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A Fresh Look at Semipresidentialism

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

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The scholarly debate on the advantages and disadvantages of the two dominant democratic regime types—presidentialism and parliamentarism—gained prominence during the "third wave" of democratization. Discussions of the inherent perils of presidentialism and the unequivocally virtuous nature of parliamentarism were especially salient during the 1990s, but they remain important to this day. In the past few years, democratizing countries such as Afghanistan, East Timor, and Iraq have faced or are still facing tough choices as to regime constitution. Moreover, a number of established democracies, including Mexico and Taiwan, are currently debating whether or not to change their basic system of government.

Most academic contributions to the regime-type debate have focused on the relative advantages and disadvantages of presidentialism and parliamentarism, and the consensus seems to adhere to Juan Linz's judgment that, all else being equal, parliamentarism should be chosen above presidentialism.[1] That said, there are powerful counterarguments that properly crafted presidential regimes can be of advantage in certain countries.[2]

In the presidentialism-versus-parliamentarism debate, analysis of semipresidential systems—which have both a directly elected president and a prime minister responsible to the legislature—has been notable for its near absence. Semipresidentialism has been and remains a very popular choice of government, especially for countries that democratized during or after the third wave; indeed, in the formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union

there are twice as many semipresidential regimes as presidential and parliamentary regimes combined. Nevertheless, semi-presidentialism has been the focus of only one book-length study and scarcely more journal articles.[3]

From an academic viewpoint, semipresidentialism's popularity is somewhat alarming. Semipresidentialism is now a widespread system of government, yet to the extent that scholars have theorized about it they have overwhelmingly concluded that it should be avoided. Linz's judgment can still be treated as the received academic wisdom on the subject: "In view of some of the experiences with this type of system it seems dubious to argue that in and by itself it can generate democratic stability."[4] Specifically, he argued that semipresidentialism tends to be associated either with "politicking and intrigues that may delay decision making and lead to contradictory policies due to the struggle between the president and the prime minister" or with "an authoritarian interpretation of the powers of the president."[5] Arturo Valenzuela and Arend Lijphart have agreed in these pages with Linz's judgment.[6]

The general constitutional category of semipresidentialism encompasses a diverse set of polities that operate in ways which differ significantly from one another. The experiences of various semipresidential regimes can teach us not only about this form of government, but also about the impact of presidentialism and parliamentarism on democracy. Highly "presidentialized" semipresidential regimes, such as Madagascar's, with strong presidents and subservient heads of government, pose severe obstacles to democracy's survival. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the semipresidential countries with strong prime ministers and figurehead presidents, such as Slovenia, which are most likely to democratize successfully. Finally, other semipresidential countries, such as Niger, have a balance of presidential and prime-ministerial powers, which tends to be problematic and not particularly conducive to democracy.

Redefining Semipresidentialism

Semipresidentialism as a concept has been defined in a number of ways. The French political scientist Maurice Duverger first popularized the term in 1980, and his definition is still the one most widely used:

> [A] political regime is considered as semipresidential if the constitution which established it combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them.[7]

The problem with Duverger's definition is the second criterion: Who is to decide what constitutes "quite considerable powers"? This

imprecision has led every analyst subjectively to decide what powers are sufficient to count as "quite considerable," and as a result, the number of countries regarded as semipresidential varies from one observer to the next. Duverger counted six West European semipresidential regimes: Austria, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland and Portugal—this despite the largely symbolic nature of the Austrian, Icelandic, and Irish presidents. Other scholars have argued that, due to the weakness of their presidents, these three countries and others like them should not be classed as semipresidential at all. Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, for example, count only two West European semipresidential regimes, France and Portugal, while classifying Austria, Iceland, and Ireland as parliamentary because they have weak—albeit directly elected—presidents.[8]

The lack of a clear definition of semipresidentialism, or rather the subjective component of the prevailing definition, makes it hard to put the term to effective use. As a result of the ambiguity, scholars disagree as to the number of semipresidential countries worldwide and fail to compare like with like. For example, if we adopt a strict definition of "quite considerable powers" and count as semipresidential only those countries with strong presidents, then we should conclude that semipresidentialism is inherently likely to encourage a conflict of power within the executive. We reach such a conclusion because our analysis is based only on highly presidentialized semipresidential regimes, and it is precisely those regimes that are likely to experience the problem we encounter. By contrast, if we adopt a less strict definition and include countries with figurehead presidents—such as Austria, Iceland, and Ireland—then we would not be in a position to conclude that semipresidentialism creates an inherent tension within the executive. It may do so, but only under some circumstances that we would then need to specify.

Elsewhere I have argued that the solution to this problem is to drop the second criterion from Duverger's definition.[9] If we do, we can simply define a regime as semipresidential if it has both a directly elected fixed-term president and a prime minister who is responsible to the legislature. Such a definition allows us to agree on a definite set of semipresidential countries and maximizes the opportunity for authors to compare like with like. Still, this definition does not eliminate *all* subjectivity with regard to determining the set of semipresidential countries. How would one classify Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, which in addition to a prime minister has not one but three directly elected presidents? Following presidential elections in that country, the three presidents-elect vote to determine who will be the first to chair their presidential council, and then parliament decides the rotation between the remaining two presidents.[10] Is Bosnia-Herzegovina a semipresidential regime or not? This highly unusual case demands a judgment call. In

my opinion, Bosnia-Herzegovina's system should *not* be labeled semipresidential, because it deviates too far from the stipulation that a semipresidential regime should have a single directly elected president. Nevertheless, other observers may disagree.

Other borderline cases include Slovakia and Iceland, where the president may be removed from office by a plebiscite. These regimes deviate from the definition because the president is not necessarily guaranteed to remain in office for a fixed term. Still, I believe that these countries should be classified as semipresidential because a supermajority is needed in the plebiscite in order to remove the president. Thus, the president is not simply responsible to a potentially fickle majority in parliament in the same way as the prime minister. In effect, these presidencies are very similar to the fixed-term presidencies of other semipresidential countries.

Overall, even though the revised definition of semipresidentialism does not eliminate all subjectivity in determining which countries to include in this category, it drastically reduces the number of judgment calls that have to be made. In this way, it maximizes the potential for scholars to compare like with like.

Semipresidentialism and Democracy

Working with the revised definition, there are currently 55 semipresidential countries in the world (see the table on p. 102). The 2004 Freedom House survey ranked 23 of these as Free, 15 as Partly Free, and 17 as Not Free. In addition to the 23 Free countries, 8 of the 15 Partly Free semipresidential countries were classified as electoral democracies. Thus, even if the majority of semipresidential countries are either Partly Free or Not Free, a good number of semipresidential countries are Free; and although a large number of these regimes are not electoral democracies, an even greater number are. All of this seems to indicate that semipresidentialism as such does not inherently obstruct democratic survival.

That said, we need to explore semipresidentialism more closely before we can make definitive judgments about whether it is conducive to democracy. We cannot make judgments about the performance of semipresidentialism as a whole, because the set of semipresidential countries includes such a wide variety of political practices. As mentioned above, some semipresidential regimes have very strong presidents and weak prime ministers, while others have strong prime ministers and figurehead presidents, and yet others strike a balance between presidential and prime-ministerial powers. Therefore, we need to examine the performance of various types of semipresidential regimes around the world, exploring how different political practices influence countries' democratic success or failure.[11]

Table—Semipresidential Countries and Democratic Performance Based on the 2004 Freedom House Survey

Semipresidential Countries Classified as Free	Semipresidential Countries Not Classified as Free but Electoral Democracies	Partly Free and Not Free Semipresidential Countries Not Electoral Democracies
Austria	East Timor	Algeria
Bulgaria	Georgia	Angola
Cape Verde	Macedonia	Armenia
Croatia	Madagascar	Azerbaijan
Finland	Mozambique	Belarus
France	Niger	Burkina Faso
Guyana	Russia	Cameroon
Iceland	Sri Lanka	Central African Republic
Ireland	Ukraine	Chad
Lithuania		Gabon
Mali		Guinea-Bissau
Mongolia		Haiti
Namibia		Kazakhstan
Peru		Kyrgyzstan
Poland		Mauritania
Portugal		Rwanda
Romania		Singapore
São Tomé & Príncipe		Tajikistan
Senegal		Tanzania
Slovakia		Togo
Slovenia		Tunisia
South Korea		Uzbekistan
Taiwan		Yemen

Based on scholarly literature regarding this regime type, we should expect to find that highly presidentialized semipresidential countries are problematic; that semipresidential countries with ceremonial presidents and strong prime ministers are successful because they operate in a parliamentary-like way; and that semipresidential countries with a balance of executive power are problematic because of destabilizing institutional conflict. The following sections explore whether these fears and expectations match the actual experiences of the various semipresidential regimes around the globe.

Highly presidentialized semipresidential regimes. These regimes often suffer the same problems as their purely presidential counterparts. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart have argued that Linz identifies five general problems with presidentialism: 1) the executive and legislature advance competing claims to legitimacy; 2) the fixed terms of office make presidential regimes more rigid than parliamentary sys-

tems; 3) presidentialism encourages winner-take-all outcomes; 4) the style of presidential politics encourages presidents to be intolerant of political opposition; and 5) presidentialism encourages populist candidates.[12] Several of these points are salient when it comes to assessing the performance of highly presidentialized semipresidential countries.

For example, as Arend Lijphart has noted, even though semipresidentialism can permit the sharing of executive power between different parties or coalitions, the winner-takes-all nature of the presidential election remains.[13] In a highly presidentialized semipresidential system, this may lead to the emergence of a highly personalized presidency, which is likely to be harmful for democracy because the president may decide to flout the democratic process for reasons or interests of his own. In so doing, the president will likely clash with a legislature whose members enjoy an alternative source of popular legitimacy.

Democracy can and has survived in highly presidentialized semipresidential systems, but it is not the norm. Of the 23 Free semipresidential countries, systems featuring strong presidents and weak prime ministers are found in just four—Guyana, Namibia, Peru, and South Korea.[14] The survival of these highly presidentialized semipresidential regimes shows that this type of system is not inherently problematic. Indeed, the case of Namibia is particularly noteworthy, as it is one of the few consolidated democracies in sub-Saharan Africa. That said, all four of these countries have faced some very difficult political situations that arguably stemmed from or were exacerbated by the highly presidentialized nature of their semipresidential systems.

For example, in a recent overview of Asian democratization, Aurel Croissant argues that even though South Korea "advanced to democratic consolidation in terms of civilian supremacy, strengthened civil liberties and political rights, it has nonetheless serious deficits in horizontal accountability and the checks and balances of the presidency."[15] In particular, the attempts of successive South Korean presidents to assert their powers have sometimes brought them into sharp conflict with the legislature, especially when that body was controlled by the opposition.

While historical evidence shows that semipresidentialism with a very strong president and a weak prime minister is not necessarily deadly to democracy, this combination does not have a particularly good track record; where it has survived and remained democratic, it may have done so *despite* the problems with which it is associated. More often than not, highly presidentialized semipresidential countries have tended to perform badly—with at least collateral ill consequences for democracy—thus bearing out Linz's predictions. A number of the most fragile semipresidential democracies, including all the Partly Free electoral democracies, have strong presidents and weak prime ministers. Madagascar and Russia (the latter declining to Not Free for the first time in the 2004 Freedom House survey) are prominent examples.

There is reason to believe that in some semipresidential countries the strength of the presidency has helped give rise to poor democratic performance. Russia is perhaps the most notorious case. In 1993, President Boris Yeltsin's dissolution of the Duma sparked a constitutional and military crisis, and the ensuing restoration of order (culminating with a Yeltsin-ordered military assault on the Duma's building) was combined with a marked presidentialization of the country's system of government. Since then, Vladimir Putin has further reinforced and strengthened the presidency. Of course, one can make the case that Russia might have performed even worse without strong leadership, and the Russian population seems to have supported Putin over such issues as Chechnya. All the same, it seems reasonable to suggest that the highly presidentialized form of semipresidentialism in Russia has played a part in the country's sharp decline in the area of democratic governance.

Among the semipresidential countries that are not electoral democracies, most have strong presidents and weak prime ministers.

Among the semipresidential countries that are not electoral democracies (some Partly Free and some Not Free), most have strong presidents and weak prime ministers. Of course, we have to be circumspect in concluding that it is the particular form of semipresidentialism found in these countries which causes their poor democratic performance. It may well be that the authoritarian tendencies were deeply entrenched before they adopted a semipresidential constitution.

In many of the countries of the former Soviet Union—such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—the choice of highly presidentialized semipresidentialism may just have been a reflection of long-present authoritarian tendencies. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether the problems of democratic consolidation in these countries were caused by the adoption of highly presidentialized semipresidential systems or by the communist (and also postcommunist) legacy of authoritarian leadership. At the very least, however, a highly presidentialized semipresidential system offers little to alleviate such authoritarian tendencies: The direct election of the president encourages the president to portray himself as the father or savior of the nation in a political culture perhaps already given to personality cults and *caudillismo,* and the prime minister cannot act as any sort of check on the president. In short, the system does little to prevent arbitrary presidential rule.

Overall, it appears that the experiences of highly presidentialized semipresidential regimes tend to validate our predictions. While these systems do not necessarily prevent the consolidation of democracy—witness the cases of Guyana and Namibia—they often create obstacles

to it. Sometimes they do so by reinforcing the inherent problems of an already highly personalized political culture; in other cases, they actively encourage the personalization of the system. In Yemen, for example, the presidentialization of the regime under President Ali Abdallah Salih undermined the careful constitutional balance that had been negotiated prior to the merger of North and South Yemen.

In short, the evidence suggests that nascent democracies should avoid adopting highly presidentialized semipresidential systems. If this conclusion is indeed correct, then the Central African Republic may have put itself at risk by adopting a highly presidentialized semipresidential system as part of its 2005 constitution.

Semipresidential regimes with ceremonial presidents. These regimes operate in a parliamentary-like way. The president is a symbolic leader with few constitutional powers who acts as a figurehead rather than as an active decision maker, and the real power lies with the prime minister, who is in charge of all aspects of the day-to-day running of the country. To the extent that political practice in these semipresidential countries closely resembles that of parliamentary countries with indirectly elected figurehead presidents and strong heads of government—such as Germany and Greece—we would expect their democratic performance to be good.

In semipresidential regimes with ceremonial presidents, the direct election of the president legitimizes the office and allows the incumbent to serve as a spokesperson for the country, while the president's lack of executive power means that any such popular legitimacy is never directed against the prime minister and never serves to establish the president as a political competitor. Of the 55 semipresidential countries worldwide, we find figurehead presidents and strong prime ministers in just six: Austria, Bulgaria, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, and Slovenia. Although it is noteworthy that all six of these countries are Free, we need not draw an overly hasty conclusion about the apparent advantages to democracy of this form of semipresidentialism.

Portugal, for example, converted to a parliamentary-like system with a largely ceremonial president and a strong prime minister only once democracy was consolidated, so this particular kind of semipresidentialism was not a contributory factor in the country's successful democratic transition. In the period immediately following the initial democratic opening in 1974, the Portuguese presidency had carried great executive power. In Ireland, the directly elected figurehead presidency was not introduced until 1937, some 16 years after independence and 14 years after the end of the civil war. So Ireland's experience with parliamentary-like semipresidentialism does not necessarily establish this type of system as a key factor in the country's democratic success.

Even so, we can at least say that this type of semipresidential system

does not act as a hindrance to democracy. In this regard, the most interesting case is Slovenia, where the choice of the semipresidential system in 1991 was a compromise.[16] At the time of the country's constitutional debate, popular support for a directly elected presidency was largely due to the popularity of Milan Kučan, who then headed the collective presidency of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. Opposition parties knew that Kučan was likely to win a direct election but unlikely to secure an indirectly elected presidency, so they called for the latter. The resulting compromise was a semipresidential system with a directly elected but largely ceremonial president; this was also consistent with the historical legacy of assembly-centered politics in Slovenia.[17] Once elected, Kučan did not try to exercise any more power than stipulated in the constitution. Since then, there have been some disputes over the precise role of the presidency, but there have been no damaging institutional deadlocks or presidential attempts to personalize the political process in a potentially destabilizing way.

Semipresidentialism with a ceremonial president is a good option for countries that desire a leader who can speak on behalf of the country without creating a crisis.

Much like his Slovenian counterpart, the Irish president has scarcely any powers whatsoever. In the Irish case, this is at least one of the reasons why the presidential election is sometimes uncontested. Parties may not wish to bear the financial cost of an election or risk upsetting their legislative election strategy by running a poor presidential campaign—especially when there is a popular incumbent who is seeking reelection. In short, a semipresidential regime with a ceremonial president is a good option for countries where there is a strong desire for a figurehead leader, who on the basis of some popular legitimacy can speak on behalf of the country without running the risk of creating a political crisis.

In contrast to the highly presidentialized semipresidential systems, this form of semipresidentialism gives little opportunity or incentive for presidents to attempt to personalize the system. In fact, if a particular leader did wish to personalize such a system, then that leader would probably have a better chance at doing so by first assuming the premiership—as was the case in the early years of the Slovakian parliamentary system prior to the constitutional reform of 1999. Nonetheless, semipresidential systems with figurehead presidents and strong prime ministers usually operate in a parliamentary-like way, and usually require a parliamentary majority or supermajority in order to pass major legislation.

Although the number of historical examples of this type of

semipresidentialism is very small, the evidence suggests that a semipresidential system with a figurehead presidency and a strong prime minister is certainly preferable to a highly presidentialized semipresidential system. This is consistent with Linz's predictions as well as with Valenzuela's recent recommendation.[18] To the extent that this form of semipresidentialism resembles parliamentary systems, which on balance are usually considered to be less problematic, it is likely to lead to good democratic performance.

Semipresidential regimes with a balance of presidential and prime-ministerial powers. The traditional critique of semipresidentialism most often relates to countries where there is a balance of presidential and prime-ministerial powers. Whereas presidentialism often comes under criticism for creating potential conflicts between the executive and the legislature, semipresidentialism is criticized for potentially dividing the executive branch against itself. Linz has argued that semipresidentialism may be associated with "politicking and intrigues that may delay decision making and lead to contradictory policies due to the struggle between the president and the prime minister."[19] Similarly, Stepan and Skach have argued that semipresidentialism "inherently entails the possibility of deadlocked government and constitutional conflict between the dual executive if voters do not produce majorities," cautioning that in such situations, the military may step in to break the constitutional deadlock.[20] Although these problems may occur even when the president and prime minister are from the same political party or coalition, they are likely to worsen during periods of political "cohabitation," when the executive officials come from different parties. If these predictions are correct, we should expect to find that semipresidential countries with a balance of presidential and prime-ministerial powers are poor at consolidating democracy.

A considerable number of the Free semipresidential regimes have given significant powers to both the president and the prime minister and have experienced sometimes prolonged periods of political cohabitation. In some of these countries—Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Croatia, Finland, Lithuania, and Poland—the prime minister is the primary decision maker, while the president has the power to intervene either sporadically or in one or more specific policy areas, usually foreign and defense policy. In other countries—France, Senegal, Taiwan, and since the 2003 constitutional reform, São Tomé and Príncipe—the presidency carries most of the political weight, even though the prime minister remains a significant actor.

Many of these countries have experienced periods of cohabitation. The classic example is France, where cohabitation has posed no threat to the regime because it occurred after the regime was unequivocally consolidated. That said, it was traumatic for the political class, and in 2000 a constitutional amendment was passed that shortened the

president's term of office to five years, thus reducing (albeit not eliminating) the likelihood of cohabitation in the future.

In other countries, cohabitation has occurred while the system was still fragile, and it has fostered power struggles between the president and the prime minister. Such struggles have occurred in Lithuania, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, São Tomé and Príncipe, and briefly in Taiwan. Yet democracy in these countries has survived. We may conclude that balanced semipresidentialism is not necessarily problematic, even for nascent democracies and even in the event of political cohabitation.

To be sure, the democratic record of balanced semipresidentialism appears much better than that of highly presidentialized semipresidentialism. On the face of it, therefore, Linz's predictions about balanced semipresidentialism seem off the mark. It may be, however, that the countries with this institutional structure have become democratically consolidated *despite* their regimes; perhaps they *did* face the problems of balanced semipresidentialism that Linz and others have identified, but overcame them. Thus we may ask: Even if these countries have performed well in democratic terms, have they done so for idiosyncratic or noninstitutional reasons that might not be present elsewhere?

As noted above, balanced semipresidentialism creates the potential for conflict in the executive, most often during cohabitation, but also at times when the president and the prime minister are from the same party or coalition. In a number of cases, such conflict has indeed been destabilizing. Steven Fish reports that in 1998 Mongolia "endured a months-long stint in political purgatory" as the president rejected a series of candidates for prime minister that the opposition (which held the legislative majority) sent to him.[21] Even though Fish supports semipresidentialism in the Mongolian case, he acknowledges that the system played a direct role in the protracted governmental crisis.

Similarly, during the early years of democracy in Poland, there were ongoing struggles between President Lech Wałęsa and successive prime ministers. Some argue that Wałęsa "did not want to be a passive figurehead but intended to play an active role in shaping policy," and that "he tried to influence his yet to be defined constitutional prerogatives by setting precedents which he hoped would be accepted as political custom."[22] In so doing, Wałęsa came into conflict with his prime ministers, who were trying to exercise their own constitutional powers. Even if democracy has survived in both the Mongolian and Polish cases, it appears that it has done so *despite* the balanced semipresidential nature of the system.

Indeed, this finding is further supported by examining the experiences of balanced semipresidential regimes that do *not* rank as Free but that are electoral democracies. In Niger, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine, semipresidential regimes have been marred by institutional conflict, and have arguably been the reason behind these countries' failure to achieve democratic

consolidation. In 1995, Niger faced a particularly difficult period of political cohabitation between President Mahamane Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou, resulting in a yearlong political gridlock that was broken only when the military stepped in.[23] In this case, one of Linz's predictions about balanced semipresidentialism was completely accurate.

More recently, another of his predictions seemed extremely close to coming true in Ukraine. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, there have been ongoing periods of intense conflict between the Ukrainian president and prime minister. Presidents typically have wanted to wield more authority and so sought more power, whereas prime ministers upon assuming office have immediately achieved the status of a potential presidential candidate.[24] Thus the rivalry within the executive was institutional, sometimes party-political, and often highly personal. Although it would be simplistic to suggest that the system of balanced semipresidentialism was the only cause of Ukraine's problems, there is no doubt that the institutional framework created a situation in which both the president and prime minister were encouraged to seek more power. As a result, the democratic process in that country was compromised, at least until the Orange Revolution in late 2004.

There are, however, plenty of balanced semipresidential countries that are consolidated democracies ranked as Free by Freedom House. The evidence suggests that, especially as compared with highly presidentialized semipresidentialism, balanced semipresidentialism should be classed as a relatively wise constitutional choice. Certainly it appears to enjoy a better-than-average chance of success. Although balanced semipresidentialism is almost invariably associated with intra-executive conflict, the experiences of some consolidated democracies show that such conflict is surmountable. It may lead to an acute political trauma, but it is not necessarily fatal to democracy.

Even if the evidence suggests that some of the more dire pronouncements about balanced semipresidentialism may be exaggerated, why would nascent democracies choose balanced semipresidentialism when they know that most probably they will face periods of potentially destabilizing intra-executive conflict? Unless there is reason to believe that such conflict will not compromise the democratic foundations of the regime, then balanced semipresidentialism is perhaps best avoided altogether.

Two Cheers for Semipresidentialism

There has long been a considerable degree of variation in how the concept of semipresidentialism has been defined and, more importantly, how it has been applied. By adopting a minimalist definition, we reduce the element of subjectivity in identifying semipresidential countries, and thereby increase the opportunities for comparing this form of government with others, most notably presidentialism and parliamentarism.

Given the variety of constitutional arrangements and political practices that fit into the category of semipresidentialism, it is necessary to determine whether some of its forms are more conducive to democracy than others. Part of the answer to this question is unequivocal: With a few notable exceptions, the experience of highly presidentialized semipresidential countries has tended to be negative, while the experience of parliamentary-like semipresidential regimes with ceremonial presidents and strong prime ministers has tended to be positive. Democratizing countries may safely be encouraged to adopt the latter type of system, so long as the president is truly just a figurehead.

While semipresidential systems with figurehead presidents have generally performed well, other sorts of semipresidential regimes may place unnecessary obstacles on the path to democratic consolidation.

With regard to balanced semipresidentialism, the situation is more ambiguous. Some such regimes—like the polities of Cape Verde, Portugal, and São Tomé and Príncipe—have managed to navigate potentially problematic democratization processes; while others, like Haiti, have ended up with democratic failure. Inherent in this form of government is the problem of political cohabitation in the executive. In consolidated democracies cohabitation is usually not a cause for alarm, but in more fragile democratic systems it has created political turmoil. As we saw in Mongolia and Poland, the problems of executive cohabitation can be overcome without damage to the democratic process. But Niger's experience tells a different and more worrisome story. On the whole, balanced semipresidentialism can work, but it is a risky choice. Linz, Valenzuela, and Lijphart were probably right to warn against this form of government.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how to create the best possible conditions for democratic consolidation. There are so many variables behind the success or failure of democracy in a country that it is hard to determine the extent to which the formal structure of the executive affects the final outcome. Nevertheless, this analysis has shown that while semipresidential systems with figurehead presidents have generally performed well, other sorts of semipresidential regimes may place unnecessary obstacles on the path to democratic consolidation.

NOTES

1. Juan J. Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1 (Winter 1990): 51–69; and Juan J. Linz, "The Virtues of Parliamentarism," *Journal of Democracy* 1 (Fall 1990): 84–91.

2. Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

3. Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Steven D. Roper, "Are All Semi-Presidential Regimes the Same? A Comparison of Premier-Presidential Regimes," *Comparative Politics* 34 (April 2002): 253–72.

4. Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 55.

5. Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy," 55.

6. Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 15 (April 2004): 96–109; and Arturo Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," *Journal of Democracy* 15 (April 2004): 5–19.

7. Maurice Duverger, "A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government," *European Journal of Political Research* 8 (June 1980): 166.

8. Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism," *World Politics* 46 (October 1993): 8–9. They identified Finland and Switzerland as examples of "mixed" cases.

9. Robert Elgie, "The Politics of Semi-Presidentialism," in Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe,* 13.

10. I am grateful to Sophia Moestrup for this point.

11. Even though we can define semipresidentialism in a way that minimizes the subjectivity in determining the set of semipresidential countries, we cannot escape subjective judgments when it comes to identifying the different types of practice that occur within the set of semipresidential countries. So, for example, one author might wish to class Taiwan as a highly presidentialized semipresidential regime, whereas another may class it as a balanced semipresidential regime. In short, we cannot expect all scholars of Taiwan to agree as to the way in which the country operates. The same would be true for scholars of any other country. What we *can* do is to provide a framework within which it can be agreed that Taiwan is a semipresidential country, however it may operate in practice. In my opinion, this is at least a step in the right direction.

12. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal," *Comparative Politics* 29 (July 1997): 450–51.

13. Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," 102.

14. Iceland is a case where the constitution gives great powers to the president, but where in practice the prime minister exercises those powers. Therefore, Iceland is classed as a system with a ceremonial presidency.

15. Aurel Croissant, "From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asian Democratization," *Democratization* 11 (December 2004): 163.

16. Miro Cerar, "Slovenia," in Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe,* 232–59.

17. It might be noted that the prime minister was not given a great deal of

constitutional powers in the final system either, thus marking Slovenia as an anomaly among postcommunist Central and East European systems.

18. See Arturo Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," 17. He states: "Preferable to semipresidentialism would be a parliamentary system with a popularly elected but somewhat less powerful president—something closer to the Portuguese rather than the French system." The terminology differs between the analysis here and Valenzuela's article, but the conclusion is the same.

19. Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" 55.

20. Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation," 413.

21. M. Steven Fish, "The Inner Asian Anomaly: Mongolia's Democratization in Comparative Perspective," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34 (September 2001): 332.

22. Ania van de Meer Krok-Paszkowska, "Poland," in Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe,* 170–92.

23. Sophia Moestrup, "The Role of Actors and Institutions: The Difficulties of Democratic Survival in Mali and Niger," *Democratization* 6 (Summer 1999): 171–86.

24. See Oleh Protsyk, "Troubled Semi-Presidentialism: Stability of the Constitutional System and Cabinet in Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55 (November 2003): 1077–95. This situation is similar to the so-called prime-ministerial Oedipus complex that has been identified in France. See Pierre Servent, *Oedipe à Matignon: Le complexe du premier ministre* (Paris: Balland, 1988).