UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DPIR
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies
SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION
E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
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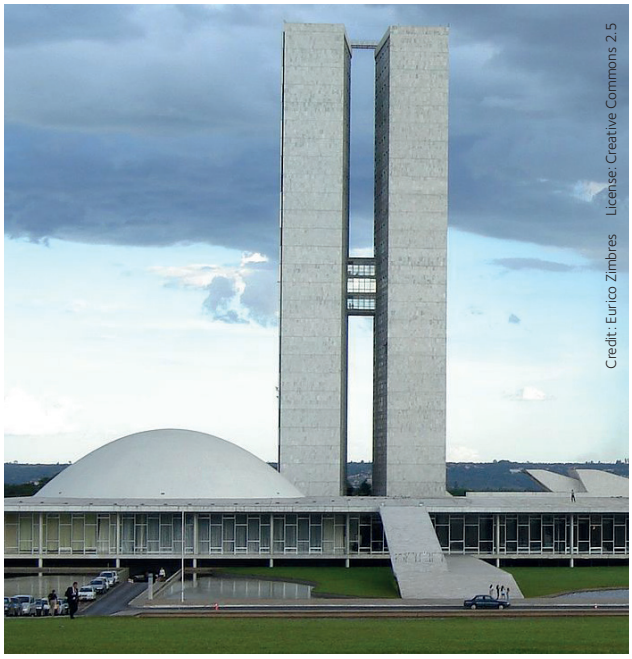
The Coalitional Presidentialism Project

Research Report, January 2015: How MPs Understand Coalitional Politics in Presidential Systems



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Brazilian National Congress, Brasília.

Paul Chaisty, Nic Cheeseman, Timothy Power (University of Oxford)[1]

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Executive summary

Motivating Research Questions

- **How do minority presidents govern with fragmented multiparty legislatures?**
- **How does this vary across the world and between presidents?**
- **What strategies have proved to be the most successful?**
- **Do these strategies promote, or undermine, processes of democratization?**

Key Findings

- The ability of presidents to form coalitions has meant that the anticipated "difficult combination" of multiparty politics and presidential systems has not proved detrimental to political stability.
- Coalitional presidentialism enables governments to secure the passage of their legislative agenda, but at the cost of entering into a set of political bargains that place constraints (whether large or small) on their activity.
- Presidents use five main tools to build and maintain coalitions: cabinet authority, budgetary power, partisan power, legislative power, and the exchange of favours.
- MPs agree that cabinet authority is the most effective tool presidents have to maintain coalitions, but the value placed on other tools varies significantly across cases.
- Most legislators agree that coalitional presidentialism has been beneficial to political stability and the representation of diverse interests within government.
- However, most MPs also believe that coalitional presidentialism has led to opportunistic support of the government of the day; that it has undermined the ability of the legislature to hold the president to account; and that it has promoted a clientelistic style of politics.

Definitions

- Coalitional presidentialism exists when a president whose party is without a majority in the lower house of parliament seeks to form and maintain a durable cross-party alliance of support.
- Participant parties are usually but not universally rewarded for their support with cabinet portfolios or other executive posts.

Cases and Method

- Small-N comparison of 9 countries in three continents: Armenia, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Kenya, Malawi, Russia and Ukraine.
- Interviews of 350 MPs including open-ended and standardized questions.
- Legislative data collection from Hansards and other sources.
- Case studies of key legislation and the budget process.

CPP Research Report

How MPs Understand Coalitional Politics in Presidential Systems

Introduction

Much of the classic literature on democratic survival has suggested that presidentialism, or the combination of presidentialism and multipartyism, is bad for democracy (Mainwaring 1993; Linz 1994). Yet many of the multiparty presidential political systems that have emerged in Africa, Latin America and the former Soviet Union have proved to be remarkably stable. In large part, this is because presidents have proved able to act like prime ministers (Colomer and Negretto 2005), forming cross-party coalitions to ensure a legislative majority and hence the (at least partial) success of their legislative agendas. The Coalitional Presidentialism Project (CPP) represents an attempt to understand the politics of alliance formation and maintenance, and asks important questions such as: How do presidents manage divided legislatures? How does this vary across the world? What strategies have proved to be the most successful? Do these strategies promote, or undermine, processes of democratization?

In order to be able to analyze the most significant tools used by presidents to maintain their coalitions – legislative powers, partisan powers, cabinet management, budgetary powers and the exchange of favours – we develop the idea of the "presidential toolbox", which allows us to consider the relative value of different tools and the different admixtures in which they are deployed. We are interested in asking why some presidents use certain tools instead of others, and which combinations of tools are most effective at ensuring coalition discipline.

This research report provides an overview of the project and presents the first set of findings from the study, focusing on the attitudes of Members of Parliament (MPs) towards the use of these tools and the impact of coalitional presidentialism. We seek to learn from the experience and opinions of the legislators who have worked under coalitional presidentialism over the thirty years. Based on interviews with 350 MPs across our nine cases – Armenia, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Kenya, Malawi, Russia and Ukraine – we look at two different questions. First, what are the strategies, or tools, that presidents use to maintain coalitions? Second, what are the consequences of the use of these tools, or put another way, what are the pros and cons of coalitional presidentialism?

We find some common themes across the 51 presidential terms that have taken place in the period under study in our nine countries. Most obviously, there is a degree of consensus among MPs on the most effective tools or powers enjoyed by presidents. A majority of legislators agree that the ability of presidents to distribute cabinet seats to reward loyal coalition partners is the most effective means to ensure discipline. Overall, MPs ranked the president's own legislative powers as the second most important tool of coalition management, followed closely by budgetary authority. The president's control over his own party and ability to make informal deals with individual legislators came joint last. However, with the exception of broad agreement of the significance of cabinet appointments, there is remarkable variation across our countries.

These variations demonstrate the great variety of strategies employed by presidents under coalitional presidentialism, and the extent that these vary over time and space. They also reveal important differences between our cases, and the value of considering the full range of tools that president's may use to keep their alliances together, rather than focusing on one specific tool, as has been the case in much of the literature to date. For example, in Benin, where patronage is central to legislative politics and political parties are weak, 40% of MPs thought that the budgetary authority was the most important tool available to the president. This drops to just 6% in Armenia, where MPs perceive the legislative powers of the president to be of

great importance, and the second most effective coalition management tool (28%).

We also find a degree of agreement over the benefits and negative implications of coalitional presidentialism. Most legislators agree that coalitional presidentialism has been beneficial to political stability and the representation of diverse interests. However, they also feel that it has led to opportunistic support for the government of the day, thereby undermining the ability of the legislature to hold the president to account and promoting a style of politics based on the exchange of favours. In other words, MPs in our sample are well aware that coalitional presidentialism involves a tradeoff. On the one hand, alliance formation eases the process of governing and allows presidents to respond to pressing policy issues. On the other, it threatens to undermine legislative scrutiny and accountability.

The information provided by the legislators in our sample provides an important new set of perspectives from around the world. This is important because so far the academic debate on coalitional presidentialism has tended to focus on a small number of Latin American cases. However, it is important to remember that legislators are not always impartial guides to the political systems in which they operate, and would not necessarily take their own medicine in power. In Brazil, for example, legislators strongly believe that a presidential coalition that dominates the parliament is harmful to the country because it weakens democratic accountability. However, when asked what size of coalition they would seek to build if they were president, the average response was 60% - a figure chosen, no doubt, because it enables the executive to dominate the legislature and potentially change the constitution.

This report begins by providing a short overview of the case selection research methodology employed by the Coalitional Presidentialism Project. Then it reviews some of the key theoretical contributions in the study of presidentialism over the last thirty years, before introducing our argument that when presidents govern with coalitions they use a broad "toolbox" of resources. The empirical analysis that follows explores the toolbox in two sections. The first section looks at the question of tool use; the second at MPs evaluations of coalitional politics. The final part of the report summarizes the main findings, and previews some of the other questions that we are asking in the CPP, and how we plan to go about answering them.

Researching coalitional presidentialism

Selecting which cases to study in cross-regional analysis is never an easy task. One of our main concerns was to ensure a baseline level of democracy in all of our cases in order to ensure that we were comparing "like with like." We are interested in coalitional politics under political democracy and/or under hybrid regimes that are robustly pluralistic. We thus employ the two most commonly used regime classification datasets in order to establish a "double threshold" for this competitive standard. We use the threshold specified by the Polity IV index for regimes that permit political competition (above 1 on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 to 10) and by the Freedom House index as "partly free" (less than 5 on a seven-point scale).[2] For some countries, our analysis is therefore only of historical interest. For example, we do not study Russia beyond 2003, when Freedom House ceased to classify Russia as "partly free".

In addition to a democracy threshold, we considered only those regimes in which presidents act as the de facto formateurs of legislative coalitions. In other words, we select political systems where only the president takes the lead in the formation and maintenance of coalitions. This means that we do consider cases that are sometimes categorized by other scholars as semi-presidential when a careful reading of the practice of executive politics suggests that they are effectively "presidential" when it comes to coalition formation. Conversely, we do not include those semi-presidential systems where prime ministers act as the formateur, as was the case in Ukraine between 2006 and 2010.

Once we had established which countries in our three regions met these two baseline conditions, our next step was to ensure variation on one of the main variables that we expect to influence coalitional governance: the difficulty that presidents face when seeking to form a legislative majority. A reasonable proxy for this is the Index of Coalitional Necessity (ICN), which takes into consideration two of the biggest structural constraints on the president within the legislature: (1) the effective number of parties, and (2) the share of lower house seats not held by the nominal party of the president.[3] In order to secure variation in terms of the magnitude of the challenge facing the executive, we purposely selected countries that are located at the top, middle, and bottom of the Index.[4]

Rather than simply selecting all suitable presidential experiences (terms) regardless of country, we first identified nine presidential regimes that afforded us the variation

2 See http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm and www.freedomhouse.org.
3 The ICN is calculated by multiplying the Laakso-Taagepera effective number of (parliamentary) parties by the complement of the percentage of seats held by the president's own party, then dividing by 10 for ease of interpretation.
4 Strictly speaking coalitional necessity is a property of presidential terms, not countries, yet the values on this variable are indicative of notable cross-country differences.

we needed, and then collected data on all instances of coalitional presidentialism in these countries. This allowed us to reduce logistical and financial costs while facilitating within case analysis and consideration of the impact of different presidents, and hence of leadership, on coalition management. Case selection was also shaped by practical considerations. In order to ensure that the study was genuinely cross-regional, and to make the workload manageable for each co-investigator, we selected three countries from each region, nine in all.

Taken together, these various criteria led us to the following case selection. In Latin America, Brazil (democratic since 1985) is a paradigmatic case of coalitional presidentialism with a strong executive, especially after the adoption of a new constitution in 1988. Ecuador (1979-) provides a useful contrast to Brazil, insofar as it has similar multipartism but weaker executive agenda-setting powers for most of the period analyzed. Ecuador also held two constitutional conventions after democratization, offering us variation on presidential power. Chile (1990-) further expands variance of context: the peculiar post-Pinochet electoral system forces coalitions to be assembled prior to elections, rather than afterward as is typical in Brazil and Ecuador.

Among the post-Soviet regimes meeting our dual democracy threshold, Armenia (1995-2007), Russia (1994-2003) and Ukraine (1996-2006; 2010-) are the three systems that come closest to pure presidentialism, with the arguable exception of Georgia prior to 2004. All three regimes have experienced coalitional presidentialism, albeit in varying degrees. In sub-Saharan Africa, coalitional presidentialism has marked the democratic experiences of Benin (1991-), Malawi (1994-) and Kenya (2002-). However, our African cases vary considerably with respect to the distribution of institutional power. Benin has developed a vibrant democracy, while Malawian presidents enjoy considerable extra-legislative powers but have often been forced to recourse to informal measures to assemble viable legislative coalitions. Finally, the powerful Kenyan presidency has relied on both formal and informal mechanisms to build working majorities in one of Africa's most assertive legislatures.

In order to facilitate genuinely comparative analysis we sought to acquire equivalent data across all nine country cases. A contextually sensitive blend of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, combined with intense consultation with local scholars and continual cross-case and cross-regional comparisons, has generated a broad array of data. The material that we have collected can be broken down into three main categories. First, a group of "objective" indicators of executive-legislative relations was gleaned from the public and legislative records and/or obtained from colleagues. Second, research consultants in each of the nine countries produced positive and negative legislative case studies of presidents who managed (or failed to manage) conflicts within their coalitions on discrete policy issues.

Third, we conducted semi-structured interviews with parliamentarians in order to develop a set of more subjective indicators of legislative-executive relations. More specifically, we interviewed 30 legislators in the

Table 1. Index of Coalitional Necessity, Selected Years[5]

Country	Effective Number of Parties (lower)	Lower House Seat Share of Pres Party (%)	Index of Coalitional Necessity	President, Party
Brazil (2010)	10.36	17.10	85.88	Rousseff, PT
Armenia (2003)	5.27	0.00	52.70	Kocharian (ind.)
Ecuador (2002)	6.71	25.00	50.33	Gutiérrez, PSP
Chile (2010)	5.64	14.17	48.41	Piñera, RN
Russia (1999)	5.49	16.30	46.17	Putin, Unity
Kenya (2002)	3.48	17.40	28.74	Kibaki, DP
Ukraine (2010)	3.30	18.00	27.98	Yanukovich, PR
Benin (2006)	3.89	42.17	22.56	Boni Yayi, FCBE
Malawi (1994)	2.69	48.00	13.99	Muluzi, UDF

5 This table presents a reasonably typical presidential term from each of our nine countries for illustrative purposes. In each country we look at all relevant instances of coalitional presidentialism, as our unit of analysis is the presidential term, not the country.

smaller chambers (Armenia, Benin, Chile, and Ecuador), 40 in the intermediate-sized chambers (Kenya, Malawi), and 50 in the large legislatures (Brazil, Russia, and Ukraine), for a total of 350 elite interviews. It is these interviews that we draw upon in this research report. Within-case samples were split 60/40 between coalition members and opposition members, to capture the typical balance of power within the legislature.

Some of the key issues covered by the questionnaire included the general views of legislators on the functionality of the presidential-legislative relationship, the informal institutions and practices used by the president to attract legislative support, the effectiveness of different presidential tools, and the views of key actors on horizontal accountability. At the completion of the project many of the project documents such as our interview questionnaire will be posted on our website.[6]

Table 2. The Sample of Interviews

Country	Chamber	Size	Category	Target N	Target (%)
Brazil	Lower	513	Large	50	10
Ecuador	Unicameral	124	Small	30	24
Chile	Lower	120	Small	30	25
Benin	Unicameral	83	Small	30	36
Kenya	Unicameral	224	Intermediate	40[6]	18
Malawi	Unicameral	193	Intermediate	40	21
Armenia	Unicameral	131	Small	30	23
Russia	Lower	450	Large	50	11
Ukraine	Lower	450	Large	50	11

Theorising coalitional presidentialism

The comparative study of presidentialism has undergone a major theoretical shift over the past 25 years. In 1984, the late Juan Linz began work on the essay that would later be published as "The Perils of Presidentialism" (Linz 1990). This essay cast grave doubts on the viability of presidentialism, warning that minority presidents facing fragmented legislatures were in a largely untenable position: executive-legislative relationships in this scenario would be characterized by pervasive strife. The Linzian approach was grounded in an expectation of interbranch conflict. Some twenty years later, a review essay by two leading scholars suggested that the research frontier in the study of executive-legislative relations under presidentialism had now shifted to coordination — i.e. to the study of the mechanisms that allowed presidents and assemblies to cooperate, even under apparently unfavourable scenarios of partisan fragmentation and divided government (Cheibub and Limongi 2010). Among these mechanisms, the most important was remarkably simple and had been well known to scholars of parliamentarism for nearly a century: coalition building. If executives cannot govern with the support of just one party in the legislature, they try to win others to their cause. This principle applies both to parliamentarism and to minority presidentialism.

In retrospect, it seems puzzling that scholars did not anticipate that directly elected presidents would engage in interparty coalition building. How was it, then, that scholars shifted their emphases from the "perils of presidentialism" to a recognition of coalitional practices over the past quarter century? Robert Elgie (2005) has usefully retraced this debate. He notes that the 1980s and early 1990s were dominated by Linz's classic argument for the superiority of parliamentarism over presidentialism, especially for young, untested democracies. Linz claimed that dual democratic legitimacies under presidentialism (based on separate electoral mandates for the legislature and president) would lead to recurrent conflicts. Conflicts would be exacerbated by the winner-take-all nature of presidential elections, by the two-dimensional nature of the presidential office (the president represents both the state and a partisan option) and by the overall inflexibility of the system, which is based on temporally rigid mandates.

Later, in recasting the original Linzian arguments, Mainwaring (1993) and Stepan and Skach (1993) argued

6 We are still collecting the final Kenyan interviews.

that the problem was not presidentialism per se, but rather the "difficult combination" of presidentialism with fragmented multiparty systems. Linzian conflicts were much more likely to emerge in a multiparty format; hence, bipartism was generally preferable to multipartism under the separation of powers. In a third phase of the debate which we have described elsewhere (Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power 2014), 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. This counter-argument emerged gradually between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s and was based heavily on the Latin American experience, especially that of Brazil. A new generation of neoinstitutionalist scholars marshaled both case-study and cross-national evidence suggesting that multiparty presidentialism was indeed viable.[7]

Many theoretical and empirical advances in recent years have come under the rubric of what has come to be called 'coalitional presidentialism', a concept that is relevant only in multiparty presidential regimes.[8] We define coalitional presidentialism as a strategy of directly elected minority presidents to build durable, cross-party support in fragmented legislatures. More specifically, we classify a case as exhibiting coalitional presidentialism when 1) the president is the principal coordinator of government, 2) the nominal party of the president does not hold majority status in the legislature, and 3) visible attempts at coalition formation are made.

Following the research that has taken place over the last ten years, it has become clear that coalitional presidentialism is far more common than was previously thought. Data collected by Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh (2004) on government formation and control of legislative seats in all democracies from 1946 to 1999 has demonstrated that coalition government occurs in 78.1% of parliamentary minority situations and 53.6% of presidential minority situations (p. 574). This finding disconfirms the Linzian expectation that presidents and prime ministers would somehow behave differently when confronted with similar landscapes of legislative fragmentation.

7 On Brazil, see for example Figueiredo and Limongi 1999, 2000. Important doctoral dissertations in this vein were completed by Deheza 1997; Amorim Neto 1998; Altman 2001; Zelaznik 2001; Mejía-Acosta 2004; Martínez-Gallardo 2005; Martorelli Hernández 2007; and Zucco Jr. 2007.

8 The coining of the phrase is usually attributed to a Brazilian scholar, Sérgio Abranches (1988), who introduced the term *presidencialismo de coalizão*. The term quickly gained traction in Brazil, where it is both a descriptor of political practice (used by journalists and politicians) and an analytical paradigm for the study of democratic governability (used by political scientists). For a review see Power (2010).

Introducing the "toolbox"

To date, much of the research that has been conducted on coalitional presidentialism has taken a univariate approach. In other words, it has focused on the way in which presidents have used one of the tools at their disposal to form and maintain legislative coalitions. This is problematic because in reality presidents have a range of tools at their disposal and deploy them in creative and dynamic ways: tracking one tool therefore provides only a partial, and often misleading, insight into executive-legislative relations. In order to be able to analyze the most significant tools used by presidents – legislative powers, partisan powers, cabinet management, budgetary powers and the exchange of favours – we develop the idea of the "presidential toolbox", which allows us to consider the relative value of different tools and the different admixtures in which they are deployed.[9]

Drawing on existing studies from our three regions, we identify five core tools that appear to be utilized – albeit in different admixtures – by presidents around the world.

Legislative powers

Legislative tools cover the powers that presidents command over the initiation, deliberation, modification and enactment of laws. The president can use agenda powers positively to cement the coalition or negatively to discourage alternative agendas within the coalition. They include, inter alia, the president's power to initiate statutory and constitutional legislation; to issue decrees that have normative consequences; to veto laws approved by parliament; to initiate laws in specific policy areas.

Partisan powers

Partisan powers refers to the influence that the president can wield over their own party, or in some cases, allied parties within the coalition (for example, parties who campaign for parliament but did not run their own candidate in the presidential election). We expect that the greater control that a president is able to exert over his/her own party the better able he/she will be to ensure coalition discipline. Presidents with strong control over a very small number of MPs and presidents with weak control over a very large party are likely to find themselves in a similar position; in both cases, the president will be forced to make greater use of alternative tools in order to marshal the coalition.

Cabinet allocation

We assume that presidents have broad powers of appointment and that they use these appointments to

9 For elaboration of the concept with application to three tools, see Raile, Pereira and Power (2011).

secure political support. "Powers of appointment" vary significantly across cases both in terms of the number of patronage positions available and in terms of the prestige of each. Although appointments to a number of different positions often carry political significance, for operational reasons we focus on appointments to the national cabinet, which is of primary import across our regions.

Budgetary Powers

This tool is defined as the president's ability to direct the formulation and execution of public spending priorities with a view to obtaining targeted political support. This has various sub-dimensions, including influence in the drafting of the national budget, normally done by the executive branch alone; authority to accept or reject legislative amendments to the national budget (which formally is a "legislative power of the president"); ability to accelerate, delay, or suspend the execution of discrete line items in the budget; and, the ability to deploy non-earmarked discretionary funds under the control of the executive branch.

Exchange of favours

The exchange of favours refers to deals between the president and legislators in which political support is informally exchanged for economic support, private benefits, or other forms of personal assistance. The informal nature of these transactions distinguish them from pork-barrel budget politics, where financial inducements are provided in return for electoral support within the formal rules of the political game. Classic examples of the exchange of favours are when the sitting president bribes MPs to vote a certain way, or secures the support of legislators by promising to finance their next election campaign. However, it is important to note that the exchange of favours does not always equate to corruption, and may not always have normatively bad connotations (Levitsky and Helmke, 2006).

The following section provides a summary of our findings regarding legislators' perceptions of the value of these five tools.

Legislators' perceptions of tool usage

One of the main research questions of our project relates to the most effective tools available to presidents to manage their coalitions. We asked all of our interviewees to rank the five tools in order of their effectiveness. Table 3 reports the responses by country. One thing that is immediately apparent is the broad consensus on the significance of cabinet appointments. In total, 44% of all MPs ranked cabinet authority as the most important

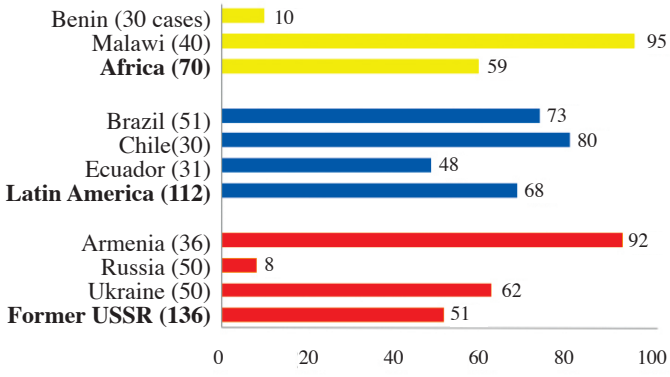
Table 3. MPs Opinions on the Most Effective Tool in Coalition Formation

	Legislative Powers		Budget control		Cabinet authority		Partisan powers		Exchange of favours	
Cases (N)	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Benin (30)	2	7	12	40	14	47	0	0	2	7
Malawi (40)	6	15	7	18	20	50	0	0	7	18
AFRICA (70)	8	11	19	27	34	49	0	0	9	13
Brazil (51)	3	6	11	22	31	61	1	2	5	10
Chile (30)	5	17	5	17	15	50	3	10	0	0
Ecuador (31)	10	32	3	7	1	3	7	23	8	26
L. AMERICA (112)	18	16	19	17	47	42	11	9	13	12
Armenia (36)	10	28	2	6	15	42	2	6	2	6
Russia (50)	9	18	8	16	10	20	16	32	5	10
Ukraine (50)	9	18	4	8	33	66	3	6	2	4
EX-USSR (136)	28	21	14	10	58	43	21	15	9	7
Total (318)	54	17	42	13	139	44	32	10	31	10

factor, including an absolute majority of MPs in Chile, Malawi and Ukraine. Only in Ecuador and did Russia did legislators rank another tool first. In the Russian case, MPs prioritized partisan powers, perhaps cognizant of the way in which the construction of a viable political organization under Vladimir Putin in the 2001-03 period boosted his capacity to control parliament. In Ecuador, legislators also saw partisan powers as important, but considered the considerable legislative powers that presidents enjoy to be more significant overall.

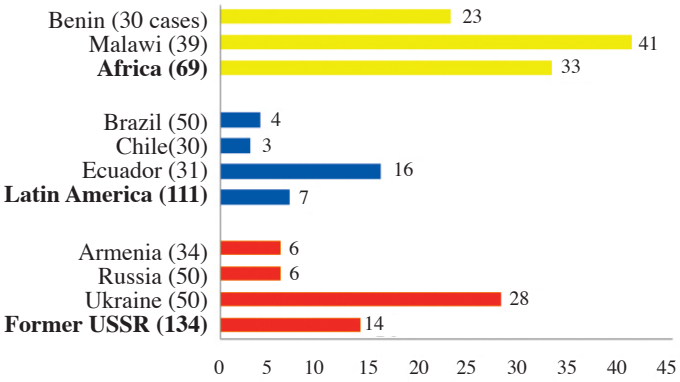
In many countries, cabinet seats are seen as being not just important, but an indispensable building block of an effective coalition. Figure 1 shows the number of MPs who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "A party will not join the president's coalition unless it is directly represented in the cabinet". Although there are two important outliers in Benin and Russia, where parties have often offered support for the president in return for other benefits, this statement wins broad support throughout the rest of the sample: 59% in Africa, 68% in Latin America and 51% in the former Soviet Union. Moreover, in countries such as Armenia and Malawi it is clear that presidents are expected to offer cabinet representation in return for the support of a new coalition partner.

Figure 1. Percentage of legislators agreeing that "a party will not join the president's coalition unless it is directly represented in the cabinet"



The other striking finding in Table 3 is that legislators across the eight countries represented here (we are still collecting the final Kenyan interviews) clearly recognise the significance of all of the five tools that we have identified. With the exception of partisan powers in Benin and Malawi, and the exchange of favours in Chile, at least one legislator from each country scored the significance of each tool. Moreover, in open-ended questions that asked legislators to reflect on their experience in these countries, many MPs provided examples of the use of these tools, suggesting that they are in play, even if they are not the most significant (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Proportion of legislators spontaneously mentioning "bribes, perks, blackmail" as important to coalition formation[10]



Perhaps unsurprisingly, mentions of bribes, perks and blackmail were highest in those countries in which democracy is newest and political institutions least institutionalized. In total, 41% of MPs in Malawi mentioned such illicit incentives in one way or another, compared to just 4% in Brazil, while the average number of MPs mentioning such factors was 33% in Africa as compared to 7% in Latin America and 14% in the former Soviet Union. However, it is important to keep in mind that the responses of legislators to this question may be more reflective of their willingness to talk openly about illicit inducements than the relative significance of these practices in their countries. In April 2013, prosecutors in Brazil announced their intention to investigate former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for his role in an illegal scheme that used public funds to pay coalition partners for support in 2004-2005. It seems unlikely that the 96% of MPs in Brazil who failed to mention bribes or side payments in their interviews were all unaware of the rumours that such deals were taking place on a regular basis.

Although the significance of cabinet appointments stands out in both the standardized and open-ended survey responses, beyond this there is very little agreement on the most effective tool available to presidents. This dissensus is an important finding in itself, because it demonstrates the considerable variations that exist in the way that coalitional presidentialism is practiced across cases. Budgetary authority is seen as being a significant tool in all eight cases, but aside from Benin and Brazil it is not

10 Legislators were asked a number of questions about the practice of coalitional politics in their country. We subsequently hand-coded the answers to these open-ended questions.

especially emphasized by our legislators over the other tools. In Ukraine, for example, the president's legislative powers are seen to be more significant than her budgetary authority. The same is true in Ecuador. This suggests that there is no one common way in which the toolbox is being used. Rather, presidents operating in different contexts, and with different sets of expectations and resources at their disposal, appear to be using coalition-building inducements in very different ways. As a result, we should be careful not to generalize on the basis of a small number of cases, and need to be alert to the reality that models that account for some presidents may not hold for others.

We observe few consistent regional patterns, in large part because each of our three regions also displays considerable internal heterogeneity. This is not to say there are no patterns of note: the weakness of political parties in Africa (Carothers 2006) means that African MPs tend to rank the significance of partisan powers very low. At the same time, these legislators tended to rank budgetary control extremely high, which makes sense given the centrality of patronage to these political systems (Barkan 1976; Barkan and Okumu 1980). But within Africa there was also considerable variation, with MPs in Malawi placing less emphasis on the budget, and more on the considerable legislative powers enjoyed by presidents. Indeed, the profiles of tools selected by MPs in Benin and Brazil are more similar than those identified by MPs in Benin and Malawi or in Brazil and Ecuador. Similarly, the tool rankings that emerge from our interviews with Russian legislators are closer to those of Ecuador than they are to Ukrainian MPs.

Legislators' perceptions of coalitional presidentialism

What do legislators think of coalitional politics more generally? Do they believe that coalitions are a necessary evil to stave off political instability, or an unnecessary expedient that serves to entrench presidential power and undermine legislative accountability? Different MPs in our sample argued in favour of both of these propositions – occasionally at the same time. But what does this mean for the sustainability of coalitional politics?

We asked MPs how they would evaluate the impact of coalitional presidentialism on a number of different aspects of their own political system. Table 4 reports the proportion of legislators who "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that coalitional presidentialism had the relevant effect. There is a clear consensus that the formation and maintenance of coalitions by presidents has a number of positive consequences. A majority of MPs believe that coalitional presidentialism has allowed for more decisive public policy. Legislators in all our countries bar Russia also agreed that the practice of coalition making had enhanced the representation of diverse social interests

Table 4. Legislators' attitudes toward coalitional presidentialism (% agreeing that coalition governments tend to produce the outcome in question)

Country	BRA	CHL	ECU	ARM	UKR	RUS	BEN	MWI
Positive factors								
Enhance the quality of public policies	43	97	84	72	68	68	70	60
Make law-making process more decisive	35	77	81	81	96	78	73	60
Permit the representation of diverse social interests	65	87	84	78	54	48	87	58
Has enhanced the quality of democracy	29	87	61	50	30	30	53	45
Encourage political stability	78	100	87	81	78	70	83	58
Negative factors								
Lead to a style of politics based on the exchange of favors	94	30	58	72	58	40	90	93
Undermine the ability of the legislature to hold the president accountable	92	73	65	61	70	70	76	75
Lead to opportunistic support for the government of the day	98	40	65	67	66	60	83	85
Encourage the legislature to transfer policy making authority to the president	78	80	55	64	72	76	67	63

within the government – and even Russian MPs, who have seen the progressive closing off of political space since their experiment with coalitional presidentialism, were split almost 50-50. The combination of broader representation and fewer episodes of legislative deadlock also led an overwhelming majority of MPs – 100% in Chile, and over 75% in five other cases – to identify a positive link between coalitional presidentialism and political stability.

However, legislators are also quick to identify the negative consequences of coalition formation. Clear majorities in every country recognize that the flipside of the way in which coalitional presidentialism promotes decisive law-making is the way in which it both undermines the ability of the legislature to hold the executive to account and, worse, encourages the legislature to transfer power to the president. MPs in six of our countries are also clear that coalitional politics does not simply exacerbate the advantages of the president, but actually facilitates a new form of politics based on the exchange of favours. It is significant that this concern was most strongly expressed in some of those countries in which democracy has been most recently introduced, and is currently most fragile, such as Benin (90%) and Malawi (93%).

Taken together, the tendency for the legislature to transfer policy-making authority to the president, and to encourage the exchange of favours, raises serious questions about the implications of coalitional presidentialism for long-term democratic consolidation. Here, our interviewees are divided. MPs in Brazil, Ukraine and Russia are strongly opposed to the idea that coalitional presidentialism has enhanced the quality of democracy. However, legislators in Chile and Ecuador are far more positive, agreeing with the statement in high numbers. A further set of MPs in Armenia, Benin, and Malawi, are roughly evenly divided between seeing the practice of presidential coalition formation as a driver and retardant of democracy. To some extent these findings appear to track recent experiences with democracy, suggesting that MPs views are primarily shaped by broader political trends – whether or not these are directly connected to coalitional politics itself.

However, it is important to note that even in countries where MPs recognize the shortcomings of coalitional presidentialism, legislators often appear to see it as a necessary evil. We asked MPs to choose between the statement that 'a presidential coalition that dominates parliament is 'beneficial … because it generates political stability' or that it is 'harmful … because it weakens democratic accountability'. Despite their misgivings, a majority of MPs in six of our 8 countries came to the conclusion that the effect of coalitional politics on political stability outweighed its effects on democratic quality (table 5). Of course, there are important variations here also. More than 60% of MPs in Brazil and Malawi believe that the overall impact of coalitional presidentialism is harmful. This reflects the different priorities of legislators in these countries, who appear to be more concerned with accountability than political stability throughout our survey. There are also important variations within countries: as one would expect, MPs who have enjoyed the benefits of being in government tend to be more positive than those who have spent their careers in opposition.

How can we explain the grudging acceptance of coalitional presidentialism in many of our cases? The most plausible explanation is that our legislators are aware that all

Table 5. Does Coalitional Control of the Assembly Enhance Stability or Undermine Accountability?

Country	A presidential coalition that dominates parliament is beneficial to this country because it generates political stability	A presidential coalition that dominates parliament is harmful to this country because weakens democratic accountability	"Both are true" (not stimulated)	N
Chile	82	14	4	28
Benin	70	30	0	27
Ecuador	60	36	4	25
Ukraine	54	35	10	48
Russia	53	43	4	49
Armenia	53	33	13	36
Malawi	38	62	0	37
Brazil	37	61	2	51

forms of government have strengths and weaknesses, and find the costs of coalition government acceptable when compared to their experience of one party, or minority, rule. In this way, the attitudes of many of our MPs seem to echo Winston Churchill's famous line about democracy: coalitional presidentialism is the worst form of government, except for all of the other forms that have been tried. This confirms two things that existing studies of coalitional presidentialism have already suggested. First, that coalitional presidentialism is valuable precisely because it enables the executive to overcome the "difficult combination" of multiparty politics and presidentialism, and avoid deadlock and democratic breakdown. Second, that coalitional presidentialism is here to stay.

Conclusions and future research

Coalitional presidentialism is an important political phenomenon around the world. For presidents whose parties lack majority support in legislative assemblies, coalitions have become the preferred way of dealing with minority support in legislative assemblies. This tendency of presidents to act like prime ministers has enabled them to overcome the "difficult combination" of multiparty politics and presidentialism. As a result, the kind of legislative deadlock that Linz feared has not occurred. However, coalitional presidentialism brings with it an important set of negative externalities. Even legislators that are overall sympathetic to coalitional politics identify a number of ways in which it may undermine democracy. The typical assessment of the MPs in our sample might be summarized as follows: coalitional presidentialism boosts political stability, but at the cost of weaker horizontal accountability.

It is clear from the responses to our survey of legislators that MPs in different countries have operated under presidents who have used very different combinations of tools to build and maintain their coalitions. Although there is a clear consensus on the importance of cabinet authority, the significance of other tools varies considerably over both time and space. This finding, and the fact that legislators across our eight countries recognize the significance of the five tools described in this paper, demonstrates the importance of understanding coalitional presidentialism through the lens of the presidential "toolbox".

We now need further research to clarify which tools presidents use under different conditions and why. We also need to know more about the implications of these combinations of tools for public policy, political stability and democracy. Are some combinations of tools more effective than others? Do some combinations have worse externalities, and if so, can these be mitigated? These are the questions that the Coalitional Presidentialism Project hopes to develop answers to in the coming years.

The research of the Coalitional Presidentialism project is ongoing, and can be followed via our website: www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/presidentialism

Project publications

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