UNRAVELING PRESIDENTIALISM: LEARNING FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

BAŞKANLIK SİSTEMİNİ ÇÖZMEK: LATİN AMERİKA TECRÜBESİNDEN ÖĞRENMEK

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ABSTRACT

Early studies on presidentialism associated the design with political instability and weak democratic credentials, with deeply divided societies being particularly advised not to craft presidential regimes. Practices of presidentialism around the world later reframed the debate, as the focus shifted to variants of presidentialism. Presidentialism, in all its shades and colors, negates a monolithic set of political outcomes as evidenced by the constant experimentation in Latin America. This study scrutinizes how some reforms in Latin America served to pluralize presidentialism whereas other steps reinforced the opposite results. Lessons can be drawn from the two steps forward and one step back advance of presidentialism in the region. While the changing role of vice presidency, the impact of electoral system reform, and allowing for presidential exit through the intervention of the electorate diffuse power, the growing legislative powers of presidents and flexibilization of term limits dent pluralization.

Keywords: Presidentialism, Presidents, Legislatures, Executives, Latin America.

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ÖZ

Başkanlık sistemi üzerine yapılan erken çalışmalarda, bu tür bir tasarım siyasi istikrarsızlık ve zayıf demokratik sicil ile ilişkilendirilirken, özellikle de derin fay hatlarıyla ayrılan toplumlar başkanlık sistemi inşa etmemeleri yönünde uyarıldılar. Dünya genelindeki başkanlık sistemi uygulamaları, farklı başkanlık sistemi türleri mercek altına alınmaya başlandıkça, tartışmayı ayrı bir çerçeveye taşıdı. Tüm renk ve tonlarıyla başkanlık sistemi, Latin Amerika'nın sürekli denemelerinden açıkça görüldüğü üzere, tek tip bir dizi siyasi sonucu yadsır. Bu çalışma, bazı adımlar başkanlık sistemlerini çoğulculaştırırken, diğerlerinin aksi yönde sonuçları güçlendirmelerini inceler. Latin Amerika başkanlık sistemlerinin iki adım ileri ve bir adım geri ritmiyle ilerlemelerinden ders çıkarılabilir. Başkan yardımcılığı makamının değişen rolü, seçim sistemi reformunun etkisi ve başkanların seçmen müdahalesiyle görevden alınabilmeleri gücü yayar ve dağıtırken, başkanların artan yasa koyucu yetkileri ve esneklik kazanan görev dönemi sınırlamaları çoğulculaşmayı zedeler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Başkanlık Sistemleri, Başkanlar, Yasamalar, Yürütmeler, Latin Amerika.

INTRODUCTION

For countries transitioning to a presidential system, Latin American experience with presidentialism is particularly instructive and versatile. Shifts in practices observed on relations between the legislatures and the executives in the region shed a light on where experimenting with presidentialism may take a political system. The prevailing trends in the region and how they have contributed to study of the global record of presidentialism thus merit scrutiny.

The trajectory followed by Latin American political systems and their relative stabilization from mid-1980s on immensely contributed to the questioning and revision of the original assumptions on presidentialism. Some of the early expectations associating presidentialism with rigidity and instability could be discarded, owing to the performance of presidential systems in Latin America. The accounts on flexibilization, parliamentarization, stable coexistence with multiparty systems as well as coalition formation have combined to point at

a change in the way presidentialism is understood. One of the most salient characteristics of Latin American presidentialism from the 1980s on has been the overcoming of grave political crises through institutional mechanisms of presidential exit such as Congressional action or resignations in response to street protests and social mobilization (Serrafero, 2018: 404). Democratic breakdowns no longer serve as explanations for quick turnover of presidents in the region.

This study begins by summarizing the findings of earlier studies on presidentialism in political science literature. The ways in which the perception of fragility and weakness of the democratic record has in time been replaced with the accounts underlining how presidentialism managed to reinvent itself is charted. Attention is then turned to how Latin American scholarship has classified presidential systems in terms of the specific aspects of relations between legislatures and executives, with taxonomies being explored. In the following sections, procedures and practices recently introduced in the region are surveyed. Rising levels of collegiality in the ranks of the executive, reforms of the electoral system, and recall referenda are examined among the moves that serve pluralization. Expanding legislative powers of presidents and revisions of presidential term limits are studied among the factors that rather dent pluralism. These shifts combine to present a presidential experience that is hardly reminiscent of how the foundations of presidential system were laid out at the beginning. It is concluded that, in the land of the caudillos[1], presidentialism was gradually pluralized, though with the taking of two steps forward and one step back.

1. THE EVOLVING LITERATURE: FROM PERILS TO VARIANTS

The original accounts on presidentialism fell far from considering it as a promising design with regards to prospects for political stability and democratic performance. In his path-breaking take on presidentialism, Linz places an emphasis on how parliamentarism is more conducive to a stable democratic political system (1990: 52). It is Linz's main conclusion that zero-sum presidential elections, fixed terms for presidents, and dual legitimacy with uncertainty over whether the legislature or the executive represents the will of the people are among the perils posed by presidentialism (Linz, 1990: 55-63). Lijphart similarly points at how "the vast majority of stable democracies have parliamentary rather than presidential or semi-presidential forms of government" (2004: 103). In formulating his suggestions for countries with deep cleavages, Lijphart views parliamentary government as the general guideline for

[1] Caudillos are considered to be political leaders who rely on the support of popular sectors to abuse institutions, mistreat their political rivals, and try to extend their stay in power (Corrales, 2008: 55).

constitution writers to safeguard the collegial nature of the cabinet, avoid presidential elections which are majoritarian in nature, and confront politics of personality (2004: 99-102). Mainwaring and Shugart concur with Linz and Lijphart in arguing that presidentialism is poorly represented among long established democracies (1997: 456). It has also been noted that presidentialism stages a problematic performance with regards to consolidation of democratic regimes (Stepan and Skach, 1993).

Mainwaring indeed acknowledges the difficulty associated with presidentialism, though with the qualification that multi-party systems in combination with presidentialism are the cause for concern (1993: 220-2). This difficult coexistence has also been confirmed by Samuels (2007, 719). A warning has been issued as to how the centrifugal dynamics of multiparty systems can lead to minority and divided governments (Riggs, 1994: 89-91). Presidential systems are noted to "function better with electoral rules or sequences that avoid extreme multipartism" (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997: 467).

Gradually gaining momentum has been a more optimistic conceptualization of multipartism under presidentialism as a mechanism of reigning in the presidents. The success of multiparty presidentialism in Latin America has been associated with how party system fragmentation functions to limit the powers of the executive (Pereira and Melo, 2012: 157-61). The constraints on partisan powers of a President increasingly are perceived as an effective mechanism of control. The interaction between multipartism and presidentialism is believed to limit hyperpresidentialism, lead to the introduction of parliamentary techniques of control, and contribute to the abandonment of an absolute notion of separation of powers (García Roca, 2016: 86).

Coming in defense of presidentialism are the studies that refuse to evaluate all presidential systems in a uniform manner and rather opt out for focusing on the variants of presidentialism. A more diversified enumeration of the sources of variation has been underway. García Roca's claim that there are as many presidentialisms- as well as semipresidentialisms and parliamentarism- as the number of countries increasingly gained the upper hand (2016: 72). There have been calls to attend to the wider institutional context in which presidentialism operates (Elgie, 2005: 118). Shugart and Carey conclude that the more powerful the presidents, the more problematic the outcomes under presidentialism (1992: 156). The expectation has been that "providing the president with limited legislative power, encouraging the formation of parties that are reasonably disciplined in the legislature, and preventing extreme fragmentation of the party system enhance the viability of presidentialism" (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997: 469).

The distinction drawn between presidential and parliamentary systems has also gradually blurred. Increasing convergence between the two systems was initially acknowledged in the earlier works of Linz, where it was noted that "parliamentary systems with tightly disciplined parties and a prime minister who enjoys an absolute majority of legislative seats will tend to grow quite similar to presidential regimes" (1990: 62-3). The executive has been expected to relate to the legislature possibly in transactional or hierarchical forms under parliamentarism and presidentialism alike (Shugart, 2008: 346-348). Shugart underlines that a presidential design may evolve into an informal fusion of powers system where the executive and the legislative branches are bound together (2008: 356). Transactional presidentialism, on the other hand, is defined as a variant where political parties form coalitions among themselves to improve their position in national and regional power structures (Duque Daza, 2014: 118). Tsebelis also accentuates that "presidential systems (with multiple institutional veto players) present characteristics of policy-making stability similar to coalition governments in parliamentary systems (with multiple partisan veto players)" (1995: 322).

Institutional design has decreasingly been treated as the cause for the ills of presidential systems. Cheibub argues that presidential democracies "are not institutionally flawed" and "have existed in countries where the environment is inhospitable for any kind of regime" (2012, 160 and 136). Riggs similarly highlights that the "fact that virtually all presidentialist regimes except that of the United States experienced authoritarianism and military coups was attributed to cultural, environmental or ecological forces rather than any inherent problems in this constitutional formula" (1994: 72). In another sign of qualification that reveals a degree of restraint in questioning the democratic credentials of presidentialism by design, it has been claimed that "the superior record of parliamentarism is in part an artifact of where it has been implemented" (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997: 456).

2. TAXONOMIES OF PRESIDENTIAL DESIGN: THE LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Elgie's survey on the trajectory followed by presidentialism studies outlines three different waves, all coinciding with the 1990s (2005: 107). Latin American experience, on the other hand, enables the identification of new waves of studies in the 2000s and beyond. In analyzing presidentialism in the region, a variety of concepts have recently come under the spotlight. Coalitional presidentialism (Chaisty et al., 2018; Chasquetti, 2008; Colomer and Negretto, 2005; Marsteintredet et al., 2013; Martínez-Gallardo, 2012; Pereira and Melo, 2012; Power, 2010), multiparty presidentialism (Pereira and Melo, 2012), flexibilization of presidentialism (Linares, 2011; Marsteintredet, 2008; Serrafero,

2014) and parliamentarization of presidential systems have been identified as the main trends.

The most frequently cited effort at classifying systems with popularly elected presidents is the one proposed by Shugart and Carey (1992: 156-66). The authors claim that "criticisms of presidential regimes should not be put forward as if all presidencies were created equal; rather, these criticisms apply with greatest force to strong presidents" (Shugart and Carey, 1992: 165). Inspired by the comparison of presidential systems in Latin America as well as the contrasts between the North and Latin American designs, a typology of presidential systems has been proposed by various authors.[2] This study concentrates on some recent scholarship from Latin America that builds on the early categorizations. Formal presidential powers have been the principal pillar in distinguishing between variants of presidentialism. Carpizo, while upholding the widely endorsed classification on the basis of constitutional norms, also proposes a typology founded on contextual circumstances which he terms the constitutional reality (2014: 29). Along similar lines, Basabe-Serrano's classification diverges from others due to its emphasis on the conditions prevailing under each presidency (2017: 7-8).

Table.1: Variants of Presidentialism

Author(s)	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV	Type V
Henríquez & Zovatto (2009)	Pure	Predominant	Mitigated / Tempered	With parliamentary nuances	Parliamentarized
Lanzaro (2010)	Pluralist	Majoritarian			
Carpizo (2014)	Hegemonic	Balanced	Weak		
Nohlen (2015)	Hyper / Dominant	Reinforced / Rationalized	Pure / Balanced	Mitigated / Attenuated	Parliamentarized
Basabe-Serrano (2017)	Imperial	Minimal	Conditioned	Transitional	

To the extent that formal powers are concerned, pure presidential systems have been associated with the US design. This variant is portrayed by the existence of a balanced relationship and counterweights between branches of government (Henríquez and Zovatto, 2009: 55-6; Nohlen, 2015: 98).

[2] Early attempts at proposing a typology of presidential systems were undertaken by Karl Loewenstein (1949). Pure presidentialism, attenuated presidentialism, and approximated parliamentarism were the three categories used to classify the presidential experience in Latin America (Loewenstein, 1949: 454-5). From the first to the third, the ascendancy of the executive was restrained, and collegiality was introduced into the ranks of the executive.

Nonetheless, presidents nominate the ministers freely and ministers are responsible to the President (Basabe-Serrano, 2017: 4-5; Carpizo, 2014: 11).

The predominant variant of presidentialism is characterized by the personalization of politics, a distribution of power that favors the executive, and the lack of organs that can check and balance executive power or their being devoid of autonomy (Carpizo, 2014: 32; Henríquez and Zovatto, 2009: 55-6; Nohlen, 2015: 98). Plebiscitarian tendencies are equally discernible (Nohlen, 2015: 98). Amidst the power imbalance, the presidency is pivotal to the constitutional system (Carpizo, 2014: 32). Presidents hold wide-ranging legislative competencies of a diverse nature (Carpizo, 2014: 33). Such designs are still believed to fall far from autocracies, given that they incorporate quite efficient mechanisms for the protection of individual rights (Carpizo, 2014: 32-3).

In mitigated versions of presidentialism, legislatures are furnished with wider competencies and legislative powers of presidents face considerable limitations (Henríquez and Zovatto, 2009: 57). It is rather the legislature that is pivotal to the constitutional system, as the President lacks the veto power or such power is subject to an override with a simple majority (Carpizo, 2014: 34). The ministers exercise executive power collectively with the President, even though the formers are responsible to the latter (Carpizo, 2014: 11). A degree of collegiality can thus be observed inside the ranks of the executive.

In the perspective of Reniu, parliamentarization in presidential regimes is so widespread a trend as to be observable in 12 out of the 18 Latin American states (2008: 12). Parliamentarized variants of presidentialism incorporate the features of parliamentarism to varying degrees. Parliamentarization is regarded as a means of putting a brake on hyperpresidentialism and enabling the rationalization of presidentialism (García Roca, 2016: 76). Decision-making in parliamentarized presidential systems rests on negotiation and consensus (Nohlen, 2015: 99). Individual or collective responsibility of the ministers before the legislature is the cornerstone (Carpizo, 2014: 11). Another corollary is the flexibilization of a system known for its rigidity in terms of tenure and separate mandates. Indicators of parliamentarization include ministers attending legislative sessions and answering questions, vote of confidence and motions of censure against the ministers individually or collectively, a coordinating minister being designated as responsible for the operation of the cabinet, and dissolution of the legislature by the President (Valadés, 2008: 239-46; Nohlen, 2015: 99; García Roca, 2016: 74-7). While the rules are restrictive and difficult to carry on with in practice, constitutions of Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay allow for the dissolution of the legislature by the executive (Serrafero, 2018: 415).

In a more restrictive attempt at borrowing from parliamentarism, some presidential systems are known to manifest parliamentary nuances. While joint control of the cabinet by the legislature and the President is established, the President rather than the legislature ultimately decides whether a minister continues in office once a motion of censure is initiated (Henríquez and Zovatto, 2009: 58; Reniu, 2008: 12). Pockets of presidential power are wider in presidentialism with parliamentary nuances than in parliamentarized variants of presidentialism.

Carpizo's elaboration on an alternative categorization of presidential systems discusses the underlying causes of presidential empowerment or emasculation. Hegemonic presidentialism denotes a predominant political party chaired by the President and holding legislative majority, coupled with a two-party system or two rival blocs of political parties (Carpizo, 2014: 48). Political parties are disciplined, and power is concentrated (Carpizo, 2014: 48). At the opposite end, weak presidentialism combines an extreme multiparty system made up of ideologically distant parties with a president lacking legislative majority support (Carpizo, 2014: 50). Parliamentary checks such as ministerial responsibility before the legislature are also introduced (Carpizo, 2014: 50-1).

A different attempt at classification is based on an explanation that integrates institutional factors with contextual ones. The imperial variant of presidentialism combines strong institutional and partisan powers in a setting of economic prosperity and high presidential approval ratings (Basabe-Serrano, 2017: 6-7). A resemblance is observed between imperial presidentialism and hyperpresidentialism (Basabe-Serrano, 2017: 12). In hyperpresidential systems, even though the constitutional texts impose rigid and at times unrealistic restrictions on power delegation, de facto delegation becomes rather widespread and open-ended (Rose-Ackerman et al., 2011: 328). In minimal presidentialism, presidents hold limited formal powers and legislative representation, in the midst of economic and social tension accompanied by little popular support (Basabe-Serrano, 2017: 7-8). Bargaining, negotiation and building of coalitions with opposition parties become essential (Basabe-Serrano, 2017: 8).

An earlier effort at classifying Latin American presidentialism involves Lanzaro drawing a distinction between pluralist and majoritarian variants. The pluralist variant fosters a presidential system based on compromise, as whoever wins the presidency shares the victory in a de facto or de jure manner with others, stimulating the effectiveness of checks and balances (Lanzaro, 2010: 2-10). Even though a pattern of cooperation, negotiation and inter-party agreements is laid out, these ends are delivered through case-by-case settlements rather than an encompassing pact or a dense network of responsibility (Lanzaro, 2010: 6). Majoritarian presidentialism, on the other hand, signifies a system in

which whoever wins the elections governs in a more or less exclusive manner, possibly with the formation of formal coalitions (Lanzaro, 2010: 10).

3. PLURALIZING PRESIDENTIALISM

Some of the excesses of Latin American presidentialism have been mitigated by ridding it of some of its majoritarian characteristics. Horizontal checks and accountability inside the executive have been reinforced through vice presidents elected increasingly on the same ballot with presidents and the formation of coalitions bringing together members of different political parties in allocating ministerial portfolios or during legislative votes. Presidential and legislative electoral systems have both been reformed. While run-off elections are considered to offer a majoritarian formula, moderation of candidates as well as bargains between political parties they tend to induce also serve the pluralization of the political landscape. This influence is coupled by the introduction of a diverse range of variants of proportional representation (PR) system in legislative elections. Additionally, recall referenda point at a new dimension of peaceful and early presidential exits as a consequence of popular vote. At the moment, there seems to be surprisingly little connection between the recently burgeoning studies on vice presidents and the few studies on collegiality. Equally in need of further analysis is how recall referenda can figure in the flexibilization of presidentialism.

Collegiality and Pluralizing the Ranks of the Executive

A major contribution on the part of studies on Latin American presidentialism relates to the efforts at measuring presidents' powers over their cabinets or administrations. Araújo, Silva, and Vieira (2016) propose an index on whether the constitutions of the region create a hierarchical or vertical governmental decision-making process (Araújo et al., 2016: 15). Powers exercised in the removal of ministers, their selection and eligibility, the requirement of countersignature, and the power to censor and dissolve the parliament are pivotal to the endeavor (Araújo et al., 2016: 11). Binary variables denote that the value of 1 is assigned when ministers can be freely appointed by the President, the President can unilaterally remove the ministers, eligibility criteria do not go beyond age and nationality, requirement for ministerial countersignature is nonexistent, or ministers have no power to initiate legislation (Araújo et al., 2016: 9). The key finding is that a significant level of variation characterizes presidential powers over cabinets across Latin America (Araújo et al., 2016: 1).

A lately flourishing debate on vice presidency indeed has major implications on the study of collegiality inside the executive. If a clear pattern of hierarchy characterizes relations between the president and the vice president,

with the former holding exclusive sway over the appointment of the latter, collegiality is forsaken. Yet, a striking recent trend in Latin America is that a large number of presidents feel compelled to pick running mates from outside their own parties based on the exigencies of coalition building. The existence of vice presidents who are the principal opponents of the government they are a member of has also been pointed at (Bidegain, 2017: 181).

Based on the scrutiny of vice presidents who served between 1985 and 2012 in 17 Latin American countries, observing a balanced distribution or the enlargement of political-partisan support is believed to surface as the strongest criterion in the selection of vice presidents (Mieres and Pampín, 2015: 113). Leading a political grouping confers vice presidents a cushion that sustains them in power, with the caveat that such leadership can also be constructed from the vice presidency (Sribman, 2011: 121). Support from actors wielding power, pressure groups or a particular sector is equally treated as a source of autonomy for vice presidents (Sribman, 2011: 121).

Brazil is identified as an extreme case in the sense that all of its eight vice-presidents elected "since the return of democracy have had a background in a party different from that of the president" (Marsteintredet and Uggla, 2019: 16). It has been argued that "presidencies with such 'external' vice-presidents are almost three times as likely to suffer interruptions such as coups and impeachments than are those which have a designated successor with the same partisan background as the president" (Marsteintredet and Uggla, 2019: 2). A survey of recent impeachment processes resulting in the President's removal or congressional dismissals of popularly elected presidents demonstrates that all occurred in circumstances in which the vice president was the member of a different party or a politically independent figure (Marsteintredet and Uggla, 2019: 20).

The four formulas that were historically at work in choosing vice presidents have been independent elections, election on the same ballot as the president, election of the presidential candidate with the second highest vote, and the president personally picking the vice president (Marsteintredet, 2019: 122). Electing the president and the vice president on the same ballot has become the norm in the region, which promises to boost loyalty in relations between the two actors (Marsteintredet, 2019: 122; Marsteintredet and Uggla, 2019: 12). Except for in Venezuela where they are named by the president, vicepresidents are today elected on a joint ticket with presidents (Mieres and Pampín, 2015: 103).

There is considerable variation in the role played by vice presidents in Latin America. Some constitutions maintain silence on the responsibilities to be assigned to the vice president whereas others refer to ad hoc assignments by

presidents or explicitly enumerate responsibilities other than replacing the President (Bidegain, 2017: 172). Another cause for variation is that while in some constitutions vice presidents are tasked with coordinating legislative-executive relations, in others - with purely executive vice presidents - there is no association between the vice president and the legislature (Bidegain, 2017: 173). In fact, in the integrated broker model, the vice president is a member of the legislature who can vote under a defined set of circumstances or at all times (Bidegain, 2017: 173).

Pluralizing the Party System: Electoral System Reform

It has been accentuated that "institutions of parliamentarism empower political parties to an extent that is not generally found under presidentialism", as they "control delegation from voters to representatives, as well as from representatives to the chief executive" (Strøm, 2000: 274). To the contrary, presidentialism is assumed to weaken political parties (Carey, 2009: 174). The dampening effect of presidentialism on the number of relevant political parties and the presidentialization of political parties combine to confine the influence of parties over political processes. Regarding the former effect, Hicken and Stoll raise a qualification through the finding that "legislative elections reduce legislative fragmentation when there are few presidential candidates but increase legislative fragmentation when there are many presidential candidates" (2011: 857). The latter effect, on the other hand, promotes personalization of politics and transforms political parties into structures rallying around presidential candidates (Samuels, 2002: 475). It is assumed that "centralized parties that are cohesive, disciplined, without factions and with a leadership that is independent from the organization (for extra-political or statutory resources) will be more suitable to increasing levels of presidentialization" (Passarelli, 2015: 2).

Yet, electoral reforms have already begun altering party systems in Latin America. Democratization and the rise of new political parties brought along the adoption of more inclusive electoral norms which have the tendency to pluralize party competition and increase fragmentation in party systems (Negretto, 2018: 145 and 135). In an ever-expanding number of countries, formulas requiring absolute majorities or a lower percentage of the vote- usually fixed at 40 percent or above- along with the specification of a minimal margin between the first and the second ranking candidates have become the norm in presidential elections (Zovatto, 2017). These requirements under the run-off formula are believed to have "bolstered the winner's legitimacy and enticed candidates toward the political center", with the corollary of ideological moderation (McClintock, 2018).

While the PR system is entrenched in the region, recent reforms have seen the introduction of personalized voting, denoting alternatives such as open party lists, flexible closed party lists instead of bloc lists or mixed voting for candidates and closed party lists simultaneously (Negretto, 2018: 137). These steps weaken the leadership's disciplinary powers over the party, with the presidents having to negotiate their agendas even inside their own parties (Negretto, 2018: 146).

Growing resort in the region to the holding of synchronic legislative and presidential elections seems likely to boost the potential for concurrent majorities and serve the presidents. Nonetheless, the net effect of all these shifts is a greater need for coalition building. The resultant multipartism, in a more or less polarized or extreme form (García Roca, 2016: 85), has made it imperative for presidents to engage in bargaining with rival political parties. Minority presidents and divided governments have become the norm across Latin America since 1978, with a reduction in the partisan powers of presidents (Negretto, 2018: 145). Early studies on presidentialism acknowledged presidents' efforts at allocating "cabinet seats to parties other than their own in order to attract the support of these parties or, after elections, to reward them for such support" (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997: 454). Later studies on Latin American trajectory produced the most detailed accounts on coalitional presidentialism.

The management of coalitions has been regarded as "a crucial factor in the explanation of presidential success in implementing his or her agenda in Latin America" (Melo, 2009: 39). Presidents in the region can frequently be found building formal or informal legislative coalitions and using material or administrative resources to buy the support of legislators (Negretto, 2018: 147). The nominal size of the presidential cabinet in the Congress operationalized as "the percentage of Chamber seats held by the ministerially represented parties" and cabinet coalescence indicated by "the degree of proportionality between the pro-presidential parties' share of seats within the government's floor voting coalition in the Chamber and their share of ministerial portfolios" (Pereira et al., 2005: 186) were presented as the main predictors.

Classified as exaggerated presidentialisms in the early 1990s, Chile or Brazil stand out as the prime cases with an open list PR, large number of effective parties, and coalition governments (Melo, 2009: 31). Strong constitutional powers for the presidents are believed to have compensated the weak party leadership in both cases (Melo, 2009: 32). Through the lure of such powers, presidents managed to assemble cross-party coalitions. Pereira et al. indeed draw a resemblance between Brazilian coalitional presidentialism and the efforts of prime ministers in the multiparty parliamentary systems of Europe (2005: 186).

Political outsiderness has been identified as another major cause of minority presidentialism. While it is argued that in "presidential democracies that have more institutionalized party systems, the election of political outsiders is the exception" (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997: 456), it has been easier for candidates lacking ties to established political parties to perform well in Latin American elections. Yet, outsider presidents' skills and experience in building coalitions have been questioned (Clark et al., 2013: 817). The tendency of outsider presidents to distance themselves from the political class and the personalization of politics associated with this choice have been analyzed as principal predicaments (Carreras, 2013: 99; Ellis and Samuels, 2009: 531-2).

Bringing the People Back In: The Recall Referenda

At the beginning of 2010s, increasing frequency in the use of direct democracy mechanisms was witnessed (Altman, 2010: 10). Qualifying the large part of referenda as cases of plebiscites called by the president and the legislature, Altman also underlined that the popular initiative was endorsed by the prevailing majority of Latin American constitutions while being binding only in few countries (2010: 18-20). Direct democracy mechanisms coming from above then formed 85 percent of cases (Altman, 2010: 21), denoting also that referenda were utilized mostly to promote decisions rather than to control them. Cases of limited, balanced, and amplified direct democracy coexist in Latin America, with the role of citizens and the range of mechanisms used expanding from the first to the third variant (Welp, 2016: 147-148).

Emblematic of a new wave of studies on Latin American presidentialism is the focus on recall referenda. Whether the practice can be seen as a means of flexibilizing presidential systems merits some scrutiny. The recall referendum, it is argued, was introduced from the end of 1980s on to overcome the crisis of representation manifested by popular discontent and apathy, with a view to opening new institutional spaces for participation and popular control over public policy processes (Eberhardt, 2017: 107-8). This vertical and social accountability mechanism has been regulated in such a manner as to ensure that, through the consent of a number of electors usually set somewhere between 10 to 35 percent of electoral rolls, a public official might be forced to leave office (Eberhardt, 2017: 108-9).

An optimistic look into recall referendum underlines that this instrument makes it possible to resolve some conflictive situations through more direct institutionalized ways and from the bottom up, avoiding a crisis of governability (Serrafero and Eberhardt, 2017: 517). It is listed among the constitutionally defined means of presidential succession, along with death, resignation,

impeachment, declaration of physical/mental/moral inability and the abandonment of office (Serrafero and Eberhardt, 2017: 522).

Serrafero and Eberhardt indeed insist on the inclusion of the recall in debates on presidential interruptions or falls, even though the number of countries incorporating it into their constitutions remains very low (2017: 524). Recall referenda at a national scale are allowed in Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia, with the latter three also enabling such a vote to be scheduled against the President (Eberhardt, 2017: 110). The instrument has so far been put into practice only against Venezuelan and Bolivian presidents. The very presidents who initiated the reforms allowing for the practice were targeted by them, only to survive in both cases.

The jury still seems to be out on the record of recall referenda. The risk associated with the process is that electoral calculations or pursuit of vengeance through early elections can figure, whereas presidents may be searching for plebiscitary support by obtaining popular confirmation for their mandate (Eberhardt, 2017: 114). There is the reservation that the preference in favor of the practice by the three countries that then displayed hyperpresidential characteristics points at a tendency in certain democracies to become less representative and more plebiscitarian (Serrafero and Eberhardt, 2017: 527). Generalizations are still difficult to make. Causing significant variation are factors such as the period of time into a president's term during which a recall referendum can be called for, the number of signatures required to schedule the vote, absolute and relative number of votes that have to be collected for removal, the deadline involved, the turnout requirement for validating the vote, the timing of entry into force of the results, how the president is to be replaced, and how many times the practice can be resorted to during a particular mandate (Eberhardt, 2017: 118-9).

4. REELECTABLE CO-LEGISLATORS: REGRESS IN PLURALIZATION?

Two other trends that have assumed the center stage in studies of Latin American presidentialism are the expansion of the legislative toolbox of presidents and the revision of presidential term limits. Although both seem to cause a regress in the pluralization of presidential systems, they fall short of invalidating the impact of the first set of factors enumerated in the previous section. The former factor to be discussed below can be considered a balancing act, ensuring that pluralization does not transform the political system into an extremely polarized one. Widely defined presidential powers enable the presidents to counter the lack of support from the ranks of the legislature. The gradual relaxation of term limits also displays the potential for weakening the

pluralizing tendencies. In discussing how caudillismo persists in Latin America, Corrales points at presidents returning to power and the ones who change the rules to remove term limits (2008, 56). The record is a mixed one, with recent cases of less permissive treatment of reelectability being observed too.

Expanding Legislative Powers of Presidents

Presidential legislative and nonlegislative powers have mainly been measured through an ordinal scale ranging from 0 to 4, along with the use of binary variables coded on the existence or nonexistence of powers (Araújo et al., 2016: 11; Metcalf, 2000: 664). Following Shugart and Carey (1992)'s efforts at measurement, various attempts were made to attain more precision such as those by Metcalf (2000), United Nations Development Program (PNUD) (2005: 92), Fortin (2013) or Doyle and Elgie (2015). Inspired by these studies, Latin American scholars elaborated on separate indexes of legislative and executive powers of presidents.

In Latin American context, countries were ranked with regards to presidential powers for legislating as can be observed in the PNUD (2005) and the García Montero (2008) indexes. In line with the García Montero index, whether the President can initiate legislation in all areas or a designated number of them such as proposing international treaties and the annual budget as well as whether the legislature can undertake the modification of these bills make a difference (2008, 20). In countries which have symmetrical bicameral legislatures with identical powers for both chambers, the executive is believed to have a lesser level of participation in legislative output (García Montero, 2008: 47). Along with agenda-setting powers associated with the ordering of the bills that appear before the legislature, decree powers also occupy a central place in the indexes. Unilateral action and delegation theories are instructive in making sense of decree powers, with the former viewing "executive orders or decrees as instruments that the executive uses to bypass adversarial or noncooperative legislative bodies" and the latter claiming that decrees also satisfy the preferences of legislators as they "have ample opportunity to overturn (via their own considerable lawmaking powers) any undesirable presidential policies initiated by executive orders" (Pereira et al., 2005: 180-1).

As far as the studies on powers placed at the disposal of the presidents are concerned, positive and proactive powers (such as the initiation of legislation, declarations of urgency for bills, preparation of national budget, calls for extraordinary sessions, decree power) are accompanied by negative and reactive ones (encompassing veto in its total or partial form) (García Montero, 2008: 15; Duque Daza, 2014: 81; Negretto, 2018: 142). Additions that can be made to the list of negative and reactive powers are the presidential power to apply to the

Constitutional Court or the Supreme Court for abstract review and to call a referendum.

On the matter of how presidents bolster their legislative activism, partisan powers inside the legislature are instructive. Based on the study of 30 Latin American presidents in power in the period 1993-2010, a main finding has been that the combination of an institutional design favorable to the executive and the division of Congress into differentiated ideological blocs favor presidential control of the legislative agenda (Santos et al., 2014: 512). Legislative cartels are particularly conducive to easing the penetration of presidential influence into legislative activity, with the participation of one or few actors at the time of establishing the order of sessions (García Montero, 2008: 23). Based on the Chilean experience, it is assumed that "cartelized coordination exists between the executive and government legislators to pass modifications proposed by the executive" (Toro-Maureira and Hurtado, 2016: 2).

Legislatures are considered to be in a general state of decline, as they "have become more reactive than proactive" (Pereira et al., 2005: 194). This changing complexion of presidential powers and the expansion of legislative powers of presidents have been well documented in Latin America. The index developed by the PNUD calculates the Latin American average score for presidential legislative powers to be 0, 38, which is significantly above the US score of 0, 15 (PNUD 2005, 93). Yet, in various studies, the conclusion reached is that this power distribution does not necessarily culminate in the monopolization of power by Latin American presidency. Negretto, for instance, negates the rise of hyperpresidentialism with a reference to the presence of two counteracting tendencies: existence of rules that reduce the probability that the President holds congressional majorities and enhancement of the capacity of the Congress to supervise executive powers (2018: 132).

Legislatures seem to have various ways through which they can flex their muscles. Parliamentary control instruments such as the ratification of presidential appointments or acts, budgetary or public debt related controls, and impeachment can be listed (García Roca, 2016: 72). In discussing the fall of governments through democratic means too, a major trend associated with presidential ruptures across Latin America is greater activism of the congresses in the region (Serrafero and Eberhardt, 2017: 523). Regarding the powers of Latin American legislatures, it has been demonstrated that "Although the region lags behind 'Western' powers in terms of the legislature's ability to control resources and exert oversight functions – including investigating and questioning the executive – it surpasses other world regions on these dimensions" (Wilson and Woldense, 2019: 8). Cheibub, Elkins, and Ginsburg refer to "a contemporary pattern of Latin American constitutionalism that combines a

strong legislature with a president possessing strong lawmaking powers" (2011, 12).

A Mixed Record: Redefining Presidential Term Limits

The debate on reelectability and term limits has a strong bearing on the extent of flexibilization of presidential mandates and presents a major bone of contention across all presidential systems. The topic gains all the more relevance in a region where 46% of the presidents had to exit from power two years into their term or earlier (Blondel, 2015: 132). Latin America has once been regarded as a region with a deep tradition of banning presidential reelection in order to safeguard alternation in power and evade personalism (Sánchez and García Montero, 2016: 110). The majority of countries engaging in reform transitioned from reelection with an interval between presidential terms to immediate reelection (Treminio, 2014: 69). In the large part of the reforms, a relaxation of the norms on reelection took place, with rising degrees of permissiveness (Negretto, 2018: 137-8).

Term limits were altogether removed in Venezuela in 2009 and in Nicaragua in 2014. In Honduras, the reform attempt by President Zelaya provided an excuse for his toppling (Sánchez and García Montero, 2016: 112). The bending of rules on relectability without any formal amendments have also been undertaken. Fujimori in Peru and Correa in Ecuador effectively served for three terms in spite of the two-term limit, given the recognition that their first election materialized under a different constitutional framework and could be disregarded (Sánchez and García Montero, 2016: 113). A similar interpretation by judges enabled Morales in Bolivia to compete for a fourth term in October 2019, even though he previously was defeated in a referendum on the issue.

Failed attempts such as in Panama in 1998 and Venezuela in 2007 or introduction of bans on reelectability point out the mixed legacy. Countries displaying vacillation were Colombia and Ecuador, with a continual search in response to political exigencies. In Colombia, the shift to reelection which was then followed by an effort at making the practice more permissive ultimately culminated in a ban on reelectability.[3] In a major power battle involving the incumbents trying to shut their antecessor out of power in both Colombia and

[3] Owing to a constitutional reform under the Uribe presidency, a consecutive reelection was allowed for. In 2010, as Uribe's final term in office was nearing an end, an effort at organizing a referendum based on a citizen initiative was made. The Constitutional Court opposed the initiative. In the 2015 'Reform of Equilibrium of Powers', it was ascertained that a citizen who served once in the presidency under this designation could not be reelected (Sánchez and García Montero, 2016: 114).

Ecuador, Santos blocked Uribe's return while Moreno deprived Correa of the possibility of reelection by eliminating the indefinite reelection rule in 2018.

5. CONCLUSION

While early accounts enumerated a number of perils and design flaws associated with the presidential system, through an up-close look, differences between presidentialism and parliamentarism have been increasingly downplayed and the existence of variants of presidentialism gradually noted. Building on the earlier work, recent studies on Latin America offered new variants of presidentialism based on the comparison of presidential systems in the region and contrasts between the North and the Latin American designs.

Since the return to multiparty competitive politics in mid-1980s, there have been significant changes in political practices across Latin America. Constant experimentation with presidentialism in the region has so far had major implications on the research agenda. Various trends coinciding to remould Latin American presidentialism have indeed been explored. From collegiality to the changing role of vice presidents or the introduction of recall referenda, the Latin American trajectory invites further research. Efforts at measuring presidential powers need to take into account this diversification of practices.

On balance, it can be argued that Latin American presidentialism has pluralized over the years. Greater collegiality in the ranks of the executive, resulting primarily from the growing significance of vice presidency and the compelling need for coalitions, functions as a major check on presidential powers. The use of more personalized and flexible forms of the PR in legislative elections and the introduction of run-off elections as well as a reduced threshold in electing presidents have combined to cause an increase in fragmentation of party systems. The resultant need for coalition building on the legislative floor or during the formation of the executive has become another hallmark of Latin American presidentialism. Recent incorporation of the practice of recall referendum gave the voters the power to change the composition of the executive. These shifts jointly serve to pluralize presidentialism and decentralize power through installing institutional checks and balances.

Yet, as far as these recent moves in remodeling Latin American presidentialism are concerned, counteracting tendencies can be observed. The pluralization of Latin American presidentialism has been operating under certain limitations. Presidents have increasingly become co-legislators with the incremental expansion of their legislative toolbox. The revision of presidential term limits towards the more permissive has at the same time allowed them to personalize power in a manner reminiscent of caudillismo. Latin American

presidentialism at large can thus be depicted as taking two steps forward but one step back in pluralizing its ranks.

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