

PARLIAMENTARISM AND PRESIDENTIALISM

Comparative Politics

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IE University

Where we are in the course

1. Introductions
- 2-3. Approach and method of comparative politics
- 4-5. The nature, formation, and development of states
- 6-7. Authoritarianism
- 8-9. Democracy
- 10-11. **Parliamentarism and presidentialism**
- 12-13. Elections and electoral system

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14. Review session
15. Midterm exam

Review on concepts of democracy

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- Democratic politics therefore take different dynamics in different forms of government

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- Fundamental differences between parliamentarism and presidentialism

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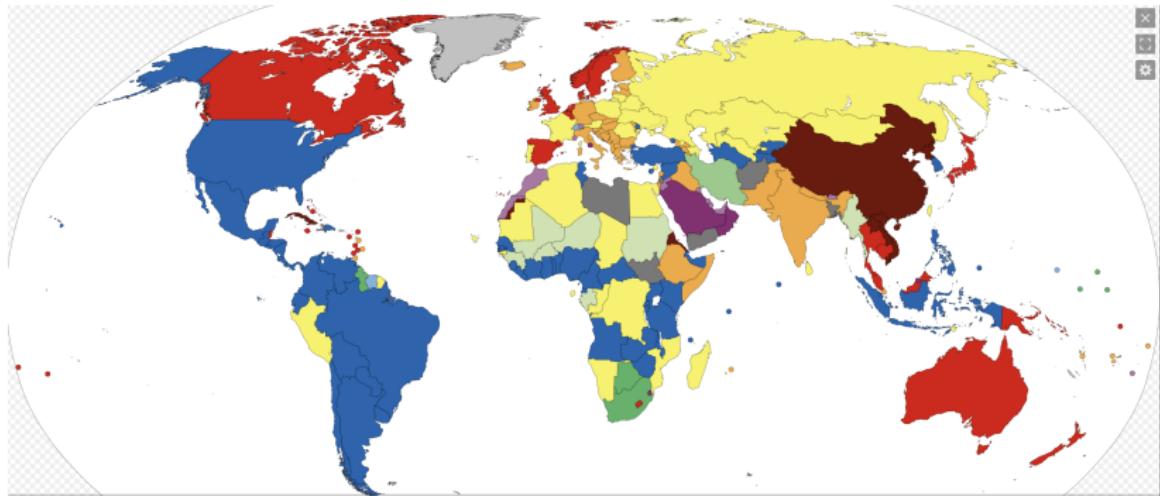
- Fundamental differences between parliamentarism and presidentialism
- Beyond fundamentals: Dependencies in practice

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- Fundamental differences between parliamentarism and presidentialism
- Beyond fundamentals: Dependencies in practice
- Consequences for political and economic development

Fundamental differences

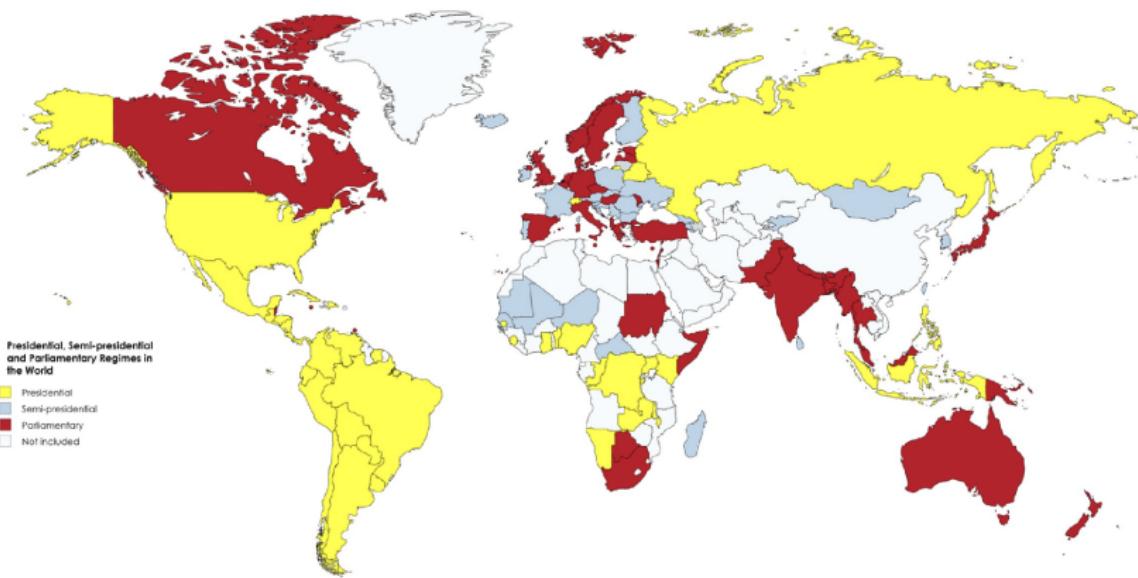
“Political systems” around the world



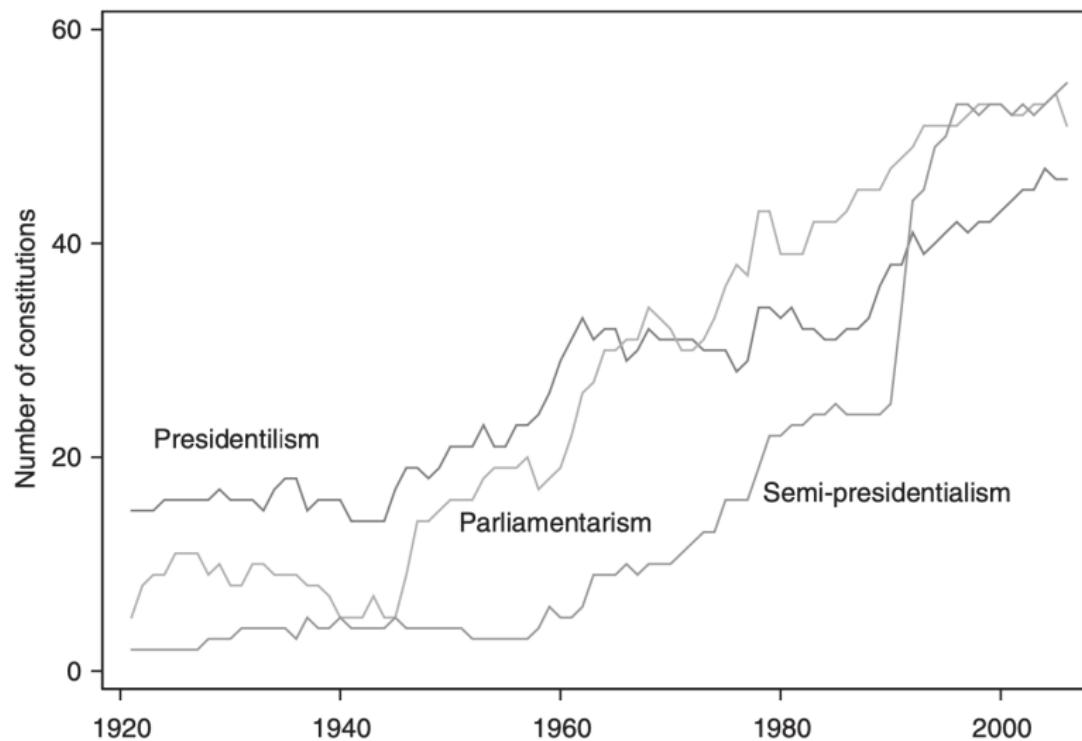
World's states coloured by systems of government: Parliamentary systems: Head of government is elected or nominated by and accountable to the legislature
Constitutional monarchy with a ceremonial monarch
Parliamentary republic with a ceremonial president
Parliamentary republic with an executive president
Presidential systems: Hybrid systems: Executive president is independent of the legislature; head of government is appointed by the president and is accountable to the legislature
Semi-presidential republic: Executive president is independent of the legislature, but is accountable to it
Assembly-independent republic: Head of government (president or directory) is elected by the legislature, but is not accountable to it
Theocratic republic: Supreme Leader holds significant executive and legislative power
Absolute monarchy: Monarch has unlimited power
One-party state: Power is constitutionally linked to a single political party
Military junta: Committee of military leaders controls the government; constitutional provisions are suspended
Provisional government: No constitutionally defined basis to current regime
Dependent territories and places without governments Note: this chart represents *de jure* systems of government, not the *de facto* degree of democracy. [View details](#)

[More details](#)

Forms of government around the world



Forms of government over the past 100 years



Make sure not to confuse...

- Political regime (and subtypes of dictatorships)

In general, be careful not to be misled by official titles (e.g., heads of government in Spain and Italy are called “Presidents”, even though these are parliamentary systems)

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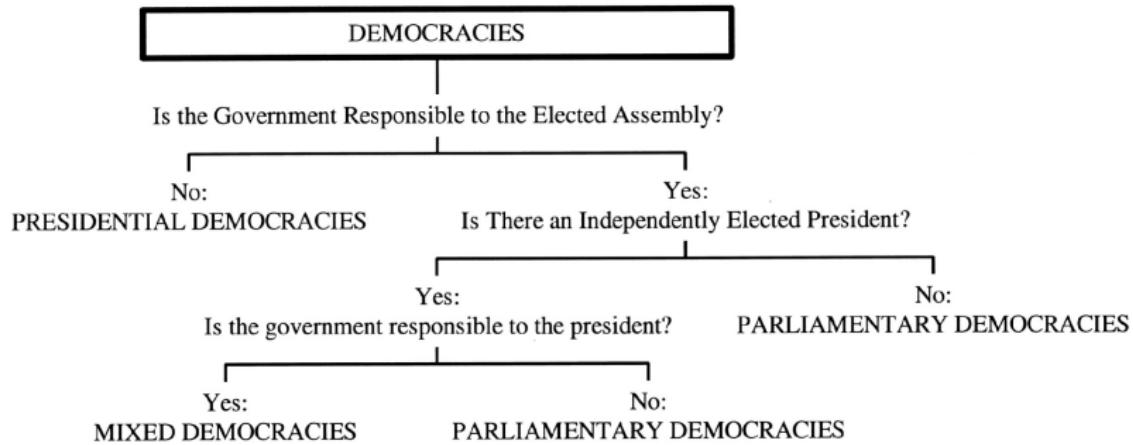
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Classifying forms of government



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- **Head of government:** leader of the administration of the state (may or may not coincide with the head of state), who may also be referred to by a variety of titles
- **Legislative responsibility:** a situation in which a legislative majority has the constitutional power to remove a government from office without cause.

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- An **impeachment** is a constitutional process through which a head of state or government can be charged with wrongdoing and potentially removed from office in a presidential or semi-presidential system by a legislature acting similarly to a court

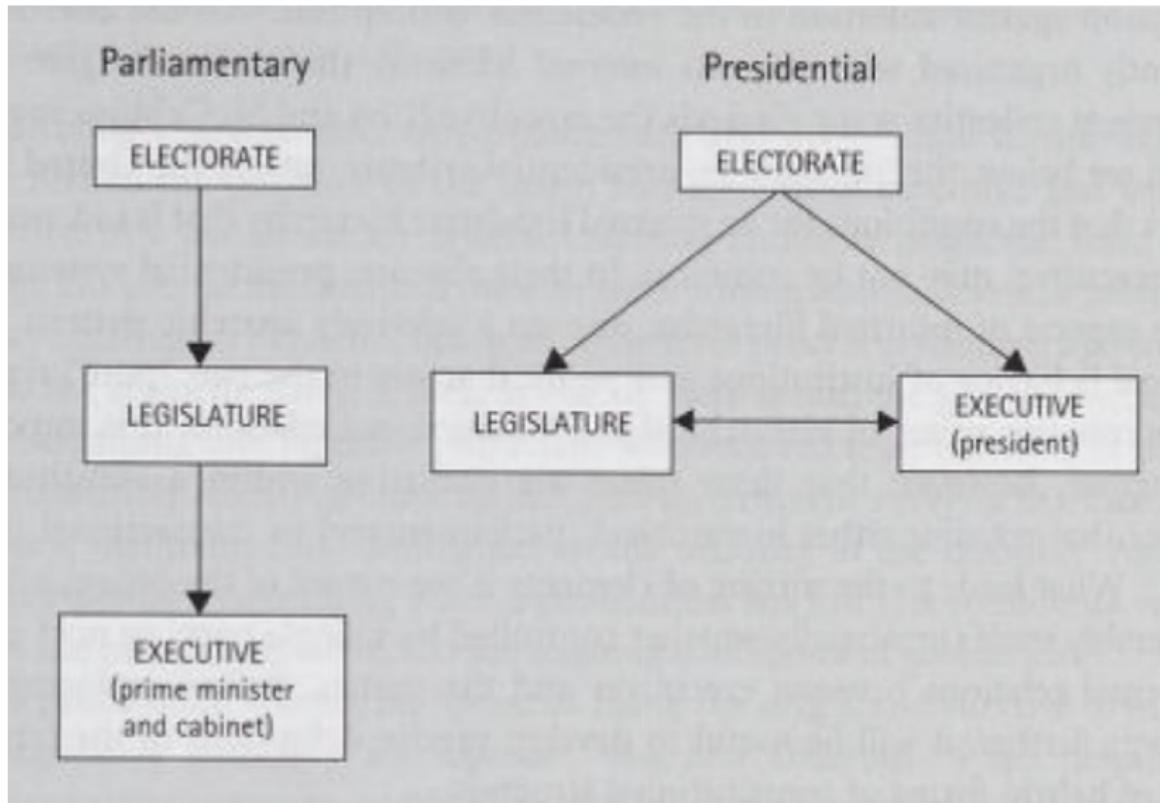
Fundamental differences

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(Stepan & Skach 1993)
- Presidentialism is often referred to as “separation of powers”,
whereas parliamentarism is sometimes referred to as “fusion of
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- In democracy, elections happen under a fixed schedule

Beyond fundamentals: Dependencies in practice

Leader turnover through action in the legislature

UK Johnson



Spain Rajoy



Brazil Rouseff

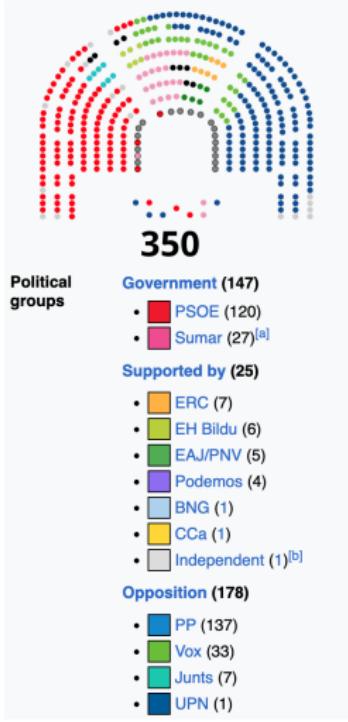


Legislative coalitions: UK, Spain, Brazil

UK Commons



Spain Congreso



Brazil Câmara



Beyond the simple separation-vs-fusion-of-powers view

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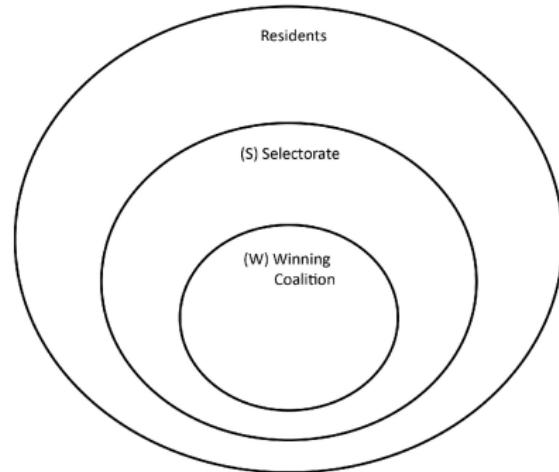
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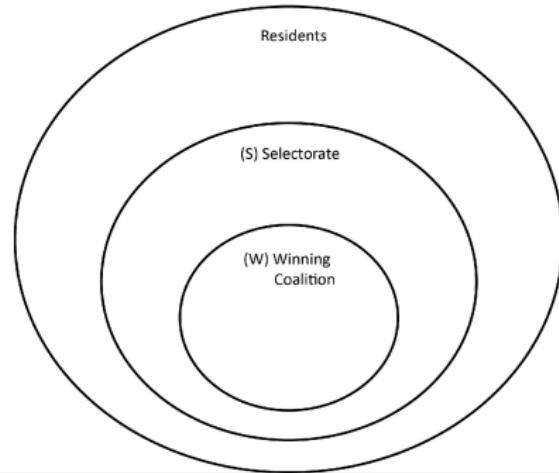
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- The dynamics of coalitions differ systematically however because heads of government in parliamentary systems depend more directly on having a legislative majority
- The **strength of parties** as organizations, and **internal competition** within the parties can reshape the dynamics of both parliamentarism and presidentialism

Legislative coalition building from the perspective of selectorate theory



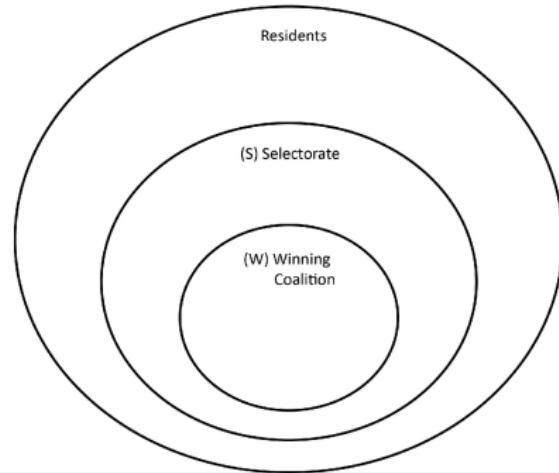
- Size of the selectorate (S)

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- Size of the selectorate (S)
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- Size of the selectorate (S)
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- The ratio W/S - the loyalty norm

Cabinet types

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- A **minority coalition government** comprises multiple governmental parties that do not together command a majority of the legislative seats.
- A **surplus majority government** comprises more parties than are strictly necessary to control a majority of the legislative seats.

Government formation can get long in parliamentary systems

The Brussels Times

A BUSINESS ART & CULTURE EU AFFAIRS WORLD BELGIUM

Belgium breaks own record for longest period without government

Monday 3 August 2020



© Belga

Belgium on Sunday broke its own standing record for the longest political crisis and longest period without an elected government.

It has been 592 days since the previous government, led by former Prime Minister Charles Michel, collapsed over inter-party tensions on migration in December 2018.

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- Also depends on inter- and intra-party competition
- Key role for party bosses (cf. Schumpeter, Przeworski)+

Duration of the government formation process, by country

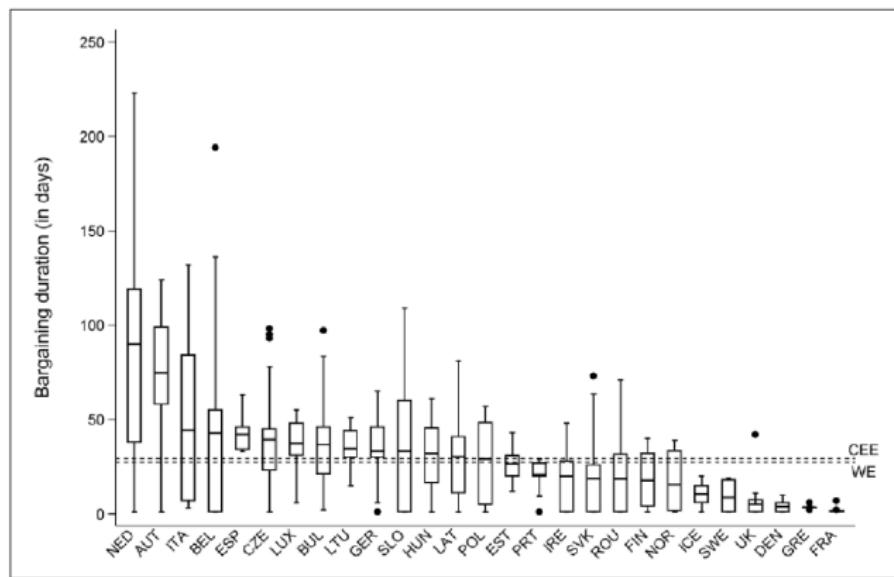


Figure 1. Bargaining duration across and within European countries.

Note: The box plots show the distribution of bargaining duration by country. The band inside the box depicts the average (not median) bargaining duration, while the whiskers span all data points within 1.5 inter-quartile-range of the nearer quartile. All countries are ordered based on their average bargaining duration. Dashed lines indicate the average duration of government formation processes in Western Europe (WE) and in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

Duration of the government formation process, by complexity

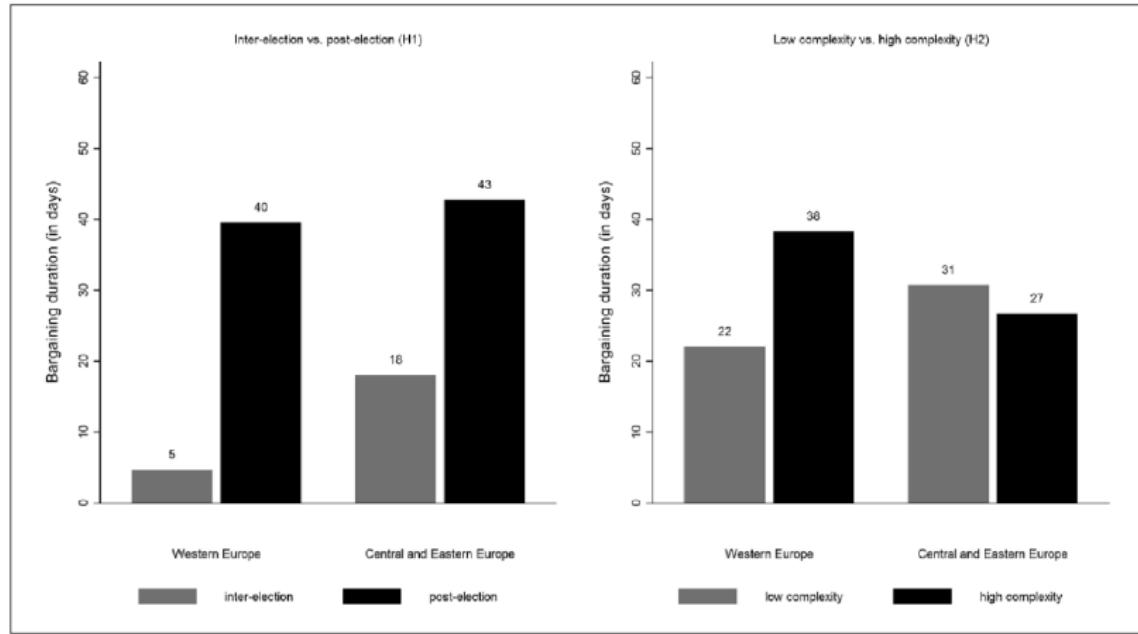
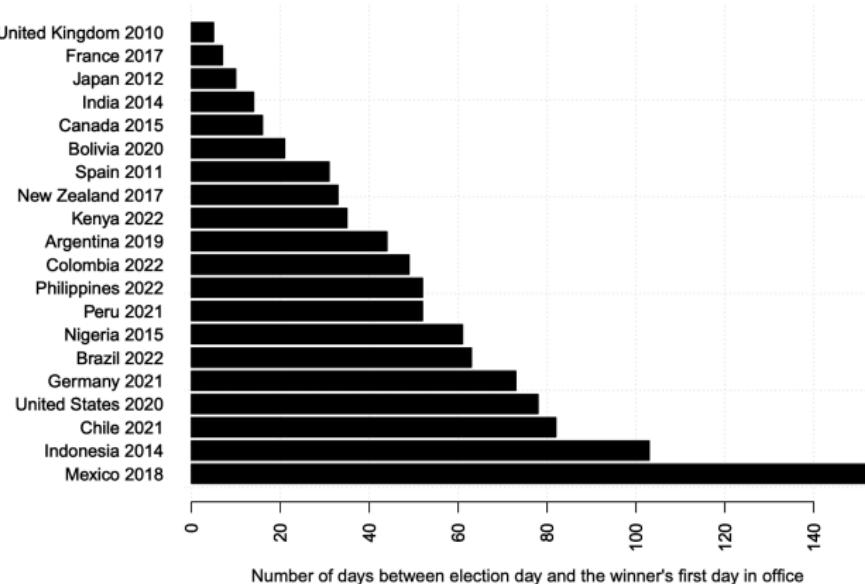


Figure 2. Average bargaining duration for low and high levels of uncertainty and complexity.

Note: This figure shows the average bargaining duration in days for bargaining situations in Western and Central and Eastern Europe. The left panel further differentiates between low uncertainty (inter-election; grey bars) and high uncertainty (post-election; black bars) bargaining situations. The right panel further differentiates between low complexity (effective number of parties below mean; grey bars) and high complexity (effective number of parties at or above mean; black bars) bargaining situations.

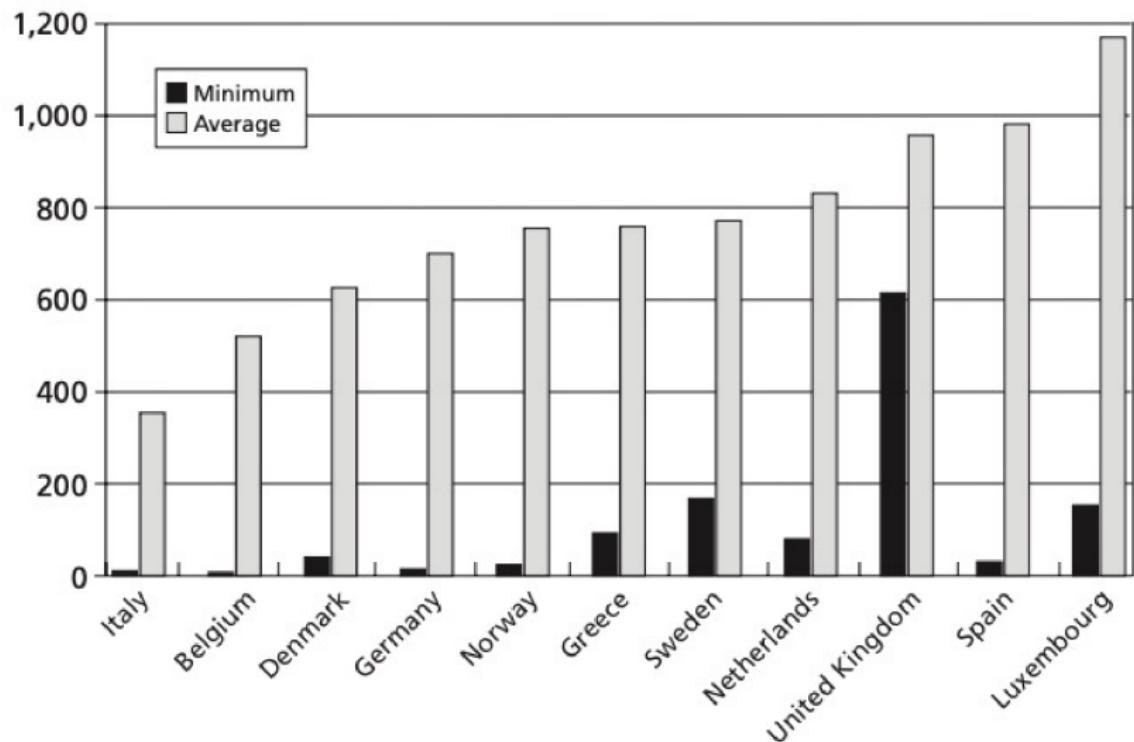
Although note that it often takes time for heads of government to take office under presidentialism, too – for different reasons

Figure 1: Recent transition periods after national-level elections in a sample of 20 countries



For each country, data correspond to the latest instance (up until January 1, 2023) when a new party reached national-level executive office through popular election – either direct elections in (semi-)presidential systems, or legislative elections in parliamentary ones. See Appendix A for details.

Duration of cabinets



Consequences for political and economic development

Which form of government is data

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- **Economic performance**: economic growth, inflation, human development corruption...

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- Parliamentarism allows to deal with conflicts by going back to the polls (votes of no confidence, snap elections), which may serve as an escape valve for tensions in the political system. By having a fixed electoral schedule, **presidentialist systems do not have that escape valve** and may see political conflicts across branches of powers escalate more easily.

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- Presidentialism operates in the logic of **winner-takes-all politics**, and thus tends to make politics a zero-sum-game.
- In presidentialism, the head of government is **more likely to feel they are the representative of “the people”**. This may lead to authoritarian temptations when clashes with the legislature emerge.

A more recent take on the perils of presidentialism

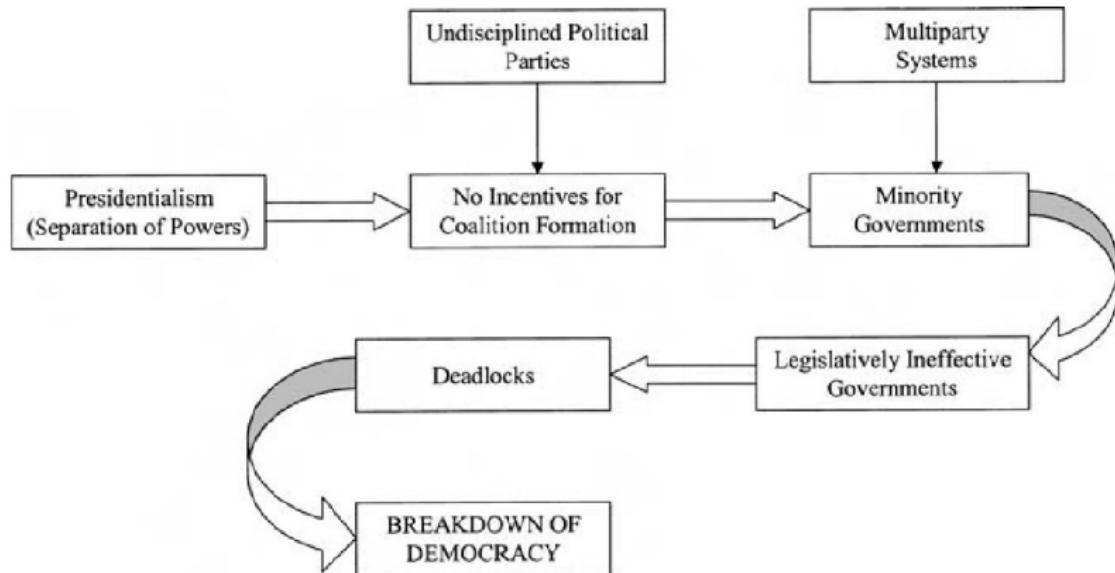


Figure 1.1 From Presidentialism to the Breakdown of Democracy.

Raw data on legislative success

TABLE 2 *Legislative Success of the Executive*

Coalition status	Parliamentarism	Obs.	Presidentialism	Obs.
All	80.15 (13.92)	335	62.63 (20.30)	214
Single majority	89.12 (10.17)	107	71.57 (17.78)	55
Coalition majority	76.07 (10.89)	122	51.31 (19.71)	33
Coalition minority	78.25 (17.21)	26	53.03 (21.25)	20
Single minority	79.28 (8.92)	45	61.34 (17.94)	84

Notes: 'All' includes 'Super majority' and 'Divided government' situations.
Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

Raw data on democratic survival

TABLE 3 *Observed Probabilities that a Democracy Would Die in a Particular Year*

Coalition status	Parliamentarism	Presidentialism
All	0.0135 (1,632)	0.0419 (669)
Coalitions	0.0085 (709)	0.0483 (207)
Single party	0.0173 (923)	0.0390 (462)
Majority	0.0116 (1,298)	0.0461 (412)
Minority	0.0210 (334)	0.0350 (257)
Super majority	0.0128 (78)	0.0189 (53)
Single majority	0.0167 (717)	0.0451 (266)
Divided government	—	0.0408 (49)
Coalition majority	0.0040 (503)	0.0645 (93)
Coalition minority	0.0234 (128)	0.0492 (61)
Single minority	0.0194 (206)	0.0306 (197)

Notes: 'Coalitions' include 'Super majority' situations. The number of observations of each category is shown in parentheses.

Raw data on macroeconomic performance

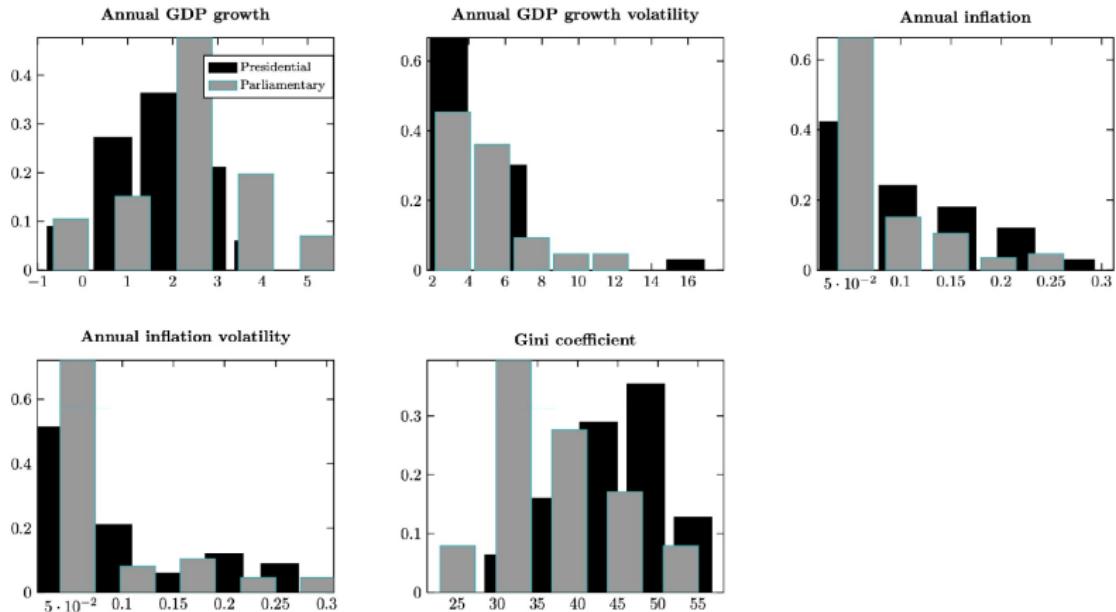


Fig. 1 Presidential and parliamentary regimes: macroeconomic outcomes. Histograms illustrating the distribution of our macroeconomic indicators of interest as an average over the whole sample (1950–2015) across parliamentary and presidential regimes using BG classification for government structures

Regression results

Table 4 Economic growth and the form of government

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Pres	-0.814*** (0.001)	-0.868*** (0.000)	-0.916*** (0.001)	-1.173*** (0.000)	-1.153*** (0.000)	-1.198*** (0.000)	-0.593** (0.037)	-0.622** (0.033)	-0.691** (0.042)
Semi-pres		0.236 (0.581)			-0.017 (0.959)			0.151 (0.623)	
Maj			-0.562* (0.070)	-0.502* (0.090)	-0.380 (0.215)	-0.094 (0.734)	-0.066 (0.814)	-0.134 (0.657)	
InitialGDP			-0.818*** (0.001)	-0.794*** (0.001)	-0.800*** (0.002)	-1.371*** (0.000)	-1.375*** (0.000)	-1.375*** (0.000)	
Education			3.850*** (0.000)	3.863*** (0.000)	2.518*** (0.015)	0.420 (0.666)	0.622 (0.536)	0.827 (0.446)	
Fertility					-0.697*** (0.000)	-0.644*** (0.000)	-0.509** (0.021)		
LifeExp					0.055* (0.090)	0.062* (0.055)	0.046 (0.338)		
Openness					0.006** (0.010)	0.006** (0.015)	0.008*** (0.007)		
GovtSize					-2.653 (0.170)	-2.927 (0.144)	-4.094*** (0.025)		
ExRateVol					0.000 (0.568)	0.000 (0.435)	0.001 (0.175)		
R ²	0.176	0.178	0.210	0.294	0.292	0.339	0.390	0.389	0.429
N	263	263	210	205	205	169	204	204	169

Dependent variable is the mean annual GDP per capita growth rates over the panel time horizon. Coefficients are estimates from random effects regression using panels between 1965–1979, 1980–1994 and 1995–2009 including time dummies and a constant (not presented). Results from columns (1), (4) and (7) present those using the scale variable of the form of government using BG, in columns (2), (5) and (8) dummy variables for both types of government from the BG, and similar in (3), (6) and (9) for presidential data from PT. A standard star convention is used, with *, ** and *** representing significance levels of 10, 5 and 1% respectively. P values of t-statistics are in parentheses where heteroskedastic clustered robust standard errors have been used

Regression results

Table 11 Inequality and the form of government

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Pres	0.124*** (0.004)	0.130*** (0.002)	0.238*** (0.000)	0.164*** (0.000)	0.160*** (0.000)	0.208*** (0.000)	0.185*** (0.000)	0.182*** (0.000)	0.211*** (0.000)
Semi-pres		−0.011 (0.835)			−0.012 (0.796)			−0.007 (0.873)	
Maj			0.077** (0.037)	0.061 (0.103)	0.023 (0.593)	0.067* (0.076)	0.056 (0.126)	0.014 (0.747)	
GovtSize			0.040 (0.200)	0.048 (0.134)	0.002 (0.960)	0.133 (0.309)	0.175 (0.188)	0.152 (0.272)	
Openness			−0.003 (0.939)	0.001 (0.971)	−0.018 (0.594)	0.000 (0.995)	0.000 (0.916)	0.000 (0.275)	
Initial-GDP			−0.022 (0.560)	−0.029 (0.453)	0.034 (0.408)	0.016 (0.737)	0.013 (0.788)	0.083* (0.060)	
Initial-GDP ²			−0.001 (0.437)	−0.001 (0.422)	−0.004*** (0.008)	−0.002 (0.312)	−0.002 (0.300)	−0.005*** (0.001)	
Human-Cap						−0.071* (0.081)	−0.074* (0.072)	−0.087* (0.091)	
Inflation						0.007 (0.942)	0.004 (0.972)	−0.002 (0.978)	
R ²	0.125	0.119	0.182	0.197	0.200	0.143	0.302	0.304	0.182
N	269	269	246	209	209	167	192	192	164

A standard star convention is used, with *, ** and *** representing significance levels of 10, 5 and 1% respectively. Dependent variable is the log of the mean Gini coefficient for income inequality over the period 1970–2008. Comparative Politics 6. Parliamentarism and presidentialism

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Wrap-up

Taking stock of what we saw today

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