

# Duverger, Semi-presidentialism and the supposed French archetype

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# Duverger, Semi-presidentialism and the supposed French archetype

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*The concept of semi-presidentialism was first operationalised by Maurice Duverger. There are now 17 countries with semi-presidential constitutions in Europe. Within this set of countries France is usually considered to be the archetypal example of semi-presidentialism. This article maps the main institutional and political features of European semi-presidentialism on the basis of Duverger's original three-fold schema. The most striking feature is the diversity of practice within this set of countries. This means that semi-presidentialism should not be operationalised as a discrete explanatory variable. However, there are ways of systematically capturing the variation within semi-presidentialism to allow cross-national comparisons. This diversity also means that France should not be considered as the archetypal semi-presidential country. At best, France is an archetypal example of a particular type of semi-presidentialism. Overall, Duverger's main contribution to the study of semi-presidentialism was the original identification of the concept and his implicit insight that there are different types of semi-presidentialism. In the future, the study of semi-presidentialism would benefit from the development of theory-driven comparative work that avoids a reliance on France as the supposed semi-presidential archetype.*

Maurice Duverger first introduced the idea of semi-presidentialism as a regime type separate from presidentialism and parliamentarism in 1970 (Duverger,

1970). He was the first person to complete a full-scale comparative work on semi-presidentialism, *Echec au roi*, in 1978 (Duverger, 1978). He also published the first English-language article on the topic in 1980 (Duverger, 1980). Even though Duverger's substantive addition to the literature on semi-presidentialism effectively ended with the publication of a book that he edited in 1986 (Duverger, ed., 1986),<sup>1</sup> by this time the concept of semi-presidentialism was being widely debated and the comparative analysis of semi-presidential countries had already become a focus of international academic attention. The third wave of democratization in the early 1990s further increased the interest in semi-presidentialism as the number of semi-presidential countries increased quickly and as the effects of regime types were systematically studied (for example, Linz, 1994). The consolidation of many of these democracies, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, has not diminished the interest in semi-presidentialism. Indeed, only recently one leading scholar wrote that semi-presidentialism "apparently is a regime type whose time has come" (Shugart, 2005, p. 344).

In France, the introduction of the direct election of the president, following the October 1962 constitutional amendment, established the Fifth Republic as a semi-presidential regime. This terminology is still not accepted within the French community of constitutional lawyers. However, within the international political science community France is almost unanimously acknowledged as having a semi-presidential system. More than that, France is often considered to be the archetypal example of such a system. For instance, while the list of semi-presidential countries can still vary from one writer to the next, France is always included in such a list. When the debate about the institutional effect of regime types was debated in the early 1990s, the French

experience was often central to the discussion about the pros and cons of semi-presidentialism. In other words, within the political science community France remains a standard reference point for the study of semi-presidentialism.

This paper examines France's claim to be the archetypal example of semi-presidentialism. Now that there are up to 60 semi-presidential countries in the world, 19 of which are in the greater European area including Russia, to what extent is France the typical example of semi-presidentialism, or even the typical example of European semi-presidentialism? In addressing this question, we reflect on Duverger's contribution to the study of semi-presidentialism. Focusing only on the experience of semi-presidentialism in Europe, we argue that semi-presidentialism is best understood as comprising an heterogeneous set of countries and that even in a European context France can at best be seen as an example of only one form of semi-presidentialism rather than as an example of semi-presidentialism as a whole. We suggest that Duverger's enduring contribution to the study of semi-presidentialism lies in his very identification of the concept and in his implicit insight that there are different types of semi-presidentialism.

### **Duverger's idea of semi-presidentialism and the number of semi-presidential countries**

The main contribution of Duverger to the study of semi-presidentialism lies in his formulation of semi-presidentialism as a separate regime type. Prior to his work, the parliamentary/presidential dichotomy was the long-established analytical focus of governmental systems. For example, in the early 1940s the

well-known debate between Don Price (1943) and Harold Laski (1944) focused solely on the parliamentary/presidential dichotomy. Moreover, when Duverger first identified the concept of semi-presidentialism there were very few semi-presidential regimes in existence apart from France, and those that did exist were in small countries usually overlooked by political scientists at that time – Austria, Finland, Iceland and Ireland. Therefore, it is remarkable that it took Duverger less than a decade after the French shift to semi-presidentialism to conceptualize the idea coherently and to start to analyze the politics of semi-presidential countries comparatively.

While Duverger's conceptualization of the idea was seminal, his definition of semi-presidentialism has proved to be problematic. By 1980, he had arrived at his standard definition:

[A] political regime is considered as semi-presidential if the constitution which established it combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them (Duverger, 1980, p. 166).

Elsewhere, I have demonstrated at length that the problem with this definition is the issue of what should count as "quite considerable" presidential powers (Elgie, 1999; Elgie, 2007). Different people make different judgment calls. As a result, the list of semi-presidential regimes varies from one person to next.

This introduces the problem of selection bias when the effects of semi-presidentialism are studied. As a result, there is a tendency now to define semi-presidentialism simply as the situation where there is both a popularly-elected fixed-term president and a prime minister and cabinet responsible to the legislature. (See, for example, Shugart, 2005; and 2006). This greatly reduces the level of disagreement about the list of semi-presidential countries.

The reformulated version of Duverger's definition means that we can identify semi-presidential countries simply by reading their constitution. In a European context, there are currently up to 19 semi-presidential countries, depending on where the boundaries of Europe are set.<sup>2</sup> (See Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> In the rest of this article, we compare France with 14 other European semi-presidential systems. We leave aside consideration of Belarus, because democracy collapsed almost immediately after the introduction of semi-presidentialism; Russia, because only part of the country is in the European geographical area; and both Montenegro and Serbia, because semi-presidential systems were only formalised there following the formal dissolution of the union of the two countries in 2007. In the next section, we use Duverger's standard schema for analysing the politics of semi-presidentialism to engage in an institutional mapping exercise of the 15 European countries under consideration. This mapping exercise will help to determine whether or not France can be considered the archetypal semi-presidential country.

**Figure 1 about here**

**Explaining presidential influence: Duverger's three variables**

Duverger's main focus was the operation of semi-presidentialism in France. For example, in *Echec au roi* (Duverger, 1978) over half of the book is taken up with an analysis of the French situation. However, he applied his analysis of French politics comparatively. In particular, he was concerned with the presidentialisation of political systems in semi-presidential countries and with the variation in presidential influence over time. So, we can take Duverger's dependent variable to be the systemic influence of the president. A problem, though, is that he does not provide a measure of such influence. Instead, he identifies a number of 'modalities', including a hegemonic presidency and a limited presidency. (See, for example, Duverger, 1996, pp. 518-587). Unfortunately, these modalities are poorly specified and a contemporary researcher would be expected to identify them much more rigorously.

To explain the different modalities of presidential influence, Duverger identified three key variables: the president's constitutional powers; the founding context of the regime; and the president's relationship with the parliamentary majority. In the rest of this section, we identify these variables and compare the situation in France with the situation in the 14 other European countries under consideration to see whether France is part of a modal group or an outlier.

#### *The president's constitutional powers*

Duverger was one of the first academics to try to measure the president's constitutional powers. In *Echec au roi*, he identified 14 constitutional powers and then identified the situation for each of the six West European countries with

which he was concerned (Duverger, 1978, pp. 22-23). He did not come up with a score as such, but he did offer a ranking of presidents using his indicators. (See Figure 2). On the basis of Duverger's rankings, France is not an archetypal semi-presidential country. The French president is constitutionally one of the weakest in Western Europe.

**Figure 2 about here**

Since Duverger, the measurement of presidential powers has become a cottage industry. Here, we report the scores for the 15 European semi-presidential countries on the basis of two such measures. The first is the long-standing measure identified by Shugart and Carey (1992). This way of measuring presidential power has been criticised (Metcalf, 2000), but it has been widely used in the academic literature and it has the advantage of being replicable.<sup>4</sup> The second is a more recent measure by Siaroff (2003) and is based on a very different set of indicators. This measure is also contestable,<sup>5</sup> but, again, it is replicable and it has started to be used in comparative analyses. (See Tables 1 and 2).

**Tables 1 and 2 about here**

The measures reinforce the idea that European semi-presidentialism is heterogenous. On the basis of the Shugart and Carey criteria, the president's constitutional powers range from a score of 0 in Ireland to 13 in Ukraine prior to the 2006 reforms. In theory, the maximum score possible is 40. However, in their comparative work the maximum score that Shugart and Carey (1992, p. 155) recorded was 15 in Chile. Most presidential systems they measured had a score of around 11-12. So, the calculations here confirm that European semi-presidential systems range from the situation where practice is purely parliamentary, as in Ireland, to at least one case where practice is consistent with



politics in a pure presidential regime. The modal score is 2, suggesting that in Europe the dominant form of semi-presidentialism is parliamentary-like. However, only three of the 20 cases recorded this score. So, again, the inherent heterogeneity of semi-presidentialism is noticeable. The average score is 5.7, suggesting some sort of limited but not insignificant role for the president.

On the basis of the Siaroff criteria, the same heterogeneity is present. The measures range from the lowest possible score of 1 - Austria, Iceland and Slovenia<sup>6</sup> - to a high of 7 of a possible 9 - France and Ukraine. The average score is 4.3, again suggesting a limited but not insignificant presidency, whereas the modal score is 6. Again, the spread of scores suggests that European semi-presidentialism ranges from parliamentary-like systems to presidential-like systems, given that 7 is the modal score for the presidential regimes that Siaroff measures (Siaroff, 2003, pp. 296-297).

According to the Shugart and Carey criteria, France scores 5. This figure suggests that the French president's constitutional powers are slightly less than the European semi-presidential average, but that they are not out of line. Thus, the 1958 constitution would appear to establish a moderately powerful presidency. By contrast, according to the Siaroff criteria, France scores 7, which is considerably higher than the average score and which is consistent with the modal score for presidential regimes. Given Duverger ranks France as having one of the weakest presidencies in Western Europe, taken together these rankings and scores probably tell us more about the perils of measuring presidential powers than the extent of the powers themselves. Nonetheless, we can conclude that only the Shugart and Carey criteria indicate that France has anything like an archetypal semi-presidential system in terms of the president's

constitutional powers. However, even this statement ignores the great variation across the set of semi-presidential countries.

Overall, on the basis of constitutional powers alone, it may be more accurate to conclude that there is no such thing as an archetypal semi-presidential regime and that at best France is only an archetypal example of a particular form of semi-presidentialism, whether presidential-like on the basis of the Siaroff criteria or a mixed premier-presidential form on the basis of the Shugart and Carey scores.

### *The founding context*

In his 1980 article Duverger stressed that the founding context of semi-presidentialism helps to explain the subsequent extent of presidential influence over the political system. He underlines the importance of the “combination of tradition and circumstances” (Duverger, 1980, p. 180) that affect the evolution of semi-presidential regimes and he states that these factors are important not merely at the moment of constitution building but also in the early years of the new regime. Duverger argues that the founding context is a major reason why the extent of the president’s constitutional powers is a poor predictor of the president’s actual influence over the system as a whole.

Figure 3 provides a snapshot of the founding context of European semi-presidential systems. We can see that France is slightly unusual in terms of the context in which semi-presidentialism was adopted. Most countries chose semi-presidentialism as part of an overall constitutional package. Most countries also chose semi-presidentialism at the point of democratization and/or statehood.

However, with Poland, Romania and Ukraine, France is part of a small group of countries that adopted semi-presidentialism as a constitutional amendment rather than as a full constitutional package. Even so, Poland, Romania and Ukraine quickly went on to adopt full constitutions that incorporated the semi-presidential amendment. So, France is unusual within this set of countries. In addition, with Ireland, France is part of an even smaller group that did not adopt semi-presidentialism at the point of democratization and/or statehood. So, the context in which semi-presidentialism was adopted in France is somewhat unique in a European context. France is the only country where semi-presidentialism was adopted as a constitutional amendment when democracy was already established.<sup>7</sup> Again, this suggests that France should not be viewed as an archetypal example of European semi-presidentialism.

**Figure 3 about here.**

What difference does the founding context make? Figure 3 suggests that Duverger was surely right that the founding context can be crucial in determining the subsequent operation of a system. For example, in Croatia semi-presidentialism was adopted in the context of the break up of the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent conflict situation. There was a new majority party that had a strong leader. The direct election of the president was a way of legitimizing the party's rule and the leader's position. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Croatia developed a strong presidency at least in the early years of the independence. By contrast, in Slovenia the threat of war was very quickly absent. The incumbent president was a popular figure and was considered likely to win a direct election. However, the president's party did not have a majority and the other political forces were wary of giving the presidency too many powers in the

near certainty that their candidates would lose the presidential election. In other words, in contrast to its geographical neighbour, very different geopolitical and party political circumstances in Slovenia encouraged the creation of a figurehead presidency.

The equivalent situation in France is well known. The 1958 constitution established a parliamentary system with an indirectly elected president. However, de Gaulle was an active president in the early years of the presidency, especially in foreign and defence policy, but not exclusively so. Major reforms, in education and the economy for example, would not have been presented without the support of the president and the intervention of the president's advisers. He appointed prime ministers who were loyal supporters of his vision of reform. In April 1961 he invoked Article 16 and assumed emergency powers until 30 September. On 7 October 1962, three weeks before the referendum that approved the constitutional amendment to directly elect the president, de Gaulle dissolved the National Assembly following the government's defeat in a motion of confidence. Overall, the president was the key political actor even prior to the 1962 reform. The 1962 reform merely confirmed existing political practice and was deliberately designed to institutionalize the presidency's pre-eminence over the system in the future.

Duverger is surely right to suggest that the founding context can be crucial for determining the subsequent operation of a system, but the extent to which this concept is useful in the comparative study of semi-presidentialism can be questioned. Duverger presents the founding context as an explanatory variable. He argues that it can explain why some presidents with strong constitutional powers are very weak and *vice versa*, and he applies this argument

to the French case very persuasively. However, the founding context is a catch-all term that incorporates a set of other variables – party political, external events and so forth. Therefore, the founding context cannot serve as an explanatory variable in the simple way that Duverger suggests. More than that, Duverger does not specify the conditions under which the founding context makes a difference as opposed to those when it does not and, when it makes a difference, he fails to specify the conditions that lead to a strong presidency despite the constitutional situation, as opposed to those that lead to a weak presidency similarly. In short, while the founding context seems to make a difference to the subsequent operation of semi-presidentialism, much more work needs to be done to unpack the notion of the founding context so as to allow us to predict both the circumstances under which the founding context has a major effect on subsequent events and, in that case, the circumstances under which it leads to either a strong or a weak presidency.

#### *The president's relationship with the parliamentary majority*

While Duverger emphasises the constitutional powers of president and the founding context of semi-presidential regimes, his main explanatory variable for the different modalities of presidential influence is the president's relationship with the parliamentary majority. In his political science textbook, Duverger outlines his argument very clearly and in the context of West European semi-presidentialism generally: "In practice presidential power depends above all on the presence or absence of a parliamentary majority and the president's relationship with the forces that comprise it" (Duverger, 1996, p. 511).<sup>8</sup> As

regards the latter variable, Duverger identifies three basic scenarios: the president as the leader of the majority; the president opposed to the majority; and the president as a disciplined member of the majority. The extent of the president's influence over the system as a whole, he says, will vary as a function of whether or not there is a majority and, if there is, which of these three scenarios is present (ibid., p. 514-517). According to Duverger, when there is no majority, the president's constitutional powers are weakened (ibid., p. 515). When the president leads a majority, the prime minister's constitutional powers are weakened and the president has "almost absolute control" (ibid., p. 516) of the legislature. When the the president is opposed to the majority (under cohabitation), the prime minister acts as a British-style head of government but the president is still able to use any constitutional powers granted to the institution (ibid., p. 517). When the president is a disciplined member of the majority, then, contrary to the situation under cohabitation, the president cannot act against the will of the prime minister (ibid.)

Table 3 maps the frequency of these relationships in terms of three indicators: 1.) cohabitation, namely where the president and prime minister are from different parties and where no representatives of the president's party are in government; 2.) the situation where the president and prime minister are from different parties but where the president's party is part of a coalition government; and 3.) whether the government has majority or minority support in the lower house of parliament.

On the basis of these indicators there is a clear distinction between West European and Central and East European semi-presidential countries. The latter have experienced more minority government on average, though this is hardly

surprising given the chaotic party systems in that region in the early 1990s. In turn, West European semi-presidential countries have experienced more cohabitation and more periods when the president and prime minister have been from different coalition parties. Indeed, with the notable exception of Slovakia, it is very rare for presidents and prime ministers to have been from different coalition parties in Central and East European semi-presidential countries. However, this situation is mainly due to the tendency towards non-party presidents in this region. Given such presidents have often had clear party backgrounds in the past, the figures for the incidence of presidents and prime ministers from different parties in Central and Eastern Europe is probably underestimated. In addition to certain regional differences, there are some trends across European semi-presidentialism as a whole. For example, three countries have never experienced cohabitation, while four countries have experienced it more than 33 per cent of the time. So, it would appear that some countries are more 'cohabitation-prone' than others. Equally, seven countries have experienced minority governments less than 10 per cent of the time, whereas the other eight countries have all experienced in more than 25 per cent of the time. Clearly this difference is a function of party politics, but it also points to ways in which different types of semi-presidential governments might be systematically identified. Overall, though, across the set of countries the outstanding feature of these indicators is the diversity of European semi-presidentialism.

**Table 3 about here**

For its part, France has experienced cohabitation almost exactly as often as the European average overall. However, it has experienced the situation where the president is from one party and the prime minister is from a coalition party

much more infrequently than average. The same is true of minority government. In the French case, the presence or absence of a majority and the president's relationship with the majority helps to explain the president's influence over the system. The difference in the president's weak position under cohabitation compared with the president's dominant position when he has appointed a prime minister with the support of a loyal presidential majority in the legislature is very clear. In addition, the relative weakness of the presidency in the period 1988-93 is also at least partly explained by the absence of an absolute majority of support in the legislature for President Mitterrand. Figure 4 updates Duhamel's (1995) extrapolation of Duverger's logic to identify the various relationships in more detail still.

**Figure 4 about here**

In this context, the significance of the introduction of the *quinquennat* is apparent. The reduction of the president's term of office to five years and the reordering of the electoral calendar such that National Assembly elections now take place in the period immediately following the presidential election means that cohabitation is less likely than before. The successful candidate at the presidential election will have won a majority of the vote at the second ballot and there is a strong likelihood that the new Assembly will reflect this majority. Also, given that the presidential and parliamentary terms are now the same length and synchronised, then all else equal there is no opportunity for 'mid-term' elections that return an Assembly majority opposed to the president.

That said, the ambiguities of the 2000 reform remain. The death or premature resignation of the president may mean that the presidential and assembly terms go out of sync. Unless they are re-synchronised by a dissolution,



the threat of mid-term cohabitation would then re-emerge. The 2000 reform also raises more general questions about the the president's power to dissolve the Assembly. If the president dissolves the Assembly, then unless the president resigns at the same time as the dissolution, which would be a high-risk strategy, or unless the president dissolves the Assembly again immediately after the next presidential election,<sup>9</sup> the terms of the two institutions will be out of sync and the threat of mid-term cohabitation would re-emerge. Thus, there is a sense in which the *quinquennat* reform reduces the likelihood of Assembly dissolution. Finally, even though the synchronisation of the electoral calendars reduces the risk of cohabitation, it does not rule it out altogether, nor does it rule out the risk of the Assembly elections returning no overall majority for the president, again introducing one of Duverger's scenarios where the president is likely to be less powerful than is usually the case. Indeed, in Romania, which is the only other European country with synchronised elections, cohabitation has been avoided, but minority government has been quite common. (See Table 3).

Overall, Duverger's schema of presidential/parliamentary relations helps us to understand variations in (or modalities of) presidential influence in the French case. That said, it is unclear how useful it is comparatively. Firstly, concepts such as cohabitation have no resonance in parliamentary-like presidential countries. In Ireland, there were some tensions between the Labour President, Mary Robinson, and the Fianna Fáil government during one period of cohabitation in the early 1990s, but the circumstances were not comparable to the French case. The same point can be made about Austria, Iceland and Slovenia. In countries such as these, the power of the president scarcely varies. The president is simply weak whatever the relationship between the president and parliament.

Instead, the prime minister's influence varies as a function of the relationship between the prime minister and parliament. Secondly, it is unclear that minority government necessarily weakens the president as Duverger suggests. Cindy Skach (2005) argues the opposite. What she calls 'divided minority government', where "neither the president nor the prime minister, nor any party or coalition, enjoys a substantive majority in the legislature" (ibid., p. 17), can, she argues, "predictably lead to an unstable scenario, characterized by shifting legislative coalitions and government reshuffles, on the one hand, and continuous presidential intervention and use of reserved powers, on the other" (ibid., pp. 17-18). In contrast to Duverger, Skach argues: "The greater the legislative immobilism, governmental instability, and cabinet reshuffling resulting from the minority position of the government, the more justified or pressured the president may feel to use their powers beyond their constitutional limit, for a prolonged period of time" (ibid., p. 18). This scenario may explain the power of the Ukrainian president, despite the long periods of minority government in the country. In short, Duverger's variable provides a useful explanation of why presidential power varies within France, but it is not clear that it helps to explain the politics of semi-presidentialism generally.

What does this institutional mapping exercise tell us about European semi-presidentialism? What does it tell us about Duverger's comparative analysis of semi-presidentialism given that the universe of semi-presidentialism has increased well beyond the six West European countries with which Duverger was acquainted?

The first point to be made is that Duverger's schema for the study of semi-presidentialism is problematic. He fails to specify his dependent variable clearly. His measure of the president's constitutional powers is contestable. His conceptualisation of the founding context lacks rigour. His conclusions about the importance of the president's relationship with the parliamentary majority may apply well to France, but there are limits to its comparative application. In short, Duverger's deserves great credit for first introducing the concept of semi-presidentialism, but, as it stands, his schema for studying semi-presidentialism is fundamentally flawed.

The second point is that there is little point searching for an archetypal semi-presidential regime. Countries with semi-presidential constitutions operate in very different ways. The consequence of this observation is that semi-presidentialism, as defined here, should not be used as a single explanatory variable. For example, it would be methodologically non-sensical to compare countries with parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential constitutions as regards, for example, their respective democratic performance. Even if parliamentary and presidential countries were sufficiently homogeneous to treat each as a single category, the same is not true for semi-presidential countries. As Cheibub (2006) has demonstrated, any such study may tell us something about the relative performance of parliamentarism vs. presidentialism, but it cannot tell us anything meaningful about semi-presidentialism as a whole. The variation within this category is simply too great.

That said, we can still operationalise semi-presidentialism, but when we do so we need to distinguish the variation within this category. We may distinguish between two types of semi-presidentialism: president-

parliamentarism and premier-presidentialism (Shugart, 2005; 2006). We may distinguish between three types of semi-presidentialism: parliamentary-like, dual presidential/prime ministerial, and presidential-like semi-presidentialism (Elgie, 2005). We may use a continuous measure, such as Siaroff's measure of presidential power, to capture the variation within semi-presidentialism. Whatever the preferred distinction, we can then explore the effect of institutional variation. For example, do semi-presidential countries with president-parliamentary regimes perform worse than countries with premier-presidential regimes as Shugart seems to suggest? Do semi-presidential countries with higher Siaroff scores perform worse than semi-presidential countries with lower scores? We may decide to explore the effect of variation within semi-presidentialism solely within the universe of semi-presidential countries as in the above examples. Otherwise, we may wish to compare the effects of variation within semi-presidential countries to other types of countries. For example, we may compare the performance of presidential countries solely with semi-presidential that are president-parliamentary. We may decide to compare the performance of both presidential countries and president-parliamentary countries with premier-presidential countries. These research strategies flow directly from the acknowledgement of variation within semi-presidentialism. (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5 about here**

The notion of variation within semi-presidentialism is entirely consistent with Duverger's work. His schema for the comparative study of semi-presidentialism may be problematic, but one of his insights was the idea of systematic variation. For instance, despite the logic of his definition and its implication that a semi-presidential country was one where the president must

have “quite considerable powers”, Duverger consistently classed countries such as Austria, Iceland and Ireland as semi-presidential, even though political practice is undoubtedly parliamentary. Writing about these countries in his political science textbook, he states “these three countries have semi-presidential constitutions but operate effectively like parliamentary systems” (Duverger, 1996, p. 504). In other words, Duverger viewed countries such as Austria, Iceland and Ireland as having parliamentary-like semi-presidential systems, whereas France had a more presidential-like semi-presidential system.

The idea of variation within semi-presidentialism means that there can be no archetypal example of semi-presidentialism. So, France should no longer be associated with any such epithet. At best, France could be a typical example of particular type of semi-presidentialism – perhaps as an example of the dual presidential/prime ministerial type or, in Shugart’s terminology, as an example of premier-presidentialism – but not a typical example of semi-presidentialism as a whole. The universe of semi-presidentialism is so varied that no country should be considered as an archetypal semi-presidential country.

### **After Duverger: the recent study of semi-presidentialism and the French case**

In his work Duverger was concerned with explaining why the president’s constitutional powers were not an accurate predictor of actual presidential power. He was also concerned with explaining why presidential power varies over time within one country. This is why he focused on the importance of the president’s relationship with the parliamentary majority. Recent work on semi-presidentialism has addressed issues that are closely related to Duverger’s

concerns. This work has also illustrated the importance of identifying variation within semi-presidentialism. At the same time, the recent work has had a much narrower focus than Duverger's overarching concern for presidential power generally. This work has also operationalised the notion of variation within semi-presidentialism much more systematically. Some of this work has incorporated France into the research agenda. However, there is plenty of room for this recent work to be applied to France much more systematically.

In his work, Oleh Protsyk has adopted the strategy of examining only countries with semi-presidential constitutions and has focused on institutional variation within semi-presidentialism to explain variation in political outcomes. In his 2005 study, he aimed to explain why cabinet formation outcomes vary across countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Protsyk, 2005). He argues that variation is the result of whether a country has a president-parliamentary form of semi-presidentialism or a premier-presidential form, though he notes the importance of other variables too, such as whether or not the party system was clientelistic and whether or not presidential and parliamentary elections were concurrent. In his 2006 study, he focused on presidential/prime ministerial conflict and aimed to explain why it varied from one country to another (Protsyk, 2006). Again, he focused only on semi-presidential countries and again he hypothesised that the level of conflict varies as a function whether there was a president-parliamentary or a premier-presidential form of semi-presidentialism. In fact, he finds that this variable did not explain the level of conflict very well, but that other factors, such as the level of party system development, the ideological positioning of the prime minister and the level of support for the

prime minister in the legislature, were much better predictors of intra-executive conflict.

Both of these studies have great potential to be applied more widely and for France to be included in the study. For example, in his 2006 work Protsyk uses secondary sources to determine the level of presidential/prime ministerial conflict. There are plenty of equivalent sources that could identify periods of greater and lesser degrees of conflict in the French case. Indeed, Duverger's empirical work would provide a good starting point for coverage of the first 30 years of the Fifth Republic at least. The explanatory variables are also relevant, especially if the general level of party system development were to be substituted for the level of party institutionalisation as proxied perhaps by the date that French parties were most recently (re-)formed.

Another recent study is by Neto and Strøm (2006). Their aim was to explain why the level of non-partisan ministers varies across countries. They hypothesised that the level of presidential powers and the prime minister's electoral prospects explained the variation. They captured the variation within semi-presidentialism by using Shugart and Carey's measure of the president's legislative powers. They hypothesised and found that the greater the president's powers, the more non-partisan ministers were included in the cabinet. The situation in France neatly fits their findings.

The research strategy adopted by Neto and Strøm differed from the one adopted by Protsyk in two key respects. They used a continuous measure to capture variation within semi-presidentialism rather than Protsyk's dichotomous measure. In addition, their universe was not simply semi-presidential countries, but also parliamentary countries with an indirectly elected head of state. This

shows how semi-presidential can be compared with other types of comparable systems. In her work, Margit Tavits has also adopted this case selection strategy. She wishes to explain why actual presidential power, rather than the president's constitutional power, varies across this set of countries and she identifies a number of proxies to capture the extent of presidential power (Tavits, 2008). She uses quantitative and qualitative analysis to show that, contrary to common-sense expectations, direct election does not account for variation in presidential power across Europe. Instead, presidential power varies more as a function of the party political opportunity structure.

The work by both Neto and Strøm and Margits includes France as one of the countries in the model. Like Duverger, their work is comparative and France is a suitable case for consideration. Unlike Duverger, though, this work starts from a theoretical basis and then tests hypotheses on the set of suitable cases. In Duverger's work, there is always the sense that France comes first. The French case is the main focus of attention and a comparative model is then derived from the French case. This inductive strategy is understandable, but it may be the cause of some of the problems with Duverger's research design. The recent deductive literature incorporating semi-presidentialism suggests that theoretically driven models can provide more robust cross-national explanations of the fundamental issues with which Duverger was concerned – presidential power, presidential/prime ministerial conflict etc – than studies that focus on France alone or on studies that extrapolate from the French case. In short, the study of France and the study of semi-presidentialism generally would benefit, first, from the incorporation of France into comparative studies and, second, from the development of theory-driven comparative work that includes France.



## Conclusion

France is often treated as the example of semi-presidentialism *par excellence*. This article has demonstrated that semi-presidential countries operate in many different ways. Therefore, the idea of an archetypal semi-presidential country, whether France or any other, is misplaced. That said, the concept of semi-presidentialism captures a particular constitutional arrangement and the identification of this concept was one of Maurice Duverger's great contributions to political science. (Hopefully, constitutional lawyers will catch on soon). Moreover, within the category of countries with semi-presidential constitutions, there are identifiable types of semi-presidentialism. There are ways in which variation within semi-presidentialism can be captured systematically. Again, Duverger recognised this diversity and found ways of expressing it, although his inductive approach is less successful at explaining cross-national variation than more recent deductive models. Although not an archetypal example of semi-presidentialism, France is a natural case for inclusion in semi-presidential studies. The study of semi-presidentialism would benefit from theories being tested on as wide a range of countries as possible, including France. The inclusion of France, and as many comparable countries as possible, in semi-presidential studies can only make the conclusions drawn about this regime type as generalisable as possible. This strategy will also further increase interest in Duverger's concept of semi-presidentialism, a concept whose time has come, not just apparently but definitely.

**Figure 1 European countries with semi-presidential constitutions, 2008**

Country	Year	Country	Year
Austria	1945	Montenegro	2007
Belarus	1994	Poland	1990
Bulgaria	1991	Portugal	1976
Croatia	1990	Romania	1990
Finland	1919	Russia	1993
France	1962	Serbia	2007
Iceland	1944	Slovakia	1999
Ireland	1937	Slovenia	1991
Lithuania	1992	Ukraine	1991
Macedonia	1991		

**Figure 2 Duverger's 1978 ranking of the president's constitutional powers in West European semi-presidential systems (in descending order),**

Finland
Iceland
Weimar Germany
Portugal
Austria
France

Ireland

Source: Duverger (1978, p. 22-23)

**Table 1 Shugart and Carey's measures of presidential powers in European semi-presidential systems**

	<b>PKV</b>	<b>PTV</b>	<b>DC</b>	<b>EXL</b>	<b>BUD</b>	<b>REF</b>	<b>CF</b>	<b>CD</b>	<b>CEN</b>	<b>DIS</b>	<b>TOT</b>
<b>Austria</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	<b>4</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Croatia 1990-1999</b>	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	<b>9</b>
<b>Croatia 2000-</b>	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Finland 2000-</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>France</b>	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	<b>5</b>
<b>Iceland</b>	0	0	1	0	0	2	4	0	0	4	<b>11</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Macedonia</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Poland 1992-1996</b>	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	<b>8</b>
<b>Poland 1997-</b>	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Portugal 1976-1982</b>	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	4	<b>10.5</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	<b>7.5</b>

<b>1983-</b>											
<b>Romania</b>	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	7
<b>Slovakia 1999-2000</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
<b>Slovakia 2001-</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
<b>Slovenia</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4
<b>Ukraine 1992-2005</b>	2	0	4	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	13
<b>Ukraine 2006-</b>	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	6
<b>Average</b>											5.7
<b>Mode</b>											2

PKV = Package veto; PTV = Pocket veto; DC = Decree powers; EXL = Exclusive introduction of legislation; BUD = Budgetary powers; REF = Referendum proposal; CF = Cabinet formation; CD = Cabinet dismissal; CEN = Cabinet censure; DIS = Dissolution of Assembly

See Shugart and Carey (1992, pp. 150) for scoring schema.

Scores for Central and Eastern Europe taken from Elgie and Moestrup (2008).

Scores for Western Europe calculated by author for this article.

**Table 2** Siaroff's measures of presidential powers in European semi-presidential systems

	PE	CE	AP	CM	VT	EDP	FP	GF	DL	Total
<b>Austria</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Croatia 1990-2000</b>	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Croatia 2001-</b>	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Finland 1919-1956</b>	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Finland 1957-1994</b>	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Finland 1995-1999</b>	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Finland 2000-</b>	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>France</b>	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Iceland</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Macedonia</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Poland</b>	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	<b>6</b>

<b>1992-1996</b>										
<b>Poland 1997-</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Portugal 1976-1982</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Portugal 1983-</b>	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Romania</b>	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Ukraine 1992-1996</b>	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Ukraine 1997-</b>	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	<b>7</b>
<b>Average</b>										<b>4.1</b>
<b>Mode</b>										<b>6</b>

PE = popularly elected; CE = concurrent presidential and legislative elections; AP = discretionary appointments powers; CM = chairs cabinet meetings; VT = veto power; EDP = long-term emergency or decree powers; FP = central role in foreign policy; GF = central role in government formation; DL = ability to dissolve the legislature

Scores taken from Siaroff (2003, pp. 299-300).

**Figure 3 The founding context of European semi-presidentialism**

Country	Founding context
<b>Austria</b>	New constitution following democratisation. A strong presidency was associated with prior collapse of democracy. First president elected by parliament and was a figurehead.
<b>Bulgaria</b>	New constitution following democratisation. Direct election was a compromise. Outgoing majority party sensed it would lose election and ensured a weak presidency.
<b>Croatia</b>	New Constitution following independence. Direct election of a strong president suited the majority party after first elections.
<b>Finland</b>	New constitution soon after independence and civil war. Direct election was a compromise. President adopted many of the Czar's powers from the previous regime.
<b>France</b>	Direct election was a constitutional amendment. The reform was designed to reinforce an already presidentialised system.
<b>Iceland</b>	New Constitution following independence. The president was expected to be a figurehead like the monarch under former Danish rule. First president was elected by parliament.
<b>Ireland</b>	New constitution. Historic and strong leader remained as prime minister. First president was non-political and was the sole nominee, so no direct election.
<b>Lithuania</b>	New constitution following independence and democratisation. Semi-presidentialism was a compromise.



<b>Macedonia</b>	New Constitution following independence. Semi-presidentialism chosen quickly. The new system continued the former-communist tradition of a weak presidency.
<b>Poland</b>	Direct election was a constitutional amendment during democratisation process. This suited the new non-communist majority, but this majority was very divided.
<b>Portugal</b>	New constitution following democratisation. The main force behind democratisation supported semi-presidentialism.
<b>Romania</b>	Direct election was a constitutional amendment quickly after the collapse of communist regime. Leader of new majority won first election easily.
<b>Slovakia</b>	Direct election was a constitutional amendment. It was designed to allow the president to be chosen following previous difficulties in electing the president by parliament.
<b>Slovenia</b>	New constitution following independence and democratisation. Semi-presidentialism was a compromise: direct election was popular, but parliament reduced presidential powers because majority forces sensed the incumbent president would be re-elected.
<b>Ukraine</b>	Direct election was a constitutional amendment quickly after the collapse of communist regime.

Source: country chapters in Elgie ed. (1999) and Elgie and Moestrup eds. (2008).

For Portugal, Martins (2006).

**Table 3** Frequency of cohabitation and minority government in European semi-presidential countries (% of years as SP)

	<b>Cohabitation – president and PM from different parties and no representative of president’s party in government</b>	<b>President and PM from different parties but president’s party represented in government</b>	<b>Minority government</b>
Austria	11.3	56.5	6.5
Bulgaria	40.0	0.0	0.0
Croatia	0.0	0.0	37.5
Finland	19.5	43.7	26.4
France	20.5	4.5	7.0
Iceland	22.6	19.4	6.3
Ireland	24.3	7.1	32.9
Lithuania	13.3	0.0	26.7
Macedonia	6.7	0.0	0.0
Poland	35.3	5.9	29.4
Portugal	54.8	9.7	32.3
Romania	0.0	12.5	62.5
Slovakia	37.5	62.5	0.0
Slovenia	13.3	0.0	6.7

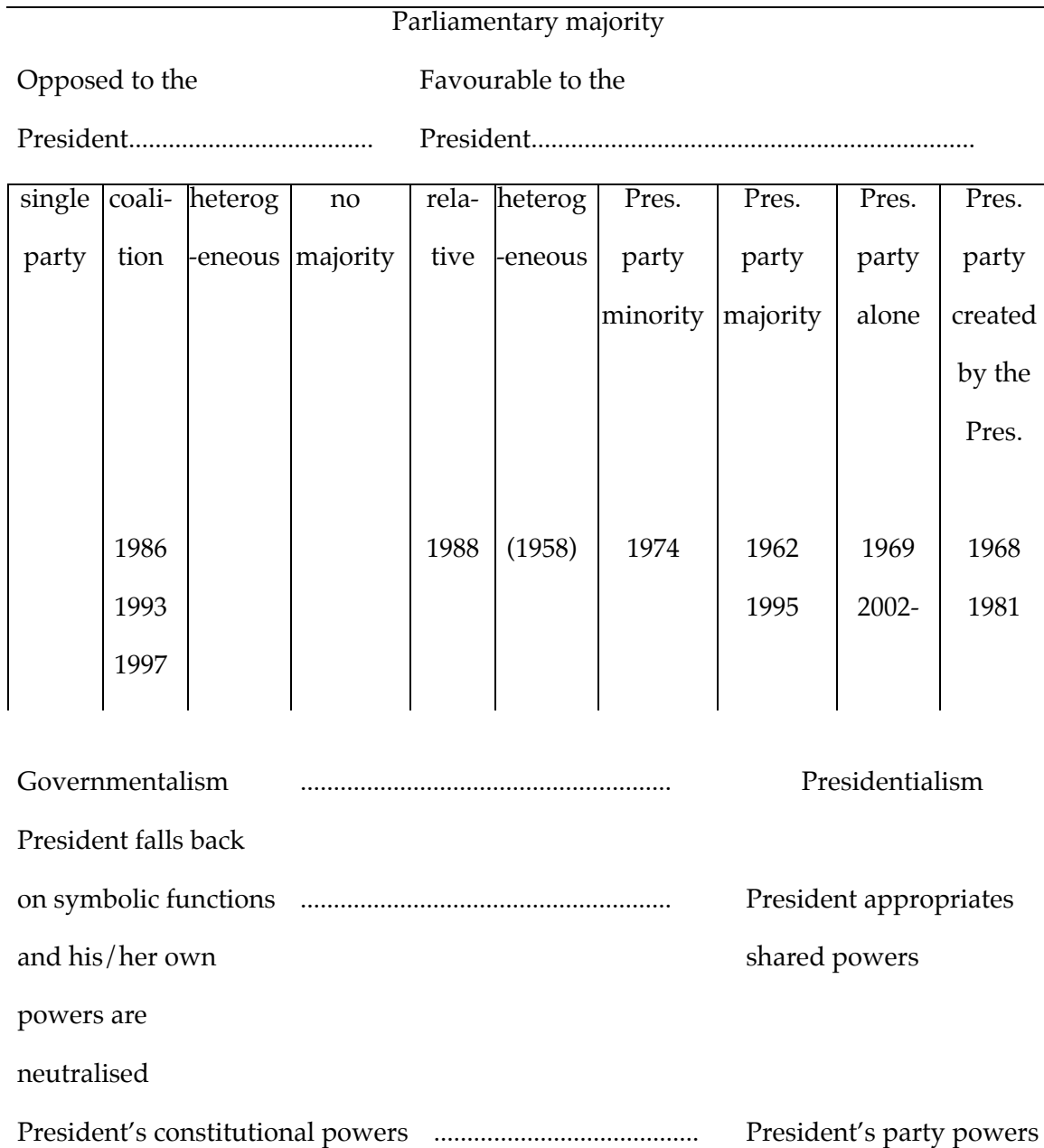
Ukraine	0.0	0.0	75.0
WE average	22.8	26.7	18.3
CEE average	16.0	6.4	28.0
Average	21.0	21.4	22.2

Source: For cohabitation and coalition, dataset primarily constructed from [www.worldstatesmen.org/](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/). For minority government, World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (DPI), entry MAJ. Available at: <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/0,,contentMDK:20699744~pagePK:64214825~piPK:64214943~theSitePK:469382,00.html>

Data for minority government prior to 1975: Austria and France from the country chapters in Elgie (1999 ed.); Finland from Strom (1990); Ireland from Mitchell (2001).

All calculations are from the beginning of semi-presidentialism to the end of 2006, except Iceland minority government from 1975-2004.

**Figure 4 Duhamel's schema of presidential/parliamentary relations in France**



Source: Duhamel (1995, p. 125). Updated by the author.

**Figure 5 Operationalising the study of semi-presidentialism**

Exercise	Defining feature	Examples
Typology-building	Constitutional features of regime	Presidentialism, semi-presidentialism, parliamentarism
Explanation of political outcomes	Explanatory variable	Types of semi-presidentialism e.g., based on the president's constitutional powers  1.) Dichotomised: president-parliamentarism vs premier-presidentialism, or  2.) Continuous: e.g. Siaroff presidential power scores
	Dependent variable	1.) Success of failure of democratization 2.) Quality of governance e.g., degree of executive/legislative conflict
	Case selection	1.) Comparison of SP countries only, 2.) Comparison of presidential and president-parliamentary SP countries vs premier-presidential and parliamentary countries

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent editions of his political science textbook updated existing work, rather than offering a new analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Depending on where the boundaries of Europe are drawn, then there could now be 20 European semi-presidential countries following the October 2007 referendum in Turkey that approved the direct election of the president. The first direct election is due take place no later than 2014 or 2012 if the reduction in the president's mandate from seven to five years is applied to the incumbent president rather than the first directly elected president.

<sup>3</sup> It might also be noted that Moldova was semi-presidential until 2000 when a parliamentary system was established.

<sup>4</sup> For the West European countries, there was a high degree of reliability between Shugart and Carey's (1992, p. 155) scores and the author's calculations for this article. In the French case, we disregarded Article 40 because it does not refer specifically to a bill introduced by the president. Given Shugart and Carey also seem to disregard this article in their scoring, we assume that they do intend to impose this restriction.

<sup>5</sup> The reliability of some of Siaroff's scores must be questioned. For example, in Ireland the president does not have the right to veto legislation, yet Siaroff's measures indicate that this is the case. In Ireland, the president has the right to send a bill to the Supreme Court for its constitutionality to be judged. This is the equivalent of Article 61 of the 1958 French Constitution rather than Article 10, which outlines the French president's limited veto power. So, Siaroff's score for Ireland should be 2, not 3, bringing it rightfully back into his category of countries where political practice is parliamentary.

<sup>6</sup> Siaroff scores 1 for direct election. So, all semi-presidential countries will score at least 1.

<sup>7</sup> The recent Turkish shift to semi-presidentialism is similar to the French case in both aspects.

<sup>8</sup> Translations by the author.

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<sup>9</sup> In addition, the constraint imposed by Article 12 means that the previous dissolution must not have taken place in the preceding 12 months in order for this strategy to be possible.

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