

Comparative Politics

Week 5

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Notices

- Email: jlzhou@nyu.edu
- Office hour: **Monday 11-13; Tuesday 13-15**, at Room 317, 19W4
 - Book my office hour here: <https://calendly.com/jlzhou/15min>
 - Only for the week of midterm
 - If you can not make it to office hour, feel free to ask question via email
 - But no shoot urgent email, since I don't check email all the time
- This is the final recitation before midterm (No recitation next week)

Today

- Presidential system v.s. Parliamentary system
 - Features
 - Pros and Cons

Presidential system v.s.
Parliamentary system

(typical) Parliamentary system

- The government is chosen by the legislature and serves at the pleasure of the legislature.

(typical) Presidential system

- The chief executive is chosen by the people (usually directly) and the chief executive cannot be removed by the legislature without cause (fixed term).

(typical) semi-presidential system

- Usually two executives
- One with legislative responsibility (i.e., can be removed by the legislature for political reasons), and one who is popularly elected for a fixed term.

Difference between presidential system and parliamentary system

- How to elect executive?
 - What's the executive-legislature relationship?
 - How to remove executive? (Legislative responsibility)
 - Check and balance?
 - Representation?
 - Why Linz think presidential system could be more dangerous?
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- Any other questions on two readings?

Clips from the West Wing

- Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js1EJZ6h_KE and think the following questions:
- What do you make of Toby's argument advising Belorussian leaders *not* to adopt a U.S. presidential system?
- Why might parliamentarism be more suitable than presidentialism in this context? (Of course it would be helpful to have more contextual knowledge of Belarus, but let's set that aside for the moment and discuss your views based simply on what you know from this clip.)
- Or you may think that Toby is wrong: perhaps presidentialism (or semi-presidentialism) is a better choice. Why?
- Or, third, perhaps you think that the choice among these constitutional systems ultimately matters little, and that other institutional features (veto powers, term limits, vote shares for particular parties, etc.) matter more.

Group discussion

- Divide the team: team presidentialism and team parliamentarism
- Come up with your strongest arguments in favor of presidentialism / parliamentarism

Possible tradeoffs between two types of systems (as articulated by critics of presidentialism – see, e.g., Linz)

	Parliamentary Systems	Presidential Systems
Regime Stability	High	Low
Government Stability	Low	High
Representation	High	Low
Efficiency	High	Low

But these tradeoffs depend on assumptions about parliamentary and presidential systems that may not always apply

	Parliamentary Systems	Presidential Systems
Regime Stability	High: <i>assumes e.g. few executive emergency powers</i>	Low: <i>assumes strong emergency powers, no term limits</i>
Government Stability	Low: <i>assumes difficulty retaining majority legislative support, easy to remove government</i>	High: <i>Assumes long fixed terms for president, a lot of executive control over cabinet appointment</i>
Representation	High: <i>assumes representation not diluted by coalition govts</i>	Low: <i>assumes strong president (relative to legislature)</i>
Efficiency	High: <i>assumes legislature not focused solely on forming a government</i>	Low: <i>Assumes strong veto powers</i>

Final question

- What they would want to know about that country in order to decide whether a presidential system or a parliamentary system would be more appropriate?