Parliamentary v. Presidential Systems

- J. Linz, et al: presidential systems are more prone to breakdown of democracy
  o Consolidation easier under parliamentary system
- Mainwaring, et al: presidential system survival depends on other factors
  o parliamentary systems can produce same flaws
- Empirical record appears to support Linz, but how data are examined matters

Presidential system:
- chief executive is elected directly
- executive and legislature have fixed terms of office

Parliamentary system
- chief executive elected by legislative majority
- exec. requires leg. confidence to remain in office
- exec. can dissolve leg. and call for new elections

Linz’s “Perils of Presidentialism”
- President competes with legislature over democratic legitimacy
- Fixed term creates rigid positions; no way to break deadlocks
- Zero-sum game to pres-leg. interactions
- Presidents may become intolerant of opposition; confuse plurality with mandate

Challenges to Presidential Critique
- in bicameral systems, parliamentary legitimacy may be contested by on upper v. lower house lines
- fixed terms allow for stable governments in crises
- zero sum relations depends on other factors:
- party discipline: strong parties more zero-sum
  - electoral system: FPTP worse than PR
  - federal v. unitary: unitary gov'ts more dominant
- no restraint on power of parliamentary exec.
  - checks and balances in presidential systems