I. Untitled introduction: presidential government
   A. Definition: a democratic system in which the legislature and the executive exist independently and are
      elected independently of each other
   B. Political parties have a somewhat different role – parties are often more loosely unified in presidential
      compared to parliamentary systems
      1. Parties in a presidential system don’t have as much control over nominations and election campaign
         resources of individual members of the legislature
      2. Because of separation of constituencies, one party is not guaranteed a control of both the executive
         and legislative branches
         a. In the 1980s, the Republican Party controlled the White House and (sometimes) the Senate, but
            not the House
         b. In the 1990s, it was the Democratic Party in that situation
   C. Examples of presidential systems: U.S., much of Latin America, France, Russia, & Turkey
   D. The fragmentation of power typical of the U.S. system
      1. Is illustrated in each house of Congress – power is diffused between majority- & minority-party
         leaders, standing committees & their chairs.
      2. The fragmentation of power weakens party discipline in Congress

II. Presidential and parliamentary systems compared
   A. Presidential-leadership expectations – are high
      1. The president is the only official elected in a nationwide election
      2. The Constitution gives extraordinary powers to the president, especially as commander in chief
      3. Custom and tradition gives the president primary responsibility for
         a. Foreign policy
         b. Domestic policy proposals to Congress
   B. However, separation of powers (and constituencies) makes presidential-leadership success very difficult
      (especially in federal systems like Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, & the U.S.)
      1. The voters don’t know who to praise or blame
      2. Both branches find it easier to behave irresponsibly in a presidential system of fragmented powers and
         responsibilities
   C. Comprehensive policy – is much more difficult to accomplish in a presidential compared to a
      parliamentary system
      1. Bargaining and compromise can lead to contradictory policies
      2. Intense minorities can block apathetic majorities – e.g., more handgun control [Shively is incorrect
         about prayer in schools – a clear majority favors a moment of silence over any government-sponsored
         prayer in public schools]
   D. Recruitment of executive leaders – most come from outside the legislature (many from outside
      government) in a presidential system
      1. Less familiar with a wide range of public-policy issues
      2. Less familiar with legislative leaders, norms, and procedures
      3. Are more likely to be chosen in haste and without adequate review
      4. But outsiders do bring more varied talents and backgrounds
   E. Review and control of the executive –
      1. Although Shively says that oversight is less systematic and regular in presidential systems because
         a. There is no weekly question hour
         b. Impeachment and removal is not a useful substitute
      2. However, he also notes [in C. 14, sect. V. A.] that compared to national legislatures, parliamentary
         committees lack significant oversight powers:
         a. No permanent staff
         b. No authority to call committee hearings
         c. No subpoena power
F. The political process – is less flexible (less able to adjust to changing circumstances)
   1. A common example is loss of public support
   2. Extreme examples are:
      a. Death, resignation, or impeachment/removal of a president
      b. Presidential disability

III. The split executive of parliamentary systems
A. Parliamentary systems are based on
   1. A union of executive & legislative power
   2. But a separation of chief-executive and chief-of-state leadership roles
      a. The Prime Minister (Premier or Chancellor) is the chief executive with real powers
      b. The President (or monarch) is the chief of state or ceremonial leader with only symbolic powers
B. In contrast, in a presidential system,
   1. There is a separation of the executive and legislative branches in terms of powers & constituencies
   2. But a union of the chief-of-state and chief-executive roles
      a. The president is both the working and ceremonial leader (although many of those less important duties are pushed off on the vice president)
      b. This combined role gives the president an advantage in seeking public support that the chief executive in a parliamentary country lacks

IV. Why aren't all democracies parliamentary systems
A. Parliamentary systems (that unite the executive and legislative branches)
   1. Are more efficient (if there is a majority party or a stable coalition majority)
   2. Are more responsive to the will of the majority
   3. And the majority party or coalition is more easily assigned praise or blame
B. But presidential systems (that separate powers & constituencies)
   1. Have more safeguards against the abuse of government powers
   2. Require more bargaining and compromise between diverse interests

V. Judicial review – seems to be more necessary in a presidential (and federal) system of fragmented powers

Table 15.1
A. There is more of a need for a referee to adjudicate disputes among branches and levels of government
B. Parliamentary/unitary systems with judicial review include: Austria, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain

VI. A note on constitutions and power – constitutions are not static but change and develop
A. Through amendments
B. Through custom and practice (e.g., political parties)

VII. Examples of transition in presidential government
A. France
   1. 1945-57: political instability resulted in (economically successful) bureaucratic rule
   2. 1957-69: President Charles de Gaulle was installed by the military & in 1962 a new constitution provided a hybrid presidential/parliamentary system:
      a. A directly elected president who is powerful if his party controls the National Assembly
      b. But a National Assembly that can dissolve the executive cabinet (and force “cohabitation” if the opposition controls the National Assembly – the prime minister shares more power with the president)
B. Mexico
   1. 1910-20: revolution (sporadic conflict continued for another 5 to 10 years)
   2. 1929-1997: one-party dominance by the PRI (Party of the Institutionalized Revolution) but the president was limited to a single 6-year term limit
   3. 1997-present: party competition brought about by reform efforts of several PRI presidents, media exposure of corruption in government, and public support for reform