

PART III

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DYNAMICS AND
DEVELOPMENTS
WITHIN
POLITICAL
EXECUTIVES

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CHAPTER 18

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THE PRESIDENTIALIZATION OF POLITICAL EXECUTIVES

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† ROBERT ELGIE AND GIANLUCA PASSARELLI

18.1 INTRODUCTION

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THE idea that there has been a presidentialization of prime ministerial politics is not new. For example, Allen (2018: 13) quotes a journalist from 1904 who claimed that the British prime ministership was becoming more like the office of an elected president at that time. Blick and Jones (2010: 32) have also pointed to claims in the early 1920s that British Prime Minister David Lloyd George was acting like a president. They also cite work in the 1960s that was making similar comments about British prime ministers then (Blick and Jones: 59–63). In a scholarly context, though, the term ‘presidentialization’ seems to have originated in Canada in the 1970s among scholars looking at their own political system and comparing its development with that of the US presidency (Smith 1977). This origin is instructive because, as Helms (2015: 2) points out, at this time presidentialization was often equated with the more general concept of ‘Americanization’. In Britain, the prime ministership of Margaret Thatcher (1979–90) provoked more general discussion of whether the system there had become presidentialized. This led to Michael Foley’s (1993) book about the supposed rise of the British presidency. This was the first full-length work on the presidentialization of a parliamentary system. From this point onwards, the presidentialization thesis was present in the scholarship about Britain (e.g. Pryce 1997). Gradually, this thesis started to gain traction elsewhere too. In 2000, Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb organized a workshop on ‘The Presidentialization of Parliamentary Democracies?’ at the European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions in Copenhagen. This initiative led eventually to Poguntke and Webb’s

(2005a) ground-breaking edited volume. Theirs was the first comparative study of presidentialization. More so than Foley's work or any other, Poguntke and Webb's book constitutes the academic point of reference on this topic. In this sense, it marks the beginning of what we can think of as the contemporary period in the scientific study of presidentialization. Thereafter, Samuels and Shugart (2010) made another important contribution to the study of this topic, but in a way that was markedly different from Poguntke and Webb's approach. Thus, there are now effectively two ways of studying presidentialization. We consider both in this chapter.

There are three parts to this chapter. The first section briefly identifies the four main questions that are asked in the contemporary study of presidentialization. The second section reviews the existing work that has tried to answer those questions. The third section establishes a research agenda for the future study of presidentialization.

18.2 WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENTIALIZATION?

There are four general questions in the study of presidentialization.

First, what is meant by the term and how should it be defined? This question begs a further question. What is the difference, if any, between presidentialization and cognate concepts such as personalization and prime ministerialization? Another question that is asked in this regard is whether the concept of presidentialization can be applied to the study of presidents in presidential and indeed semi-presidential countries, or whether it is applicable only to the study of prime ministers in parliamentary systems? A further question still can be asked. Is the presidentialization of prime ministerial politics the equivalent of what used to be termed 'prime ministerial government'? These conceptual questions are foundational to the contemporary study of presidentialization.

Second, what are the sources of presidentialization? This question treats presidentialization as the dependent variable. Here, there is a debate as to whether presidentialization is the product of institutional features, or a broader process of societal change (Elgie and Passarelli 2019). If its source is institutional as Samuels and Shugart (2010) understand it to be, what is the relationship between institutional variation and different degrees of presidentialization? If it is the result of a process of societal change as Poguntke and Webb (2005a) believe, what are the historical, cultural, sociological, political, and other factors that have caused presidentialization in general and that lead to cross-national variation in the level of presidentialization?

Third, whatever we understand by the term 'presidentialization' and whatever its sources, to what extent has there been a presidentialization of contemporary polities in practice? Clearly, this is an empirical question. Poguntke and Webb's (2005a) volume was extremely influential in this regard. They provided a general template that scholars could apply to study the degree of presidentialization in a country and change over time.

A number of studies have been published applying their framework and usually finding at least some evidence to support the presidentialization thesis.

Finally, what are the consequences of presidentialization? This question treats presidentialization as the explanatory variable. As we shall see, Poguntke and Webb's framework is not very helpful in this regard. By contrast, Samuels and Shugart's (2010) method of analysis offers more potential for systematic research in this regard.

In the next section, we review the existing work on presidentialization, referring back to the four basic research questions that we outlined here.

18.3 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENTIALIZATION?

18.3.1 What Is Meant by the Term and How Should It Be Defined?

The concept of presidentialization has proven difficult to define. Indeed, rather than trying to provide a rigorous definition of the concept, scholars typically focus on the defining features of presidentialization, often providing a list of such features. Even then, scholars tend to identify those features in relatively general terms. Nonetheless, the basic claim is that certain general features are constitutive of presidentialization.

Foley (1993: 24) identifies the defining feature of the US presidential system to be what he calls 'spatial leadership'. He states: 'This refers to the way that recent presidents have sought to enhance their position in Washington by creating as much distance between it [Washington] and the presidency' (Foley 1993: 24). He argues that US-style spatial leadership was the result of 'deep-seated and long-term changes in the American polity' (Foley 1993: 59). He also argues that similar changes occurred in Britain in the 1980s. In this way, he concludes, spatial leadership became a 'feature of the British political landscape' (Foley 1993: 59), leading to the rise of the British presidency during the Thatcher premiership. This way of thinking supports the idea that presidentialization is often synonymous with Americanization (Helms 2015). That said, Foley (1993: 263) states that he is not implying 'a convergence of the British premiership with the American presidency'. 'The presence of a *de facto* presidency in the British system', he argues, 'has been conditioned by British circumstances and tradition' (Foley 1993: 278). Instead, he argues that there has been the rise of 'an authentically British president' (Foley 1993: 283). Whether or not we agree with his argument, we can see that Foley is not defining presidentialization. He is treating it as an analogy. He argues that there have been analogous developments in Britain and the US, leading to what he believes to be the rise of the British presidency.

Mughan (2000) follows a slightly different but essentially similar thought process. He does provide a definition of presidentialization. He states that it 'implies movement over

time away from collective to personalized government, movement away from a pattern of governmental and electoral politics dominated by the political party towards one where the party leader becomes a more autonomous political force' (Mughan 2000: 7). Like Foley, Mughan (2000: 7) makes a direct analogy with the US system. Unlike Foley, though, he believes that there has been a 'convergence on the individualist American model'. For Mughan (2000: 10), presidentialization is a 'straightforward, empirically detectable' phenomenon. For him, presidentialization is

a personalization of electoral politics that on the one hand occurs within the parameters of an unchanging parliamentary constitution and on the other persists over time, albeit that the actual impact of the party leaders on mass political behaviour and election outcomes can vary in magnitude from one contest to the next.

(Mughan 2000: 9)

On basis of these features, assessing presidentialization thesis involves 'mapping whether party leaders have indeed become more prominent in election campaigns and determining whether they are more influential electoral forces than they used to be' and 'explaining any presidentialization of impact that has taken place' (Mughan 2000: 12). Thus, Mughan differs from Foley in providing a definition, but engages in essentially the same exercise as Foley, namely identifying the observable features of a presidentialized system.

Both Foley and Mughan make direct reference to the US when thinking about the concept of presidentialization. Poguntke and Webb (2005b) differ in this regard. Like Mughan, they provide a definition of presidentialization. They state that it 'denominates a process by which regimes are becoming more presidential in their actual practice without, in most cases, changing their formal structure, that is, their regime-type' (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 1). As they immediately note, though, this definition merely begs the question of what it means for a country to become more presidential. Like both Foley and Mughan, they then provide a sketch of what they consider be an ideal-typical presidential system. They do not define the idea in purely constitutional terms (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 2). Instead, Poguntke and Webb claim that 'the *de facto* presidentialization of politics can be understood as the development of (a) increasing leadership power resources and autonomy within the party and the political executive respectively, and (b) increasingly leadership-centred electoral processes'. Specifically, they argue that these developments affect three 'central arenas of democratic government'. This leads them to identify what they call the 'three faces of presidentialization, namely *the executive face*, *the party face*, and *the electoral face*' (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 5; italics in the original). Thus, like both Foley and Mughan, Poguntke and Webb provide a set of features that can be observed to determine whether or not a country has undergone a process of presidentialization. Unlike Foley and Mughan, though, at no point in their introductory discussion do they refer to the US model as an analogy, or to a process of Americanization.

Samuels and Shugart (2010) provide an alternative way of thinking about the concept of presidentialization. Like both Mughan and Poguntke and Webb, they provide a definition of presidentialization. Unlike all three authors we have considered so far in this subsection, though, Samuels and Shugart define the concept in terms of the institutional features of a regime. They ‘define presidentialization as *the way the separation of powers fundamentally shapes parties’ organizational and behavioral characteristics, in ways that are distinct from the organization and behavior of parties in parliamentary systems*’ (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 6; italics in the original). In terms of the separation powers, they are concerned with, first, electoral origin, meaning whether the executive comes to office with the support of the legislature or separately, usually through the direct election of the president; and, second, electoral survival, referring to whether the continuing existence of the executive in office is independent of the legislature or whether it can be provoked by the legislature through a motion of no confidence. This is a very different way of thinking about presidentialization. We should immediately signal, though, that Samuels and Shugart are primarily concerned with the presidentialization of political parties, whereas Foley, Mughan, and Poguntke and Webb are interested in broader electoral and political features. Nonetheless, Samuels and Shugart argue that variation in the presidentialization of parties causes variation in such features. Therefore, indirectly they are concerned with the broader operation of the political executive.

To sum up, scholars have identified the defining features of presidentialization, but there is no commonly accepted definition of the term. Perhaps, though, there is no need for any such definition. If we can identify the constitutive features of presidentialization, then arguably we have sufficient grounds to go ahead and examine whether or not there is evidence for presidentialization in practice. The defining features of presidentialization vary from one author to the next. However, to the extent that Poguntke and Webb’s account has become the standard way of thinking about the concept, then the study of presidentialization is often associated with consideration of one or more of their three faces of presidentialization.

18.3.2 What Is the Difference, If Any, between Presidentialization and Cognate Concepts Such as Personalization and Prime Ministerialization?

Whatever the definition of presidentialization, or the defining features of it, how does the concept of presidentialization relate to similar concepts such as personalization and prime ministerialization?

For some writers, the concepts of presidentialization and personalization are synonymous. For example, we have seen that Mughan (2000: 9) states that presidentialization can be defined as ‘a personalization of electoral politics’. Jou and Endo (2015) take

this argument to its logical extreme. In their article on the presidentialization of Japanese politics, they state explicitly that ‘the terms “personalization” and “presidentialization” are used interchangeably’ (Jou and Endo 2000: 358). Thus, the title of their article is the ‘Presidentialization of Japanese Politics?’, but the first section reviews the existing literature on the ‘[p]ersonalization of politics in parliamentary systems.’ For other writers, though, the two concepts are different. For example, Karvonen’s (2010) volume on the personalization of parliamentary democracies does include a brief discussion of the presidentialization thesis. However, Karvonen is rather dismissive of the idea, stating the ‘general “gut impressions” of expert authors seem to be more in favour of the presidentialization thesis than the actual evidence presented in the various country studies’ (Karvonen 2010: 20). From thereon in, he focuses exclusively on the personalization thesis, for which he believes the evidence is also relatively mixed.

In their work, Samuels and Shugart (2010) have clearly differentiated between the concepts of presidentialization and prime ministerialization. They argue that the ‘reliance on an individual leader is more accurately identified as personalization than as presidentialization’ (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 249). The ‘notion of presidentialization’, they state, ‘differs fundamentally from the concept of personalization’. For them, the most important point in this respect is that ‘parties in parliamentary systems can never become truly presidentialized because the fusion of electoral origin and survival gives parties tools to minimise both adverse selection and moral hazard problems’ (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 249). Thus, the crucial issue here is that even though parliamentary parties can fire their leaders after having selected them, presidential parties can neither choose nor dismiss the president. For Samuels and Shugart (2010: 250), what differentiates personalization from presidentialization is the emphasis on candidates ‘who enjoy some personal reputation distinct from their party’s collective reputation’. For them, personalization as a concept can ‘be applied fruitfully to executives and their parties’ (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 250), yet presidentialization means something more than personalization. This is because of their institutional perspective. In essence, there is presidentialization when a president is heading a branch of political authority constitutionally separate from the legislature, but this does not automatically mean that there is personalization too. This is because such a president does not necessarily enjoy the high personal reputation that is constitutive of personalization.

There is now a considerable literature on the topic of personalization. The aim here is not to review this literature, but to illustrate how it relates to the concept of presidentialization. For example, Cross et al. (2018) consider personalization to be a general phenomenon affecting politics and polities across the world. They argue that the ‘implications of personalized politics are necessarily widespread and can be found across many different aspects of political parties and our democratic politics more generally’ (Cross et al. 2018: 10). Specifically, they and most authors argue that personalization influences electoral campaigns, voting behaviour, and indirectly but importantly in the context of this chapter, the functioning of governments, and, therefore, of the political executive. For their part, Rahat and Kenig (2018) examine the cross-national variation in the levels and patterns of party change and political personalization. Reviewing the literature on

personalization, Costa Lobo (2017: 159) reports that ‘there is no strong trend towards personalization of party organizations, whereas in electoral behaviour the evidence points to the increasing use by voters of leaders as heuristics’. In this way, the personalization of politics is often equated with leader effects on voting behaviour. In this regard, contributors to Aarts et al. (2013) show that voters tend to let themselves be guided by the leaders they like rather than turning away from those they dislike.

There is, thus, a large literature on the personalization of politics. However, very little of this work directly invokes the concept of presidentialization. Instead, it tends to be very focused on the role of political leaders, including presidents and prime ministers, the changing role of political parties, and the impact of leaders and parties on electoral politics. In this context, Poguntke and Webb’s idea of the three faces of presidentialization is useful. As we noted above, they identify an ‘electoral face’ of presidentialization. This idea concerns ‘*electoral processes*’ and the ‘shift from partified control to domination by leaders’ (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 10). Specifically, they refer to the ‘*growing emphasis on leadership appeals in election campaigning*’, the fact that ‘*media coverage of politics focuses more on leaders*’, and ‘*the growing significance of leader effects in voting behaviour*’ (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 11; italics in the original). These are the classic themes of the literature on the personalization of electoral politics. Thus, in contrast to Mughan’s definition that conflates the two concepts, we can reasonably conclude that presidentialization is not the same as personalization, but that the two concepts do overlap. In other words, from the perspective of Poguntke and Webb at least, personalization is merely one of the features of the broader concept of presidentialization. Put differently, for them the personalization of electoral politics is part of the electoral face of presidentialization, meaning that it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of presidentialization.

In contrast to personalization, the concept of prime ministerialization relates more to the role of the head of the executive within the executive branch, or what Poguntke and Webb call the executive face of presidentialization. Scholars have debated whether politics in modern democracies is witnessing a trend towards the increased centralization of political power in the hands of the chief executive, though in practice the study of the concentration of power in this regard dates back to the first decade after World War II. In particular, it has increasingly come to be accepted that prime ministers in parliamentary regimes are accumulating organization resources, including personal staffs and political advisors. In addition, growing attention has been paid to the changing relationship between parliaments and heads of governments in parliamentary democracies. In particular, it has been shown that prime ministers have intervened in parliamentary debates more infrequently over time (Dunleavy et al. 1990), suggesting that parliaments are no longer the main arenas of political debate and communication. This situation seems to resemble the politics of the chief executive in presidential regimes. Here, presidents are usually not allowed even to set foot in the legislative chamber, except for annual set-piece state of the union speeches. Given these developments, there may be a *prima facie* case that prime ministerships are becoming increasingly similar to presidencies in presidential regimes.

Without exception, scholars accept that there have been changes to the role of the head of government in parliamentary systems. The question is whether these changes should be understood as the presidentialization of prime ministerial politics, or the prime ministerialization of parliamentary politics. We will discuss the empirical evidence in favour of the presidentialization thesis below. Suffice to say here, though, that plenty of authors have understood the changes to the role of prime minister through the lens of the concept of presidentialization. For example, we have already seen that Foley (1993) was one of the first authors arguing in favour of a presidentialization of the British executive, a theme to which he returned later (Foley 2008). Heffernan and Webb (2005: 56) also discussed the three faces of presidentialization in the context of the British prime minister, concluding that ‘politics in Britain’s parliamentary democracy has come to operate according to a logic which more closely echoes presidentialist politics than was hitherto the case’. Kefford (2013) has applied Poguntke and Webb’s schema to the Australian case, finding mixed evidence for the presidentialization thesis during the premiership of Kevin Rudd at least.

Other scholars, though, prefer to consider these changes differently. Here, the contributions by Dowding (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) are noteworthy. He explicitly contests the concept of ‘presidentialisation’ and also the work of Poguntke and Webb (2005a) generally. Instead, he argues that the term ‘prime ministerialisation’ should be preferred to ‘presidentialisation’ at least in empirical studies that deal with processes of change in parliamentary systems. Dowding makes his position very clear, stating that the ‘presidentialisation of the prime minister thesis should be expunged from political science vocabulary’ (Dowding 2013a: 617). Interestingly, he criticizes the concept at least in part because of the recurrent analogy with the US presidency. This Americanization, he states, is ‘what commentators seem to have in mind’ (Dowding 2013a: 618). Instead, he argues that ‘executive behaviour can only be analysed through the institutional form that makes it appropriate’ (Dowding 2013a: 617). For Dowding, there are important institutional and behavioural differences between presidents in presidential regimes and prime ministers in parliamentary regimes. This leads him to the claim that even though personalization is occurring in both presidential and parliamentary systems, the increasing power of the prime minister that ‘Foley and others identify is not a presidentialization but, gratingly or not, a prime ministerialization of the British prime minister’ (Dowding 2013a: 619). For their part, Peters and Helms (2012: 30) have argued that the term presidentialization ‘may be something of a misnomer’. This because while ‘presidents appear to be extremely powerful, they are in many ways more constrained than are prime ministers’. In other words, if the term ‘presidentialization’ is being used to refer to the idea that prime ministers are becoming as strong as (US) presidents, then the term is being misused, because many prime ministers are stronger than their (US) presidential counterparts especially in domestic policy.

From this discussion, we can see that the concepts of personalization and presidentialization are sometimes thought of as interchangeable. For scholars following Poguntke and Webb, though, personalization is best considered to be a subset of

presidentialization. Dowding thinks of the relationship between personalization and prime ministerialization in the same way. However, we can also clearly see that the concepts of presidentialization and prime ministerialization are mutually exclusive. That said, some scholars reject the concept of presidentialization without necessarily embracing the concept of prime ministerialization (Rhodes et al. 2009: 110–12). Nonetheless, if scholars believe that there have been changes to prime ministerial politics in parliamentary systems that include but are not confined to a process of personalization, then they have to choose between characterizing those changes as either presidentialization or prime ministerialization, or use some other term altogether.

18.3.3 Can There Be Presidentialization in Presidential and Semi-Presidential Countries?

We have seen that the concept of presidentialization has its origins in the discussion of the changing role of prime ministers in parliamentary regimes. This discussion was closely associated with the idea of the Americanization of parliamentary politics. This historiography might suggest that presidentialization is a concept that applies only to prime ministers. Yet, what about presidents? Can the concept of presidentialization be applied to the study of directly elected presidents in presidential and semi-presidential regimes? Here, it is useful to distinguish between the general idea of presidentialization and the application of Poguntke and Webb's more specific version of this concept to presidential and semi-presidential regimes.

The idea that countries with directly elected presidents have become presidentialized without reference to Poguntke and Webb's concept is widespread. In this context, presidentialization simply refers to some general process of increasing presidential power. For example, Cason and Power (2009) discuss the presidentialization of foreign policy making in Brazil without making any reference to any of Poguntke and Webb's three faces of presidentialization. Indeed, while this chapter focuses on scholarly work in English, it is worth noting *en passant* that there is a vast French-language literature on the presidentialization of French politics that goes back to the early 1960s and the de Gaulle presidency. In a sense, this way of thinking about presidentialization is merely the presidential mirror image of Dowding's idea of the prime ministerialization of parliamentary politics. Here, it is worth recalling Dowding's claim (2013a: 618) that 'executive behaviour can only be analysed through the institutional form that makes it appropriate'. Understood this way, presidentialization and prime ministerialization are mutually exclusive but effectively equivalent concepts, capturing the same general process of power concentration but in different institutional contexts.

The more interesting recent development is the application of Poguntke and Webb's (2005a) presidentialization schema to presidential and semi-presidential regimes. For example, their volume included a chapter by Fabbrini (2005) on the US. He argues that

US electoral politics have become personalized over the years (Fabbrini 2005: 313). He also notes that the system of separation of powers entails structural differences between the US president and prime ministers in parliamentary regimes. In particular, he states that ‘individual incumbents have to cope with the structural constraints of their position’ (Fabbrini 2005: 330). Nonetheless, he also makes the case that ‘the American system of separated government has gradually presidentialized in the last three decades’ (Fabbrini 2005: 331). He argues that in both the US and parliamentary regimes ‘a common transformation of the governmental process seems to have taken place: the legislature and the chief executive have moved apart’. In the US context, this means that the president ‘has had to rely on his own personal mandate and resources in order to negotiate his way through the political agenda’ (Fabbrini 2005: 331). So, we can see that there are specificities to the application of Poguntke and Webb’s version of presidentialization to the US, but we can also see that both they and their contributors believe that presidentialization is not just a phenomenon that applies to parliamentary regimes.

A similar logic underpins Helms’ (2015) work. He also applied Poguntke and Webb’s version of presidentialization to the US context. That said, he did so on the basis of ‘a slightly amended version’ (Helms 2005: 1) of the concept. He excludes consideration of the electoral face, arguing that in contrast to prime ministers in parliamentary regimes US presidents do not usually claim a mandate from their electoral victories (Helms 2005: 3). He also wishes to consider what he calls the ‘legislative face’ of presidentialization, which is one of the ways in which the party face manifests itself in presidential systems. Specifically, and consistent with Fabbrini’s analysis, he wishes to see if there has been ‘a growing divide between the executive and the legislative branch’ (Helms 2005: 3). For the purposes of this section, the key question is not whether Helms finds evidence for presidentialization in the US—though he does—but the mere fact that he believes Poguntke and Webb’s concept ‘can in fact be meaningfully applied to the study of presidential leadership [there]’ (Helms 2005: 11).

Poguntke and Webb (2005a) applied their schema to semi-presidential regimes too. They included chapters on Finland, France, and Portugal. Scholars have subsequently followed up on the logic of this inquiry. For example, Sturzu (2011: 326) has applied Poguntke and Webb’s framework to Romania, concluding that ‘Western presidentialization and the Romanian way of making politics seem to converge on several points’. Zaznaev (2008) has applied Poguntke and Webb’s framework to Russia. That said, and somewhat reminiscent of Helms, he wishes to emphasize two aspects of presidentialization (Zaznaev 2008: 31). These are the president’s increased control over resources and the president’s autonomy from the legislature. He concludes by arguing that the ‘concept of “presidentialization” is useful for providing an understanding of the complicated and contradictory processes currently developing within the framework of the various forms of government in different countries’ (Zaznaev 2008: 40). In this way, Zaznaev captures the general consensus among scholars of presidentialization. Those who believe the concept has traction tend also to believe that it can be applied, albeit in a somewhat modified form, not just to prime ministers in parliamentary regimes, but to chief executives in all systems.

18.3.4 Is the Presidentialization of the Premiership the Equivalent of ‘Prime Ministerial Government’?

We have seen that Poguntke and Webb identify a so-called ‘executive face’ of presidentialization. This element of the presidentialization thesis concerns the growth of prime ministerial advisers, the centralization of political communication, the capacity to set the policy agenda, pre-eminence in international negotiations and so forth. These developments are not new. Indeed, there is a sense in which they echo themes associated with debates about prime ministerial government that emerged in the UK in the 1960s and that were paralleled by work on chancellor Democracy in Germany and equivalent research elsewhere. So, is the presidentialization thesis merely the ‘latest version’ of the old prime ministerial government thesis? Indeed, we can extend this line of thinking a little further still. In the early 1990s Dunleavy and Rhodes (1990) challenged the narrow terms of the traditional prime ministerial vs. cabinet government debate by introducing the concept of the ‘core executive’. This concept referred to ‘all those organizations and structures which primarily serve to pull together and integrate central government policies or act as final arbiters within the executive of conflicts between different elements of the government machine’ (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990: 4). The core executive approach paved the way for a perspective which focuses on dynamic relationships between multiple actors within the executive as a whole, rather than the consideration of essentially static formal structures centred on the prime minister. How does the presidentialization thesis relate to work on the core executive?

We can say that the presidentialization thesis is consistent with a critique of the traditional prime ministerial government debate. The clue is in the suffix. Similar to the core executive approach, the *-ization* suffix suggests the consideration of a dynamic process of change. Indeed, Poguntke and Webb (2005a: 5) discuss the idea of presidentialization ‘as a process’, stating that the central research question of their volume concerns whether ‘there are contingent and structural (as opposed to formal- constitutional) factors at work that push modern democracies towards a more presidential working mode’. Arguably, the presidentialization thesis requires scholars to adopt a diachronic perspective, making comparisons of change over time. Thus, the presidentialization thesis is not merely the repackaging of the old prime ministerial government debate. In this regard, it shares common ground with the literature on core executive politics.

That said, there would appear to be a potentially important difference between the presidentialization debate and the core executive approach. There is a sense in which Poguntke and Webb’s version of the presidentialization thesis does indeed emphasize relationships between multiple actors (see below) and a dynamic process of change, but it also perhaps suggests the presence of a long-term, seemingly ineluctable, and general trend towards presidentialization (Elgie and Passarelli 2019). For them, there is something almost inevitable about the development of presidentialization in modern democratic societies. For sure, not all countries may experience the process of presidentialization in the same ways and to the same degree, but the direction of change seems to be clear.

To the extent that there is a process of change, then it is towards presidentialization. This perspective is different from the core executive politics approach. Indeed, the apparently unidirectional nature of the change inherent in the presidentialization thesis has been explicitly criticized by those most closely associated with the core executive approach. For example, Rhodes et al. (2009: 219) state that ‘there is nothing as distinct as a “trend” towards greater centralization [...]’. Instead, prime ministerial power is always ‘contingent, interdependent, and variable’. Indeed, whereas proponents of the presidentialization thesis wish to present a picture of the trend regarding the executive as a whole, the core executive approach emphasizes the multiple relationships, or ‘court politics’, that exist within the executive. Thus, Rhodes et al. (2009: 112) conclude that while ‘the core executive thesis can encompass the several varieties of court politics, the presidentialization thesis cannot’. Overall, there is a clear sense in which the Poguntke and Webb’s version of the presidentialization thesis and the Rhodes et al.’s version of the core executive politics approach are mutually exclusive, even if both challenge the old-style prime ministerial vs. cabinet government debate.

18.3.5 What Are the Sources of Presidentialization?

We have seen that there are now two very different ways of thinking about the concept of presidentialization. Poguntke and Webb identify the three faces of presidentialization, with personalization being effectively subsumed under the electoral face. By contrast, Samuels and Shugart understand presidentialization from the perspective of the electoral origins and survival of chief executives, with personalization being a separate phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, these different interpretations of the concept lead to differences in how the two sets of scholars think about the sources of presidentialization.

Poguntke and Webb adopt a broad sociopolitical approach to explaining presidentialization, or what we have termed a ‘grand historical narrative’ (Elgie and Passarelli 2019). For them, presidentialization is a general process that is occurring in modern democracies and that is separate from any other process of constitutional change. In this regard, they make it quite clear that there are non-institutional forces driving presidentialization (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 12–13). For Poguntke and Webb presidentialization is the result of the interaction of many different factors. They identify four ‘underlying structural causes’ of presidentialization (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 16). They are the internationalization of politics, the growth and increasing complexity of the state, the changing structure of mass communications, and the erosion of social cleavages. They also identify two ‘contingent causes’ (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 16) that intervene to shape the relationship between the structural causes and the three faces of presidentialization. These are the personality of leaders and the political context, meaning the state of the economy and so forth. We have seen that Poguntke and Webb believe there has been a general trend towards presidentialization over time. However, they make it clear that the structural forces shaping presidentialization do not necessarily operate in tandem, stating that it

should not be assumed that these triple processes run in perfect simultaneity with each other: since our main causal factors have more immediate effects on some faces of presidentialization than on others, they might progress at different speeds and over different time-spans. (Poguntke and Webb 2005b: 16)

This is why the degree of presidentialization overall is likely to differ from one country to another, even if there is a basic historical trend towards presidentialization in general. Indeed, it could even vary from one leader to another in the same country, even if there is a general trend towards presidentialization.

Samuels and Shugart (2010) have a very different starting point. They

do not claim that [their] argument supersedes or supplants the importance of social, economic, or cultural forces that drive party formation, evolution, and behaviour [...] but analysis of these differences should begin with the difference in constitutional design. (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 18)

Specifically, they are concerned with whether or not the origins and survival of the chief executive are separate from the legislature. They state: *‘to the extent that the constitutional structure separates executive and legislative origin and/or survival, parties will tend to be presidentialized’* (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 37; italics in the original). Separate origin refers to the situation where there is a direct presidential election that is held separately from legislative elections, albeit perhaps simultaneously. Separate survival ‘means that a party or legislative majority cannot remove a sitting president’ (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 15). This schema allows them to distinguish between four different institutional configurations—presidentialism, two forms of semi-presidentialism—president-parliamentarism and premier-presidentialism—and parliamentarism—with the degree of presidentialization descending ordinally across the four regimes respectively. Samuels and Shugart have a particular focus on what Poguntke and Webb would call the ‘party face’ of presidentialization. They state,

to the extent that capture of a separately elected presidency is important for control over the distribution of the spoils of office and/or the policy process, party behavior and organization will tend to mimic constitutional structure, giving rise to ‘presidentialized’ parties. (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 396; emphasis in the original)

Thus, Samuels and Shugart are not concerned with identifying any broad historical trend towards presidentialization. Instead, they are concerned with the institutional origins of presidentialization, particularly as they shape the organization of political parties.

Scholars have not challenged Poguntke and Webb’s origin story. However, Samuels and Shugart’s framework has been reconsidered. Here, Passarelli’s (2015a) contribution is important. He has shown that the ‘genetic origins’ of political parties interact with the institutional features of the regime to shape the degree of presidentialization. By ‘genetic origins’, he means ‘the original organizational characteristics of a party’ (Passarelli 2015b: 2). Following Panebianco (1988), he identifies three such characteristics: ‘1) the organization’s

construction and development; 2) the presence or the absence (at the party's origin) of an external "sponsor"; 3) the role of charisma in the party's formation' (Passarelli 2015b: 11). He states that the

interaction between constitutional features and the organization of the features of endogenous parties means that the presidentialization of parties is not a monolithic phenomenon. Rather it varies as a function of organizational development, the presence of factions, the role conferred to the leadership, etc.

(Passarelli 2015b: 16)

Indeed, he argues that the genetic origins of political parties 'can (to some extent) counter balance the effects of institutions' (Passarelli 2015b: 15). Having remodelled Samuels and Shugart's framework in this way, Passarelli's (2015b) volume then presents a number of country case studies, showing how constitutional form and party origins interact to shape the presidentialization of party politics.

18.3.6 To What Extent Has There Been a Presidentialization of Contemporary Politics?

The concept of presidentialization may be difficult to define, but as we have seen plenty of scholars have identified what they consider to be the constitutive features of the concept. On that basis, the claim is that if these features can be observed in practice, then there is evidence that presidentialization has occurred. We have also seen that scholars have identified the various sources of presidentialization and argued that the degree of presidentialization is like to vary from one country to another according to differences in these sources. These foundations have led to a number of empirical studies exploring the extent of the presidentialization of executive politics in various countries.

We have seen that the first claims of a presidentialization of parliamentary politics were made in Canada in the 1970s (Smith 1977) and that this idea was then popularized in the UK media during the Thatcher premiership in the 1980s. At this time, scholars were more inclined to go into print to reject the presidential analogy. For example, Wearing (1977) immediately critiqued Smith's claims of the presidentialization of the Canadian prime ministership. For his part, Courtney (1984: 238) reported the claim that Canadian prime ministers had 'fashioned their position and their powers on the example of the American president' and that parliament had been 'transformed into an institution of little value and consequence in the policy-making process'. However, he was sceptical of the presidentialization thesis, arguing that 'while the pendulum of power may have swung too far in the direction of the executive and away from parliament, the charge of "presidentialization" of the office misses the point' (Courtney 1984: 239). In the British context, a similarly sceptical position was taken by G. W. Jones (1991). He stated that even Prime Minister Thatcher was only as strong as her party and parliament 'allowed her to be', concluding that 'Mrs Thatcher was no president' (Jones 1991: 134).

Interestingly, prior to Foley's (1993) book on the topic, scholars typically failed to refer to any specific scholarship on the presidentialization thesis, even when they claimed that it was a 'well-argued over' theme (Jones 1991: 111). Indeed, writing a long time after Foley's work, King (2007: 318–22) also provided an empirical critique of the presidentialization of British politics thesis, but without citing the work of anyone who had actually made such a claim.

The scholarship has now fundamentally changed. Beginning with Poguntke and Webb (2005a) volume, most studies have tended to accept the presidentialization thesis and have also concluded that there is at least some empirical evidence to back it up. Most notably, in the conclusion to their book Poguntke and Webb report the trends towards presidentialization in fourteen countries (Webb and Poguntke 2005: 338–9). Summarizing the findings across the three faces of presidentialization as a whole, they conclude that there was a strong change towards presidentialization in three countries (Germany, Israel, and Italy), a moderate change in nine (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and the US), and a small change in two countries (Canada and France), both of which had already exhibited a high degree of presidentialization for a considerable time. Overall, this led them to claim that they 'feel confident' that 'it is reasonable to talk of the "presidentialization" of contemporary democracy' (Webb and Poguntke 2005: 347).

With Poguntke and Webb's template in hand, scholars have begun to apply the presidentialization thesis to their country of interest. Typically, scholars have found evidence in favour of the thesis, though it has usually been mixed. For example, Kolltveit (2012: 372) has argued that in Norway the prime minister's office has 'clearly strengthened, suggesting that the prime minister's ability to coordinate cabinet policy has increased'. This is an indicator of presidentialization. However, he finds no clear evidence to support the presidentialization thesis in terms of the background of ministers or cabinet reshuffles. In Sweden, Sundström (2008: 166) states that the 'presidentialisation thesis gains only some support'. He identifies nine indicators of presidentialization, including a weakening of the government's collective deliberations, a more presidential leadership style, and so on. He finds full or partial evidence for seven of those indicators, but no evidence for the other two. Also in Sweden, Bäck et al. (2011: 273) conclude that Prime Minister Persson 'resembled the more presidential figures described in the literature on contemporary parliamentary governments'. However, they also claim that 'our own assessment of two important indicators of presidentialization—the selection of ministers and the reshuffling of ministries—uncovers no convincing evidence of any steady development towards a more president-like prime minister in Sweden'. So, again a mixed picture emerges. In Germany, Helms (2005: 430) concludes that the country 'has witnessed a rather limited amount of what has been conceptualised in the more recent literature on the parliamentary democracies as "presidentialism"'. In a follow-up case study, applying Poguntke and Webb's framework to the chancellorship of Angela Merkel, the same author identified manifestations of presidentialization in particular in terms of the party face, but less with regard to the electoral and executive faces of presidentialization (Helms 2014: 108–16). For their part, Chohan and Jacobs (2017) have

pointed to developments in Canada that go against the presidentialization thesis. We might also note that there is some very limited work on the presidentialization of presidents in parliamentary regimes, notably Italy (Palladino 2015). Overall, there is good evidence to suggest that Poguntke and Webb have identified a general cross-national trend towards presidentialization, but that many countries still have a long way to go if they are to end up fully presidentialized.

Passarelli's (2015b) volume also includes a number of empirical case studies. His summary reports how constitutional form and parties' genetic origins interact to shape the degree of presidentialization (Passarelli 2015c). For example, he concludes that in Chile the presidential regime and the origins of political parties served to reinforce the high level of party presidentialization there. By contrast, in the US the genetic features of the two main parties 'have "downsized" the presidential effects on parties generated by institutions' (Passarelli 2015c: 257). This conclusion is noteworthy because whereas Samuels and Shugart would assume that the degree of party presidentialization was the same in both Chile and the US, Passarelli's framework allows us to identify variation within the set of presidential regimes. The same point applies to parliamentary regimes too. Here, there is a difference between Japan and Italy on the one hand, and Australia, Germany, and the UK on the other. In the former, the nature of political parties means that the level of presidentialization is much lower than in the latter. Indeed, Passarelli's framework has a further implication. It allows us to consider within-country variation too. That is to say, the genetic origins of political parties vary within countries. This means that the degree of presidentialization can differ across time within the same country and the same institutional structure as one party with one type of genetic origin takes power at the expense of another with a different type. Passarelli's study represents a first step in this type of analysis.

18.3.7 What Are the Consequences of Presidentialization?

In one sense, there has been relatively little work on the consequences of presidentialization. An exception is Sykes' (2009: 235) general claim that 'presidentialisation intensifies the masculinist nature of the top job', referring to prime ministers.

Perhaps one of the reasons why there has been little emphasis on this aspect of the concept can be found in Poguntke and Webb's (2005a) introduction to the concept. We have seen that they believe presidentialization to be the result of a whole range of economic, social, and political developments. They then state that

[e]qually, however, it is possible that causality flows in the opposite direction since structural changes like the internationalization of politics give more executive power to leaders and this, in turn, may strengthen their electoral appeal and their ability to dominate their party; that is, as executive presidentialization occurs, so the media focus more on leaders and voters then become more susceptible to leadership effects.

(Poguntke and Webb 2005a: 17)

In other words, presidentialization is the result of the structural changes they identify, but at the same time presidentialization is also a further cause of those self-same structural changes. Needless to say, this circularity makes it difficult to treat presidentialization as an explanatory variable at least when it might be used to try to explain variation in anything that relates to the structural and indeed contingent causes they identify as the sources of presidentialization. Given those structural and contingent causes refer to wide-ranging aspects of modern democracy, it becomes very difficult to separate out the independent effect of presidentialization if the aim is to explore its specific consequences. Thus, Poguntke and Webb's framework may be very useful for assessing the extent of the presence of presidentialization in contemporary democracies, but it is not very helpful for identifying the effects of presidentialization.

In another sense, though, the effects of presidentialization have been studied in some detail. Here, though, we have to turn to Samuels and Shugart (2010). They were explicitly concerned with exploring not only the presence of presidentialization, but also its effects on a wide range of outcomes. Given their approach is purely institutional, they can identify its independent effect without falling into the obvious circularity that limits Poguntke and Webb's framework in this regard. For example, Samuels and Shugart show that political outsiders are more likely to hold office as regimes become presidentialized. They also show that in pure parliamentary systems, 'about three in ten changes in prime minister result from purely *intraparty* politics' (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 120; italics in the original). A similar finding occurs under semi-presidentialism, but here presidents also have influence over prime ministerial appointments and dismissals, indicating the presidential 'contamination' of intra-party relations under the most presidentialized system. By contrast, under presidentialism parties have almost no direct influence over the removal of presidents. Samuels and Shugart (2010: 221) also show that regime type interacted with party system variables affects the likelihood of policy switching, with greater switching the more presidentialized the system.

Overall, we can see that there is considerable potential for scholars to study the effects of presidentialization. To do so systematically, though, we have to move away from Poguntke and Webb's understanding of the concept, or if we are going to use their idea then we would have to focus on a set of outcomes that are unrelated to the structural and contingent factors that they believe to be the causes of presidentialization.

18.4 WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRESIDENTIALIZATION?

Having identified the main research questions relating to the study of presidentialization and having reported the state of the art regarding the answers to those questions, we now turn our attention to the research agenda for the future study of this topic. We focus on three main areas—the concept itself, the application of the concept, and the other factors that need to be considered when applying the concept.

18.4.1 Understanding the Concept of Presidentialization

There is still a need to clarify what scholars mean by the concept of presidentialization and in two respects. First, the same term is currently being used in two very different ways (Elgie and Passarelli 2019). As we have seen, there is a sense in which Poguntke and Webb's use of the concept is incommensurable with Samuels and Shugart's understanding of it. To avoid confusion, we might wish to relabel the term in one of these cases. A suggestion is that we keep the term 'presidentialization' for studies that apply Poguntke and Webb's framework or an equivalent one and use a term such as 'constitutional presidentialization' for studies that use Samuels and Shugart's schema. This move might at least make it clearer that the two sets of scholars are each engaged in a different type of analytical exercise. Second, in relation to work that is concerned with Poguntke and Webb's understanding of the concept, or at least a non-Samuels and Shugart understanding of it, then we might also need to move closer to some consensus about the constitutive elements of the concept of presidentialization. Currently, authors tend to identify their own constitutive features, or they tweak Poguntke and Webb's features for the purposes of studying their chosen country of interest. This means, though, that we are failing to compare like with like. To be clear, we do not necessarily have to agree on a standard definition of presidentialization as such, but it would help to reach agreement on the specific features of political life that we should be focusing on when we wish to observe whether there is evidence for the presidentialization of contemporary polities.

There is also a need to clarify the relationship between the concepts of presidentialization and prime ministerialization and in turn their relationship with the concept of personalization. We have seen that some scholars object to the use of the term 'presidentialization' when applied to the study of parliamentary regimes, preferring the term 'prime ministerialization' instead. In this respect, we need to know whether scholars are talking about the same phenomena but in two different institutional contexts, or whether they are talking about two different phenomena altogether. If the former, then we could use both terms but in the knowledge that they are referring to the same sources of change that Poguntke and Webb identified and that are expressed in the same three faces of presidentialization/prime ministerialization that they identified, and so on. If the concepts are not synonymous, though, what are the differences between them? How are the constitutive features of presidentialization different from those of prime ministerialization? If the features are different, could a parliamentary country be exhibiting some degree of both presidentialization and prime ministerialization? More pertinently perhaps, could a semi-presidential regime be exhibiting both presidentialization and prime ministerialization? Some work is still needed to provide clear answers to these questions. Whatever the answers to them, we would like to suggest that the relationship between these concepts and the concept of personalization has been resolved. We should see personalization as an expression of the electoral face of Poguntke and Webb-style presidentialization/prime ministerialization and as a phenomenon separate from Samuels and Shugart-style constitutional presidentialization.

18.4.2 Applying the Concept of Presidentialization

When undertaking empirical work, we would encourage scholars to think about three issues. The first concerns the observable features of presidentialization. This issue is clearly bound up with the discussion in the previous subsection. Until we have a clear sense of what to look for, then the empirical evidence regarding the extent of presidentialization will remain fundamentally unreliable. Poguntke and Webb have given us some general characteristics to consider with regard to the three faces of presidentialization, but we need more specific indicators. That said, scholars should also aim to find evidence for the presence of presidentialization broadly rather than focusing on a small number of specific indicators. For example, both Bäck et al.'s (2011) study of Sweden and Kolltveit's (2012) study of Norway examine only particular features of their country's political process. Yet, for Poguntke and Webb presidentialization is a process that has an effect on three faces of politics, each of which comprises a number of different aspects of political life. To test whether or not there is evidence for presidentialization in the way that they understand it, we need to have a broader sense of the political system. An alternative strategy is to see whether there is evidence for the idea that there has been a presidentialization of contemporary politics. Arguably, presidentialization changes expectations about politics, including what voters consider to be important in candidates, would-be leaders, and so on. If so, it would be useful to know whether people consider systems to have been presidentialized, whatever they may understand by that term. To what extent is the idea of presidentialization factoring into their perceptions of the political process?

The second issue concerns the geographical application of empirical studies. Thus far, scholars have applied the concept almost exclusively to individual countries. Webb and Poguntke (2005) have provided a summary of the case studies in their volume, but to date there has been no comparative or large-*n* study. Again, on the basis of work that can clearly identify the observable implications of presidentialization, we would encourage scholars to undertake more comparative and large-*n* studies. More than that, while relatively few country case studies have been conducted so far, some countries have been examined more than once. In particular, Germany, Sweden, and the UK have already been the subject of a number of inquiries. We encourage scholars to widen the set of countries under investigation. We also encourage scholars to increase the geographical range of the countries under consideration. To date, the thesis has been applied to the 'usual suspects', namely West European countries, Westminster democracies, specifically Australia and Canada, Japan, and the US. There is plenty of opportunity to expand the country selection. Is presidentialization really a general phenomenon or is it limited to only some countries or regions?

The third issue concerns the nature of the empirical studies. While we encourage large-*n* comparative studies, single country case studies are likely to remain the chosen research design strategy. In this respect, though, we would encourage scholars to engage in diachronic comparisons. We have seen that presidentialization is considered to be a

process of change. So, taking a contemporary snapshot of a country does not provide evidence of whether such a process has occurred, only whether there is currently evidence of a presidentialized political system. Diachronic studies would test the idea that there has been a change over time.

18.4.3 Placing the Study of Presidentialization in Context

From the perspective of Samuels and Shugart's (2010) understanding of constitutional presidentialization, two factors could usefully be considered. The first concerns political parties. We have seen that Passarelli (2015a) has introduced the genetic origins of political parties as a factor that conditions the effects of constitutional presidentialization. We need more work on this topic. Specifically, while Passarelli's volume includes a set of case studies showing how these two factors interact to shape the level of party presidentialization, we now need to examine whether the resulting variation in party presidentialization affects the outcomes that Samuels and Shugart considered in their volume. So, Passarelli's study is merely a first step. The second factor concerns the constitutional powers of the chief executive. Samuels and Shugart confined their study to the effect of regime types. Yet, the constitutional power of presidents varies within regime types. How does this variation, potentially in interaction with the genetic origins of parties affect the outcomes that Samuels and Shugart are interested in? This point can be applied to prime ministers too. As Doyle shows elsewhere in this volume, there have been attempts to measure not just presidential but also prime ministerial power (see also Chapters 19 and 28 in this volume). Again, how does the variation in the formal powers of the principal figure within the political executive condition the effect of constitutional presidentialization?

From the perspective of Poguntke and Webb, the power of chief executives is potentially important too. In presidential and semi-presidential regimes, is the degree of presidentialization conditioned by the constitutional powers of the president? Would we expect to see a greater presidentialization of the presidency in countries where the president has some constitutional prerogatives than in those countries where the president is merely a figurehead? In countries where the president has some constitutional prerogatives, would we expect the presidentialization of the prime minister's office to be restricted? In parliamentary regimes, does the power of the prime minister differ conditional upon whether there is a majoritarian or a consensual system? Does presidentialization have a greater impact on consensual systems, making the prime minister a more important political broker among the different forces? These are questions that can reasonably be asked in the context of Poguntke and Webb's presidentialization thesis.

Finally, we would encourage more work to be conducted on the effect of presidentialization on voting behaviour. There has been plenty of work on personalization and voting behaviour as well as work on leader effects on voting behaviour. However, if we consider presidentialization to be a general process and personalization to be merely

part of the electoral face of presidentialization, then there is the potential for systemic presidentialization to have an effect on voter expectations, perhaps in terms of attitudes towards what political leaders can be expected to achieve, or the electoral mandate that they are given.

Overall, we see a vibrant research agenda for the study of both presidentialization generally and constitutional presidentialization specifically. We would encourage scholars to follow up on these suggestions for the research agenda and to generate new ideas in this up and coming domain.

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