

Title of workshop:

New Directions in Comparative Presidentialism: Cross-Regional Perspectives

Subject area: Comparative Politics

Name of workshop director(s):

Mariana Llanos (German Institute of Global and Area Studies) and Timothy J. Power (University of Oxford)

Name and address of institution(s):

GIGA Institut für Lateinamerika-Studien
Neuer Jungfernstieg 21
20354 Hamburg, GERMANY

Latin American Centre
St Antony's College, University of Oxford
Oxford OX2 6JF, UNITED KINGDOM

Telephone number/s: +49 (0)40 428 25766 +44 (0)1865 274 486

Fax number/s: +49 (0)40 428 25562 +44 (0)1865 274 489

e-mail address/s: llanos@giga-hamburg.de timothy.power@lac.ox.ac.uk

New Directions in Comparative Presidentialism: Cross-Regional Perspectives

workshop co-directors: Mariana Llanos and Timothy J. Power

Outline of the Topic

Prior to the 1990s, there was virtually no theoretically and comparatively informed research on presidential democracy outside the United States. Sparked first by Juan Linz and then by the classic study of Shugart and Carey, comparative political science developed a promising new research programme on "comparative presidentialism". Yet the research questions that drove the first two decades of research are now receding, and the debate on presidential democracy now runs the risk of stalling. The proposed workshop aims to revive and reinvigorate the debate by (1) drawing together new research agendas with new dependent variables and (2) encouraging cross-regional studies of presidentialism.

Modifying a periodization usefully developed by Robert Elgie (2005), we can divide the presidentialism debate into three phases. The first phase was dominated by Linz's classic argument for the superiority of parliamentarism over presidentialism, especially for young, untested democracies. In the late 1980s, Linz (1990) claimed that the competing democratic legitimacies under presidentialism (the president and legislature being elected separately) would lead to recurrent conflicts. Conflicts would be exacerbated by the winner-take-all nature of presidential elections, the two-dimensional nature of the presidential office (the president represents both the state and a partisan option) and the overall inflexibility of the system (long, fixed executive terms). In the second phase of the debate, Mainwaring (1993), Stepan and Skach (1993) and others claimed that the problem was not presidentialism per se, but rather the "difficult combination" of presidentialism with fragmented multiparty systems. In a third phase, the "difficult combination" argument was assailed by scholars claiming that presidentialism could work like parliamentarism: presidents were capable of building stable multiparty coalitions, even in weakly institutionalized party systems. In one of the most remarkable recent examples of South-North knowledge transfer in comparative politics, the core of this

argument was rolled out between 1997 and 2007 mostly by young Latin American scholars completing doctoral dissertations in U.S. and European universities (Deheza 1997; Amorim Neto 1998; Pereira 2000; Altman 2001; Zelaznik 2001; Mejía-Acosta 2004; Martínez-Gallardo 2005; Martorelli Hernández 2007; Zucco Jr. 2007). Although Latin America dominated this literature, scholars of the more recent African transitions to democracy independently came to similar conclusions about their region. Chabal and Daloz (1999) and Van de Walle (2003) found that African presidents' flexible use of formal and informal powers enabled them to dominate even highly fragmented legislatures. Research on post-Soviet parliaments, in particular the Russian State Duma, has also begun to focus on the range of tools used by presidents to build parliamentary majorities (Chaisty 2006, 2008; Remington 2008). Cross-national quantitative research has supplied additional support for the ideas that coalition formation is common under presidentialism and that multipartism does not significantly reduce the legislative success rates of directly elected executives (Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh 2004; Cheibub 2007); thus there is an emerging consensus that many presidents enjoy governing tools which allow them to overcome the disincentives to cooperation deriving from multipartism. Yet what we do not know is whether the provision of these governing tools (formal and informal power) to presidents creates negative externalities, e.g. by undermining the accountability of the president to legislative, judicial, or societal actors.

With coalitional presidentialism now widely recognized as the "solution" to the dilemmas posed by Linz and Mainwaring, the debate has reached a plateau and runs the risk of stagnating. We propose to reinvigorate the debate, using the Mainz 2013 workshop to pull together several new strands of research on comparative presidentialism. In encouraging new work, we believe that scholars should be far more precise about what is enhancing the sustainability of presidential democracy in different cases; that they should ask whether governability-enhancing powers work in similar ways across different regions and national contexts, and that they should question whether the provision of governing tools to presidents strengthens policy decisiveness at the expense of democratic accountability. We also believe that the longstanding subfield of "presidential studies" in U.S. political science contains a number of research traditions that could inspire cognate bodies of research on new democracies in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and postcommunist Europe. Two examples are leadership studies (e.g. the tradition of Richard Neustadt, examining the characteristics of presidents as opposed to institutional presidencies) and the rich literature on presidential organization, which examines how presidents form and reform the internal bureaucratic apparatuses of the executive branch — including the presidential office itself — with a view to obtaining political support.

Finally, the workshop organizers wish to incentivise authentically cross-regional perspectives on presidential democracy. We envision the workshop as an opportunity for Africanists, Asianists, Latin Americanists, and scholars of the former USSR to think outside their regions and share comparative insights with one another.

Upon completion of the workshop, the co-directors plan to organize an edited volume with the papers presented in Mainz. Ideally we would do so under the auspices of the ECPR.

Relationship to Existing Research

The workshop aims to contribute to the new literature on coalitional formats of presidentialism, yet it also aims to encourage new work on leadership, presidential organization, and democratic accountability under the separation of powers. We are aware of four newly initiated research projects that already have mini-networks upon which we can draw. Mariana Llanos (GIGA), Leiv Marsteintredet (University of Bergen) and

Andrés Mejía-Acosta (IDS Sussex) are developing a new project on “executive centers of power,” examining the causes and consequences of political coordinators operating inside presidential offices. Marcelo Camerlò (ICS Lisbon) is studying how ministerial recruitment patterns affect the legislative success of presidents. Paul Chaisty, Nic Cheeseman, and Timothy Power (University of Oxford) have recently begun an ESRC-funded project analyzing the tools that presidents use to form and cultivate coalitions in the fragmented multiparty democracies of Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The main concern of their project is the horizontal accountability of the president to fragile legislatures. Magna Inácio (Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil) is studying how the internal organization of the presidency — an office that is often unwisely analyzed in exclusively unipersonal terms — must be tailored and made flexible to accommodate interparty cooperation, much like multiparty cabinets in parliamentary regimes.

All of these projects represent new frontiers in the comparative study of presidentialism, moving well beyond the initial Linzian concern with regime survival. They illustrate how the dependent variable in presidential research has moved away from democratic breakdown and toward issues of democratic quality and responsiveness. However, the literature still retains a Latin American bias that we hope to counteract in this workshop by aggressively recruiting applications from Asianists, Africanists and postcommunist scholars.

Likely Participants

In accordance with ECPR guidelines we seek to have 16 papers presented over four days. To allow for the possibility of attrition, we will recruit slightly over 20 scholars. Some of their names are mentioned above in connection with newly launched research projects. We also plan to target a number of additional individuals and stimulate applications from them. However, we also recognise that the workshop is open and that the final lineup will be diverse. We also recognise that in the end we will only be able to accept two or three papers from outside the ECPR network.

Type of Papers

Ideally, we would have two conceptual and theoretical papers on the first morning of the workshop (Wednesday, 13th March). These will develop some of the ideas in this proposal about the need for a revived research agenda in comparative presidentialism. We would also commission two cross-regional empirical papers on the final afternoon (Saturday, 16th March). These would make the case for promising comparative work on presidential democracy in two or more world regions.

The remaining 12 papers would be made up of case studies situated within four regions. Based on our strong familiarity with current patterns of research and publication, we are certain that an open call for papers will draw an excessive number of proposals on Latin America. However, we want to use this workshop to redress some of the regional imbalances in comparative presidential research, and we must necessarily signal this objective to the ECPR community. For this reason the “Abstract of Proposed Workshop” (for publication on the ECPR website) states explicitly that we encourage proposals from scholars working on presidential democracy in Africa, Asia and postcommunist Europe. We will informally cap the number of accepted papers on Latin America at four or five. Ideally, and if our recruitment efforts are successful, our 12 case study papers would be distributed in this way: 4 papers on Latin America, 3 on the former USSR, 3 on Africa, and 2 on Asian cases. We believe that this is a compromise solution that addresses the current overrepresentation of Latin America in the literature while being realistic about the modest number of scholars currently working on presidentialism elsewhere.

Possible Schedule (assuming 16 papers)

Wednesday, 13 March 2013 a.m.: conceptual and theoretical papers

Wednesday, 13 March 2013 p.m.: Latin American cases

Thursday, 14 March 2013 a.m.: Latin American cases

Thursday, 14 March 2013 p.m.: post-Soviet cases

Friday, 15 March 2013 a.m.: post-Soviet and African cases

Friday, 15 March 2013 p.m.: African cases

Saturday, 16 March 2013 a.m. Asian cases

Saturday, 16 March 2013 p.m.: cross-regional analyses

Biographical Sketches of the Workshop Directors

Mariana Llanos is a Senior Research Fellow at the GIGA Institute of Latin American Studies. She is co-convenor of the ECPR Standing Group on Latin American Politics, and member of the executive committee of ALACIP (Latin American Association of Political Science). She works on the comparative political institutions of Latin America. She is co-editor of *Presidential Breakdowns in Latin America* (Palgrave, 2010) and is currently directing a project on president-judiciary relations that includes both Latin American and African democracies.

Timothy J. Power is University Lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford, where he also directs the Latin American Centre at St Antony's College. He is a former president of the Brazilian Studies Association and is currently an Associate Fellow of Chatham House, London. His articles on presidential institutions in Latin America have appeared in *Journal of Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Political Research Quarterly*, and *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, among other outlets.

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