

PRESIDENTIALISM, ELECTIONS AND REPRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

How does presidentialism affect various forms of representation? All else being equal, presidentialism is likely to impede the prospects for ‘mandate’ representation but enhance the prospects for ‘accountability’ representation. The *degree* of mandate or accountability representation is a function of the balance of powers and the degree of separation of purpose between the branches. Strong presidentialism works against mandate representation by freeing the president from his/her legislative copartisans and promoting ‘policy switching’. In contrast, a high ‘separation of purpose’, defined primarily by a country’s electoral institutions, clarifies for voters the responsibility of each branch for policy. Thus presidentialism – under certain common institutional configurations – provides accountability representation to a degree overlooked by existing research.

KEY WORDS ● accountability ● elections ● electoral systems ● presidentialism ● representation

1. Introduction

How does presidentialism affect the relationship between elections and representation? We follow Pitkin (1967) in defining representation as a relationship between citizens’ interests and political outcomes in which rulers act to meet the interests of the public. By implication, our question is comparative in two ways – we seek to explore the ways in which presidential and parliamentary governments might differ in terms of fostering political representation, as well as to understand how presidential institutions might differ in the degree to which they enhance or limit representation.

Our question is pertinent because although the study of representation has a long history, and although presidentialism of some form has become the

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regime of choice for many new democracies, neither normative nor positive political theory has adequately explored the implications of the separation of powers for notions of representation.¹ Scholars have noted that while no democratic system can guarantee representation, certain institutional configurations are likely to enhance or limit representation. Some scholars thus criticize presidentialism for several alleged drawbacks, including political rigidity, dual democratic legitimacies, zero-sum politics, an undemocratic 'style' of presidential governance and a tendency for political 'outsiders' to gain office independently of political parties (see, e.g., Linz, 1990, 1994; Mainwaring, 1993; Stepan and Skach, 1994).

Yet following Shugart and Carey (1992), and Mainwaring and Shugart's (1997) response to Linz, we argue that this debate is misguided, and that some of these alleged drawbacks are in fact potential pluses for democratic representation. Indeed, the debate ought not be about 'better' or 'worse' representation in one regime type versus the other but about enhancing certain aspects of representation versus others, of tradeoffs both within and across regimes. In this light, we argue that presidentialism is more likely to maximize some forms of representation, while it is also more likely to minimize other forms. This conclusion builds on Przeworski et al.'s (1999) recent discussion of the relationship between elections and representation. Przeworski et al. distinguish the 'responsiveness' from the 'accountability' role of elections. In the former (called 'mandate representation'), voters signal politicians what they would like them to do and politicians follow through on their promises, while in the latter (called 'accountability representation') voters determine whether they approve or not of what the government has done, in a 'retrospective voting' fashion.

As Carey and Shugart (1995) did for electoral systems, this article is a largely conceptual attempt to describe the potential differences in representation between regime types and within presidential regimes. In the next section we explore these notions of 'mandate' and 'accountability' representation. Subsequently we discuss whether these modes of representation are more or less likely in presidential or parliamentary systems. We conclude that, *ceteris paribus*, presidentialism creates disincentives for mandate representation while at the same time creating incentives for accountability representation. The *ceteris paribus* condition is crucial, however, because the degree to which presidentialism impedes mandate representation or enhances accountability depends on the degree of balance in the separation of powers and the

1. A recent example illustrates the problem: Powell's (2001) excellent study of accountability does not explore potential differences between presidential and parliamentary systems, focusing instead on differences between 'majoritarian' and 'proportional' systems. Presidentialism, of course, tends to fall in between these two ideal-types. Powell's study includes 20 cases, only one of which is a pure presidential system (the USA).

degree to which there is unity or separation of purpose between the two branches. We elaborate on these concepts and hypotheses in Section 4. In the final section we explore the implications of our argument for notions of representation and propose several ways in which these theoretical hypotheses could be empirically tested.

2. Representation through Elections: Mandates and Accountability

2.1. Mandate Representation

Governments can be representative because they are either responsive or accountable (Manin et al., 1999: 10). Governments are responsive when voters signal what they would like the government to do, parties propose policies, citizens use their vote to choose the best policies and the government implements its proposal (p. 30). This view of elections is common: scholars typically explain major policy initiatives around the world as a response to voters' desire for change. For example, Klingemann et al.'s (1994) 'manifestos project' analysis explains policy formation in OECD countries this way.

Mandate representation occurs when politicians' and voters' interests coincide or when government leaders expect voters will stick with their initial preferences (Manin et al., 1999: 16). Of course, no democracy has rules that could enforce mandate representation, and with good reason: when circumstances change, a government may have to violate its mandate in order to adequately represent its citizens. Indeed, this kind of citizen-politician linkage might be broken under any of several circumstances. Politicians may have different interests from voters, they may face pressure from actors whose preferences diverge from voters' (union leaders, lobbyists, bureaucrats) or they may believe that voters have malleable interests. Indeed, the fact that voters' interests change in response to changing environmental conditions implies that they might not want parties to stick to their mandates. For example, if the social, economic or political context changes (e.g. a recession or war occurs) voters might not want the government to stick with its original promises but to come up with solutions to the emerging problems. In these circumstances the original mandate is no longer truly in the best interests of the voters. Politicians might also be strategic and believe that voters have incorrect information about the 'best' policy. They may campaign on that 'best' policy but then later switch policies, and yet reap later electoral rewards because they were correct and the voters were, in fact, incorrect but satisfied with the government's 'deviation' from the mandate. Following a discussion of the 'accountability' mode of representation, we will explore the conditions under which presidentialism encourages or discourages mandate representation.

2.2 *Accountability Representation*

Scholars have focused significant energy on the critical question of whether citizens can hold governments accountable. For example, there is a relatively large literature on 'retrospective voting' (e.g. Fiorina, 1981). According to this theory, representation does not occur because elected representatives stick to their promises. Representation instead emerges because voters retrospectively determine whether governments are acting in their best interests and reward or sanction them appropriately.

Although this idea has tremendous normative appeal for democratic theory, several potential problems might hinder voters' capacity to hold governments accountable. At one extreme, voters might not be able to 'kick the bums out' if no viable alternative exists. Voters must have an available alternative in order to sanction the incumbents by voting them out of office.² In one-party dominant countries like Japan and Mexico over a period of many decades, voters may lack a clear alternative even if the incumbent party is performing poorly. In countries with less institutionalized party systems, moreover, there may not always be a viable alternative. For simplicity's sake we assume in the discussion that follows that voters have an alternative. We do not believe this assumption is overly strict, because, provided elections themselves are reasonably fair, candidates are likely to enter and provide a viable alternative when voters are sufficiently unhappy with that status quo. In fact, presidential systems with uninstitutionalized party systems arguably make the entry of 'neopopulist' type candidates easier, because existing party alignments are a weak constraint on the ability of new entrants to mobilize voters (Roberts, 1995; Phillip, 1998; Weyland, 2001).

A second reason why elections may fail to induce accountability is if governments conceal information that might help voters make an informed decision. This is a problem in all mass democracies. However, Persson et al. (1997) have recently argued that the separation of powers, by constitutionally engendering conflicts of interest between branches of government, encourages greater information revelation to voters in presidential government,³ so it is not unreasonable to assume that citizens in presidential systems are at least potentially capable of holding governments accountable.

2. On this point, see Anderson (2000).

3. The conditions of Persson et al.'s (1997) model are that one agent (e.g. the president) has full agenda-setting power and collusion between agents is impossible. These conditions often do not hold in reality. More importantly, as we argue later, these two factors are a function of the balance of the separation of powers and the degree of unity or separation of purpose. In short, our conceptualization adds finer-grained hypotheses to Persson et al.'s argument: accountability is relatively more likely under certain institutional arrangements within separation of powers systems.

Third, citizens will be able to hold governments accountable only if politicians desire (and are eligible for) re-election. If incumbents merely want to serve one term, enrich themselves at the public's expense and then leave government, then accountability would be impossible to obtain. This raises the question of whether limitations on executive re-election limit voters' capacity to hold governments accountable in presidential systems. Manin et al. (1999) argue that this is the case. However, this ignores the likelihood that incumbents care about their legacy and possess a strong interest in the continuation of their policies, and assumes that presidential elections are entirely about candidates' *personal* qualities rather than about broadly based national policy proposals that are associated with partisan appeals – *even if relatively less so than in a (stylized) European parliamentary system*.

Presidents are deeply concerned with their place in national history and part of that legacy often includes helping elect a successor. This entails not only transmitting to voters the idea that the incumbent and the successor-candidate share a personal affinity but also that they agree on policy issues that the voters care about. On the one hand, candidates know that they must distance themselves from an unpopular incumbent president. But, on the other hand, they also know that they may benefit from associating with a popular incumbent. Voters may either reward a successful president's party by electing his/her hand-picked successor or punish his/her party by electing the candidate of a rival party. Thus there is no reason why voters cannot hold presidents – *even those not running for re-election* – accountable in a retrospective voting fashion and thus hold 'government' to accounts more generally.

Most importantly for our purposes, scholars have claimed that the threat of electoral sanction declines when voters cannot discern responsibility for government policy. Scholars associate certain institutional and partisan variables with the relative 'clarity of government responsibility'. Powell and Whitten (1993) concluded that voters are more likely to punish or reward the incumbent government if 'clarity of responsibility' is high. Similarly, Manin et al. (1999: 47) argue that accountability is limited by coalition government and divided government; and they imply that government responsibility ought to be less clear in presidential systems more generally (see also Adserà et al., 2000). This implies a corollary hypothesis: that voters will be relatively less capable of holding presidential governments accountable than parliamentary government. In contrast, however, Anderson (1995) found that even under parliamentary coalition government voters can distinguish the parties that are responsible for outcomes from those that are not and punish or reward them accordingly.

The question of accountability has yet to be adequately explored for presidential systems and these contradictory hypotheses suggest that additional theoretical and empirical work ought to explore the comparison

between presidential and parliamentary systems as well as look for differences within presidential systems. We believe that there are good theoretical reasons to question Manin et al.'s preliminary hypothesis and to suppose voters can hold presidential governments accountable. Although no empirical work exists that tests this proposition in comparative perspective, substantial evidence exists that supports this view for economic voting effects in the US case (see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier [2000] for a review). In the next section we discuss why mandate representation ought to be less likely in presidential systems generally but why accountability remains possible. Subsequently, we will explain how variations in presidential institutions generate different expectations regarding mandate and accountability representation.

3. Mandates and Accountability in Presidential Systems

Existing research provides scant theoretical guidance on the extent to which presidentialism might enhance or limit either 'mandate' or 'accountability' representation. Przeworski et al. (1999) do note that institutional design is a potentially crucial variable in promoting representation. However, they do not address the hypothesis that the separation of powers matters for representation and they acknowledge that 'our understanding of the effects of the structure of government clearly lags behind' (p. 23). We agree and hope that the following discussion contributes to the understanding of representation under the separation of powers. We first discuss the likelihood of mandate representation under presidentialism and then explore the possibility of accountability under presidential systems.

3.1. The Likelihood of 'Mandate' Representation in Presidential Systems

Scholars have long criticized presidentialism for an institutional structure that allegedly impedes 'responsible party government'. This essentially Anglophile point of view has a long history in American political discourse, having been advocated by such reformers as Woodrow Wilson, the APSA's Committee for a Responsible Party System and, more recently, by the Committee on the Constitutional System (see Sundquist [1992] for a review). These reform advocates have blamed the American system of government for chaos, fragmentation, gridlock and lack of capacity to promote broad policies or respond to crises. The 'responsible parties' notion loudly echoes the 'mandate representation' conception: parties articulate a distinctive platform, voters make decisions based on those distinctions and parties govern according to their platform. Critics, such as E.E. Schattschneider (1942),

argued that responsible parties are unfortunately unlikely in the US because the separation of powers allows the president to be 'above' his/her party and to switch directions independently of party dictates. Other scholars echo this view: for example, Stokes (1999) argued that 'policy switches', which occur when a president not only abandons his or her campaign promises but governs contrary to the thrust of his or her campaign platform, are common in Latin America, especially when presidents lack legislative majorities. Thus, let us generalize these arguments: holding such factors as party fragmentation, the electoral rules and the degree of party competition constant, we hypothesize that one is more likely to see policy switches under presidentialism than under parliamentarism, and thus that mandate representation is less likely under presidentialism.

This hypothesis follows directly from the separation of powers itself. A thought experiment provides a way to get at this question: let us assume two countries, one presidential and one parliamentary, both with unitary systems, similar distributions of voter interests and single-member district electoral systems. What would be the differences in terms of mandate representation between the two? Let us also assume that we are talking about a presidential system that *most resembles* the prototypical 'Westminster' parliamentary system, one in which the ballot is fused, the presidential election won by plurality, the elections are always concurrent, the regime is unitary, the legislature is unicameral and the president has few constitutionally prescribed powers.

This presidential system would come as close as possible to undermining Madison's conception of the separation of powers, because the executive and legislative branches would be highly dependent on each other for their electoral survival in office, and because the president would be fairly weak in terms of constitutional prerogatives. Nonetheless, the constitutional separation of the executive and legislative branches would remain, meaning that the president's survival in office would not depend on the confidence of the legislature. This separation of survival, therefore, might still create tension between the president and legislators of the same party. For example, the president could use his/her position as a sort of 'bully pulpit' to badger members of the legislature into passing his or her proposals, sure that his/her tenure is safe in a way that can never be the case for a parliamentary executive. Thus, even in a system that resembles the 'efficient' government of the Westminster type about as much as any presidential system could, the president has some freedom of movement to lead his/her party – perhaps away from the median legislator's ideal point – without fear of being tossed from office. In sum, *a presidential constitution offers the opportunity to violate mandate representation*. Of course, few presidential systems remotely resemble our example. Instead, in the modal presidential system the executive

has far more incentives and opportunities to 'go it alone' and violate his/her party's mandate.⁴

Our argument does not imply that mandate representation is impossible under presidentialism. We have only argued that *executive* mandate representation is relatively less likely under presidentialism. The fact of the separation of powers requires, however, that we talk about the possibility of mandate representation for legislators as well as executives under presidentialism. Under parliamentarism, the constitutional fusion of executive and legislative branches makes such a conceptualization irrelevant. But one of the benefits of presidentialism is that voters may believe that members of the executive and legislative branches have mandates for different things. Indeed, voters may believe the president should have greater leeway to enact 'policy switches' because s/he needs to respond to national emergencies or economic crises, whereas legislators' responsibilities are much more limited – for example, to 'bring home the bacon'. While this is not mandate representation in the sense of policy manifestos, any conception of 'government mandate' should not, by definition, rule out situations in which the 'mandate' that legislators receive is to attend to local and/or sectoral demands that might conflict with national party priorities. (We elaborate on this theme later, when we discuss how the interplay between the separation of powers and separation of purpose affects representation.) Regardless, we conclude that we have less reason to expect mandate representation under a separation of powers system, *at least for the president*.

3.2. The Likelihood of Accountability Representation in Presidential Systems

Presidential systems appear to have a disadvantage, *ceteris paribus*, relative to parliamentary systems in terms of the likelihood of mandate representation. However, this might not be such a bad thing, as we noted earlier. Government flexibility is often needed, in particular in less-developed societies, where presidentialism happens to be more likely (Shugart, 1999). And moreover, this does not mean that citizen–politician linkages do not exist. As Shugart and Carey (1992: 44) argued, presidentialism is inherently superior to parliamentarism on the principle of maximizing direct accountability between voters and elected officials, because the public directly elects the executive instead of a group of parliamentary elites, and an executive cannot be removed by shifting legislative coalitions in the legislature.

4. In Section 6 we address the interaction of party structure and the separation of powers. See Samuels (2002) on how presidentialism differently affects party behavior relative to parliamentarism.

In presidential systems, answering the question ‘To what extent can voters hold governments accountable retrospectively?’ depends on answering a prior question: ‘Accountable for what?’. In parliamentary systems, because the government formation and confidence processes inextricably link the executive to the legislature, ‘accountability’ refers to voters’ opportunity and/or capacity to reward or punish the *entire government* as a collective entity, for whatever combination of reasons. Given the separation of powers, this is usually not feasible under presidentialism. To the extent that it is achievable, it would be most likely in those presidential systems that most resemble parliamentarism in their promotion of ‘unified’ government and policy-based legislative campaigning. We shall return to this point later, noting that the conditions required for parliamentary-like government accountability in presidential systems are stringent and rare but still possible.

However, the rarity of parliamentary-style collective government accountability under presidentialism does not imply that presidentialism as a regime type necessarily reduces accountability. Voters’ ability to hold elected officials accountable depends on what aspect of the system we expect them to *want* to hold accountable, and why. Quite simply put, presidentialism typically allows for the possibility that voters can hold presidents and legislators accountable for different things. This is constitutionally (and thus theoretically) impossible under parliamentarism. For example, if a voter perceives that the president is to blame for national economic performance, he or she may not return the president to office or elect his/her chosen successor. Meanwhile, the same voter may continue to hold legislators accountable for quite different things, such as providing a continued flow of government services to poor or marginalized areas. This institutional set-up may not be ‘efficient’ (Cox, 1987) but in situations of great societal inequality or regional diversity this very ‘inefficiency’ may hold the key to sustaining democracy (Shugart and Carey, 1992: Ch. 9; Shugart, 1999).

In short, ‘accountability’ may mean very different things under presidentialism and parliamentarism. This suggests a new way of thinking about ‘accountability representation’, one that incorporates presidentialism’s particular institutional structure. The collective, ‘responsible parties’, policy-oriented sense of accountability that is rooted in the European experience or in normative political theory and that has dominated the theoretical literature as well as guided empirical research is likely to occur under presidentialism only under a very limited set of conditions (which we shall describe later). However, these same conditions may permit voters to hold *both* branches accountable, albeit for different things. Empirically, we expect no difference between voters’ ability to hold a parliamentary *government* and a presidential *executive* accountable for such national-policy relevant things as the economy (all else being equal) but to our knowledge no one

has ever tested this proposition. Moreover, no one has ever explored the extent to which voters hold *legislatures* accountable for the same thing they might hold executives accountable for under presidentialism. We return to the issue of empirical extensions of our hypotheses in the final section. In the next section, however, we describe the institutions that define the degree of separation of powers and separation of purpose. Subsequently, we explain how these two factors shape the likelihood of ‘mandate’ and ‘accountability’ representation *within* presidential systems.

4. The Separation of Powers: Balanced or Imbalanced?

In Section 3 we described the potential differences *across* regime types in terms of enhancing or limiting representation. Here we explore the differences *within* presidential systems in terms of mandate or accountability representation. This variability is a function of countries’ varying degrees of separation of power and purpose between the branches of government. In this section we explore the degree of separation of power, and in section 5 we explore the variation in separation of purpose.

Presidents may influence the legislative output of the system through a combination of constitutionally granted powers, such as veto, decree and agenda powers (Shugart and Carey, 1992; Cox and Morgenstern, 2001). As we will show, the relative balance of power is intimately related to the degree and kind of representation a system promotes or impedes.

In Table 1 we provide a ranking of presidential systems according to the president’s powers over legislation.⁵ The ranking is based on the premise that decree and agenda powers give the president a stronger ability to move legislative outcomes in his or her preferred direction than do veto powers. The veto is an important power for the president because it ensures that the congressional majority must bargain with the president in the process of producing legislation, thereby ensuring that the president is not marginalized in law-making. However, decree powers – by which we mean the authority of the president to establish new law without prior congressional delegation – allow a president to legislate unilaterally. Thus decree authority is a more potent tool in the hands of the president for shaping legislative output than is the veto. Likewise, agenda powers are those that allow the president to restrict the range of choices available to the congressional majority, by prohibiting legislation on a matter absent presidential initiative, restricting the right of congress to amend bills or breaking bills

5. A country is considered as more than one ‘case’ when the value on one of the variables changes.

Table 1. An Index of Presidential Powers over Legislation
(Institutions in Effect as of 2001, Unless Otherwise Noted)

Index value	Veto	Decree	Agenda	Cases
0	0	0	0	Nicaragua, Paraguay, Venezuela 1958–2000
Veto power only				
1	1	0	0	Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico
2	2	0	0	Argentina 1983–93, Bolivia, Dominican Rep., El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, USA
Decree power only				
3	0	1	0	Peru 1980/92, Venezuela 2000–
	0	2	0	None
Agenda power only				
4	0	0	1	None
	0	0	2	Uruguay
Decree and agenda power				
5	0	1	1	None
	0	2	1	Brazil
	0	1	2	None
	0	2	2	Colombia 1991–
Veto and agenda powers				
6	1	0	1	None
	1	0	2	None
	2	0	1	Philippines
	2	0	2	Chile, Georgia, S. Korea
Veto and decree powers				
7	1	1	0	Ecuador 1978–98
	1	2	0	None
	2	1	0	None
	2	2	0	None
Veto, decree, and agenda powers				
8	1	1	1	None
	1	1	2	Ecuador 1998–
	1	2	1	None
	1	2	2	None
9	2	1	1	None
	2	1	2	None
	2	2	1	Argentina 1993–, Russia
	2	2	2	Colombia 1968–91

Coding:

Veto: 0, no veto, or veto with 50% +1 override; 1, no veto on budget; 60% or greater override on other bills; 2, 60% or greater override on all bills.

Decree: 0, no provision for decree laws without prior delegation; 1, provision for decree laws, but limited in scope or opportunity for congress to reject before promulgation; 2, decree on broad range of policy areas with congressional rejection possible only after effect.

Agenda control: 0, no provision, or applies only to budget with no restrictions on amendment; 1, provided on broad range of policy areas, but no restrictions on amendments; 2, provided, with restrictions on amendment.

up by promulgating some portions while vetoing others (item veto). Agenda powers have more impact than decree powers in isolation, because congress generally has the ability to rescind decrees by passing countervailing legislation, while agenda powers restrict the ability of congress to legislate. When decree powers are combined with agenda powers, or especially with a veto, then the president has a truly formidable control over the legislative output.

Table 1 presents a rank-ordering of the various possible combinations of the three components of the index of presidential legislative powers, based on the starting assumptions just described about the relative impact of each power taken separately, and then assessing how they combine. Some configurations of the three component powers are grouped together, on the grounds that variations within the group are imperceptible, but that the group as a whole is discernible from other groups of configurations. We see in Table 1 that adding increments of veto power, but neither of the other powers, makes a president gradually more powerful (index values 0–2). Then a president with decree power, but neither of the other powers, is somewhat more powerful still (index value 3). Then a president with the capacity to restrict the agenda, but neither of the others, is yet more powerful (4). The remaining index values combine the powers in various ways, with configurations that combine veto and decree powers being stronger than those that combine agenda powers with either veto or decree (but not both). The exercise in classifying presidents' constitutionally derived legislative powers allows us distinguish which countries' presidents ought to be, *ceteris paribus*, generally more or less powerful relative to their legislatures. We now move to describe the sources of unity or separation of purpose, and we then explain how the combination of separation of power and purpose are connected to the likelihood of mandate and/or accountability representation.

5. Unity or Separation of Purpose

Presidential systems, unlike parliamentary systems, allow for the possibility that different parties will simultaneously control the executive and legislative branches of government. We commonly call this situation 'divided government'. However, scholars often overlook the inherent tendency for presidents and legislators to go their separate ways, even under conditions of nominally 'unified' government. Our contribution here is to describe the factors that push presidents and legislators – even those of the same party – to 'go their own way' to varying degrees across presidential systems. We can imagine two extreme scenarios. In the first, both the president and the legislators respond to the same national policy demands. Individual legislators might disagree with the president on specific policy responses, particularly if they are from different parties, but voters judge both president and legislators on the

basis of their performance collectively. That is, both branches are likely to be held accountable for the same things. In such a case, we can say that there exists considerable *unity of purpose* that partially overcomes the separation of powers. In contrast, at the opposite extreme, voters reward or punish presidents and legislators on entirely different grounds. Voters might hold the president responsible for national policy but demand that legislators do little more than provide pork to their district. This situation describes one with a high degree of *separation of purpose*.⁶ Where any given presidential system falls on this hypothetical continuum of unity versus separation of purpose depends on several institutional factors:

- *Electoral separation*, which refers to the extent to which congressional candidates are separated from the incentive to align with the presidential campaign of their party due to the electoral cycle. For instance, if all legislators are elected on the same day as the presidency is decided, there is little or no separation. At the opposite extreme, if both houses (or the sole house) of the legislature are never fully renewed at the same time as the president, we have maximum separation, in that presidential campaigns have the minimum effect on the incentives of legislative candidates to align on national issues. Intermediate degrees of separation include full concurrent renewal of one house, but staggered renewal of the other, or some concurrent and some midterm elections, or congressional elections concurrent with the first round of a two-round presidential election.
- *Personalization of congressional electoral incentives*. This component refers to the degree to which legislative candidates have an incentive to campaign for their seats distinctly from their party label. Following Carey and Shugart (1995), we take the degree of personalization to be a function of electoral formula and district magnitude.⁷ Low personalization obtains when legislators are elected via a closed-list formula in relatively large districts. Such a combination provides the minimal opportunity for candidates to cultivate a personal vote, because they are individually 'hidden' on a long list of candidates nominated by their party. Thus they have an incentive to cultivate a party vote, and thus to be more responsive to the national priorities of their party leaders. At the opposite extreme, when candidates obtain personal preference votes in large districts, they have the maximum incentive to offer voters something other than mere loyalty to a party line, because they must differentiate themselves to collect

6. This section builds on Cox and McCubbins (2001) and Shugart and Haggard (2001).

7. Ballot provision could also be important but there is little variation on this variable and what variation exists does not change our ranking (only in Argentina do parties provide the ballots).

personal votes. Intermediate degrees of personalization are represented by various mixed systems or small-magnitude systems.

- *Malapportionment*. The extent to which legislators' interests are separated from those of the president also follows in part from the nature of the districting arrangements for congress. At one extreme would be a single nationwide district for both houses (or the sole house), such that the congress would be as congruent as possible with the national constituency of the president. While there are few cases of zero malapportionment in presidential systems, there are many cases of low malapportionment, which we define as equal to or less than the world average (.07) on the malapportionment index devised by Samuels and Snyder (2001). At the opposite extreme, no legislative chamber is elected under low malapportionment, and at least one is high.⁸

Table 2 shows a rank order of presidential systems on factors that promote separation of purpose. The ranking is based on an assumption that separation of purpose is lowest when there is minimal electoral separation between the branches, even in the presence of personalization or malapportionment (index values 0–2). When elections are separated, but no other separating factors are present, overall separation is somewhat greater (3). Then, as moderate personalization or malapportionment is added to electoral separation, the incentives for separation of purpose increase further (4) but not as much as when all three components are separating purpose between the branches (5–9). In the context of electoral separation, high malapportionment (8–9) is taken to be more separating overall than moderate-to-high personalization in the context of only moderate malapportionment (5–7). That is, when congressional elections are not conducted at the same time as the national presidential campaign, and when less populated areas are highly over-represented, even a closed-list electoral system generates considerable responsiveness to regional issues at the expense of national issues.

As we have hinted, the institutional combination most conducive to unity of purpose is concurrent elections, a party-centric electoral formula and low congressional malapportionment. This institutional combination makes presidential majorities more common than other formats (Shugart, 1995). Even when there is no presidential majority, this format at least increases the likelihood that legislators are chosen in a process whereby the same national issues that the major presidential candidates articulate in their campaigns are likely also to loom large in legislative campaigns. In contrast, the institutional combination most likely to produce a separation of purpose

8. We define high as greater than .10, which is more than half a standard deviation above the worldwide mean reported by Samuels and Snyder (2001).

Table 2. An Index of Institutional Factors Favoring Separation of Purpose
(Institutions in Effect as of 2001, Unless Otherwise Noted)

Index value	Electoral separation	Personalization	Malapportionment	Countries
0	0	0	0	Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay
One separating factor, other than electoral				
1	0	1	0	Panama
	0	0	1	Venezuela 1958–2000
	0	2	0	None
	0	0	2	Bolivia 1985–94
Two separating factors, other than electoral				
2	0	1	1	None
	0	2	1	None
	0	1	2	Dominican Rep. 1978–94, Bolivia 1994–
	0	2	2	None
Electoral separation only				
3	1	0	0	None
	2	0	0	El Salvador
Electoral separation, and one other separating factor				
4	1	1	0	None
	1	0	1	None
	2	0	1	None
	1	2	0	Peru 1993–, Uruguay
	2	1	0	None
	2	2	0	None
Moderate electoral separation, but only moderate malapportionment				
5	1	1	1	Mexico, USA
	1	2	1	Philippines, Peru 1978–92
High electoral separation, but only moderate malapportionment				
6	2	1	1	Georgia, Russia, Venezuela 2000–
7	2	2	1	Colombia 1991–
Moderate electoral separation and high malapportionment				
8	1	0	2	None
	1	1	2	None
	1	2	2	None
High electoral separation and high malapportionment				
9	2	0	2	Argentina
	2	1	2	Chile, Dominican Rep. 1994–, Ecuador, S. Korea
	2	2	2	Brazil, Colombia 1991–

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Footnotes from previous page

Coding:

Electoral separation: 0, both houses or sole house fully renewed concurrent with decisive round of popular presidential election; 1, at least one house fully renewed concurrent with each presidential election, but also some midterm elections or two-round presidential election; 2, congressional elections rarely or never concurrent with decisive round of popular presidential election or both houses staggered renewal.

Personalization of congressional elections: 0, both houses or sole house closed list, magnitude of five or more; 1, small magnitude or mixed system, both houses or sole house; 2, preference-vote system with high magnitude, at least one house.

Malapportionment of congress: 0, both houses or sole house low malapportionment; 1, one house low, other high; or both houses or sole house moderately malapportioned; 2, no house with low malapportionment, at least one high.

is non-concurrent (especially all-midterm) legislative elections, personalized electoral formula and a high degree of congressional malapportionment. Presidents under such formats are unlikely to enjoy legislative majorities or to have them only through part of their terms. Still, whether or not they have majorities, what is key is that these institutions promote a separation of the electoral incentives of legislators from issues that dominate the presidential campaign.

6. The Relationship between Balance of Power, Balance of Purpose and Representation

We can now take the indices shown in Tables 1 and 2 and plot the ranking of each case on each dimension. The result is shown in Figure 1, which shows that the more divergent the constituencies are between presidency and congress, the more constitutional powers presidents tend to have.⁹

From the figure, we can see that there are two main clusters of cases. There are 12 cases in the lower left (both index values three or less), where institutions favor unity of purpose and the president has relatively low powers over legislation. There are 11 cases in the upper right (both index values five or greater), where institutions favor separation of purpose and the president has high powers over legislation. Two other cases (Peru 2 and Uruguay) are located in the very middle of the graph, having moderate ranks on both dimensions. There are no cases within the arc drawn from the upper left of the figure; high presidential powers are simply not found in conjunction with low separation of purpose. However, there is a small cluster of six cases within the arc radiating from the lower right. These are particularly interesting cases from the standpoint of representation, because they are

9. For an explanation of *why* this is the case, see Shugart (1999).

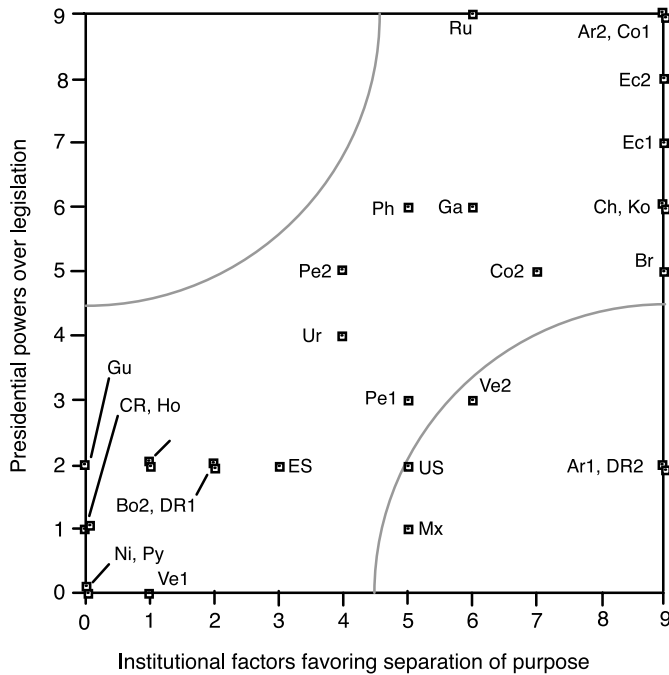


Figure 1. Relationship Between Separation of Purpose and Presidential Powers over Legislation

Key:

Ar1, Argentina 1983–94; Ar2, Argentina 1994–; Bo1, Bolivia 1985–94; Bo2, Bolivia 1994–; Br, Brazil; Ch, Chile; Co1, Colombia 1968–91; Co2, Colombia 1991–; Cr, Costa Rica; DR1, Dominican Republic 1978–94; DR2, Dominican Republic 1994–; Ec1, Ecuador 1978–98; Ec2, Ecuador 1998–; ES, El Salvador; Ga, Georgia; Gu, Guatemala; Ho, Honduras; Ko, South Korea; Mx, Mexico; Ni, Nicaragua; Pe1, Peru 1980–92; Pe2, Peru 1993–; Ph, Philippines; Pn, Panama; Py, Paraguay; Ru, Russia; Ur, Uruguay; US, United States of America; Ve1, Venezuela 1958–2000; Ve2, Venezuela 2000–.

mixed cases – separation of purpose may tend to be quite high, yet presidents have minimal compensating powers. We return to a consideration of these cases, and their implications for representation, later.

Figure 1 allows us to see not only the ‘snapshot’ of specific institutional configurations but also the trends over time in countries where institutional reforms have altered the position on one or the other dimension. For instance, Argentina and Peru were two of the cases with high separation of purpose but low presidential powers. In both cases, recent constitutional changes have enhanced presidential powers. Note that this is one of the two alternative reforms that would be expected, based on the relationship shown in the figure; the other possibility is an enhancement of unity of

purpose. Only two cases (Colombia and Peru) reduced separation of purpose and neither by more than two points on our scale. Why such apparent reticence on the part of reformers to enhancing unity of purpose? We suspect that the reason lies in the very nature of congressional incentives under systems of high separation of purpose. In such systems, legislators get elected (and re-elected) primarily on their service to parochial interests. It can be expected to be a tough sell to convince such politicians to hitch their fates to swings in national political moods. However, legislators (or constituent assembly delegates, who may aspire to future legislative service) may be more willing to enhance separation of purpose, because it shields them from the higher stakes and swings of a national presidential contest. Examples may be seen in the great enhancement of separation of purpose in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. Legislators and constituent assembly delegates may also be more willing to enhance presidential powers if they are persuaded that the existing degree of presidential powers is insufficient to cope with high separation of purpose. Higher presidential powers enhance the policy-making capacity of the system without removing the opportunity for legislators to curry local favor.¹⁰ We now turn to a consideration of the implications for representation of the relationship between separation of purpose and presidential legislative powers.

In systems with high separation of purpose, the opportunities are present for voters to form separate assessments of the performance of each branch and reward or punish appropriately. The reason is that different strategies with respect to national versus local issues are likely to be optimal for presidential and legislative candidates. We have further suggested that this allowance for different electoral strategies may be desirable to institutional designers who are thinking of their own prospects for a legislative career. Thus, these presidential systems with high separation of purpose are more likely to exhibit a form of accountability in which each branch is held accountable for different things. Under high separation of purpose, legislators are typically held accountable for attending to more parochial concerns, while presidents are accountable for national policy. This relationship epitomizes the saying that 'it's lonely at the top'; and so for it to work, the president needs a high degree of legislative authority in order to accomplish much policy-making without legislators being co-accountable with him/her.

10. Colombia is the only case with a downward move in presidential powers. The explicit goal of reformers in Colombia, where the inability of even a very powerful president to tackle many of the nation's deep problems, was to encourage congress to be more responsive to national policy-making by removing the temptation to abdicate much policy-making to an overburdened executive. See Archer and Shugart (1997). It is telling, however, that only small changes were made in the direction of enhancing unity of purpose. As we have suggested, the constituent assembly delegates were not willing to go too far in attaching their electoral fates to the national level.

Figure 1 shows that there are many presidential systems – those in the upper right – that exhibit the combination of high separation of purpose and high presidential powers. This combination facilitates differential assessment of each branch by voters. In fact, because the president has such high legislative authority, it may be possible for congress to shirk responsibility for national policy by simply leaving most issues to be resolved by the president through unilateral action. Presidents – seeking partners to cope with the ‘lonely-at-the-top’ problem – may explicitly seek to link legislators to national policy-making by forming coalition cabinets.¹¹ While the formation of coalitions is, no doubt, largely a means for presidents to purchase support in congress via patronage, our analysis here suggests that we should not overlook the possibility that coalition-building is a means of making congress more co-responsible for national governance than would otherwise be the case, given the high presidential legislative authority. That is, if presidents can successfully increase congressional accountability for national policy by having parties other than their own share responsibility for the government, they can partly overcome the institutional obstacles occasioned by the high separation of purpose.

However, there are a few cases that have the high separation of purpose needed to allow voters to form separate assessments of each branch, yet lack the high degree of presidential powers needed for the president to put much of an independent stamp on legislation (lower right portion of Figure 1). Given the relative lack of presidential powers to carry out national policy independent of congress, cases in this region of the figure are unlikely to perform well unless congress itself takes on national policy-making responsibilities. To do so, members would have to invest collectively in building up the institutional capacity of their branch to assess policy options and bargain with the president over national policy on relatively equal terms. In this way, then congress members would become accountable to voters for national policy, as well as the president. Of course, just such investment in the institution is what developed in the USA, where members of congress, as a result, take stands on national issues, notwithstanding their considerable institutional incentive to think in local terms as well. Something similar may be underway in Mexico as it democratizes and members have a stake in the institutional capacities of their branch as a counterweight to the president.¹² Absent the development of congressional capacity and accountability for national policy, systems in this region are likely to see pressures for enhanced

11. We are grateful to Octávio Amorim Neto for pointing out the importance of coalitions.

12. The absence of eligibility of members for re-election is an obstacle to the development of congressional capacity and accountability. Not surprisingly, moves are underway to repeal the re-election ban. See Cantú (2001).

presidential powers as a means to overcome the high separation of purpose, which is precisely what happened in both Argentina and Peru which, as one can see, recently moved 'out' of this region of Figure 1.¹³

What about cases at the other end of the spectrum, those with high unity of purpose and low presidential powers? Only those five systems located in the far lower left of the figure (scoring zero or one on each dimension) have the conditions that make likely the generation of congressional majorities elected on the same national issues as the president. Thus only those cases have the *potential* to generate something approximating mandate representation, whereby the campaign produces a president with a mandate based on programmatic commitments articulated in the campaign and a congress that is likely to share the same mandate. However, we emphasize potential, because the very separation of powers means, as we noted previously, that the two branches are not co-responsible for government. Presidents are free to break their commitments without fear of losing office and legislators are free to reject presidential proposals without fear of early election. It is our hope that future empirical study of these systems can reveal the extent to which voters in fact think of legislative parties' national policy commitments when casting their legislative vote. Our indices suggest that in these cases of low separation of purpose and low presidential powers, voters would have little information about how to assess the two branches differently. As we suggested earlier, these systems most resemble the 'efficient' majoritarian parliamentary systems. They are most likely to have presidential majorities, partly because legislators and presidents are likely to be held accountable together. Costa Rica is one of these systems and it seems to come closest, among presidential democracies, to fitting a notion of Westminster-like accountability. Perhaps not coincidentally, Costa Rica is also the second oldest presidential democracy in the world. Costa Rica combines concurrent elections, a unicameral congress, no staggering of elections and a party-centered electoral formula. In fact, consistent with what the index implies, Costa Rica's institutions have produced a plurality for the president's party in every election since the inception of democracy in 1948 except one and a majority in most of them. Moreover, parties have tended to be quite cohesive (Carey, 1996) and have shown a high capacity for tackling pressing national problems (Wilson, 1998).

There is just one thing wrong with this picture, however. The list of countries with low separation of purpose and low presidential powers –

13. Likewise, in Mexico, President Vicente Fox proposed a sweeping increase in the president's budgetary agenda powers. However, this proposal was essentially dead on arrival in congress, not surprisingly. For the proposal, see *Proyecto Por el que se Reforman Diversos Artículos de la Constitución Política de los Estados Mexicanos, en Materia Presupuestaria*, Gaceta Parlamentaria, Cámara de Diputados, 3 April 2001.

the situation most conducive to executive and legislature being held co-responsible for governance – includes not only Costa Rica but also Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Venezuela 1, which are not exactly known for their high capacity to resolve the very pressing national problems for which we would expect politicians to be held collectively accountable (see, e.g., Taylor-Robinson [1996] on Honduras; Crisp [2000] on Venezuela). Why is this the case? To answer this paradoxical question, we need to return to first principles about how presidentialism breaks the connections between executive and legislators. Because of both separate origin and separate survival, legislators in presidential systems are inherently *not* co-responsible for governing in the way that they are in parliamentary systems. It is in this context that the very party-centered institutions that are most conducive to aligning voter behavior across elections to the two branches are also most conducive to creating extremely centralized parties that fail to connect legislative incentives with the policy demands of voters.

In parliamentary systems, the direct connection between executive selection and tenure, on the one hand, and legislative re-election, on the other, means that legislators shirk responsibility for policy at their peril. By its very constitutional nature, this cannot be so in presidential systems and we find a tendency within highly party-centered presidential systems for legislative party lists to be constructed almost solely with patronage considerations in mind. Under party-centered systems, legislators are *not individually accountable* for their actions and they may have a tendency to respond to an *internal* constituency – the leaders who nominate them to lists and determine their rank on the ballot – instead of to the external constituency of voters (see Shugart, 2001).

When these conditions of overly centralized parties obtain, legislators are not accountable to voters in any meaningful sense. Yet because executive and legislative tenures are separate, parties do not necessarily develop the collective policy-based reputation that is typical of parliamentary systems (Samuels, 2002). This suggests a counterintuitive outcome: overall accountability may be (though need not be) *worse* when presidential powers and unity of purpose are both low than when at least one is high. The reason is that the president, while remaining the most visible politician and thus most likely to be held accountable, cannot respond effectively to voter demands for policy because s/he lacks the constitutional means to get things done without legislative cooperation. Yet the legislators themselves lack the institutional incentives to cooperate on national policy matters because the electoral process does not permit voters to hold them accountable. That is, to overstate a bit for the sake of illustration, those who hold the policy-making authority cannot be held accountable and those who can be held accountable do not have policy-making authority. This situation

can be overcome only if legislators are given an incentive to be responsive to constituents notwithstanding the party-centered nature of the electoral system. That is, electoral and party institutions need to balance party-centered incentives (to guard against extreme separation of purpose) with incentives to be individually responsive (to guard against extreme centralization). Of course, doing so increases separation of purpose – an effect that buttresses our basic point, which is that some separation of purpose is necessary for voter to be able to hold both branches accountable.

Few presidential systems seem to have successfully struck the requisite balance between legislators' responsiveness to their local constituents and their commitment to a national party. We can identify three that, impressionistically, appear to have done so: Costa Rica, Chile and the United States – the last two, of course, in systems that generate a relatively high separation of purpose. There is no single unifying cause that we can point to that has allowed these three countries to strike the local–national balance in legislative incentives. In Costa Rica, the mix of incentives results from national-level control over nominations coupled with informal internal party structures that encourage members to remain close to their local communities (Carey, 1996; Taylor-Robinson, 1996). In Chile, national-level nomination control is combined with a personal vote in two-seat districts, which means that intraparty competition is avoided but candidates are in competition with another member of the same multiparty alliance for the votes of their district.¹⁴ However, in the United States, there is no national nomination control whatsoever but there is competition within parties at the stage of primary elections for the privilege of carrying the mantle of the party in the general election. Synthesizing, what these three cases have in common is limited or no intraparty competition at the general election, yet incentives to represent the party at the local level – whether through informal party rules (Costa Rica), intra-alliance competition for personal votes (Chile) or primaries (United States). No other presidential system contains such a mix of electoral incentives, so perhaps the key to establishing the right mix of legislative incentives in presidential systems is to avoid intraparty competition while nonetheless retaining responsiveness to the community. Clearly, it is a difficult balancing act. This is an area that cries out for empirical and theoretical work, because it would help us identify the conditions under which members of congress in presidential systems would have the incentive to be accountable for national policy.

14. However, because Chile is a case of very high presidential powers over legislation, the ability of congressional accountability to function is severely limited. See Siavelis (2000).

7. Conclusion

Political scientists have yet to link our knowledge of different institutional structures, and our theories about how regime characteristics affect such things as party systems and regime survival, to truly comparative theories of democratic representation. In this article we have attempted to reconceptualize how we think of representation in presidential systems. Representation – the links between citizens and elected officials – involves different *processes* given different constitutional structures, so perhaps it should be obvious that the *quality* of citizen interest representation is likely to differ under presidential or parliamentary government. What might be surprising is the relative lack of scholarly research confronting this issue.

Building on Shugart and Carey (1992) and Przeworski et al. (1999), we began with the idea that in most cases, voters can hold the executive and legislative branches in a presidential system accountable in different ways, something that is unlikely in a parliamentary system. This implies that presidential systems are unlikely, under most conditions, to generate either mandate representation or a form of accountability that closely resembles the collective government accountability of the standard parliamentary model. Instead, presidential systems are more likely to generate a form of accountability in which each branch is held separately accountable. All else being equal, voters are likely to hold executives responsible for national policy issues while at the same time holding legislators responsible for local or regional concerns. This, we believe, is normatively a good thing: in contrast to the notion that presidentialism tends to *confuse* voters, the separation of powers can *enhance* the possibility for government accountability – and hence representation – because voters may be able to separate responsibility for policy between branches as well as between parties, and reward or punish their representatives accordingly (Persson et al., 1997).

Across presidential systems, voters are most able to hold the executive accountable precisely where the president has the greatest constitutional legislative powers, and where separation of purpose eases voters' identification of the 'responsible (executive) party'. Thus (executive) accountability is actually enhanced where presidential powers are greatest. As we have shown, these types of presidencies are most likely to be found precisely where they are needed most: where there is a high separation of purpose. In other words, precisely in those cases where parliamentarism would be *least* capable of promoting accountability – where legislators are not elected on a basis that promotes a national focus in legislative elections – is where presidencies tend to be endowed with the power to promote nationally oriented policies, and thus where a (presidential) executive ought to be *most* accountable.

7.1. Empirical Extensions

Our argument has several obvious empirical extensions, and testing the arguments in this article would push political science research a long way forward toward understanding the nature and prospects for representation under presidentialism. Unfortunately, very little research of this kind exists. Here, we provide some preliminary suggestions. We presented two basic hypotheses: first, that presidential and parliamentary systems differ in terms of mandate and accountability representation; and second, that the extent of mandate and/or accountability representation within presidential systems is a function of the degree of separation of power and of separation of purpose between branches of government. We discuss these hypotheses in turn.

One might empirically test our hypothesis that mandate representation is less likely under presidentialism by generalizing Stokes' (1999) discussion of 'policy switches'. This would first require a precise definition and operationalization of a policy switch. Then, perhaps through a content analysis of campaign platforms and speeches, coupled with a subsequent analysis of what governments actually did, we might discover whether policy switches are more likely under presidentialism. Of course, a major problem is that one cannot measure policy switches that were attempted but that failed or policy switches that were desired but were not attempted. Nevertheless, a careful research design might identify 'critical cases', i.e. countries where we might least and most expect policy switches under presidential and parliamentary regimes. After examining the frequency of and reasons for policy switches in these cases, we might be able to draw some interesting conclusions. A similar effort might involve extending the 'manifestos project' analysis into more countries to test the extent of mandate representation across regimes.

Scholars might also test the hypothesis that accountability representation differs across and within regime types using individual or aggregate data. Survey data, for example, could get at the question of the extent to which voters hold different branches accountable for different aspects of policy output under presidentialism. As we have suggested, in the modal presidential system voters ought to hold the executive branch relatively 'more' accountable for economic outcomes, while holding their legislators accountable for localistic or regional concerns. To test such hypotheses with individual-level data requires cross-nationally valid surveys. The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) provides such an opportunity to test these hypotheses. The CSES places a cross-nationally valid 'module' of questions in countries' National Election Studies, aiming to understand how citizens living under different institutional arrangements evaluate democratic institutions and processes. Unfortunately, at present the CSES only has data

from two presidential systems (Mexico and the USA, with partial data from Argentina).¹⁵ However, CSES research continues and, as more countries come on line, scholars might test for differences in accountability representation between presidential and parliamentary systems as well as within presidential systems.

Another approach might be to use aggregate electoral and economic data to explore economic voting effects. Using aggregate data, despite the attention scholars have paid to assessing whether 'clarity of responsibility' matters for economic voting effects, scholars have never attempted to assess whether presidentialism provides such clarity or not. Indeed, although several studies have assessed economic voting effects cross-nationally (e.g. Remmer, 1991, 2001; Paldam, 1991; Powell and Whitten, 1993; Pacek and Radcliff, 1995; Wilkin et al., 1997; Chappell and Veiga, 2000), no study has even included a dummy variable for presidential government. Instead, scholars have pooled presidential and parliamentary cases, implicitly assuming that voters think similarly about *executive* elections in presidential systems as they do about *legislative* elections in parliamentary systems. This may or may not be the case; it requires empirical investigation. An exploration of aggregate economic voting effects could also address the issue of whether voters hold the executive and legislative branches accountable for different things, or at least to different degrees. Research might actually find that voters hold both branches accountable, which would be surprising for our hypotheses, but we would certainly not have any normative objection to such a finding. However, a finding that voters hold the legislative branch less accountable for national-level economic performance than they do the president (as evidence from the US case suggests) would confirm our hypotheses but would not necessarily imply that legislatures are 'unaccountable'. Instead, it would suggest that scholars should explore other policy outputs for which voters might hold legislators accountable.

This article is intended to provide a starting point for research. We hypothesized that representation ought to differ between democratic regime types, provided theoretical justification for that argument, and argued that differences in mandate or accountability representation within presidential systems are a function of the separation of power and separation of purpose. We subsequently provided a simple coding scheme that operationalizes these concepts and that could guide future research. Our conclusions and suggestions are preliminary but we expect that scholarly creativity will discover many additional ways to get at the important yet virtually unexplored question of potential differences in representation that citizens may obtain under presidential or parliamentary regimes.

15. See the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems at <http://www.umich.edu/~nes/cses/cses.htm>.

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