

# Endogenous Presidentialism

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- Large Literature on the *consequences* of presidentialism.
- Linz (1978) - presidential democracies more prone to coups and harder to consolidate.
- Persson, Roland, Tabellini (2000) - in presidential democracies rent extraction and public good provision lower than in parliamentary ones.
- But little work on the *origins* of presidentialism.
- But the question is compelling - see the experience of Sub-Saharan Africa since independence.

Country	Date of Independence	Constitution at Independence	Presidential Constitution	Parliamentary Constitution	Semi-Presidential Constitution
Botswana	1966	Parliamentary		1959	
Burkina Faso	1960	Presidential			1970 1977 1991
Burundi	1962	Parliamentary	1981 1992		
Cameroon	1960	Parliamentary	1961 1972		
Central African Republic	1960	Presidential	1964 1981 1986	1959	
Chad	1960	Parliamentary	1962 1989		
Cote d'Ivoire	1960	Presidential		1959	
Gabon	1960	Parliamentary	1961 1975	1959	1991
Gambia	1965	Parliamentary	1982 (amendment)	1970	
Ghana	1957	Parliamentary	1960 1979 1992	1969	
Guinea	1958	Presidential	1982 1990		
Guinea-Bissau	1973	Parliamentary		1984 1991	

Country	Date of Independence	Constitution at Independence	Presidential Constitution	Parliamentary Constitution	Semi-Presidential Constitution
Kenya	1963	Parliamentary	1968 (amendment) 1969		
Malawi	1964	Parliamentary	1966 1994		
Mali	1960	Parliamentary	1974		1992
Mauritius	1968	Parliamentary		1959	
Niger	1960	Presidential	1989		1991
Nigeria	1960	Parliamentary	1979	1963	
Rwanda	1962	Presidential	1978		1991 (amendment)
Senegal	1960	Parliamentary	1983		1970 (amendment), 1991 (amendment)
Sierra Leone	1961	Parliamentary	1978 1991	1971	
South Africa	1910	Parliamentary		1909 1961 1983 1993	
Sudan	1956	Parliamentary			1973
Tanzania	1964	Parliamentary	1965 1977 1985		
Zaire	1960	Parliamentary	1967 1978 1990		
Zambia	1964	Parliamentary	1973 1991		
Zimbabwe	1980	Parliamentary	1987	1979	

# This Paper

- In this paper we develop a theory of the endogenous choice of a presidential constitution (as opposed to a parliamentary one).
  - Analysis predicated on two assumptions.
- 1 The minority is relatively powerful compared to the majority in a parliamentary system.
  - 2 A president is more powerful relative to his own coalition than a prime minister is.

# Sketch of a Model Embodying these Assumptions

- We consider a polity formed of two groups, one of which is in a majority and which differ in their preferences with respect to government policy, specifically public goods provision.
- In each group there are three sorts of individuals, citizens, politicians and political leaders.
- In the model citizens elect politicians to the legislature using a system of proportional representation.
- The political system determines the allocation of a fixed budget between the provision of public goods and rents to politicians.

# Presidential Constitution

- Two separate elections, one where the leaders of the two groups vie for the presidency, and one for the legislature.
- Once elections have been held, the president then proposes a policy vector of public goods and rents for politicians to the legislature which is implemented if it is supported by a majority otherwise a status quo policy is implemented.

# Parliamentary Constitution

- Only one election for the legislature.
- After the election a legislator is chosen at random to be an agenda setter to nominate a legislator to be prime minister. The nominated prime minister proposes a government coalition. If the coalition he proposes receives majority support then the prime minister proposes a vector of public goods. If this proposal receives a majority then another agenda setter is chosen at random from the government coalition to determine a division of rents which is then voted on.
- If at any stage a proposal either to form a government or for a specific proposal is defeated then a status quo policy is implemented.



# Defense of this Model of Presidentialism

- Though there is separation of powers under a presidential constitution this does not lead to the type of checks and balances that Persson, Roland and Tabellini emphasize.
- Evidence does not support the idea that presidentialism has greater checks and balances than parliamentarism. Indeed, leaving aside the US, hard to associate presidentialism with checks and balances in Latin America, Africa or the former Soviet Union.
- Even in the US the president has a huge impact on the agenda. Lowi, Ginsberg and Shepsle (2008, pp. 246-247) note that

*“Delivering a “State of the Union” address might not appear to be of any great import. It is a mere obligation on the part of the president to make recommendations for Congress’s consideration. But ... each president, especially since Franklin Roosevelt, has relied on this provision to become the primary initiator of proposals for legislative action in Congress.”*

# Presidentialism outside the US

- Elsewhere in the world, the agenda setting powers of presidents are much greater. In Argentina, Chile and Taiwan, only the president can introduce a budget and congress cannot increase expenditures and it is quite general for presidents to have the agenda setting powers with respect to budgets.
- In Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Russia presidents can decree new legislation without getting any authority from the legislature.
- It is hardly plausible that the desire of Joseph Mobutu to make himself president in 1967, rather than remain prime minister of Zaire, represented an increase in checks and balances. The same can be said for Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe in 1987, Siaka Stevens in Sierra Leone in 1978, Hastings Banda in Malawi in 1966, Omar Bongo in Gabon in 1961, or Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1960.

# Institutional Preferences

- In the model rent extraction by politicians is higher and public good provision lower under presidentialism.
- Political leaders prefer to be presidents.
- Conditional on being in the winning coalition, those in the majority group prefer a parliamentary constitution because it increases their power relative to their leader. However, the drawback is that it also empowers the minority. With some probability the majority can lose agenda setting power.
- Politicians from the majority group can be induced to support presidentialism if the probability that they will lose power is sufficiently large and if losing power is sufficiently bad.

- We show that losing power will be worse, and presidentialism more attractive, when the preferences of the two groups with respect to public goods are more polarized, when ideological differences are more extreme, and when the society is poor in the sense that the government budget is low.

# Presidentialism and Democratic Stability

- Imagine that those who lose under democracy (the minority) have the option to pay a cost and overthrow it.
- Their incentive to do so will depend on how bad democracy is for them.
- Under presidentialism public good provision is lower so the minority are worse off.
- So the model captures one mechanism where Linz's hypothesis is correct.
- Possible to construct equilibria where the majority wish to introduce presidentialism even if it introduces the possibility that democracy will be overthrown by a coup.

# Designing Democratic Institutions

- Our focus is on equilibrium democratic institutions.
- The analysis might suggest that parliamentary institutions lead to greater public good provision and more stable democracy.
- Interesting that in the return to democracy which took place in many African countries in the 1990s there was no corresponding return to parliamentarism. Authoritarian leaders were happy to introduce democracy given that they could get themselves elected as president.
- So policy conclusions are complex - presidential democracy may be better than authoritarianism.