Intra-Democracy Regime Change

Transitions Between Presidential, Parliamentary and Semi-Presidential Systems

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Abstract

This article examines transitions between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential systems in democracies. Using two major datasets, it identifies nine such transitions in eight different countries: Brazil 1961, France 1962, Sri Lanka 1977, Slovakia 1999, Moldova 2000, Turkey 2007, Kenya 2008, Kenya 2010, and the Czech Republic 2012. Findings from a close examination of these cases include the following: most transitions involve the semi-presidential regime type; serious crises precede the transitions in nearly all the cases and change is often used as a means of solving these crises; electoral volatility and turnover in government precede most transitions; change serves different functions in different political contexts, ranging from facilitating acceptance of anti-establishment executives to implementing power-sharing deals; and once achieved, regime change becomes an almost permanent fixture on the political agenda, with debates escalating rather than dying down.

Keywords: regime change; parliamentarism; semi-presidentialism; presidentialism

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1. Introduction

The new-institutional resurgence in political science has produced a legion of studies on various aspects of presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential regime types. Some of these studies dealt with questions of definition, some offered new classifications, some branched into related areas of presidential or prime ministerial powers, and many examined the relative merits of different institutional set-ups. Relatively scant attention has been paid, however, to the transitions between these regime types, probably because there have been very few of them. As Klaus von Beyme (2001: 6) observes, 'Constitutional engineering in the transition from democracy to democracy has been rare. (…) There is only one

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notable case of transition from one type of regime (parliamentary) to another (semi-presidential) – France in 1958'.

France may well be the most notable example of such a transition, but there have been other examples, increasingly more numerous in recent years, and discussions on regime change do flare up from time to time in many countries. In light of its increasing importance and implications for political performance, this article will try to find answers to the following questions: Why and when do democracies change their regime types? Do the countries that change their regime type have anything in common, or does each case follow a unique trajectory? Which political actors support such change and for what reasons? Can we detect any wider patterns? Do we see a parliamentary-to-presidential transition more often, for example, or the opposite? How about transitions to semi-presidential systems?

Using a recent dataset (Cheibub et al. 2010) for initial case selection, this article will examine the few cases of transitions between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential systems in democracies in some detail. The following section discusses the threefold classification of democratic regimes into parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems, and examines the proposals for new classifications. Studies on regime change and institutional change are reviewed next, and the case for treating intra-democracy regime change is laid out separately. Then the procedure followed in selecting the cases is explained in depth, followed by a section that presents and discusses the findings from a detailed consideration of these cases.

2. The threefold taxonomy

The discussion on the classification of democracies into parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems is a popular one, with many scholars contributing to the debate. In recent years, however, the very terms parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential have come under sustained attack, with some scholars questioning their utility and offering new classifications and terminology.

Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey (1992) were the first to offer a new classification that included categories other than the classical three. Their five-fold classification, based on the two dimensions of presidential authority over cabinet and separate survival of cabinet and assembly, included premier-presidential, president-parliamentary, and assembly-independent types, in addition to the classical parliamentary and presidential types. Assembly-independent type was mostly a theoretical construct, with few real world examples. Premier-presidential and president-parliamentary types resulted from a distinction between those semi-presidential systems in which the cabinet is responsible only to the parliament, and those in which both the president and the parliament have the power to dismiss the cabinet the president. This categorization, especially the distinction between the two-sub-types of semi-presidentialism, has been very influential, with many later studies making use of the distinction.[1] In a later formulation, Shugart (1993: 30) offered another five-fold classification, this time dropping the mainly theoretical assembly-independent category, retaining presidential, parliamentary, premier-presidential and president-parlia-

mentary types, and offering the new category of 'Parliamentary with [elected] 'President".[2]

In the article 'The inadequacy of the presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary distinction', Alan Siaroff (2003) presented a new typology, based on a measurement of presidential powers.[3] Crucially, he treated the popular election of presidents as one among many aspects of presidential power, and rejected the concept of semi-presidentialism altogether. Instead, in addition to presidential systems, he talked about three other regime types: parliamentary systems with dominant presidents, parliamentary systems with corrective presidents, and parliamentary systems with figurehead presidents.

Both Shugart and Carey's (1992) and Siaroff's (2003) typologies mainly attack the semi-presidential category, either rejecting it altogether in the case Siaroff, or dividing it into two in the case of Shugart and Carey. Both, however, retain the basic distinction between presidential and parliamentary categories. Jose Antonio Cheibub, Zachary Elkins and Tom Ginsburg (2014), however, question this very distinction and find that these categories do not have as much coherence as expected, in terms of the constitutional provisions regulating relations between the executive and the assembly. They also find the presidential category to be the least cohesive of the three, and the parliamentary and semi-presidential categories to be indistinguishable from each other in terms of wider constitutional provisions. Instead of these classical terms, they offer to use narrower but more precise terms such as 'assembly confidence executive' (for parliamentary systems) and 'directly-elected executive' (for presidential systems), which recognize the presence of myriad differences within the classical categories of parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems.

Yet, despite these challenges, the threefold classification of democratic regimes into presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential systems proved to be an enduring one. If anything, the number of studies using these categories seems to have slightly increased in the last decade. A simple search in the Web of Science databases shows that, as a percentage of all studies with the topic 'politics', studies with the topics 'semi-presidential', 'presidential system', or 'parliamentary system' has not lost any ground since 1980, and has become even more numerous starting with the late 1990s.[4] It seems that many researchers prefer to keep using these terms, even in the face of the radical criticism reviewed above, finding them to be useful and important conceptual tools. This study also uses this simple yet powerful classification, not least because a more refined categorization scheme with finer distinctions and a larger number of categories to work with would be counter-productive at this stage of research, distracting us from the more urgent task of identifying transitions between major categories.

3. Literature on regime change and institutional change

Another important distinction, the one between democratic and non-democratic polities, is not so much under theoretical attack as simply overlooked in studies on regime change. To the best of the author's knowledge, there are three studies examining regime change between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential systems, and none bothers to treat intra-democracy regime change separately from change under authoritarianism or change accompanying democratic transition.

The first of these studies (Hayo, Voigt 2010) is quantitative in nature and covers transitions between parliamentary and presidential regime types between 1950 and 2003, whether taking place within democracies, within non-democracies or accompanying a democratic transition. The second (Protsyk 2011) has a regional focus, studying regime change within post-communist countries, albeit without regard for their democratic status at the time of transition. The third (Elgie, Moestrup 2007) looks at regime change involving semi-presidential systems, similarly without regard for whether the change happens within a democratic political framework or not. All of these studies provide useful information and explanations regarding regime change, but their foci are different from that of the present study, and there are good reasons to focus on regime change within democracies only.

First, a change in the form of government of a non-democratic polity is a relatively minor event. Because constitutions are usually trivial documents in non-democratic polities, a change in the constitution of a non-democratic polity is also likely to be trivial, that is to say, less likely to result in or be a symptom of real change in the distribution of power within that polity.[5] On the other hand, a change in the form of government of a democratic polity is a major event, usually preceded by lengthy discussions on the topic, and followed by a real change in the rules of the game. Consequently, constitutional change within non-democracies is certainly an important topic for some purposes, but it is one that is qualitatively different from constitutional change within democracies, and bundling these two together in quantitative analyses, as Hayo and Voigt (2010) do, would confound the results.

Second, a change in the form of government that happens simultaneously with democratic transition is also qualitatively different from an intra-democracy regime change. In this case, the change in the form of government is part of a larger change, and most probably happens because the previous form of government is associated, in the eyes of the major actors, with non-democracy; it is part of the *ancien régime*. As a result, the discussion around the topic, the positions taken by different actors regarding the change, and the justifications given by these actors for their positions, are likely to be very different from those surrounding a change in an already democratic polity. Hence, intra-democracy regime change should be treated separately from regime change in non-democracies and regime change accompanying democratic transition.

The only consideration of intra-democracy regime change in a comparative framework, to the best of the author's knowledge, is found in Samuels and Shugart's (2010) book on regime type and party politics. Apart from being very brief, this examination of intra-democracy regime change relies on secondary literature for case selection, and because the several studies they cite as sources have different criteria regarding what a democracy is and when to count a regime change, their selection is ultimately an arbitrary one. For example, the changes they identify in Gambia in 1982, Georgia in 2004, and Taiwan in 1997 are not included in the present article because they fail to meet the criterion of being intra-democracy changes not accompanying democratic transition. Thus, having a systematic approach to case selection becomes crucial.

Apart from these studies on regime change, studies on institutional reform more generally are also relevant. In a review of the literature on determinants of institutional change, Bedock (2014) identifies three related fields of inquiry: policy change, electoral reform, and democratic transition. Of those, transitions to democracy are the most dramatic since they

involve an overhaul of the entire framework of politics in a country, and I have already argued that intra-democracy regime change should be studied separately from those involving democratic transition. Policy change is a relatively minor and mundane form of change that happens very frequently, and thus not comparable to intra-democracy regime change either. Electoral reform, on the other hand, is comparable to regime change in terms of its magnitude and its content, and there is a large body of work on the determinants of electoral system change, some of which might be relevant for the study of transitions between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes.

In another article, after reviewing findings from studies on electoral reform, Bedock (2015: 5) argues that factors identified in electoral reform studies 'apply to a wider set of reforms', not just to electoral reform, and goes on to test hypotheses derived from this literature. Using a dataset covering Western European countries from 1990 to 2010, she finds that electoral volatility and political alternation, defined as the case when 'political actors previously in opposition come to power' (2015: 7), are significantly associated with the frequency of institutional change. These factors could also be expected to play a role in intra-democracy regime change, and they will be taken up in the following sections. There are, however, a number of differences between the subject matter of Bedock's (2015) work and the present article, which might lead to differing conclusions. First of all, Bedock (2015) uses the SEIPOL dataset which codes multiple categories of institutional reform – electoral system, parliament, de-centralization, election of mayors,[6] referendums, and suffrage-, and it is clear that some of the changes identified in that dataset are rather minor compared to transitions between forms of government, the topic of the present article. We would expect different dynamics behind a reform introducing postal voting, for example, and a reform introducing direct election of the head of state. Even if we were to leave aside the issue of comparable size, the fact that the dataset aggregates different *types* of reform might be another factor leading to different conclusions, for the present article focuses on one type of reform only. Finally, Bedock's work (2014; 2015; Bedock et al. 2012) focuses on Western Europe and the two decades from 1990 to 2010, whereas the present article does not have a geographic focus and considers a longer time period, 1946 to 2010.

4. Case selection

This article will use two separate datasets for case selection, the Democracy-Dictatorship (DD) dataset (Cheibub et. al. 2010b) and the Polity IV dataset (Center for Systemic Peace 2012), supplemented by Elgie (2011). Each of these datasets has unique strengths, and their combined use helps in properly identifying cases of intra-democracy regime change. For the most recent period not covered in these sources (2011–2014), secondary literature was consulted, consistent with the criteria used in the datasets.

The DD dataset provides a three-fold classification of democratic regimes, and in so doing, uses minimal definitions:[7] Systems in which governments cannot be removed by the assembly are 'presidential;' those in which they can are either 'parliamentary' or, where there is a popularly elected president, 'mixed' or 'semi-presidential' (Cheibub et al. 2010: 79). This

minimal approach results in unambiguous categorization, and makes identifying regime change an easy task. However, because their democracy definition is also minimal, it may result in a Type II error, whereby regime transitions that are not properly intra-democracy may also be selected. For example, the change from popular to parliamentary election of the President in Bangladesh in 1991 is coded as an intra-democracy regime change by the DD dataset, but it was part of the process of restoration of democracy, which started with popular uprisings and the deposition of Hussain Muhammad Ershad in 1990 and continued until the 1991 parliamentary elections. To eliminate such cases, the Polity IV dataset was used,[8] which measures autocratic and democratic patterns of authority in countries on a scale from -10 to +10, and which assigns a score of -5 to Bangladesh in 1990, clearly not a democracy. Thus, Bangladesh 1991 is dropped from the list of intra-democracy transitions.

Table 1 shows all cases of intra-democracy regime change that took place in the post-WWII period, based upon the DD dataset[9] (Cheibub et al. 2010) and information provided in Elgie[10] (2011), and checked against the Polity IV dataset. Some transitions identified by the two main sources were omitted either because they took place in a non-democracy (operationalized as a polity-2 score of less than 5 during the change), or they accompanied democratic transition (meaning that the change took place within three years of the transition to democracy). Admittedly, these cut points are somewhat arbitrary and different cut points could create slightly different lists. For example, the three-year criterion regarding democratic transition could be expanded or shrank: Slovakia and Moldova could be

Table 1: Transitions between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential systems in democracies

	Type of transition	Polity2 score the year before/during/after change	Content of change
Brazil 1961	presidential to parliamentary	6/5/5	post of Prime Minister created, assembly confidence required, President elected by Parliament
France 1962	parliamentary to semi-presidential	5/5/5	popular election of President
Sri Lanka 1977	parliamentary to semi-presidential	8/8/6	popular election of President
Slovakia 1999	parliamentary to semi-presidential	9/9/9	popular election of President
Moldova 2000	semi-presidential to parliamentary	7/7/8	President elected by Parliament
Turkey 2007	parliamentary to semi-presidential	7/7/7	popular election of President
Kenya 2008	presidential to semi-presidential	7/7/7	post of Prime Minister created, assembly confidence required
Kenya 2010	semi-presidential to presidential	7/8/8	post of Prime Minister abolished, assembly confidence no longer required
Czech Republic 2012	parliamentary to semi-presidential	8/8/8	popular election of President

Sources: Cheibub et. al. (2010b), Center for Systemic Peace (2012), Elgie (2011), and author's review of the secondary literature for the most recent period.

omitted from the list if the former path were taken, or many more cases from Central and Eastern Europe could be included if the latter option were chosen. Three years represents a compromise between these two extremes.

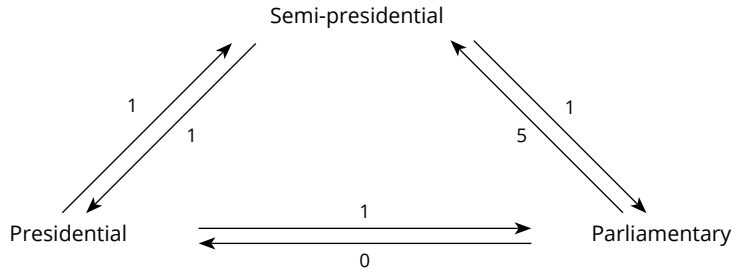
5. Findings and discussion

What follows is an account of observations arising from a detailed consideration of these cases:[11] most transitions involve the semi-presidential type, most transitions follow a serious crisis and are used as a means of solving that crisis, regime types – hence transitions – acquire different meanings in different political contexts, and, once achieved, transitions remain a recurring theme, becoming almost permanent items on the political agenda.

5.1 Types of transition: ascendance of semi-presidentialism

Theoretically, six types of transition are possible between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes: 1) Parliamentary to presidential, 2) Presidential to parliamentary, 3) Parliamentary to semi-presidential, 4) Semi-presidential to parliamentary, 5) Presidential to semi-presidential, and 6) Semi-presidential to presidential. In reality, however, eight out of nine transitions that took place in democracies involved semi-presidential regimes (see Figure 1), and of those, five were parliamentary to semi-presidential transitions, realized by the introduction of popular election of presidents. Parliamentary to presidential transition is the only empty category, not yet observed in a democracy.

Figure 1: Type of transition



Sources: Cheibub et al. (2010b), Center for Systemic Peace (2012), Elgie (2011), and authors' review of the secondary literature for the most recent period.

That most transitions involve semi-presidential regimes can be attributed to its being a half-way-station between the two 'pure' types.[12] Of course, semi-presidential regimes are not simply mixtures of presidentialism and parliamentarism, having distinct qualities that justify creating a separate category, and expressions like 'semi-' and 'mixed' are more of a convenient pedagogical tool than they are minute descriptions. However, it could be

argued that at least in the eyes of the general public, and politicians too, a transition into semi-presidentialism represents less of a change compared to a transition between parliamentarism and presidentialism. That, in itself, may go a long way towards explaining why most transitions involve semi-presidential regimes.

More specifically, transitions between parliamentary and semi-presidential types are more common than those between other pairs: they account for more than half of all transitions in a democratic context. One reason why such transitions are more common could be that they are easier to achieve than the other transitions: all that is required to change a parliamentary regime into a semi-presidential one, or the other way around, is to change the method of election of the president, which is an already existing post.[13] Transitions between parliamentarism and presidentialism, on the other hand, require three distinct amendments: 1) the creation or the elimination of the post of Prime Minister – a harder pill in itself to swallow, both ways, 2) the introduction or elimination of the requirement of assembly confidence for cabinets, and 3) changing the method of election of the President. Transitions between presidentialism and semi-presidentialism are similarly more difficult to achieve because they require the first two of these amendments.

Finally, most transitions between parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes are parliamentary to semi-presidential, not the other way around. One reason why this is the case might be statistical: the semi-presidential category is a more recent invention, and by the time it was invented, parliamentary systems, which could theoretically make the transition to semi-presidentialism, already existed. Any change in the other direction, however, would first require the establishment of a semi-presidential democracy. Therefore, everything else being equal, we would expect transitions into parliamentarism to be less numerous. A second reason might be that, as is commonly observed, overturning the popular election of presidents is difficult to achieve, whereas introducing the popular election of presidents is a crowd-pleaser that would not have a hard time finding many supporters among the electorate.

5.2 Change as a means of solving crises

One common characteristic of the nine cases of intra-democracy regime change was that nearly all[14] took place following crises, and were used as a means of solving those crises.

In France, even though popular election of the president was introduced in 1962, it was the Algiers crisis of 1958 that brought De Gaulle back to power and started the process of change, culminating in the proclamation of the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle had defended the strengthening of the executive branch vis-à-vis the parliament from early on, as early as the end of WWII (State 2011), and part of the reason for his abrupt resignation in 1946 was his failure to persuade the political actors to create a stronger executive. He was able to introduce those changes, however, only in the atmosphere of the Algiers crisis and the civil war that many thought was impending at the time. The only way to avoid a civil war was to have De Gaulle, the war hero respected by most if not all sides, back at the helm, and one of his conditions for accepting the job was a new constitution that would provide, in his own words, for 'a government which governs, which is strong and which lasts, a solid Executive' (cited in Andrews 1982).

In Brazil, the crisis started when the President Jânio Quadros unexpectedly resigned in 1961, only seven months after taking office, precipitating 'the most serious political–institutional crisis in Brazil since 1945' (Bethell 2008: 136). It was an abrupt and dramatic resignation, one that Quadros also had difficulty explaining, but a commonly held view is that it was a political manoeuvre to come back in a stronger position (Bethell 2008). This manoeuvre was based on the calculation that the vice president João Goulart, the legal successor in case the office of presidency was vacated, was a leftist not acceptable to the military and the conservative establishment, and that Quadros would be in a position of strength to implement his proposed reform for a stronger presidency and a weaker congress once he was invited back. That this was a serious miscalculation became clear when the Congress accepted his resignation. With the military and political leaders divided, some supporting Goulart's succession as president and others bitterly opposing it, 'there was a real danger of civil war' (Bethell 2008: 138), which was only averted by introducing a parliamentary regime, which represented a compromise: Goulart would become president, but in a much weakened position, sharing many of his powers with a Prime Minister and a Council of Ministers responsible to the Congress.

In Slovakia, the crisis was not as grave as in France or Brazil, but it was a crisis nevertheless, since a polarized and fragmented Parliament failed to agree on a new President when Michal Kováč's term ended in March 1998 (Henderson 2002). There were seven parties in the parliament, a four-party coalition government that did not have the necessary three fifths majority to elect the president on its own, and no candidate on which the two blocs could agree. Having foreseen this state of affairs, the opposition had proposed a referendum on the popular election of the president in 1997, but this referendum was prevented by the government of Vladimír Mečiar, who had assumed some of the powers of the President when the post remained vacant for an extended period of time, and cancelled the referendum using – some would say abusing – these powers (Malová and Láštic 2001). Eventually, the popular election of the president was introduced after the 1998 parliamentary elections, which brought the previous opposition to power in a large coalition government led by Mikuláš Dzurinda. The new president was finally elected in June 1999, after a 16-month delay.

Change in Moldova was triggered not by a single event, but by a series of crises, best summarized as governmental instability in a semi-presidential system in the absence of institutionalized parties (Roper 2008). There were three cabinets, four if we include an interim one, and even more names proposed, in between the 1998 parliamentary elections and the 2000 constitutional amendment that introduced parliamentarism. Hence, solving the problem of governmental instability was a big political issue, with President Lucinschi's party promising in 1998 parliamentary elections a change into presidentialism to solve the problem once and for all. When Lucinschi attempted to follow through on this promise with a consultative referendum in 1999, the proposal received the support of a majority of the voters, with 64 per cent voting in favour. Ultimately, however, it was the Parliament's decision whether to change the system of government into presidentialism, and the Parliament, controlled by Lucinschi's opponents, decided to do just the opposite[15]: they changed the system into a parliamentary one, amending the constitution so that presidents are now elected by a three-fifths majority in the Parliament.

The crisis in Turkey was in some respects similar to the one in Slovakia: the Parliament was unable to elect a new president when President Sezer's term ended in May 2007. The governing party did not have the two-thirds majority required to elect the president in the first round of voting, but did have the absolute majority to have its candidate, Abdullah Gül, elected in the subsequent rounds. The opposition, however, boycotted the first round of voting in the Parliament, and applied to the Constitutional Court arguing that a two-thirds majority was required not just for election, but also for the opening of the Parliament's session. On the same day, the Turkish military also got involved in the issue, publishing a memorandum on its website against Gül's candidacy, arguing that he was not secular enough. Eventually, the Constitutional Court decided in the favour of the opposition, disregarding the earlier practice and effectively preventing Gül's presidency (Özbudun, Gençkaya, 2009). In response, the governing AKP (Justice and Development Party) decided both to hold early parliamentary elections in 2007 and to amend the constitution so that presidents are now directly elected in popular elections.

Of all the pre-amendment crises reviewed so far, Kenya's was the gravest. On December 27, 2007, parliamentary and presidential elections were held in Kenya. In the parliamentary elections, the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), led by Raila Odinga, won a big victory, winning more than twice the number of seats won by the Party of National Unity (PNU) of incumbent president Mwai Kibaki. In the presidential elections, however, Kibaki was announced as the winner, a result seen by many international observers as fraudulent. Communal violence bordering on civil war ensued, claiming more than a thousand lives and creating many more refugees (BBC News 2010). Fighting stopped only after a power-sharing agreement brokered by international mediators was signed by the two leaders in February 2008. As part of the agreement, Kibaki kept the presidency, but the constitution was amended to create an office of Prime Minister, to be held by Odinga, and a council of ministers responsible to the Parliament (Tran 2008).

The crisis in the Czech Republic was a relatively minor one, and it was similar to those observed in Turkey and in Slovakia, being triggered by the difficulties the Parliament had in electing a president. In 2003, when the first two ballots in the Parliament failed to elect a president, the debate around and the demand for popular election of the President intensified (Kopeček, Mlejnek 2013). The same thing happened in the 2008 presidential election in the Parliament, in which an open vote was used for the first time, creating 'a very ugly picture', with 'pressure put on some electors, […] threats and accusations of bribery', which, 'along with the steep decline in trust of the political class, raised public and media pressure to introduce direct election' (Kopeček, Mlejnek 2013: 71). Direct elections were included in the new government's program after the 2010 general elections, and were finally accepted in 2012, with the first popular presidential election taking place in 2013.

5.3 Volatility and change in government

Based upon the literature on electoral reform and institutional change, this article also looked at volatility and change in government as factors leading to transitions between presidential, parliamentary and semi-presidential systems. Volatility in the last parliamen-

tary elections before the transition was measured using the Pedersen (1979) index, and change in government was coded if an opposition party or coalition replaced the governing coalition in the last presidential or parliamentary elections. Although the number of cases is too small to allow a statistical analysis, at least one of these conditions was present in all of the cases, and both were present in a majority of the cases.

Table 2: Volatility and change in government

	Volatility	Change in government	Shift of power
Brazil 1961	3%	Yes	centrist President to weakened left-wing President
France 1962	21%	Yes	anti-Gaullist to Gaullist
Sri Lanka 1977	20%	Yes	socialist/Sinhalese nationalist to right-wing
Slovakia 1998	61%	Yes	Mečiar to opposition coalition
Moldova 1998	86%	No	—
Czech Republic 2010	36%	No	—
Turkey 2007	55%	Yes	secular coalition to pro-Islamists
Kenya 2008–2010	41%	Yes	Kibaki sharing power with opposition coalition

Sources: Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (2006); Dassonneville (2015); KRI Kusaka Research Institute (2009); Powell and Tucker (2014); Deegan-Krause (2010); Resnick (2011); Çarkoğlu (2011).

As Table 2 shows, all transitions except Brazil 1961 happened following parliamentary elections that witnessed very high levels of volatility, ranging from 20% to 86%. For comparison, the average volatility in Western Europe in the post-war period was 10% (Dassonneville 2015). Again, all transitions except Moldova 1998 and Czech Republic 2010 happened when parties or leaders previously in opposition came to power. These observations complement Bedock's (2015) findings, showing that volatility and change in government are important factors for intra-democracy regime change as well.

5.4 Change assigned different meanings

Change meant different things in different political contexts: regime types were assigned different meanings, issues were framed differently, and discussions sometimes revolved around country-specific questions that are not necessarily central in the theoretical literature on regime types. In a few cases, regime change was peripheral to the larger discussions taking place. The same acts or legislation that the academic literature identifies as marking regime change meant different things to the political actors involved. It is not that they were insignificant, they were simply significant for other reasons. This was especially true for the transitions in Brazil, Turkey and Kenya where the classical concerns raised in the academic literature on regime types, for example their theoretical advantages and disadvantages, were almost absent from the public debate.

In Turkey, change meant a victory by the governing party against the military/secular establishment. That the regime would change into a semi-presidential one with the introduc-

tion of direct elections appears to have been only an after-thought. During the referendum in 2007, the two sides did not really talk about the merits of parliamentary vs. semi-presidential regimes, but about whether the AKP, a moderate Islamist party, had the right to fill the top position with one of its own. To the governing AKP, popular election of the president was first and foremost a means of overriding the military's and the Constitutional Court's veto.

In Brazil, change was similarly about the incorporation of an anti-establishment president, this time a leftist one, into the system. The short-lived change was also a compromise, though an unsuccessful one, given that the military did move against Goulart after all, establishing a military regime that lasted from 1964 to 1985. In Moldova, change was a reaction to the President, who the Parliament thought had overreached by proposing a presidential system. In Slovakia, change meant an opposition newly in power deciding to follow through with its promises, instead of reneging on them.

In Kenya, change primarily meant a ceasefire and a power-sharing deal, not only between the leaders and the political parties, but also between major communal groups, since voting is primarily along ethnic lines. In the larger context of constitutional reform in Kenya, there were two discernible camps in the 2008 and 2010 amendments, and in the earlier reform proposals: those advocating parliamentarism and *majimbo* (the Swahili word for devolution of power away from the centre towards counties) as opposed to those favouring presidentialism and a strong central government. The latter camp mostly consisted of the members of Kikuyu, the largest ethnic group, whereas the former camp mostly consisted of members of smaller groups (Kramon, Posner 2011). The 2008 deal, providing for a semi-presidential system, was a compromise in that sense too, because it was not the ideal solution for either camp.

5.5 Change as a recurring theme

In many cases, regime change was not the beginning and end of the debate. Change usually had a long history of supporters, and once achieved, acquired determined opponents trying to bring the previous regime back.

Sri Lanka is a good example where debates about the transition to semi-presidentialism started much earlier than the actual change, as reviewed above, and where the issue kept simmering decades after the transition. Eliminating the 'executive presidency' and returning to the parliamentary system was a big campaign issue in the 1994, 2005 and 2010 presidential elections (Liyanage 2010). A draft amendment was ditched at the last minute in 2000 (Ratyanake 2000), and then president Mahinda Rajapaksa repeated the promise many times but did not act on it (Groundviews 2010). In 2013, the issue was on the agenda one more time, with the National Movement for Social Justice (NMJS), a left-leaning civil society organization, preparing yet another constitutional reform proposal abolishing the executive presidency and returning to the parliamentary system (Colombo Telegraph 2013).

Before its 1961 experiment with parliamentarism, Brazil was ruled under a presidential system for many years, from 1889 onwards, but it was no stranger to parliamentarism. Under Dom Pedro II, the last emperor before the proclamation of the Republic, Brazil had a parliamentary system of government from 1847 to 1889, and defenders of parliamentarism have

been a steady if minor fixture of Brazilian politics (Elkins 2013). Indeed, it could be argued that the compromise in 1961 took the form of parliamentarism precisely because parliamentarism as an alternative was within easy reach and seen to be viable due to prior experience. With the referendum in 1963, Brazil went back to its presidential system, but the issue never died. Form of government was one of the most hotly debated issues in the making of the new constitution following the transition back to democracy in 1985, and initially at least, it seemed as if the Constitutional Assembly would adopt a parliamentary system as the form of government (Elkins 2013). Eventually, it was the presidentialists who won, but the issue was taken up one more time in a referendum in 1993, where voters were asked, among other things, whether they would like to have a parliamentary or a presidential system. Voters overwhelmingly chose presidentialism, with only 30 per cent voting in favour of parliamentarism.

Moldova is another country where discussions about the form of government remained alive after the change. Following Lucinschi's botched attempt in 1999 to bring presidentialism, and the parliament's reaction of introducing a parliamentary form of government, the country went to the polls one more time in 2010, to decide whether to return to semi-presidentialism by having the President directly elected instead of being elected by the parliament. The occasion was similar to Slovakia 1998 and Turkey 2007. The parliament's was unable to agree on a candidate for the top position when Vladimir Voronin's term ended in September 2009. The referendum, meant to resolve the crisis and in which 88 per cent voted in favour of popular election, was inconsequential nevertheless, because the necessary turnout of 33 per cent was not achieved due to the opposition's boycott (ADEPT 2010). The crisis was eventually solved in 2012 when the parliament finally agreed on the independent figure of Nicolae Timofti, previously a member of the judiciary, becoming the new President (The Economist 2012).

Another country with a long history of debates over the form of government is Kenya. Following independence from the United Kingdom in 1963, Kenya had a parliamentary form of government with the British monarch as the head of state, but opted for presidentialism with its 1964 republican constitution. From that time onwards until the 2008 experiment with semi-presidentialism, Kenya had a presidential form of government, but there were debates on and efforts to introduce parliamentarism before that date. As reviewed above, the 2008 amendment was the result of a power-sharing deal between Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki, the latter keeping the presidency and the former occupying the newly created office of prime minister. This deal, however, was almost a replay of another deal that took place before the 2002 elections, between the same two leaders who represented the two wings of the opposition to the ruling KANU at the time. Odinga's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Kibaki's National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAPK) had come together before the elections to form the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which went on to win both the presidential and the parliamentary elections. The coalition was based on a deal to amend the constitution once in power, creating an office of prime minister to be occupied by Oding; but having won the presidency, Kibaki reneged on his commitments (Kramon, Posner 2011). As a result, there were two rival and unsuccessful proposals for constitutional reform in 2004 and 2005, the former known as the Bomas draft and providing for a parliamentary system, the latter known as the Wako draft and essentially keeping the Presidential system intact, which was voted down in a 2005 referendum. In the discussions prior to the 2010

amendment, form of government was again one of the main issues on the agenda, and presidentialism was re-introduced after a two-year hiatus (Kramon, Posner 2011).

In Turkey, debates about the form of government, which existed at least since 1980s (Ünal 1996), did not end but escalated after the 2007 amendment. For the main opposition CHP (Republican People's Party), the problem was the amendment itself: nominated by parties and campaigning against their rivals, presidents would lose their above-politics status, and become partisan figures. For the governing AKP, the problem was that the amendment did not go far enough: the directly elected president would not have powers corresponding to his popular legitimacy, he even had to resign from his party upon election. Thus, initially CHP sought to re-introduce the earlier method for the election of presidents, whereas the governing party prepared a proposal to introduce a presidential system (Güven 2013). When neither party was able to affect their desired changes and it was time for the direct presidential election in 2014, then Prime Minister Erdoğan, presidential candidate of the AKP, started to campaign for an 'active, running, sweating' president (Şafak 2014), whereas CHP and MHP's (Nationalist Action Party) candidate, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, promised to be a uniting figure acting within the bounds of the current constitution, not trying to extend or re-interpret presidential powers. Many commentators argued that the choice before the voters was not simply between different candidates, but also between different forms of government as well, with Erdoğan representing a change into a presidential regime, and İhsanoğlu representing continuity of the parliamentary system, albeit with a directly elected president (Yetkin 2014).

The Czech Republic also had a long history of debating whether to introduce direct elections for the President, starting immediately after the end of the communist rule in Czechoslovakia, with one observer describing the debate as 'a never-ending story' (Kysela 2013). The debate was rekindled in 1992, when Czech Republic's constitution was being written, in 2002, when a number of parties made direct election an election promise, during 2003 and 2008 presidential elections in the parliament, and finally in 2012, when the amendment was finally passed (Kopeček, Mlejnek 2013). The results of the first popular election and President Zeman's activism in office immediately gave rise to another debate regarding the limits of presidential power, with a bill to curb president's powers being debated in the parliament (Velinger 2015).

6. Conclusion

Contrary to the common perception, France is not the only example of a democratic country that has changed its form of government. Using two separate datasets and other sources, this study identified nine cases of intra-democracy regime change, and found some striking common patterns, including the popularity of the semi-presidential regime type, crises, electoral volatility and turnover in government preceding regime change in nearly all the cases, change being assigned different meanings in different contexts, and long-running debates in many of the countries that changed their form of government.

Going back to the questions raised in the introduction, the following observations can be made:

- When and why do democracies change their regime type? For many countries, the answer seems to be 'when they face a crisis, and as a means of solving that crisis'. The crisis in question can be a deadlock in the parliament resulting from a failure to agree on a President, problems associated with de-colonization, or even political violence following contested election results. In many of these crises, introducing a new regime type was part of the solution.
- Which actors support change and for what reasons? In many cases, the actors that initiated the change were parties or leaders that recently acquired power, after long years in opposition. Their motivations varied, from keeping pre-election promises to expectations of future political gain, and in cases where change accompanied a power-sharing deal, assenting to the change was a means of preserving at least some power for the previous incumbents.
- Which type of transition is the most common? The most common type of transition was parliamentary to semi-presidential, achieved by introducing the direct election of the President. The popularity of this transition likely arises from the fact that it was the most recent to emerge as a model, and has an in-between status compared to the pure types.

From a methodological perspective, this article argued that regime change in a democratic polity is qualitatively different from one in a non-democracy, because constitutions are relatively trivial documents in authoritarian systems, and that regime change accompanying democratic transition needs be treated separately from those taking place in democracies. The presence of a lively and long-running debate in many of the countries studied here supports these points, but the fact that regime change was often a minor issue next to the larger political debates taking place was an unexpected finding. To delve further into the motivations of the political actors involved, discourse analysis of these debates could be a welcome supplement to studies of regime change.

Footnotes:

1. For example, in a recent book on democratic performance of semi-presidential regimes, Robert Elgie (2011) bases his analysis on the distinction between premier-president and president-parliamentary systems, and finds that 'Countries with president-parliamentary constitutions have performed worse than those with premier-presidential constitutions.' Shugart (2005) revisited this distinction in a later article, associating it more strongly with a Madisonian conception of agents and principals.
2. This new category has also caught on, with a recent book dedicated to the topic by Şule Özsoy (2009).
3. To be more precise, Siaroff (2003: 293) initially developed an eight-fold classification based on a combination of answers to three questions: 'Is the head of state also the sole head of government, or is there a separate head of government? Is the head of state popularly elected or not? Is the head of state accountable to the legislature and thus removable by a vote of non-confidence?' He does not name these eight categories, however, and some of them are mainly theoretical constructs with few examples. He then proceeds to measure presidential powers in these eight categories, and comes up with a three-fold classification of parliamentary systems, in addition to presidential systems, thus doing away with the notion of a semi-presidential system.
4. Search conducted on July 27, 2013, with the keywords 'politics', 'semi-presidential', 'presidential system' and 'parliamentary system' in the 'topic' field of the databases SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, CPCI-S, and CPCI-SSH.

5. The argument here is a relative one: admittedly, constitutions are important documents in some authoritarian systems too, as burgeoning literature shows, but they are uniformly so in democratic systems. For a recent volume that strongly argues for taking constitutions and constitutional change in authoritarian systems more seriously, see Ginsburg and Simpser (2013). The argument of this paper remains, however, that even when the change is significant, constitutional change in non-democratic polities is qualitatively different from that in democracies.
6. Bedock (2015) labels this category 'Direct election of executive heads at the national or local level', but ends up coding local politics only, failing to find any changes at the national level except for Finland.
7. The DD dataset, which accompanies an article by Jose Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi and James Raymond Vreeland (2010), updates a previous dataset (Przeworski et al. 2000), and provides information on regime characteristics of 202 countries from 1946 – or later in the case of newer states – to 2008. They use a six-fold classification of regime types, consisting of parliamentary democracies, mixed (semi-presidential) democracies, presidential democracies, civilian dictatorships, military dictatorships and royal dictatorships. This classification, in turn, is based on a prior classification of all regimes into democracies and dictatorships.
8. Although there are many datasets measuring democracy, the Polity IV dataset was chosen for two reasons: 1) it provides historical coverage, unlike, for example, The Economist's *Democracy Index*, which starts from 2006 and 2) it faces fewer criticisms of political bias, unlike the Freedom House's *Freedom in the World*, which is the only other long-running and continuing project that measures democracy.
9. The DD dataset shows a regime change from the year 2002 to 2003 in Slovenia, from a semi-presidential regime to a parliamentary regime, but this seems to be a factual mistake. Slovenia kept electing its president via popular vote after 2002 too, with the most recent elections being held in 2007 and 2012. The DD dataset identifies a change in Moldova in 1997 from a parliamentary to a semi-presidential regime, whereas popular election of presidents in Moldova started in 1991. Cheibub et al. (2010) may have dismissed these elections because it was an election in which only the incumbent ran. Elgie (2011) starts Moldova's semi-presidential regime in 1994, which is the date when the first post-independence constitution was made, but there was prior legislation in 1991 introducing popular election of presidents (Roper 2008). That change in 1991, however, does not count as an instance of intra-democracy regime change in the present article, because it accompanied the transition to democracy. The DD dataset also shows regime changes in Bangladesh 1991 and Mongolia 1992, but these are better treated as regime changes accompanying democratic transition because Bangladesh's Polity 2 score changed from -5 to 6 from 1990 to 1992, and Mongolia's changed from 2 to 9 from 1991 to 1993.
10. In his numerous books on semi-presidentialism, Elgie (2011) also uses a minimal definition, and provides lists of current and historical semi-presidential regimes. Cross-checking these lists with the Polity IV dataset, the author identified four additional cases of regime change under democracy, supplementing the DD dataset: Sri Lanka 1976, Turkey 2007, and Kenya 2008 and 2010. These cases are not identified as intra-democracy regime change by the DD dataset. In the three recent cases, the discrepancy emerges because Cheibub et al. (2014) start counting when popular elections actually take place, whereas Elgie (2011) starts counting as soon as the constitution is amended. Sri Lanka 1976, on the other hand, is interpreted as a transition into civilian dictatorship by the DD dataset, whereas the Polity IV dataset clearly identifies Sri Lanka as a democracy in these years, which is the reason why it has been included in the present study. I have not been able, in addition, to find out why both the DD dataset and Elgie (2011) mention 1976 as the date of change, instead of 1977 when the relevant legislation actually took place. In 1976, the United Front government was in power, and in between the first amendment to the 1972 constitution in 1975 – regarding the size of the constituencies in elections – and the second amendment in 1977 – introducing the 'executive presidency' – there were no other constitutional changes or other political developments that would justify identifying 1976 as the date of transition. In 1978 a whole new constitution was written by the United National Party, known as the second republican constitution, which kept the executive presidency. The 2012 change in the Czech Republic, in the recent period not covered by the two sources, was also included in the analysis because it fits all the criteria used.

11. It should be kept in mind that the analysis that follows is exploratory in nature as it cannot avoid the case selection bias: only cases that underwent a change were selected.
12. Another name in the DD dataset for this category is 'mixed'.
13. Of course, this is according to the minimal definition of semi-presidentialism, employed by Elgie (2011), the DD dataset and the present author. If one were to use Duverger's original formulation, which requires 'quite considerable powers' for the popularly elected president in order for a regime to be defined as semi-presidential, more extensive changes would be required for a transition, involving a president's powers, but I would argue that even those would be minor compared to creating a new post or requiring assembly confidence. The most important reason for adopting the minimalist rather than the maximalist definitions of semi-presidentialism is that it removes the ambiguity resulting from the phrase 'quite considerable', and the subjectivity that comes with it. There is no lack of studies enumerating the different powers presidents enjoy in different countries with directly elected heads of state – Doyle and Elgie (2015) identify 38 separate studies that provide measures of presidential power in multiple countries, and because these different measures do not always agree with one another, we now have efforts to create indexes aggregating the different measurements. The disagreements between the different measures emerge first of all from different opinions about the number and content of relevant powers, from empirical observations about whether these powers exist in a given polity, and finally from arguments about just how many powers would be 'quite considerable'. These disagreements and debates have also given rise to a great many efforts to introduce new classifications, some of which were reviewed in Section 2. Given all the difficulties associated with the original and later maximalist definitions, Elgie's minimalist definition seems to be more preferable.
14. Exceptions are Sri Lanka's 1977 transition from a parliamentary to a semi-presidential regime, and Kenya's 2010 transition back to a presidential regime.
15. If the referendum was only consultative, and the Parliament was controlled by his opponents, then why did Lucinschi decide to have the referendum? William Crowther (2011: 219) argues that this was done in preparation for the upcoming presidential elections: 'President Lucinschi certainly recognized that his proposal would not be supported by the parliament. Rather, it appears that he was positioning himself for presidential elections in the fall of 2000, intending to campaign against parliament's obstructionism.'

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