the head of government will have limited administrative and party experience.

The fact that multiparty presidential democracies have a particularly poor record has not received attention. Not one of the world's 31 stable democracies has this institutional configuration, and there is only one historical example—Chile from 1933 to 1973—that did so. There have been many attempts to construct democracy with multiparty systems and presidentialism but currently, the longest standing democracy with this institutional combi-

1. Several scholars anticipated some of Linz's arguments, but none had a comparable impact (Arriagada, 1984; Blondel & Suárez, 1981; Loewenstein, 1949; Suárez, 1982).

nation is Ecuador, which has had a democracy—and a troubled one at that—only since 1979. This situation poses three related questions: why this institutional combination is inimical to stable democracy, why multipartism exacerbates the problems of presidentialism, and why presidentialism compounds the difficulties created by multipartism.

Multiparty presidentialism is more likely to produce immobilizing executive/legislative deadlock than either parliamentary systems or two-party presidentialism. In contrast to parliamentary systems, presidential systems do not have mechanisms intended to ensure legislative majorities. The president's party often has a majority, or close to it, in two-party systems, but rarely does so with multipartism. Presidents are often forced to build new legislative coalitions with every issue. In this regard, multiparty presidential governments resemble minority parliamentary governments, but in most parliamentary systems the government lasts only as long as it has majority legislative support on key issues.

Two-party systems are also likely to be more compatible with presidential democracy because ideological polarization is less likely with only two parties. High-entry barriers keep radical actors out of the party system, and the need to win votes from the center encourages moderation. The absence of extremist parties and the centripetal nature of party competition favor democratic stability by assuring actors that electoral and policy losses will not have catastrophic consequences.

Finally, the combination of presidentialism and multipartism is complicated by the difficulties of interparty coalition-building in presidential democracies. Multiparty coalitions in parliamentary systems differ in three regards from multiparty coalitions in presidential systems, all of which make such coalitions less stable with presidentialism. First, in parliamentary systems, the parties choose the cabinet and prime ministers, and they remain responsible for providing support for the government. In presidential systems, presidents put together their own cabinets, and the parties are less firmly committed to supporting the government. Second, in contrast to the situation in parliamentary systems, in many presidential systems legislators of parties with cabinet portfolios do not support the government. Third, incentives for parties to break coalitions are generally stronger in presidential systems.

At a theoretical level, the justification for focusing on multiparty presidential systems is that, just as is the case in parliamentary systems, the nature of the party system significantly affects how presidentialism functions. However, in contrast to the substantial literature on how multiparty parliamentary systems work (especially on coalition building), almost nothing has been written about the institutional dynamics of multiparty presidential systems. The article reopens the old debate on whether multipartism is inimical to stable democracy by suggesting that it is so specifically with presidential government. And it adds to the debate on the perils of presidentialism (Linz, 1990) by arguing that it is specifically the combination of presidentialism and multipartism that presents problems.

DEFINING KEY TERMS

It is important to define how some key terms are used in this article. A democracy must meet three criteria. First, democracies must have open, competitive elections that determine who governs. Election results cannot be determined by fraud, coercion, or major proscriptions, and legislative and executive office must be decided on the basis of elections. Elections must, in principle, afford the opportunity of alternation in power, even if, as in Japan, actual alternation does not occur. Second, in the contemporary period, there must be nearly universal adult suffrage. Until recent decades, this criterion was debatable because some nations that were usually considered democracies (e.g., Switzerland) excluded women, but this is no longer the case. Third, there must be guarantees of traditional civil liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of organization, due process of law, and so on.[2]

Even with a reasonably clear and operationalizable definition of democracy, deciding what governments are democratic involves difficult judgments. In constructing a list of democracies in the post-1945 period, I tolerated some deviations from the three criteria that distinguish democratic government. In Stephens' (1989) terms, I counted restricted democracies, which are characterized by some limitations on participation, competition, or civil liberties, as well as full democracies. Thus I included Switzerland before 1971, Chile before 1958, Peru before 1980, Brazil between 1946 and 1964, and several other countries that had restrictions on participation. Restrictions on participation in South Africa and Western Samoa, however, are so extensive that they cannot be considered democracies, even though competitive elections are regularly held and civil liberties are safeguarded for the voting population. I also allowed for some restrictions on competition, thereby including Argentina (1958-1962, 1963-1966), Colombia (1958-

2. My definition of democracy essentially follows Dahl's (1971) definition of polyarchy, except with the additional criterion regarding traditional civil liberties.

1974), India (1975-1977), and several other cases. Finally, I tolerated some restrictions on civil liberties.[3]

A presidential democracy has two distinguishing features.[4] First, the head of government is essentially popularly elected; this includes the U.S., where the electoral college has little autonomy with respect to the popular vote. Legislative elections and postelection negotiations do not determine executive power. Wherever the head of government is selected by the legislature, not as a second alternative where the popular vote does not produce a clear winner, but as the fundamental process, the system is usually parliamentary[5] and never presidential. Postelection negotiations that determine which parties will govern and which will head the government are crucial in many parliamentary regimes, so they indirectly determine who will be prime minister. Such postelection negotiations are not part of the selection process of chief executives in presidential systems.

In presidential systems, the president must be the head of government. In semipresidential systems (e.g., Finland, France), a popularly-elected president is head of state but is not always the head of government. In Austria, Iceland, and Ireland, a president is elected by direct popular vote but has only

3. Beginning in 1973, my list relies on The Freedom House annual publication *Freedom Around the World*. I considered democratic those countries that Freedom House ranked as free. For the period before 1973, sources consulted for classifying countries according to whether they are democracies included Dahl (1971), Lijphart (1984), Powell (1982), Rustow (1967), and Stephens (1989), as well as the annual publications *The Europa World Year Book*, *The Political Handbook of the World*, and *The Statesman's Year-Book*. For many purposes, the dichotomous classification used here (democratic × nondemocratic) would be inadequate, and continuous categories would be preferable. For present purposes however, it was neither necessary nor possible to construct a continuous measure of democracy because of the difficulty of getting adequate data on all countries for such a lengthy time period.

4. For related discussions of how presidentialism should be defined, see Linz (in press), Lijphart (1984, pp. 68-74), Riggs (1988), and Shugart and Carey (1992, p. 18-27).

5. Switzerland is an exception. The executive (which is collegial) is selected by the legislature, but the system is not parliamentary because the executive has a fixed term of office. In Bolivia, as was also the case in Chile before 1973, when no presidential candidate wins an absolute majority of the popular vote, congress elects the president. But there is a key difference between these two cases. In Chile, the congress always selected the front-runner in popular votes; it did not broker the election but rather confirmed the popular winner, so it can be considered presidential. If, however, congress plays the dominant role in selecting the president, as is the case in Bolivia, then the system is not presidential. In Bolivia, the congress gave the presidency to candidates who did not capture the most votes in 1979, 1985, and 1989. Legislative negotiations became the primary mechanism for selecting the president. Consequently, the system is not strictly presidential, but rather alternating; it is presidential when one candidate obtains an absolute majority in the popular vote, but it is a hybrid when, as has been occurring consistently, this is not the case. Because the president's term of office is fixed, the system is not parliamentary.

Table 1
Classifying Systems of Government

		Fixed term for head of government? Yes	No
Head of government elected by legislature?	Yes	Hybrid (Switzerland and Bolivia)	Parliamentary systems
	No	Presidential systems	Hybrid (no cases)

minor powers and, therefore, is not the head of government. In all three countries, the system of government is parliamentary, notwithstanding the existence of popular elections for president.[6]

The second distinguishing feature of presidential democracies is that the president is elected for a fixed time period. Most presidential democracies allow for impeachment, but this practice is rare and does not substantially affect our definition because of its extraordinary character. The president cannot be forced to resign because of a no-confidence vote by the legislature. In contrast, in a parliamentary system, the head of government is selected by the legislature and subsequently depends upon the ongoing confidence of the legislature for remaining in office; thus the time period of the chief executive's mandate is alterable.

In synthesis, following Lijphart (1984, pp. 68-74), I define presidentialism according to two dimensions: whether the chief executive is elected by the legislature and whether the term of office is fixed. Table 1 portrays these two dimensions.

Some other arrangements normally are associated with either presidential or parliamentary government but should not be included in a definition of presidentialism. Some analysts associate the right of legislatures to interpellate cabinet members with parliamentary government, but this practice is also found in several presidential systems in Latin America. In a few presidential systems (e.g., Peru), the legislature can call for the dismissal of particular ministers, another provision more frequently associated with parliamentary systems. Many presidential systems allow congressional representatives to become cabinet members; this feature, too, is sometimes considered an element of parliamentary government.

6. Duverger (1980) argued that Austria, Iceland, and Ireland have semipresidential governments, but the presidents have only symbolic power in all three cases. What matters is whether these offices are largely symbolic or, conversely, whether the office holders wield considerable power.

Finally, a word is needed about my classification of party systems. By dominant party system, I mean either a situation in which the same party continuously wins a majority of seats over a period of several decades (Sartori's definition, 1976), or one in which, during a shorter democratic interlude, the largest party wins at least 70% of the seats. In a two-party system, the larger party has a majority of seats on its own, but alternation in government takes place. By two-and-one-half parties, I mean that two parties dominate electoral competition, that one sometimes has a majority, but that often the largest party does not have a majority. I lump together all cases of multipartism, though I agree with Sartori that, for other purposes, differences within this category are important. Moreover, the problems associated with the combination of presidentialism and multipartism tend to increase as party system fragmentation becomes greater; thus a higher number of relevant parties (in Sartori's sense) is more problematic than three or four parties.

PRESIDENTIALISM AND STABLE DEMOCRACY

Stable (or continuous) democracy is defined here strictly on the basis of democratic longevity, more specifically, at least 25 years of uninterrupted democracy. Table 2 lists the world's stable democracies as of 1992.

Presidential systems have not fared well. Out of 31 countries that have had continuous democracy since at least 1967, only four—the debatable case of Colombia, plus Costa Rica, the U.S., and Venezuela—have presidential systems. Twenty-four stable democracies have parliamentary systems, two have semipresidential systems, and one has a hybrid.

The paucity of stable presidential democracies does not stem from a low number of cases. I assembled data on democratic governments that existed as of 1945 or that were created after 1945.[7] I excluded democracies that broke down before 1945 because of the difficulties in getting data for this period. I also excluded governments that formed immediately following postcolonial independence and that broke down within five years. The reason for this exclusion is that the first elections often were sponsored by the departing colonial power. Rather than being an achievement of local political leaders and parties, democracy was established from outside. Moreover, most of the regimes had dubious democratic credentials from the outset. When a newly independent semidemocratic or democratic government lasted for at least five years, it had met some critical tests and deserved to be included among the efforts at creating polyarchy.

7. This list of democracies is probably not exhaustive; it is easy to miss occasional short-lived democracies.

Table 2
Stable Democracies, 1967-1992

Parliamentary systems (24)	Presidential systems (4)	Other systems (3)
Australia	Colombia	Finland (semi-presidential)
Austria	Costa Rica	France (semi-presidential)
Barbados	United States	Switzerland (hybrid)
Belgium	Venezuela	
Botswana		
Canada		
Denmark		
Germany		
Iceland		
India		
Ireland		
Israel		
Italy		
Jamaica		
Japan		
Liechtenstein		
Luxembourg		
Malta		
Netherlands		
New Zealand		
Norway		
Sweden		
Trinidad and Tobago		
United Kingdom		

Source: Sources listed in note 3.

The post-1945 democracies can be divided into four categories, of which three are relevant here: (a) democracies that, as of 1992, had enjoyed at least 25 years of uninterrupted democracy (Table 2); (b) governments that at some point enjoyed at least 25 years of uninterrupted democracy, but that broke down after 1945 (Table 3); (c) democratic governments that experienced breakdowns between 1945 and 1992 without making the 25-year minimum (Table 4); and (d) extant democracies that have not yet met the 25 year minimum. This latter category is excluded from the present analysis because these cases cannot yet be considered stable democracies. Only 7 of 31 (22.6%) presidential democracies have endured for at least 25 consecutive years, compared with 25 of 44 parliamentary systems (56.8%), 2 of 4 hybrids (50.0%), and 2 of 3 semipresidential systems (66.7%).

The lack of stable presidential democracies could be unrelated to presidentialism, but there are reasons to believe it probably is related. Blondel

Table 3
Other Stable Democracies Since 1945[a]

	Period of democracy	System of government	Party system
Chile	1933-1973	Presidential	Multiparty
Lebanon	1943-1975	Hybrid	Multiparty
Philippines	1946-1972	Presidential	Two-party
Sri Lanka	1948-1978	Parliamentary[b]	Two-and-one-half
Uruguay	1942-1973	Presidential	Two-party[c]

a. Countries that had continuous democracy for at least 25 years after 1945 but that experienced democratic breakdowns.
b. Sri Lanka switched from a parliamentary to a hybrid system in 1977.
c. In the late 1960s, Uruguay moved to a three-party system.

Table 4
Unstable Democracies Since 1945[a]

	Period of democracy	System of government	Party system
Argentina	1946-1951	Presidential	Two-party
Argentina	1958-1962	Presidential	Dominant party
Argentina	1963-1966	Presidential	Multiparty
Argentina	1973-1976	Presidential	Two-party
Bolivia	1952-1964	Presidential	Dominant party
Bolivia	1979-1980	Hybrid	Multiparty
Brazil	1946-1964	Presidential[b]	Multiparty
Burkina Faso	1977-1980	Presidential	Multiparty
Burma	1948-1958	Parliamentary	Dominant party
Colombia	1936-1949	Presidential	Two-party
Cuba	1940-1952	Presidential	Multiparty
Cyprus	1960-1963	Presidential	Two-party
Dominican Republic	1962-1963	Presidential	Dominant party
Ecuador	1948-1961	Presidential	Multiparty
Ecuador	1968-1970	Presidential	Multiparty
Fiji	1970-1987	Parliamentary	Two-party
Ghana	1969-1972	Presidential	Dominant party
Ghana	1979-1981	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Greece	1946-1967	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Grenada	1974-1979	Parliamentary	Dominant party
Guatemala	1944-1954	Presidential	Multiparty
Guyana	1966-1978	Parliamentary	Dominant party
Honduras	1957-1963	Presidential	Two-party
Indonesia	1950-1957	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Kenya	1963-1969	Hybrid	Two-party
Malaysia	1957-1969	Parliamentary	Dominant party
Nigeria	1960-1966	Parliamentary	Dominant
Nigeria	1979-1983	Presidential	Multiparty

Table 4 continued

	Period of democracy	System of government	Party system
Pakistan	1947-1954	Parliamentary	Dominant party
Pakistan	1971-1977	Parliamentary[c]	Dominant party
Pakistan	1988-1990	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Panama	1945-1949	Presidential	Multiparty
Panama	1960-1968	Presidential	Multiparty
Peru	1939-1948	Presidential	Multiparty
Peru	1956-1962	Presidential	Multiparty
Peru	1963-1968	Presidential	Multiparty
Peru	1980-1992	Presidential	Multiparty
South Korea	1960-1961	Semi-presidential	Dominant party
Sudan	1986-1989	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Surinam	1975-1980	Parliamentary	Two-party
Thailand	1968-1971	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Thailand	1974-1976	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Turkey	1950-1960	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Turkey	1961-1971	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Turkey	1973-1980	Parliamentary	Multiparty
Venezuela	1945-1948	Presidential	Dominant party

a. Democracies that experienced breakdowns after 1945 without enjoying 25 years of consecutive democracy.
b. Between September 1961 and January 1963, Brazil had a semipresidential government.
c. In 1973 a presidential system was replaced by a parliamentary system.

and Suárez (1981), Lijphart (in press), Linz (in press), Riggs (1988), and Suárez (1982), have argued that presidentialism is less likely to promote stable democracy. I do not share all of their criticisms,[8] and most of the critics have overlooked some strengths of presidential systems (Shugart & Carey, 1992; Ceaser, 1986). Nevertheless, I agree that presidentialism is generally less favorable for democracy and that presidentialism has some distinct liabilities, three of which are highlighted in the following discussion.

Perhaps the greatest comparative liability of presidential systems is their difficulty in handling major crises. Presidential systems offer less flexibility in crisis situations because attempts to depose the president easily shake the

8. Linz (in press) and Lijphart (in press) add a fourth liability: the supposedly majoritarian bent of presidentialism. I disagree with this part of their argument. The most majoritarian democracies are the Westminster style parliamentary systems with highly disciplined parties, in which the winning party controls everything for a protracted period of time, possibly despite winning well under 50% of the votes. Presidentialism is predicated upon a separation of powers, so that an opposition party or coalition can control the legislature (or one house thereof), thereby exercising some control over presidential initiatives even if it does not control the presidency. I agree with Linz and Lijphart, however, that parliamentarism is more conducive to coalition building. For a critical examination of Linz's seminal piece, see Mainwaring and Shugart (in press).

whole system. There are no neat means of replacing a president who is enormously unpopular in the society at large and has lost most of his/her support in the legislature. Presidents have resigned when they have lost most of their support in the legislature, but resignation is a personal act of the president, and therefore is a noninstitutionalized means of dealing with a crisis. Moreover, when a president resigns, it often exacerbates a crisis because the vice president generally lacks the legitimacy accorded the president.

In many cases, a coup appears to be the only means of getting rid of an incompetent or unpopular president. For example, in Chile in 1973, opponents of the Popular Unity government feared that by allowing Allende to complete his six year term (1970-1976), they would open the door to authoritarian socialism. Allende had lost the support of the majority of the legislature, and in a parliamentary system, he would have been voted out of office. In a presidential system, however, there was no way of replacing him except for a coup. Given the fear that the Popular Unity government would not respect the rules of the game and that waiting for Allende's term to end could result in nonreversible catastrophe, the opposition had strong incentives to support a coup. Thus the effort to get rid of one incompetent or unpopular person can destroy the regime.

One purported advantage of presidential systems is that "presidential systems are designed to produce executive stability, and they do so" (Powell 1982, p. 63). But Powell's conclusion is based on the few cases of presidential democracies, not presidential systems. Only exceptionally is an executive displaced from office before the end of his/her term without a regime breakdown in presidential systems, so if we take only the stable democracies, the higher stability of presidents is not surprising. Suárez (1982) showed that presidential systems provide less executive stability when we consider all cases and not only the stable democracies.

As Linz (in press) argues, we need to distinguish between cabinet stability and regime stability. Parliamentary systems have mechanisms that may lead to relatively frequent changes in cabinets and governments, but this flexibility in changing governments may help preserve regime stability. Conversely, the fixed electoral timetable of presidential regimes apparently ensures stability in the head of government but introduces a rigidity inimical to regime stability.

The fixed timetable of presidential elections also has disadvantages for presidents who get the job done (Blondel & Suárez, 1981). Most presidential constitutions (those of the Dominican Republic, the U.S., Nicaragua, and the Philippines being exceptions) bar the immediate re-election of presidents. Consequently, presidents are turned out of office even if the general population, political elites and parties, and other major actors continue to support them.

A second liability of presidentialism, a greater likelihood of executive/legislative deadlock, stems primarily from the separate election of the two branches of government and is exacerbated by the fixed term of office. Presidential systems are more prone to immobilism than parliamentary systems for two primary reasons. They are more apt to have executives whose program is consistently blocked by the legislature, and they are less capable of dealing with this problem when it arises. The president may be incapable of pursuing a coherent course of action because of congressional opposition, but no other actor can resolve the problem playing within democratic rules of the game.

A third problem of presidentialism stems from the direct popular election of presidents, which in itself seems desirable. The downside of direct popular elections is that political outsiders with little experience in handling congress can get elected. As the victors in the presidential contests in Brazil in 1989 and Peru in 1990 showed, individuals may create parties at the last minute in order to run for the presidency, and they often have tenuous linkages to their parties. This problem is particularly acute if the party system is relatively weak and if party elites do not control the selection process of presidential candidates.

Although I agree with the critics of presidentialism on these key points, none of this implies that democracy cannot be sustained by presidentialism, that presidentialism is the main explanation for the vicissitudes of democracy in certain countries, or that parliamentary government would always work better. Most presidential democracies have been in Latin America, where in most countries, several other factors have contributed to democratic instability; in this sense, there is a possibility of overdetermination. Moreover, there is no absolutely clear correlation between the system of government and policy effectiveness. One presidential democracy (the United States) stands out as successful by most historical/comparative standards, and Costa Rica and Venezuela have strong democratic institutions with presidential systems. Many parliamentary systems have produced effective government, but some have not, with the Third and Fourth French Republics often being cited as examples. Finally, the nature of the party system and specific institutional prerogatives of the executive and legislature can either promote or undermine the viability of presidential or parliamentary democracy. There are different

kinds of presidentialism and parliamentarism, and the differences between one variant and another can be crucial (Shugart & Carey, 1992); differences in the nature of the parties and party system also crucially affect how well presidential and parliamentary governments function.

PRESIDENTIALISM, MULTIPARTISM, AND STABLE DEMOCRACY

That multiparty presidential systems may be especially unconducive to democratic stability is suggested by the paucity of stable democracies with this institutional combination. Table 5 rearranges the list of stable democracies according to the Rae index of party system fragmentation and the effective number of parties.[9] The four stable presidential democracies have few effective parties: 1.9 for the United States, 2.1 for Colombia, 2.2 for Costa Rica, and 2.8 for Venezuela. The means for the four presidential democracies are an *Fs* of .55 and 2.2 effective parties.

9. The Rae index (*Fs*) measures the probability that two randomly selected legislators belong to different parties. It ranges from zero (all legislators are members of the same party) to one (each legislator is the only representative of his/her party). It is derived by squaring each party's share of seats and subtracting the sum of all these squares from 1.00.

$$Fs = 1 - \sum p_i^2$$

where *Fs* is the index of fragmentation expressed in seats, *N* is the number of parties, and p_i is the proportion of seats held by the *i*th party (Rae, 1967).

The Laakso/Taagepera (1979) effective number of parties (N_s) measures how many parties are in the party system, weighted according to size. It is derived by squaring each party's share of seats, adding all of these squares, and dividing 1.00 by this number.

$$Ns = \frac{1}{\sum p_i^2}$$

where *Ns* is the number of effective parties expressed in seats and p_i is the fractional share of seats of the *i*th party. If every party has an equal number of seats, the number of effective parties is equal to the number of parties that have seats. If two roughly equal parties control a large majority and a third has fewer seats, *Ns* is equal to some number between 2.0 and 3.0, reflecting the domination of the two largest parties but the presence of a third, but smaller competitor. The number of effective parties can be derived from the Rae Index through a simple algebraic transformation. Both the Rae index and the Laakso/Taagepera index can be measured in seats or votes, but in view of my predominant interest in executive/legislative relationships, I have used seats.

Table 5
Party System Fragmentation and Number of Effective Parties in Stable Democracies (Seats in Lower Chamber)

	Year	*Fs*	*Ns*	Type of government
Trinidad and Tobago	1986	.15	1.2	Parliamentary
Botswana	1989	.16	1.2	Parliamentary
Barbados	1986	.20	1.2	Parliamentary
Jamaica	1989	.38	1.6	Parliamentary
New Zealand	1987	.48	1.9	Parliamentary
>United States	1988	.48	1.9	Presidential
Malta	1987	.50	2.0	Parliamentary
Liechtenstein	1989	.50	2.0	Parliamentary
> Colombia	1986	.53	2.1	Presidential
United Kingdom	1987	.54	2.2	Parliamentary
> Costa Rica	1986	.55	2.2	Presidential
Canada	1988	.57	2.3	Parliamentary
Australia	1990	.57	2.4	Parliamentary
Japan	1986	.61	2.6	Parliamentary
Austria	1986	.62	2.6	Parliamentary
> Venezuela	1988	.65	2.8	Presidential
Ireland	1987	.65	2.9	Parliamentary
France	1988	.67	3.0	Semi-presidential
Germany	1987	.71	3.5	Parliamentary
Sweden	1988	.73	3.7	Parliamentary
Luxembourg	1989	.73	3.7	Parliamentary
Netherlands	1989	.73	3.8	Parliamentary
Italy	1987	.75	4.1	Parliamentary
India	1989	.76	4.2	Parliamentary
Norway	1989	.76	4.2	Parliamentary
Israel	1988	.77	4.4	Parliamentary
Finland	1987	.80	5.0	Semi-presidential
Denmark	1988	.81	5.3	Parliamentary
Iceland	1987	.81	5.3	Parliamentary
Switzerland	1987	.83	5.8	Hybrid
Belgium	1987	.86	7.1	Parliamentary

Source: Various numbers of *Electoral Studies*, *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, and *The Statesman's Year-Book*.
Note: Indian data do not include 14 seats in Assam for which elections were postponed and 4 other contests that were postponed because of the deaths of candidates. In some cases, two countries have the same *Fs* index but different values for *Ns*, or vice versa, because I calculated p_i^2 to four digits and then rounded.

The means for the 24 parliamentary democracies are an *Fs* of .60 and 3.1 effective parties; for the three remaining democracies the mean *Fs* is .73 and the mean *Ns* is 4.6.

Table 6 gives the *Fs* and *Ns* values for all presidential systems that enjoyed at least 25 years of uninterrupted democracy, including three countries (Chile, the Philippines, and Uruguay) that are not currently stable democracies.[10] Six of the seven stable presidential democracies have less than three effective parties. Only Chile had a true multiparty system among the stable presidential democracies, although Venezuela did so before 1973. The table also suggests that a number of two-party presidential systems have worked well enough to allow democracy to endure for at least 25 years.

This correlation between two-party systems and stable presidential democracy would be irrelevant if two-party systems were the norm in presidential democracies, but this is not the case. Of the 31 presidential democracies listed in Tables 2, 3, and 4, 15 had multiparty systems, compared to 10 two-party systems, 5 dominant-party systems, and 1 two-and-one-half party system. Only 1 of the 15 multiparty presidential democracies endured for at least 25 years, compared to 5 of 10 two-party presidential democracies and to 11 of 21 multiparty parliamentary systems. Although they are not conclusive, the data suggest that the problem may not be presidentialism or multipartism so much as the combination.

Among stable presidential democracies, the virtual absence of multiparty systems is striking. This observation, however, does not explain why multiparty systems are less propitious to stable presidential democracy than two-party systems. Without some logical explanation, it remains possible that this is an accident or a spurious correlation. But there are reasons to believe that the combination of presidentialism and multiparty systems makes it more difficult to achieve stable democracy.

Two-party systems, in and of themselves, are not necessarily a desideratum. They constrict the breadth of opinion represented, and they hinder the building of coalition governments, making it difficult to establish consociational forms of democracy (Lijphart, in press). As Sartori (1976, pp. 191-192) observed, two-party systems become less functional and less viable as the spread of opinion becomes greater. Nevertheless, in presidential systems a two-party format seems more favorable to stable democracy. The question is why multipartism and presidentialism make a difficult combination, why a two-party system ameliorates the problems of presidentialism, and why parliamentarism mitigates the difficulties of multipartism.

The answer to these questions, I submit, is threefold. In presidential systems, multipartism increases the likelihood of executive/legislative deadlock and immobilism. It also increases the likelihood of ideological polarization. Finally, with multipartism, presidents need to build interparty coalitions to get measures through the legislature, but interparty coalition building in presidential systems is more difficult and less stable than in parliamentary systems. I develop these points in the next three sections.

10. The inclusion of Uruguay as a presidential system is debatable for the 1951-1967 period, but the collegial executive met the two distinguishing criteria of presidentialism discussed above.

Table 6
Party System Fragmentation (Fs), Number of Effective Parties (Ns), and Mean Share of Legislative Seats Controlled by President's Party in Stable Presidential Democracies (Seats in Lower Chamber)

	Elections	Mean *Fs*	Mean *Ns*	President's party[a]
The Philippines	1953-1969	.436	1.85	63.1%
United States	1968-1986	.475	1.90	45.8%
Colombia	1974-1986	.521	2.09	52.2%
Costa Rica	1974-1986	.592	2.45	50.9%
Uruguay	1942-1973	.595	2.47	49.3%[b]
Venezuela	1973-1988	.620	2.63	49.9%
Chile	1946-1973	.796	4.90	30.2%[c]

Source. Philippines: *The Political Handbook of the World.* United States: Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, *Vital Statistics on American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1988), p. 90. Costa Rica: *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* Vol. 20 (May 27-June 2, 1974), p. 26535; Vol. 28 (May 21, 1982), p. 31499; Vol. 32 No. 5 (May 1986), p. 34350. Colombia: Colombia, Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, *Estadísticas Electorales* (various years) (Bogotá). Chile: Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 313; Ricardo Cruz-Coke, *Historia electoral de Chile 1925-1973* (Santiago: Ed. Jurídica, 1984). Uruguay: Julio Febregat, *Elecciones uruguayas* (Montevideo: Senado, 1972), p. 50; CLAEH, *Uruguay: Indicadores básicos* (Montevideo: ARCA, 1983), p. 84; "Uruguay: le retour au régime présidentiel," *Problèmes d'Amérique Latine* No. 5, *Notes et Etudes Documentaires* No. 3383 (April 19, 1967), pp. 27-28; Philip B. Taylor, *Government and Politics of Uruguay* (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1960), Appendix B; Julio Fabregat, *Elecciones Uruguayas* (Montevideo: Cámara de Diputados, 1957), pp. 22, 114.

a. Mean share of seats controlled by president's party in lower chamber.

b. From 1951 until 1967, data refer to the share of seats in the Chamber of Deputies occupied by the party that had a majority of the collegial executive.

c. Chile did not have concurrent presidential and legislative elections, so the share of seats in the lower chamber controlled by the president's party changed within a presidential term. Therefore, I used the legislative elections closest in time to the presidential elections. For the 1946-1952, 1952-1958, 1958-1964, 1964-1970, and 1970-1973 presidential terms, I used data from the 1945, 1953, 1957, 1961, 1965, and 1969 legislative elections, respectively. President Carlos Ibáñez (1952-1958) did not have a party, but rather ran with the support of a coalition of parties, including the Agrarian Labor Party, the Democratic Party of Chile, the People's Democratic Party, and the Doctrinaire Party. I used data for all of these parties in calculating the percentage of seats controlled by the president's party. President Arturo Alessandri (1958-1964) similarly did not run as the candidate of a party, but rather had the support of the Conservative and Liberal parties. Consequently, I combined the share of seats of both parties.

PRESIDENTIALISM, MULTIPARTISM, AND IMMOBILISM

Multiparty presidentialism is more likely to produce immobilizing executive/legislative deadlock than either parliamentary systems or two-party presidentialism, and presidential systems are less fitted to handle executive/legislative deadlock than parliamentary systems. Because of the separation of powers, presidential systems lack means of ensuring that the president will enjoy the support of a majority in congress. Presidents are elected independently of congress, and the winner need not come from a majority party, if one exists. In some presidential systems, candidates from small parties make successful runs for the presidency.

If presidents could govern effectively without a majority, whether or not they had one would be irrelevant. Presidential systems are predicted upon the notion that legislatures can block presidential action, thereby providing an important check and balance, but such checks and balances can lead to immobilism and deadlock. Cognizant of this problem, most presidential constitutions have granted presidents greater legislative powers than the U.S. president has,[11] though presidential powers vary considerably from constitution to constitution (Shugart and Carey, 1992). In most presidential democracies, the president is largely responsible for policy and legislation, and the main policy function of congress is overseeing the executive. This fact has led some observers (e.g., Lambert, 1969) to conclude that presidents have virtual dictatorial powers. While this perception is accurate for authoritarian regimes, it is generally not true under democratic governments (Archer & Chernick 1989; Mainwaring, 1990).

In most presidential systems, the presidential role is marked by ambivalence and ambiguity (Blondel & Suárez, 1981; Suárez, 1982). Presidents have sweeping powers in some areas, but are weak in others. They are held responsible for a wide range of activities, but they often have trouble accomplishing a minimal policy agenda when they do not have secure support in the legislature. The end result is often unsatisfactory: presidents monopolize the policy agenda, but when their legislative support erodes, they

11. The vast majority of legislation in Latin American countries is initiated by presidents, and presidents have most of the capacity to implement policy. They can often veto specific parts of bills, while the U.S. president must veto or accept an entire bill. Presidents often have more extensive decree powers than they do in the United States. Most Latin American presidents have extensive emergency powers. For example, Article 121 of the Colombian constitution of 1886-1991 gave presidents the right to declare all or part of the country under a state of siege, thereby enabling them to govern by decree. From 1958 to 1989, Colombia was under a state of siege 75% of the time (Archer & Chernick 1989). Latin American presidents also generally have broader nominating powers and more extensive patronage resources than presidents in the U.S.

still cannot implement their agenda. Congressional support is indispensable for enacting laws, and it is difficult to govern effectively without passing laws. Contrary to common belief, presidents are often weaker executives than prime ministers, not so much because they have limited constitutional prerogatives, but because of legislative/executive deadlock. Yet the myriad conundrums that beset most poor nations require an effective, agile executive.

While most legislatures lack the power to initiate policy, they have the power to block the presidential agenda (Archer & Chernick, 1989; Santos, 1986). When congress exercises that power on a consistent basis, an impasse easily results. Under democratic governments, a system of checks and balances operates, but this set of checks and balances can paralyze executive power when the president lacks support in congress. As a result, even though most presidents are powerful relative to the legislature, they often have difficulties in implementing their agendas because of congressional opposition. Since policy-making capability is concentrated in executive hands, congressional opposition renders effective policy making difficult.

This Achilles' heel of presidential systems exists unless one of the following conditions exists: (a) the president's party enjoys a majority in the legislature and regularly backs the president; (b) a coalition of parties provides a majority and regularly supports the president; and (c) the president does not enjoy a stable majority in congress but is able to govern by creating shifting coalitions. For reasons discussed later, however, condition (b) is more difficult to establish in presidential systems than in parliamentary systems, and condition (c) is not likely to be stable. In general, the more seats the president's own party has in the legislature, the easier it should be to satisfy conditions (b) and (c).[12]

The tendency toward executive/legislative deadlock and immobilism is particularly acute in multiparty presidential democracies, especially with highly fragmented party systems. Under these circumstances, the president is likely to lack stable legislative support, so pushing policy measures through is apt to be more difficult. Immobilism and sharp conflict between the executive and the legislature, with potentially deleterious consequences for democratic stability and/or effective governance, often result. Protracted conflicts between the legislature and congress can lead to a decision-making

12. This helps explain why divided government has not been more problematic in the U.S. (Mayhew, 1991), though some (Sundquist, 1988-1989) argue that even in the U.S., divided government has not functioned particularly well. There is a large difference between the U.S. case, where presidents' parties generally have at least 40% of congressional seats, and highly fragmented multiparty cases. In Brazil, for example, President Fernando Collor de Mello's party (1990-1992) had less than 10% of the seats in both chambers of congress.

aralysis (Santos, 1986). In fledgling democracies, such paralysis can have ernicious results. If, in addition to being highly fragmented, the party system ; also polarized, the difficulties of governing will be compounded.

The likelihood of immobilism is lower in two-party presidential and in arliamentary systems. Having a two-party system increases the likelihood ıat the president will enjoy majority backing in congress, and hence de-reases the probability of presidential/legislative impasse. Two-party sys-ems are not necessarily better equipped to handle the problems created by a ıck of legislative support, but they are better at avoiding this problem. The ıst column of Table 6 shows that in six of the seven stable presidential emocracies, presidents' parties controlled, on average, over 45% of the seats ı the lower chamber.

Parliamentary systems are also generally better at providing stable support or governments than multiparty presidential systems. Most parliamentary emocracies have majority governments most of the time, so the government as a secure (though not indefinite) base of legislative support. In contrast, ıe very notion of majority government is problematic in presidential democ-acies without a majority party. In parliamentary systems, majority govern-ıents are those in which the party or parties with cabinet portfolios have a ıajority in parliament. In some presidential systems, it is not uncommon for government to have a cabinet member from a particular party, only to face ıe opposition of many members of that party in congress. Cabinet represen-ation does not ensure that the party's congressional representatives will upport the government. This dissociation between party affiliations of abinet members and party coalitions makes it difficult to define minority nd majority governments on the basis of cabinet portfolios, and there is no ıbvious alternative criterion. Whether or not a party is allocated a cabinet ıosition is not always relevant, for it may be an individual rather than the ıarty that has the position, and the majority of the party may oppose the ;overnment.

Even though majority governments are the rule in parliamentary systems, ninority governments occur frequently. Strom (1990, pp. 56-92) reported hat between 1945 and 1987, of 345 governments in advanced industrial ›arliamentary democracies, 111 were true minority governments. Norway, ;weden, and Denmark have had more minority than majority governments. Minority governments garner legislative support by using incentives (polit-cal positions, patronage, and policy measures) that are similar to those used n presidential systems. However, there is also a key difference between ninority governments in presidential and parliamentary democracies. The rue minority parliamentary governments in Strom's study (p. 116) lasted an ıverage of only 14 months. Presidential governments in which executive/

legislative deadlock arises, in contrast, must go on regardless of whether they have legislative support, and presidential terms last as long as six years. When incentives for legislative support break down, parliamentary systems have institutionalized mechanisms for dealing with the problem; presidential systems do not.

Not only are multiparty presidential systems more apt to generate dead-locks, with the fixed electoral timetable and the separation of powers, presidential systems have no institutionalized means of resolving such dead-locks (Linz, in press). Because of the fixed electoral timetable, even if congress opposes a president's programs, it has no way of dismissing the president except for impeachment. Impeachment, however, is generally reserved for criminal proceedings, and legislators may have no grounds for criminally trying a president. Consequently, the opposition may believe that the only means of deposing an ineffective president is supporting a coup. The parliamentary mechanism of a no-confidence vote is not available.

Presidents lack tools for pushing policy through during periods of executive/legislative deadlock. Because most democratic presidential constitutions bar immediate re-election, presidents become lame ducks rather quickly. Many begin their terms in strong control of their own parties, but lose this control as their situation as lame ducks becomes apparent (Coppedge, 1988). They cannot dissolve the legislature and call new elections, as most prime ministers can. In conjunction with the lack of a vote of confidence, the absence of this threat serves as an incentive to party indiscipline in some presidential systems (Epstein, 1964, 1967). Presidents may painfully await the end of their terms, incapable of implementing a cohesive policy package because of their lack of support. The recent (1985-1990) Sarney government in Brazil provided an acute example; one ardent congressional supporter admitted in mid-1989 that the government could only rely on 31 of 570 votes in the legislature.[13] Unlike most prime ministers, presidents cannot dissolve congress and call new elections. They are sitting ducks—more than lame ducks—if their congressional support dissipates.

Under these difficult circumstances of presidential/executive impasse and a fixed timetable, presidents and the opposition alike are often tempted to revert to extra-constitutional mechanisms to accomplish their ends. Disgruntled by their inability to effect reform within the limits of the system, presidents often seek to reform the constitution or go beyond it. Presidential authority and, along with it, the possibility of coherent policy-making can erode. Given the necessity of constantly creating new majorities in congress, presidents often subordinate policy coherence to attempts to win support for

13. *Istoé Senhor*, No. 1033 (July 5, 1989), p. 25.

their programs. In countries where parties are undisciplined, presidents often need to build a new coalition with every piece of controversial legislation.

Because the set of checks and balances frequently leads to serious impasses, the constitutional prerogatives of presidents and congresses have been an ongoing battle in many presidential democracies. Frustrated by their difficulties in implementing policy, presidents often try to pass constitutional amendments that expand their powers.[14] For their part, legislators are generally already in a marginal position in terms of policy-making, and they resist presidential encroachments upon their turf.

Most presidents bargain extensively with congressional representatives to win support for their programs. They can offer patronage to senators and deputies who support them, so they are not defenseless when they face a majority opposition bloc. Nevertheless, securing a stable base of congressional support is difficult under the best of circumstances and nearly impossible in times of economic austerity. Moreover, extensive reliance on patronage as a means of building support for policies can lead to poor use of public resources.

Immobilism in presidential democracies has often been a major ingredient in coups (Santos, 1986). In the context of ineffective government, pressing social and economic problems, and political mobilization encouraged by elite actors as a means of winning leverage in a stalemate situation, authoritarian leaders can win support for coups. Moreover, immobilism can encourage radicalism, seen as a way of overcoming the inadequacy of feckless democracies.

While presidents typically have difficulty implementing their programs, they have enormous—and ever growing—responsibilities. Most presidents administer huge, complex state bureaucracies. Yet they are constantly engaged in cultivating public support and thus have less actual time to oversee administrative activities than do prime ministers (Rose, 1981). Moreover, they generally have less administrative experience than prime ministers (Suárez, 1982). In Latin America, the gap between demands on, and capabilities of, the presidency has grown in recent years as a result of severe economic crises. The economic crises have led to closed, technocratic decision making within the executive branch, and congresses have been excluded from economic policy-making. But presidential capacity to handle these crises has eroded. In the past, the weaknesses of democratically elected presidents helped justify coups that led to the extreme hypertrophy of the executive and the emasculation or abolition of congress.

14. Every Chilean president from Arturo Alessandri to Allende (1970-1973) either attempted to bypass congress or to reform the constitution to broaden executive power. President Frei (1964-1970) ultimately succeeded at the latter, but as Valenzuela and Wilde (1979) note, the cost was high: the erosion of spaces of negotiation and compromise. Similar problems of immobilism led to constitutional reforms that enhanced presidential powers in Colombia in 1968 (Hartlyn, in press) and Uruguay in 1967. The Uruguayan constitution was changed five times between 1918 and 1967, and the fundamental controversy involved the nature of executive power (Edelmann 1969). President Goulart of Brazil became frustrated with the limits of working with congress and demanded in March 1964 (two weeks before he was overthrown) a constitutional reform that would expand his powers.

Two-party presidential systems also face institutional rigidity when executive/legislative deadlock occurs but, as noted earlier, presidents are more likely to have stable support in congress. In contrast to presidential systems, parliamentary systems have an institutionalized mechanism for overcoming deadlocks when they arise. A vote of no-confidence can topple the government, leading to new elections that may change the balance of power and help resolve the crisis. This provision allows for replacing, with less institutional strain, unpopular or inept executives. Frequent recourse to dismissing governments can breed instability, but this problem can be mitigated by measures such as the West German or Spanish constructive vote of no-confidence. Conversely, if a prime minister is frustrated because of the difficulty of effecting policy in the face of opposition control of the legislature, in most parliamentary systems, he/she can call new elections in an effort to achieve a majority. In either case, there are means of changing the government without threatening the regime.

PRESIDENTIALISM, MULTIPARTISM, AND IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION

Two or two-and-one-half party systems are also more likely to be compatible with presidential democracy because ideological polarization is unlikely. Competition tends to be centripetal because to win a majority, the parties must win votes from the center of the political spectrum (Downs, 1957). As the British case during its two-party phases shows, the parties can have clear and differentiated ideologies and programs, but in order to win elections, they must avoid extremism. In most two-party and two-and-one-half party systems, parties with a centrist, moderate orientation dominate the electoral market. Such characteristics generally favor moderation and compromise, characteristics that in turn enhance the likelihood of stable democracy (Levine, 1973; Powell, 1982, pp. 74-110; Reis, 1988; Rustow, 1955; Sani & Sartori, 1983; Sartori, 1976; Scully, 1992). Because of the high entry barriers, parties of the far right and far left do not have a chance to grow, and the absence of such parties favors democratic stability.

Democracy presupposes the willingness of political actors to accept electoral and policy defeats. This willingness is enhanced when actors believe that defeats are reversible through the democratic struggle and that they are not catastrophic. Actors therefore need to establish a set of mutual guarantees that they will not destroy each other. Constructing such guarantees is easier when extremists are weak and when compromise and moderation prevail. Two-party systems have drawbacks, but their high entry barriers limit extremism, and their centripetal tendencies generally encourage moderation. Under these conditions, the problems created by the fixed term of office are less troublesome.

Intense ideological divisions increase the stakes of the political game, serve as an incentive to polarization and, consequently, are less favorable to stable democracy. Such ideological divisions are unlikely in the context of a two-party system. This is one of the reasons why two-party democracies have been less prone to breakdown.

PRESIDENTIALISM, MULTIPARTISM, AND PARTY COALITIONS

Thus far the argument has focused on why multipartism exacerbates the problems of presidentialism. Now I look at why presidentialism makes it difficult for multipartism to function well, focusing on problems of coalition building in presidential systems. In multiparty systems, interparty coalition building is essential for attaining a legislative majority. While the need for such coalition building exists in both presidential and parliamentary multiparty systems, three factors make building stable interparty legislative coalitions more difficult in presidential democracies than in parliamentary systems.

First, party support for the government tends to be more secure in parliamentary systems because of the way executive power is formed and dissolved. In a coalition parliamentary government, the parties forming the government choose the cabinet and the prime minister. Executive power is formed through post-election agreements among parties and is divided among several parties. The parties themselves are corresponsible for governing and are committed to supporting government policy. When they cease supporting the government, there is a chance that new elections will be called. The coalition that brings the parties together is binding for the postelection period. These arrangements help ensure that there will either be legislative support for the executive or a means of toppling the government.

In presidential systems the president (not the parties) has the responsibility of putting together a cabinet. The president may make prior deals with the parties that support him or her, but these deals are not as binding as they are in a parliamentary system. Presidents are freer to dismiss ministers and to rearrange the cabinet than prime ministers in a coalition government are. Changes in cabinets are usually the president's decision and are not brought about by party decisions. Presidential autonomy is naming a caabinet is part of a generally looser institutional arrangement that can easily lead to a lack of stable congressional support, for just as presidents are less bound to the parties, so are the parties less bound to the presidents. Coalition partners are more likely to remain faithful allies if they themselves have negotiated the terms of the coalition than if they have agreed to terms established by the president.

Whereas in parliamentary systems, party coalitions generally take place after the election and are binding, in presidential systems, they often take place before the election and are not binding passt election day. Executive power is not formed through postelection agreements among parties and is not divided among several parties that are corresponsible for governing, even though members of several parties often participate in cabinets. Governing coalitions in presidential systems can differ markedly from electoral coalitions, whereas in parliamentary systems the same coalition responsible for creating the government is also responsible for governing. In contrast to the situation in coalition governments in parliamentary systems, a simple plurality can confer virtually absolute control of executive power (Lijphart, 1990, in press).

Given the separation of powers, an agreement among parties may pertain only to congressional matters, with no binding implication for relations between the parties and the president. Several parties may support the president during the electoral campaign, but this does not ensure their support once he or she assumes office. Even though members of several parties often participate in cabinets, the parties are not responsible for the government. Parties or individual legislators can join the opposition without bringing down the government. A president can end his or her term with little support in congress.

Second, in presidential systems, the commitment of individual legislators to support an agreement negotiated by the party leadership is often less secure. The extension of a cabinet portfolio does not necessarily imply party support for the president, as it does in a parliamentary system. The commitment of individual legislators to vote the party line varies a great deal, ranging from the extremely cohesive congressional parties in Venezuela to the

xtremely undisciplined catch-all parties in Brazil and Ecuador. Consequently, it is impossible to generalize about what party support for a government implies in terms of individual congressional representatives' positions. n Brazil, for example, the lack of party discipline means that individual egislators vote however they choose, a fact that reinforces the instability of congressional support for government policy. In contrast, in parliamentary systems, individual legislators are more or less bound to support the government unless their party decides to drop out of the governmental alliance. MPs isk bringing down a government and losing their seats in new elections if hey fail to support the government (Epstein, 1964, 1967).

Finally, incentives for parties to break coalitions are stronger in presidential systems than in many parliamentary systems. In multiparty presidential systems, as new presidential elections appear on the horizon, party leaders generally feel a need to distance themselves from the president in office. By remaining a silent partner in a governing coalition, party leaders fear they will lose their own identity, share the blame for government mistakes, and not reap the benefits of its accomplishments (Coppedge, 1988). In brief, coalition partners fear they will bear the electoral costs usually associated with incumbency without enjoying the benefits. In parliamentary systems, he government's composition is determined by the parties, so they are less ipt to follow this logic.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has argued that the combination of presidential government and a multiparty system is problematic.[15] The article underscored the paucity of stable multiparty presidential democracies and then argued that it is no accident that most stable presidential democracies have had limited party-system fragmentation. Although the article has not explored this issue, it raises the possibility that the liabilities of presidentialism pertain mostly to situations of multipartism.

If correct, this argument would challenge the prevailing wisdom that the number of parties does not matter much in determining prospects for stable democracy. During and shortly after World War II, impressed with the stability of democracy in Britain and the United States and its breakdown in Germany and Italy, several scholars (e.g., Duverger, 1954, pp. 206-280; Hermens, 1941) argued that two-party systems were more favorable to democracy, and that multiparty democracies tended to be more unstable. The

15. For a similar argument, see Arriagada (1984).

tide of this discussion changed in the 1960s and 1970s, with the contributions of Lijphart (1968, 1977) being particularly significant. Noting that many multiparty democracies had achieved stability for a long period of time in the smaller European democracies, Lijphart argued that in plural societies, with sharp cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic cleavages, multiparty systems could be more propitious in promoting stable democracy. With a two-party system, significant minorities might be permanent "outs," a situation that could reduce their willingness to abide by the rules of the game. A multiparty system could enable these minorities to attain meaningful representation and to participate in governing coalitions. This issue is not resolved, but most recent analysts (e.g., Sani & Sartori, 1983; Sanders & Herman) 1977) have sided with Lijphart.

This debate has overlooked the difference between parliamentary and presidential systems. Multipartism may not adversely affect prospects for democracy in parliamentary systems, but it appears to with presidentialism. Institutional combinations make a difference. Some problems typical of presidential systems—especially conflict between the executive and legislature resulting in immobilism—are exacerbated by multipartism. Conversely, with parliamentary governments but not with presidential governments, multiparty systems seem as capable of sustaining democratic regimes as two-party systems. Parliamentary regimes have more coalition-building mechanisms that facilitate multiparty democracy.

This is not to say that the combination of presidentialism and multipartism makes it impossible for a democracy to function well. The Chilean case from the 1930s until the late 1960s shows that presidentialism, multipartism, and stable democracy can go together, even in an ideologically polarized polity. However, with this institutional combination, democratic stability hinges largely on the desire of elites and citizens to compromise and create enduring democratic institutions. Optimally, political systems should have institutional mechanisms that reinforce such dispositions.

I also do not intend to suggest that institutional issues are always the main factor in determining whether democracy succeeds or fails. Some societies face conflicts that are irresolvable in the short run, regardless of institutional structures. Social, cultural, and economic conditions also affect prospects for democracy. However, some institutional combinations facilitate and others obstruct the management of social, economic, and political problems.

The two-party system and exceptionally limited ideological polarization have contributed to making the U.S. a viable presidential democracy (Riggs, 1988), but these conditions have been difficult to reproduce. Among presidential democracies outside the United States, only Colombia and Costa Rica have consistently approximated two-party systems. Venezuela has also come

reasonably close to a two-party system since 1973.[16] Ideological polarization within the party system is limited in all three countries. Not coincidentally, these three Latin American countries have the oldest presidential democracies outside the United States.

In most presidential democracies, legislative elections are based on proportional representation with district magnitudes sufficiently large to facilitate representation of several parties, making it more difficult for presidents to have a majority and more likely that the opposition would control a solid majority in congress. In some countries, including Costa Rica and Venezuela, the coincidence of presidential and congressional elections has deterred party-system fragmentation.[17] In Uruguay, citizens must vote a straight party ticket, and the importance of the presidency has a deterring effect on voting for parties that have no chance of winning this post. In many countries, however, presidents' parties do not control anywhere close to a majority of the seats in congress. Presidents who enjoy little support in congress sometimes get elected, a situation that easily leads to executive/legislative deadlock.

What can be done in terms of constitutional/institutional reform in multiparty presidential democracies? In terms of the main issues considered here, there are two possibilities: switching from a presidential system to a semipresidential or a parliamentary system, or taking measures to reduce party-system fragmentation.[18] Unfortunately, mustering political support for major institutional changes is usually difficult, and it is not easy to design alternatives that would work, even if they had political support.

A change to parliamentary government would be more feasible in some countries than in others. As Sartori (in press) has argued, effective cabinet government depends on disciplined parties, a requisite reasonably met in several presidential systems (Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Venezuela) but sorely lacking in many others (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador). In the latter countries, a catch-22 exists: presidential systems have contributed to party

16. Uruguay had a two-party system during most of its democratic history, but moved to a two-and-one-half or three-party format in the late 1960s. In the 1980s, the Argentine party system approximated a two-party format, but this was not the case in the 1960s.

17. Shugart and Carey (1992, pp. 226-258) show that where presidential elections with a plurality format coincide with congressional elections, even with proportional representation there is some impulse towards a two-party system. Conversely, if these elections do not coincide, with proportional representation, a multiparty system is likely to emerge. The most likely explanation for this phenomenon is that the presidency is so important that it polarizes voters into camps of the two most serious contenders, with a spillover effect on legislative elections.

18. It bears repeating that other institutional features affect how well presidential and parliamentary systems work and therefore, also should be considered when political elites contemplate institutional design. What is really needed is a working majority, and rules that increase party discipline or encourage coalition building could promote this objective.

weakness but, given this weakness, parliamentary government would have its risks. A change to parliamentary government would need to simultaneously establish mechanisms to enhance party discipline. Because France and Finland are the only clear examples of semipresidential systems, it is difficult to evaluate their comparative performance, but in countries with undisciplined parties, this possibility might avoid some of the problems of parliamentary systems.[19]

In many countries, reducing the number of parties that attain legislative seats by introducing a higher threshold, by reducing district magnitude in proportional systems, or by having concurrent congressional and presidential elections would be feasible and desirable. Such measures could reduce the number of parties with congressional seats from over a dozen in some cases to four or five. Although limiting party-system fragmentation is not the only institutional mechanism that appears to make presidentialism more viable, it is an important possibility. However, efforts to drastically reshape multiparty systems into two-party systems, so as to enhance the governability of presidential democracies, are ill advised. Political cleavages become institutionalized once party systems have been institutionalized, and elites and followers alike would resist drastic restrictions on representation. Efforts to restructure a multiparty system into two-partism would adversely affect legitimacy (Valenzuela, 1985), especially in party systems with (a) significant ethnic, regional, or religious parties that would disappear under different electoral rules or (b) a wide ideological distance. The advantages of bipartism thus diminish where there are sharp social or political cleavages; under these conditions, reducing party system fragmentation is still viable, but creating bipartism is not.

Institutional/constitutional reform is neither easy to accomplish politically nor a panacea. This recognition, however, should not lead to immobilizing pessimism regarding all attempts to achieve reform. The problems of multiparty presidential democracies may serve as an inducement to exploring such possibilities.

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19. I cannot delve into this complex question in detail here. See the interesting debate between Linz (in press), who is skeptical of the hybrid formulas, and Sartori (in press), who advocates them on the grounds that parliamentary government would not work in most of Latin America. See also Carey and Shugart (1992, pp. 55-75) and Duverger (1980).

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