

- 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