

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In every pure parliamentary system a vote for any particular legislator--or for the party's list--is indirectly a vote for that party's leader as candidate for prime minister. In a sense, a "perfect correlation" exists between that party's votes for executive and legislative candidates. Yet in systems with popularly-elected presidents, parties cannot take for granted the automatic alignment of the electoral bases of their executive and legislative "branches." Indeed, the notion of presidential coattail effects--well known to even casual observers of elections in presidential democracies--suggests that in such systems parties *expect* variation between a their executive and legislative vote totals. When voters have two ballots, parties must hope that their presidential candidates encourage voters to *also* cast votes for their candidates in the legislative race.

In light of this fact, consider the 2006 re-election of Brazil's incumbent president, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. At the same election, the party that Lula had helped found in the late 1970s and had led for over a decade, the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party, PT), won the largest share of votes in Brazil's legislative elections. Yet while Lula won 49% the votes, his party won only 15% that same day. Even more remarkably, in constituencies where Lula did well, the PT did poorly. That is, in 2006 there was a *negative* correlation between Lula's performance and the PT's performance, wholly contradicting the notion of presidential coattails. As we show in more detail in Chapter Five, a result as divergent as this is unusual but not unheard of. Such electoral outcomes reveal that under presidentialism the electoral bases--and presumably the policy preferences--of different "branches" of the same party can diverge widely. In parliamentary systems such electoral divergence--and the resulting policy divergence between a prime minister and his or her party's median member--is, quite simply, impossible to imagine.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In Brazil, tension between presidents and their parties is not new: President Getúlio Vargas (1950-54) went so far as to commit suicide in the presidential palace because he felt betrayed by his allies.

Separate presidential and legislative elections can also cause partisan forces to realign in ways they would not in a pure parliamentary system. Consider the process of government-formation after Romania's 2004 elections. Prior to the election the ruling Social Democratic Party and the Humanist Party joined forces in a coalition and explicitly agreed to form a government if they were to win the elections.<sup>2</sup> Such pre-electoral alliances are common in parliamentary democracies; parties typically honor these agreements by apportioning ministries and other portfolios (Carroll 2007). Together these two parties won a plurality of 40% of the seats, and their presidential candidate emerged in the first round with an eight-point lead over the candidate from the opposition Democratic Party. Given the results, these parties immediately prepared to form a government, with the aid of several smaller parties.

However, Romania's requirement that presidents obtain an electoral majority threw a wrench into those plans, because the Democratic candidate, Traian Băsescu, came from behind to beat the Social Democrats' candidate in the runoff. The Democratic Party had won only 14% of the seats, and its own coalition partner—the National Liberal Party--had won another 19%. Băsescu became president, but appeared headed for a situation of "cohabitation" in which he would have confronted an assembly controlled by the Social Democrats and the Humanists. However, he avoided cohabitation by first nominating as premier the leader of the National Liberals and then by convincing the Humanists to break their agreement with the Social Democrats and join his government. The results of the direct presidential election thus not only took government-formation out of the hands of the largest parliamentary party and the largest parliamentary coalition, but also served to break a pre-election agreement, altering the partisan balance of forces that *parliamentary* coalitions and *parliamentary* elections had established.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Terms of new Romanian political alliance outlined," Rompres news agency, Bucharest, *BBC Monitoring Europe*, September 9, 2004.

In these two examples, direct presidential elections produced results that are unthinkable in pure parliamentary systems. A party as small as Lula's Workers Party likely could not have headed a parliamentary government, and certainly could not have done so had there been a negative correlation between its leader's popularity and the party's popularity. Similarly, without a presidential runoff election, a small party like the Democrats or Liberals in Romania would have almost no chance to form a government, since two larger parties had already formed a coalition and were close to reaching a majority.

Now consider a case of parliamentary democracy, and of a prime minister—Margaret Thatcher—who was so famous for her strong-willed leadership that she was known as the Iron Lady and was sometimes said to exert a presidential style of leadership.<sup>3</sup> Despite the moniker, Thatcher's political authority vanished in 1990, three and a half years after her third-straight landslide election win, when her Conservative Party colleague Michael Heseltine challenged her in the Conservative Party's annual internal leadership election—a process that normally simply reaffirms the incumbent's leadership for another year. Heseltine's challenge failed, but his effort served to expose Thatcher as politically vulnerable—and led her to resign as Conservative leader.

Because the leader of the largest party in the British parliament automatically becomes prime minister, Thatcher also immediately resigned from that position, more than two years before the next scheduled parliamentary election. That is, the UK changed its national executive because of a regularly-scheduled *intra-party* leadership election, outside of any formal parliamentary procedure and without any direct public input. Such events are fairly common in parliamentary systems. However, as we detail in Chapter Four, we found only one case in the modern history of democratic government in which purely intra-party squabbles forced an incumbent president from office early. After a presidential election, intra-party accountability

---

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Poguntke and Webb eds. (2005), p. 21.

virtually ceases, because once in office parties cannot “fire” their leaders as presidents.

These three examples illustrate the main point of this book: *parties and party politics differ under different constitutional formats*. Conventional political science wisdom preaches that mass democracy is impossible without political parties. We agree, because parties—defined as organizations that “seek benefits derived from public office by gaining representation in elections” (Strøm 1990, 574)—fulfill all the key functions of democratic governance. They nominate candidates, coordinate election campaigns, aggregate interests, formulate and implement policy proposals, and manage government power. When scholars first asserted the essential connection between political parties and modern democracy, most of the world’s democracies were parliamentary. Yet, as we shall see below, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most democracies had directly-elected presidents. Given this, if parties are truly critical to democracy, then a systematic understanding of how presidencies shape parties is long overdue. Providing a framework for analysis that fills this gap is the reason we wrote this book.

## **DEMOCRACIES WITH ELECTED PRESIDENTS ARE NOW IN THE MAJORITY**

The great increase in the number of democracies in recent decades is by now well known and much celebrated (Huntington 1991, Geddes 1999). What is less well recognized is the dramatic evolution of the types of democracy throughout this period: where parliamentarism once was the rule and presidentialism the exception, forms of presidentialism now dominate. Throughout this book, we consider a country democratic if it scores at least 5 on the Polity IV scale for five or more years (a typical term length) in the post-war era.<sup>4</sup> Before proceeding further, we provide working definitions of each type of democratic regime. We develop these definitions more fully in Chapter Two, but by way of introduction we summarize the basic

---

<sup>4</sup> As of 2007; see <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.

distinctions as follows: In a “pure” parliamentary democracy the executive branch consists of a prime minister and cabinet who are collectively responsible to parliament through the confidence mechanism, by which a parliamentary majority may remove and replace the executive between elections.

The other “pure” type, presidentialism, features both separate origin and survival of the executive branch. Separate origin means citizens separately elect both the executive and legislative branches of government--usually through direct universal suffrage.<sup>5</sup> Separate survival means that an assembly majority cannot remove the head of the executive branch. In other words, the executive’s term in office is fixed--as is the legislature’s term, unlike in most parliamentary systems.

The third main type, semi-presidentialism, shares with pure presidentialism the separate election of a president who is head of state, but also shares with parliamentarism a prime minister who is head of government and who is, along with the cabinet, responsible to the assembly majority (Duverger 1980). In Chapter Two we provide more details about all three of these democratic regime-types and various hybrids; for now the key point is that semi-presidential systems share two critical characteristics with pure presidential systems: the separate election and survival of the president.

As we discuss in detail in Chapter Two, the differences among these three regime-types have important implications for political parties. Changes in the distribution of democratic regime-types in the past few decades provide good reason to pursue the connection between democratic regime-type and party politics. Figure 1.1 shows that parliamentarism has lost its

---

<sup>5</sup> An electoral college that consists of legislators or other politicians would not qualify as either direct or separate. However, an electoral college that mediates between popular votes and the final selection of a president (i.e. one that cannot propose candidates who did not seek popular votes) is still “separate election” for our purposes. Among the countries covered in this book, only the USA still has an electoral college and thus we frequently use the term “directly elected” to emphasize the absence of a role for legislators or other officials in the determination of a president (with occasional exceptions noted).

dominance among the world's growing number of democracies relative to pure and semi-presidentialism. In 1950 there were 20 democracies, twelve of which were parliamentary. The number of democracies doubled by 1983, and fully half remained parliamentary. Yet since that year the percentage of parliamentary democracies has never exceeded 50%. Democratization in Latin America in the 1980s moved presidentialism into second place among the three main types, but democratization in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s gave semi-presidentialism the lead among democracies with elected presidencies. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century dawned, semi-presidentialism gained a narrow plurality of all the world's democracies, and by 2005, there were eighty-one democracies by our criteria, of which 29 were semi-presidential, 28 parliamentary, and 24 pure presidential--meaning 65.4% of all democracies had directly-elected presidents.

#### **Figure 1.1 Here**

Despite the sustained growth in the absolute and relative number of democracies with elected presidencies, comparativists lack theoretical understanding of how political parties operate in such systems. Scholars have paid considerable attention to the ways in which different democratic regimes impact politics. Major topics in this literature include whether differences between presidentialism, parliamentarism and semi-presidentialism affects regime survival, policy stability or change, or the possibilities of democratic representation and accountability.<sup>6</sup> Yet scholars of political parties have yet to focus much attention on how, why, and to what extent *political parties themselves* differ under different democratic institutional contexts.

This book focuses on the phenomenon we call the “presidentialization” of political parties. We define presidentialization as *the way the separation of powers fundamentally shapes parties' organizational and behavioral characteristics, in ways that are distinct from the*

---

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Cheibub (2006); Haggard and McCubbins (2001); Persson and Tabellini (2005); Samuels and Shugart (2003); Samuels (2007).

*organization and behavior of parties in parliamentary systems.* Before explaining this concept in more detail, we briefly review scholarship on comparative political parties, focusing on the ways scholars have both ignored and taken into account variation in executive–legislative structure.

## **THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE MISSING VARIABLE OF REGIME TYPE**

Scholars have been exploring party politics for over a century. Yet most comparative scholarship on parties, party systems, and party-voter linkages has little or even nothing to say about the relationship between democratic regime type and the parties that operate within those institutions.<sup>7</sup> Some scholarship goes so far as to explicitly dismiss the potential impact of constitutional structure on party politics or party-system development. Even Maurice Duverger (1954)--though remembered as a founder of modern institutionalist research in political science--ignored the separation of powers in his classic book, a fact that attracted prominent criticism at the time (Beer 1953) but that has gone largely unexplored since.<sup>8</sup> He even ignored the impact of regime type on parties in the widely cited article in which he introduced the concept of “semi-presidential” government (Duverger 1980).

The most important reason scholars have not considered the influence of the separation of powers on parties is because comparative research on parties is intellectually rooted in the historical experience of Western Europe, where parliamentarism dominates (Janda 1993). The classics in the parties literature all implicitly assume that the study of parliamentary parties *is* the study of political parties.<sup>9</sup> Even when such research focuses on party organizations as

---

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Janda (1993); Ware (1996); Stokes (1999); Diamond and Gunther (2001); Gunther, Montero, and Linz (2002), Katz and Crotty (2006); Boix (2007); Kitschelt (2007); Hagopian (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Beer was reviewing the French edition of Duverger’s book. McCormick (1966, 4) made essentially the same point about scholars’ tendency to erase the presidency from the study of American political parties.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Michels (1962) [1911]; Weber (1958) [1919]; Duverger (1954); Lipset and Rokkan (1967); Sartori (1976);

institutions, by omission it assumes away the possibility that the separation of powers might matter.<sup>10</sup> In any case, the starting point for much research is not *institutional* structure but rather *social* structure, focusing on how cultural and economic cleavages translate into parties and party systems. Research on the emergence and evolution of party “types” reflects this focus. Thus regardless of the geographic or institutional context, political scientists have long referred to “elite,” “mass,” and “cadre” party types, formulated specifically for the late-19<sup>th</sup>/early-20<sup>th</sup> century Western European context, and then to “catch-all” and later “cartel” parties, which emerged largely as a function of socio-economic transformations in that same European context in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup>

Research on party *systems*’ emergence and consolidation has also reflected scholars’ concern with the impact of social-structural change—in particular industrialization, urbanization, and technological modernization—on political mobilization and competition, and on the ability of social groups to win parliamentary representation. Lipset and Rokkan (1967), building on concepts from Marx, Weber, Parsons and others, inferred the development of both parties and party-systems from the consequences of political, social and economic modernization in Western Europe. Subsequent scholarship echoes this emphasis on how socio-cultural cleavages impact party emergence and evolution (e.g. Inglehart 1987; Dalton 1988; Kitschelt 1994). Even today, somewhat ironically, research on the alleged “presidentialization” of parties (Poguntke and Webb eds. 2005) downplays variation in executive–legislative institutions across Europe and focuses instead on the impact of long-term structural and social change.

A second reason scholarship has yet to fully appreciate the potential impact of the

---

Panebianco (1988); Strøm (1990); Kitschelt (1994).

<sup>10</sup> As Ware (2006, 270-1) notes, “Panebianco (1988, xv) famously excluded American parties from his analysis by asserting that the factors affecting their emergence and development were different, but without discussing what the difference actually was.”

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Duverger (1954); LaPalombara and Weiner (1966); Kirchheimer (1966); Katz and Mair (1995); Gunther and Diamond (2001); Wolinetz (2002).

separation of powers is due to a tension in the study of political parties in the United States. American parties have been subject to scrutiny since the late 19th century (Bryce 1888), and were the object of the first explicitly comparative study (Ostrogorski [1902 1964]). On the one hand, some scholars of US political parties give the separation of powers pride of place. For example, McCormick (1966; 1979), Burnham (1979), and Epstein (1967) observed long ago that American parties did not emerge from societal cleavages or legislative divisions, as theories developed for Europe suggest.<sup>12</sup> Instead, they noted that party competition in the US first emerged and consolidated around presidential elections (Epstein 1986, 84; see also Davis 1992; Milkis 1993; Rae 2006). This view highlights the powerful impact separate executive elections have on party emergence, organization and behavior. According to Philip Klinkner (1994, 2), in such an environment parties suffer “at best benign neglect and at worst outright hostility” from presidents and presidential candidates, who take it upon themselves to articulate the party’s policy positions. Candidates and incumbent presidents can do this because they know that their separate election gives them “their own political constituencies and power bases, apart from those of Congress” (Epstein 1986, 87).

This separate election of the executive and legislative branches *of government* enhances the incentives for politicians in different branches *of the same party* to go their own way. Legislative majorities can defeat presidents without driving them from office--but they cannot force presidents to abandon their proposals. And presidents, for their part, can veto legislative proposals--but they cannot threaten legislators with parliamentary dissolution and new elections. This mutually-assured survival in office means that neither “branch” of a single party is bound to support the other as in a parliamentary system. In this way, the constitutional separation of powers provides a recipe for intra-party conflict.

---

<sup>12</sup> Epstein’s (1967) fundamental point was to dispute Duverger’s claim that the “mass” party was the modern norm.

Given these electoral and institutional incentives, scholars such as Steven Skowronek (1997, 49) have concluded that, “the institutional imperatives of the presidency lie on the side of independent political action, and that independence drives a wedge between partisanship and presidential conceptions of political responsibility.” The same holds true for legislators: the institutional context generates incentives to protect legislative autonomy from executive encroachment. Thus Robin Kolodny suggests that comparing legislators’ incentives across democratic regimes is an exercise in comparing apples and oranges, because under the separation of powers legislators’ primary interest is serving in the majority in their legislative chamber, *regardless of whether their party’s presidential candidate wins or not* (1998, 5).

In short, for many scholars of American politics the presidential and congressional branches of a single political party cannot be considered a single actor. As Richard Neustadt astutely observed, “What the Constitution separates, our political parties do not combine” (1960, 33-34). Given this, many prominent scholars blame the separation of powers for American democracy’s shortcomings, suggesting that presidentialism frustrates “responsible” party government, again in contrast to European parliamentary systems. It was for this reason that Woodrow Wilson (1908), in his capacity as political scientist and not as US president, urged amending the US constitution to adopt parliamentarism. E.E. Schattschneider repeated Wilson’s lament decades later (1942), and his view gained an enduring readership in the form of the statement by the American Political Science Association’s “Committee on Political Parties” (1950), which appears on course syllabi to this day. The critique of “irresponsible” parties resurges intermittently in discussions of American politics.<sup>13</sup>

If this view of American parties were consensual, we would simply ask why

---

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Helms (1949); Long (1951); Cutler (1980); Fiorina (1988); Katz (1988); Janda (1992); Sundquist (1992); Katz and Kolodny (1994).

comparativists have failed to learn anything from the US experience. Yet despite these scholars' eminence and the prominence of their arguments, the separation of powers vanishes entirely from some discussions of American political parties. Indeed, the influential treatment inspired by V.O. Key (1952) and Frank Sorauf (1968) draws attention to the "three faces" of parties--in government, in the electorate, and as organizations--but largely ignores the separation of powers.<sup>14</sup> (See Hershey (2008) for the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the undergraduate textbook built around this conceptualization). The high profile and theoretically sophisticated debate about the status of *legislative* parties in the US also ignores the separation of powers. For example, Aldrich's *Why Parties?* (1995), along with Cox and McCubbins' two books (1993; 2005), among the most-cited books on American parties--and which comparativists frequently cite and use for teaching purposes, all treat American parties as if they existed in a unicameral parliamentary system and discuss the separation of powers hardly at all.

Given this intellectual schizophrenia, comparative scholars of political parties rarely seek--much less derive--lessons from the US experience. To our knowledge, only Leon Epstein (1967; 1986) has explicitly and systematically placed American parties *as institutions or organizations* in comparative perspective.<sup>15</sup> Epstein argued that constitutional structure conditions party development and that party leaders must adapt to this institutional context. He focused on the implications of the fact that presidentialism offers parties two electoral prizes, arguing that the methods for winning each prize may conflict and generate intra-party dilemmas that are specific to separation of powers systems.

For whatever reason, comparative scholars of political parties have largely ignored this

---

<sup>14</sup> Somewhat ironically, Poguntke and Webb (eds. 2005) essentially replicate, without acknowledgment, the tripartite nature of political parties that Key and Sorauf articulated so long ago.

<sup>15</sup> However, see also Cain *et al.* (1987), which focuses on the difference in party appeals to the electorate between the US and the UK, and which has inspired substantial comparative research (e.g. Carey and Shugart 1995). A few scholars have also begun to respond to Poguntke and Webb's (eds.) characterizations (e.g. Heffernan 2005).

insight and have paid scant attention to the experience of the world's oldest presidential democracy. Instead, they have returned again and again to questions originally postulated for the study of European parliamentary parties. Party scholars thus tend to privilege sociological variables and ignore or downplay the impact of the type of executive on party organization and behavior, notwithstanding the enormous differences on this variable between Europe and much of the rest of the world. As a result, attention to the separation of powers remains inconsistent even in regions where it might matter most. For example, in Latin America, the region of the world with the most experience with presidentialism outside the US, scholars have explored the tension between presidentialism and party *systems* but have yet to consider the relationship between presidentialism and the parties themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Even within Europe, there are now major differences in constitutional structure that merit attention. For example, Portugal's democratic experience since the mid-1970s, and the emergence of several democracies in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet empire has increased the number of elected presidencies on a continent where such an institution for decades was a French and Finnish aberration. Although scholars of post-communist Eastern Europe have addressed the role of presidencies for understanding party-system evolution,<sup>17</sup> this growing body of literature has only rarely treated the organization and behavior of parties themselves as an outcome the separation of powers might shape. As we noted in our discussion of Figure 1.1, democratization in Europe pushed semi-presidentialism into the leading position among the world's democratic regimes. However, comparative research on political parties has yet to systematically investigate the potential importance of the separation of powers, despite the

---

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Scott (1969); Dix (1989); Scully (1992); Shugart and Carey (1992); Mainwaring (1993); Linz (1994); Mainwaring and Scully (1995); Torcal and Mainwaring (2003); Alcántara Sáez and Freidenberg (2001a, 2001b, and 2001c); Mainwaring and Torcal (2006). However, see Coppedge (1994) and Romero (2005).

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Kitschelt *et al.* (1999, 55-56); Ordeshook (1995); Filippov, Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1999); Remington, (2002; 2006); Hale (2005); Meleshevich (2007).

growing importance of elected presidencies for democratic governance around the world.

### CLUES FROM EXISTING RESEARCH

Perhaps comparative scholars have yet to fully incorporate the separation of powers into the study of parties because there is no need to—that is, because the separation of powers is in fact unimportant and the American case is *sui generis*. As comparativists we reject national exceptionalism arguments on principle. In any case, consider the long-standing notion shared by party scholars of methodological orientations as varied as Joseph Schlesinger (1984; 1991), Leon Epstein (1967; 1986), Angelo Panebianco (1988) and Kaare Strøm (1990) that *political opportunity structures shape parties' emergence, evolution and strategy*. When one combines this idea with Paul Pierson's (2000) notion that political institutions tend to generate incentives that induce the formation of new and complementary institutions, we can hypothesize that *presidential constitutions encourage the development of specifically presidentialized parties* (Samuels 2002). And despite our conclusion about the general direction of comparative research on political parties, scholars have offered important insights that support our hypothesis.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, we were inspired to write this book because of mounting evidence--some of it indirect--that the separation of powers affects not only the number but also the nature of the parties in a political system. For example, extending the argument that electoral institutions shape party-system fragmentation,<sup>19</sup> scholars have found that presidentialism tends to reduce the number of parties, at least if presidential elections are held using plurality rules (as opposed to a two-round majority system) and held simultaneously with legislative elections.<sup>20</sup> The dependent

---

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Willey (1998); Geddes (2004); and Kasuya (2004).

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Rae (1971); Riker (1982); Taagepera and Shugart (1989); Lijphart (1994); Cox (1997), Taagepera (2007).

<sup>20</sup> Lijphart (1994); Jones (1995); Shugart (1995); Cox (1997); Coppedge (2002); Golder (2006); Hicken and Stoll (2007).

variable in this literature is the degree of fragmentation in the party system, and as such this research only indirectly explores political parties themselves. After all, the effective number of parties is empirically and theoretically ambiguous as anything more than a summary index of the relative size of the largest parties and the fragmentation of the overall field (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 259-60; Taagepera 2007). It tells us nothing about parties' ideological commitments, internal organizational structures, or behavioral imperatives. Yet if presidential elections can reduce the fragmentation of the party system and thus the number of important partisan actors, logically they must also generate incentives for parties to aggregate into relatively larger organizations, with broader appeals. And if that is the case, then the separation of powers not only leads to *fewer* parties but also to parties of a *different nature*--a point that has been made before, if only in passing (e.g. Epstein 1967, Shugart 1988, 10-12, Sartori 1994, 101).

How might parties' "nature" differ under the separation of powers? First, presidentialism tends to *hinder parties' organizational development* (Colton 1995; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Fish 2000; 2005; Ishiyama and Kennedy 2001). Yet second, the separation of powers also tends to generate *nationalized* parties. In the US, repeated presidential elections nationalized the party system starting in the 1830s (McCormick 1979). Cox (1997) generalized this hypothesis, suggesting that "pursuit of the presidency" encourages nationalization because "would-be executives have an incentive to orchestrate cross-district coalitions of would-be legislators" (201) in order to build support for their own candidacy. The impact of presidential elections on nationalization may in turn be a function of the powers of the presidency, because as the presidency becomes more powerful, candidates for legislative office across different constituencies face stronger incentives to link with a presidential candidate.<sup>21</sup> The extent of

---

<sup>21</sup> Riker (1987); Cox (1997); Ehrlich (2000); Chhibber and Kollman (2004); Hale (2005); Clark and Wittrock (2005).

nationalization might also be a function of the concurrence of executive and legislative elections (Shugart 1995; Mainwaring and Jones 2003). When elections are concurrent, they will be “presidentialized” at least to some degree, because attention shifts to the executive race and away from legislative elections.

Perhaps because the separation of powers impedes strong party organizations and forces candidates to appeal to broad, national electoral coalitions, scholars have also recently suggested that *mass partisanship is weaker* in presidential systems (Dalton, McCallister, and Wattenberg 2000; Huber, Kernell, and Leoni 2005). There is no necessary contradiction between “nationalized” and “weak” parties, whether organizationally or in the electorate: a party can be structured to aggregate votes throughout the national territory yet have low levels of membership and inter-election commitment of activists. The point remains that the separation of powers imposes electoral incentives that affect party organization in particular ways, shaping parties’ number and their nature. Compared to “parliamentarized” parties, broad coalitions with diffuse ideological commitments may be precisely the sorts of characteristics that describe the DNA of “presidentialized” parties.

Evidence from research on legislative politics also bolsters the notion that parties’ nature differs under the separation of powers. Most importantly, given the longstanding allegation that presidentialism and “party government” are incompatible, John Carey (2009) has recently confirmed the long-held supposition (e.g. Janda and Colman 1998) that *legislative parties are less cohesive* on roll-call votes under the separation of powers. Perhaps because of this, presidents are also able to *implement less of their legislative agenda* than prime ministers, controlling for the size of the executive’s legislative coalition (Cheibub *et al.* 2004).

These findings from comparative research on elections and legislative politics indirectly

support our main theoretical point: *intra-party politics differs substantially under separation of powers*, whether under single-party majority or multiparty government, because the separation of powers affects not only relations between branches of government but also between the executive and legislative “branches” of a single political party. What we aim to do is move beyond this indirect evidence and provide both a theoretical framework as well as direct empirical support for understanding how and why the strategic dilemmas that party politicians face differ as a function of variation in the institutional context—and thus offer support for the notion that the constitutional separation of executive and legislative powers fundamentally affects parties themselves.

### **“PRESIDENTIALIZED” VERSUS “PARLIAMENTARIZED” PARTIES**

The central question in this book is, “To what extent does the presence of constitutionally-separate executive authority “presidentialize” political parties? We are interested in explaining how the constitutional structure of executive-legislative relations affects party organization and behavior. In any democratic regime, situations frequently arise in which the goals of the executive and legislative elements of the same party come into conflict (Laver 1999). Such conflict is a function of incentive compatibility in the electoral and governing arenas between a party’s executive and legislative elements, and of a party’s relative ability to hold its own executive to accounts. Our core argument, which we elaborate in Chapter Two, suggests that both incentive incompatibility and the extent of intra-party accountability vary more *across* than *within* democratic regime-types, due to the constitutional separation of origin and survival.

Separate *origin* means that politicians from the same party can face different and even conflicting incentives in the electoral arena. The separation of powers implies that parties face

distinct dilemmas of executive candidate selection and campaign strategy under different constitutional regimes, because the characteristics that facilitate winning a direct presidential campaign differ from the characteristics of a good legislative leader. In contrast, the fused origin of the executive from within a party's legislative contingent under parliamentarism necessarily implies that the executive is a direct agent of the party, thereby minimizing incentive incompatibility between branches of the same party.

Likewise, the distinction between fused and separate *survival* of executive authority has important ramifications for internal party politics, particularly in the governing arena. Separate survival means that a party or legislative majority cannot remove a sitting president, absent an extraordinary constitutional crisis. Numerous scholars have considered how fixed terms influence *inter-branch* relations (e.g. Mainwaring 1993; Linz 1994; Cheibub 2006), but scholars have largely ignored the implications of fixed terms for *intra-party* relations. The checks and balances built into the separation of powers are supposed to constrain politicians from abusing their powers by setting “ambition against ambition.” This may be true of *inter-party* politics, where a president faces an opposition majority in the legislature. However, separate survival means that presidents have little to fear from their own colleagues—a fact that throws up qualitatively different barriers to intra-party cohesion and alters the intra-party balance of power in favor of directly-elected executives in terms of cabinet and bureaucratic appointments and policy proposals. Our theoretical argument, which we elaborate in Chapter Two, suggests that Madison's theory of incentive-based accountability in separate powers systems contains an unrealized tension: while checks and balances might hold *across branches*, it does not hold *within parties*.

In short, the separation of powers changes how parties engage in all of their key tasks:

nominating, electing, and governing. Given this, our argument suggests that *to the extent that capture of a separately-elected presidency is important for control over the distribution of the spoils of office and/or the policy process, party behavior and organization will tend to mimic constitutional structure, giving rise to “presidentialized” parties*. Such parties will exhibit greater incentive incompatibility between their executive and legislative “branches,” and less intra-party leadership accountability. This means, not surprisingly, that “presidentialization” is minimized under parliamentarism. And as we discuss in Chapter Two, party presidentialization is likely not only under the “pure” regime type, but also under semi-presidential systems. This is because in these regimes, pursuit of the presidency also tends to become parties’ overriding organizational and behavioral imperative.

What is the distinction between “presidentialized” and “parliamentarized” parties? These are ideal types. We start with the assumption that parties are teams of politicians who 1) cooperate in elections under a common label to recruit candidates that they seek to elect to office and 2) coordinate the process of governing and policy-making between elections. A “parliamentarized” party fuses its executive and legislative functions, by selecting its leader and holding him or her accountable through an internal deselection process. This means that *intra-party* accountability over a leader in parliamentary parties mimics *parliamentary* accountability over a prime minister, which occurs through the confidence procedure. In the language of principal-agent theory, which we employ extensively in subsequent chapters, the party is the principal and the national chief executive is the agent, accountable to that principal.

Given the differences in democratic constitutional regimes, a “presidentialized” party is therefore one that delegates far greater discretion to the leader that it selects, in terms of how to seek and win the national chief executive position and how to govern. Discretion in the electoral

and governing arenas follows from the separation of origin of executive authority in a separate election process--the hallmark of presidential forms of government. And upon election, the separation of survival also affords the party leader additional discretion in selecting cabinet and other executive personnel and in policy initiation and management--because after the election, the party that nominated the presidential candidate can no longer hold that person immediately accountable.

We do not claim that these ideal-type parties follow rigidly from regime type. Some parties in parliamentary systems may exhibit presidentialized features--a dynamic that has attracted attention in recent years (Poguntke and Webb eds., 2005). That is, we agree that under some conditions, parties in parliamentary systems will choose leaders with personal charisma and supra-partisan appeal, and that these leaders may then use their personal popularity to distance themselves from party constraints. If this leader remains popular while the party loses popularity, he or she will retain more freedom to direct the executive branch than a leader who enjoys less personal support. This seems to have been the case, for example, of the highly personalized tenure of Japanese PM Junichiro Koizumi (Krauss and Nyblade 2005), who famously vowed to “destroy” the Liberal Democratic Party upon assuming its leadership in April 2001, and whose tenure was marked by repeated battles with party insiders.<sup>22</sup> Other examples of parties closely identified with their leader exist, such as the dependence of *Forza Italia* on Silvio Berlusconi.

Nonetheless, the theoretical logic and evidence we present in this book suggest that one should not exaggerate this sort of party presidentialization in parliamentary systems. Party presidentialization is at odds with the core logic of parliamentarism, and it is likely the exception

---

<sup>22</sup> For an overview, see Mazami Ito, “Koizumi leaves LDP factions in tatters,” *The Japan Times Online*, June 26, 2006. <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20060626f1.html> (accessed December 30, 2008).

rather than the rule or a trend across all systems, as Poguntke and Webb imply. This follows from the inescapable fact that under parliamentarism voters cannot vote *against* a party while voting *for* its leader--and it is impossible for a politician, no matter how personally popular, to ascend to the top executive post and remain there without ongoing support from the legislative majority.

Our argument also allows for parties in presidential systems to exhibit “parliamentarized” characteristics. For example, some parties in presidential systems impose rules seeking to limit the discretion and independence of their leaders who become president. Some parties also seek to maximize control over the presidential candidates by tightly controlling candidate selection and maintaining highly partisan rather than personalized presidential campaigns, and some attempt to rein in their candidates who win the presidency by insisting that they regularly consult with top party leaders while in office. Such mechanisms appear to have existed, for example, in Venezuela’s *Acción Democrática* (Democratic Action, AD) in the 1960s and 1970s (Coppedge 1994; Crisp 2000), suggesting that this party was relatively “parliamentarized.”

However, like presidentialization in parliamentary systems, “parliamentarization” in presidential systems is usually ephemeral, again because of the inescapable logic of such regimes: a politician can ascend to and remain in the top executive post *even if* his or her party performs poorly in legislative elections or declines to support the president’s policies once in office, and can remain in office *despite* the desires of his or her party. And even in allegedly “parliamentarized” parties such as AD, presidents can and do repudiate their parties – as evidenced by the battles between Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez and his party in the early 1990s (Stokes 2001; Corrales 2002) (See Chapters Four and Eight).

The separation of powers creates the conditions for the emergence of presidentialized

parties. We do not claim that our argument supersedes or supplants the importance of social, economic, or cultural forces that drive party formation, evolution and behavior. We only suggest that the separation of powers provides a necessary addition to the comparative study of parties. There may be many reasons why parties differ across countries, but analysis of these differences should begin with the difference in constitutional design.

### **OUTLINE OF THE BOOK**

Chapter Two presents our theoretical framework, based on principles derived from the *Federalist Papers* and framed in the language of collective action and principal-agent theory. The principles underlying these theories teach us that political institutions shape individual politicians' incentives. Membership in a political party confers collective benefits to all individual members. Yet maintaining the reputation of the party poses collective action problems, which politicians resolve through delegation and other mechanisms to enforce coordinated action. All parties face these dilemmas, regardless of the institutional context. However, we claim that variation in relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government impacts parties' organizational and behavioral imperatives, because such variation complicates resolution of these delegation and collective action problems.

Chapters Three and Four elaborate on the challenges of delegation between principals (parties) and agents (their leaders) across constitutional formats. Inherent in all principal-agent relationships are potential conflicts of interest between contracting parties: leaders can employ delegated resources or authority to further their own interests, which may conflict with the principals' collective interests. This problem is exacerbated to the extent that the principal cannot overcome the problems of *adverse selection*, the notion that people with undesirable

characteristics are more likely to seek and obtain certain positions, and *moral hazard*, the notion that maintaining the letter and the spirit of a contract is difficult once it is signed.

In Chapter Three we argue that parties face greater adverse selection problems under the separation of powers because the best potential agent from the party's point of view may be incapable of winning a direct presidential election, while the candidate most likely to win a direct national election is less likely to serve as a faithful party agent. Using a global database of national executives, we show that presidents, although not the stereotypical "outsiders" many have assumed, do have less *partisan* experience than prime ministers, on average. Such experience is the primary signal that parties-as-principals seek when hiring agents to reduce the danger of adverse selection. We also show that prime ministers in semi-presidential systems are less likely to be party "insiders" than those in pure parliamentary systems, and present evidence suggesting that presidents in such systems may be able to *reverse* the principal-agent relationship, making the prime minister an agent of the president rather than the party.

Chapter Four turns to the question of moral hazard. Careful selection of agents--the power to *hire*--may mitigate adverse selection problems. However, to contain the problem of moral hazard the power to *fire* an agent is more important. Principals who cannot fire their agents cannot control their agents at all, while principals who can easily fire their agents will find those agents highly responsive. Deselection mechanisms are thus critical tools for enforcing intra-party accountability. We show that in parliamentary systems, parties regularly remove their own leaders as prime minister, between elections. In contrast, in mixed systems *presidents* frequently remove the prime minister--even when the constitution does not clearly afford them such a right--again suggesting a reversal of the principal-agent relationship. And in both pure and semi-presidential systems, parties almost never initiate proceedings to remove their own

sitting president. This inability to “fire” a leader under the separation of powers creates serious intra-party moral hazard problems.

Chapters Five through Seven move into the electoral and governing arenas, to explore the nature and potential extent of incentive incompatibility between parties’ executive and legislative branches. Separate origin means that members of the executive and legislative branches of a single party can be motivated by different political incentives. This can occur because different branches of the same party can derive electoral support from different bases--either for geographic or policy reasons, or both. To the extent that this “electoral separation of purpose” can be observed, it suggests that the president and his or her party are not a single (if highly imperfect) electoral agent of the legislative party’s voters, as we assume under parliamentarism. The greater the electoral separation of purpose, the greater the intra-party conflict.

Chapter Five thus examines the degree of overlap between constituency-level election returns for presidential candidates and their parties in 53 presidential and semi-presidential systems between 1946 and 2007. Despite the unifying effect of “presidential coattails,” this survey shows that electoral separation of purpose is both normal and often extensive--and that purely intra-party factors, rather than cross-national and largely unchanging institutional factors, account for much of the variation over time in the relationship between a party’s executive and legislative vote totals.

Chapters Six and Seven turn to qualitative case-studies of the impact of separation of origin and survival on incentive incompatibility between parties’ executive and legislative branches, in both the electoral and governing arenas. To test the hypothesis that parties organize and behave differently under different constitutional designs, we would ideally compare how parties fared in countries that have shifted from one “pure type” democratic regime to the other.

Only two democracies have undertaken institutional changes close to this ideal: France in 1958 and Israel in 1992 and again in 2001. In Chapter Six we therefore explore the impact of constitutional change on party organization and behavior in these two “quasi-experimental” cases, explaining how a shift towards an autonomous executive presidentialized the parties in those two countries.

Chapter Six explored parties in two hybrid democratic regimes. Chapter Seven then turns to two pure presidential systems, adding evidence to our argument by exploring the sources of separation of purpose in the conservative Mexican National Action Party (PAN) and the leftist Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT). This contrast between two ideologically distinct parties shows that controlling for a country’s institutional context, intra-party battles from election to election over presidential nominations, campaign strategies and policy platforms affect the extent of incentive incompatibility between a party and its candidate for executive office.

Finally, in Chapter Eight we consider the implications of our theoretical framework for the study of political representation and governance. This chapter offers the first global test of the hypothesis that “responsible party government” is less likely under the separation of powers. Our framework suggests that responsible parties are a function of the degree of incentive incompatibility between the executive and his or her party. Building on research by Susan Stokes (2001), we explore the incidence of “policy-switching” under different democratic regimes, comparing incumbent executives’ policy preferences before and after every democratic election in the world between 1978 and 2002. We confirm that “mandate representation” is less likely when executive elections are competitive and when executives do not control a legislative majority--but find that these conditions *only* hold in pure and semi-presidential systems, implying that the factors Stokes (2001) identified as causally important in Latin America cannot

be generalized. In short, our findings do suggest that “responsible” party government is less likely under separate-powers systems.

Our argument and findings carry wide-ranging implications for understanding comparative politics. Most broadly, this book suggests that many of the alleged differences in governance between democratic regimes arise as a function of the ways in which regime type interacts with parties--not with the *number* of parties, as much previous research has claimed, but with their *nature*--the ways parties organize and behave strategically.<sup>23</sup> Systems with “presidentialized parties” will see different patterns of party organization and behavior because the separation of origin and survival of the executive and legislative branches of government affects party strategy about whom to nominate for both executive and legislative office, about whether or not to form electoral and/or governing coalitions, about the content of political campaigns, and about the content of and degree of support for executive policy proposals. To the extent that a separately-elected presidency exerts influence over any of the things that parties seek--votes, office, or policy--then the separation of powers does not merely split one branch from the other; it splits parties *internally*, posing particular dilemmas for members of the same party who occupy or seek to occupy different branches of government.

---

<sup>23</sup> It also suggests that the separation of powers is conceptually prior to any analysis of “veto players” (Tsebelis 2002), because the separation of powers not only affects the number of veto players, but also their nature.

**Figure 1.1. Percentage of Democratic Regimes by Executive–Legislative Structure, 1950–2005**

