In praise of the edited volume in comparative political science: A case-study of the presidentialization of politics in democratic society

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ECPR Seminar on Small and Large N Solutions to Comparative Problems

University of Sussex, 22-23 September 2005
- Review development of comparative politics since 1945
- Make a particular case for the contemporary value of collaborative research and edited volumes
- Provide an example of such an approach in which we have both been involved in recent years.
Development of comparative politics

- Old institutionalism
  - Descriptive, formal institutional focus

- Global theory
  - Reaction against descriptive country studies
  - Focus on behaviour and non-formal actors
  - Shift in geographic focus
  - High-level abstract theory

- Mid-range theory
  - More limited geographic focus
  - New institutionalism
  - Lower level of abstraction than typified global theory
  - Often small(ish) ‘N’
  - Qualitative data & method
Advantages & challenges of mid-range approach

- Problems of concept-stretching & ‘travelling’ diminish with smaller N

- Challenge: To know sufficiently well each of the cases under the lens so that indicators of functional equivalence are identified and correctly interpreted

- Solution: Assemble a team of researchers who between them carry the required knowledge of a range of national cases

- Next challenges:
  - Devise an acceptable common framework for analysis
  - Agree a common range of indicators and measures which are functional equivalents of each other across the various cases under scrutiny
  - Apply a shared interpretation of the common framework
  - Write in a disciplined way to the framework so that the same questions are addressed and equivalent evidence presented across all countries
Is the edited volume undervalued?

- UK Research Assessment Exercise?

- Attitudes across Europe?

Try to imagine the loss to political science if none of the following had been published…
J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner *Political Parties & Political Development* (Yale University Press, 1966)

Robert A. Dahl *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (Yale Uni Press 1966)

S.M. Lipset & S. Rokkan *Political Parties & Voter Alignments* (Free Press 1967)

Juan J. Linz & A. Stepan *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978)

S. Barnes, M. Kaase et al *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (Sage, 1979).


The Concept of Presidentialization

1) increasing leadership power and autonomy within the political executive

2) increasing leadership power and autonomy within the political party and

3) increasingly leadership-centred electoral processes
presidentialized government

partified government

Figure 1: REGIME TYPE
3 Faces of Presidentialization

1) intra-executive presidentialization

2) intra-party presidentialization

3) electoral presidentialization
Increase of Power

1) growth of zones of autonomous control

2) growth of capability to overcome resistance
Intra-executive Presidentialization

more resources for Chancellor
control government policy from the centre
dominance of cabinet by Chancellor
personalized mandate
Intra-executive Presidentialization

- more resources for chief executive
- control government policy from the centre
- dominance of cabinet by chief executive
- personalized mandate
Intra-party Presidentialization

- growth of leaders’ offices (staff, finance)
- formal powers
- autonomy in programme/manifesto writing
- plebiscitary modes of communication with and mobilization of rank-and-file
- leaders’ seeking personalized mandates
- institutionalization of direct leadership election
Electoral Presidentialization

Leader-focus in media coverage

Leader-focus in campaign styles

Leader effects in voting behaviour
Figure 1.3: The Major Causal Flows Involved in Explaining the Presidentialization of Politics

underlying structural causes

internationalization of politics

growth and complexity of the state

changing structure of mass communication

erosion of cleavages

contingent causes

personality of leaders

political context

intra-executive presidentialization

intra-party presidentialization

electoral presidentialization

faces of presidentialization
Agenda 2010

it was not the result of a discussion process within the party

it was put together quickly by a small group of advisors

it represented a massive departure from the SPD’s dominant philosophy

it was based on executive leadership
Example: Early Election in Germany

- highly unilateral decision by Chancellor Schroeder
- no consultation with own party
- no consultation with coalition partner
- inner circle wrote manifesto
Example: CDU/CSU Campaign

- campaign entirely controlled by Angela Merkel
- very few involved in decision to nominate Prof Kirchhof
- would have made her very strong in victory
- will make her very vulnerable in defeat
How did we do it?

- two alternatives:
  - a) development of formalized, quantifiable indicators
  - b) development of a rigid framework for analysis which was to be applied by country experts
Presidentialization

Majoritarian system (bipolar structure of competition)
- Large zone of autonomy
  - Power is contingent upon tolerance of majority party(ies)
    - More immediate power; power needs to be maintained by defending control over zones of autonomy against own party

Consensual system (minority governments, broad coalitions)
- Small zone of autonomy
  - Power is contingent upon ability of leader to moderate between veto players
  - Power needs to be acquired through extending zone of autonomy by dominating veto players