

## **Governos de coalizão e sistemas presidenciais: Profundizando a teoria mediante uma “presidencialização” do enfoque. Evidências desde as experiências latino-americanas.**

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### Resumo:

*As teorias das coalizões formaram, na literatura dominante em ciências políticas, um dos principais campos de estudo nas últimas décadas. Aplicadas à análise dos governos, estes trabalhos permitiram que se desenvolvessem um conjunto de conhecimentos teóricos e ferramentas de análise pertinentes para o estudo dos processos de formação, manutenção e conclusão deste tipo de governo.*

*No entanto, o fato de que a maior parte dos acadêmicos que discorreram sobre este fenômeno provem da Europa Ocidental ou enfocam sua análise sobre ela, conduziu a que tais conhecimentos e ferramentas desenvolvidos pela teoria das coalizões se desenvolvessem incluindo particularidades próprias às democracias parlamentárias da Europa Ocidental. Paralelo a isso, o surgimento das teorias das coalizões ocorreu concomitantemente à emergência do debate “presidencialismo versus parlamentarismo”, cujos teóricos dominantes defendiam inicialmente o caráter “acidental” ou “indesejável” da ocorrência de coalizões partidárias em um sistema presidencial. Desta forma, muito poucos trabalhos teóricos, foram realizados até o momento para analisar o processo de coalizar nos regimes presidencialistas, e, as poucas tentativas feitas recuperaram os elementos próprios das teorias já existentes sem “presidencializar” a abordagem. Isso levou a que o nível de conhecimento de governos de coalizão em sistemas presidencialistas fosse bastante baixo, apesar de que muitos estudos demonstraram a natureza rotineira do fenômeno.*

*Esta pesquisa visa preencher esta lacuna ontológica, com foco na análise estrutural de sistemas presidencialistas, interagindo, de forma constante, com a teoria existente nos sistemas parlamentares. Ao considerar os países da América do Sul, e a análise dos governos que mostraram uma configuração coligada com fortunas diversas, a ênfase é concentrada sobre o impacto do presidencialismo na formação e gestão destes governos, e sobre a alteração dessas alianças ao decorrer o mandato, cuja principal particularidade é de ser fixo. Porém, procuraremos em responder à duas perguntas portando sobre o impacto dos mandatos fixos e da separação dos poderes sobre a formação e o desenvolvimento de governos coalizados. Esta abordagem “presidencializada” das teorias das coalizões insiste, portanto, em três elementos gerais próprios ao fenômeno de coaligar em regime presidencial: i) a tendência à polarização da competição política a que conduz ii) uma temporalidade e um ciclo político distinto, e iii) o impacto, caso exista, do “bicameralismo” na formação e no desempenho das coalizões, e sua “responsabilidade” (accountability).*

**Palavras chaves: Coalizões governamentais, Sistema presidencial, clivagens, timing político, Bicameralismo**

# **Coalition Governments and Presidential System: Enhancing the Theory by Presidentialising the Scope. Evidence from the Latin American Experience**

Proposed by: Adrián Albala

## Abstract:

*Coalition theories applied to governments developed during the last decades a vast literature so as to provide huge theoretical knowledge and tools for the analysis of formation, maintenance and breakdown of this kind of governments. Nevertheless, these studies were focused especially on parliamentary systems and left away the study of this phenomenon on presidential regimes. On another hand, coalition governments used to be considered in the latter systems as an “undesirable combination”, or analysed as a functional trend rather than a proper object of investigation. This works conduced then to a very low knowledge level of coalitions under presidential systems, especially in terms of coalition governance.*

*This research then proposes to fill this analytical gap, aiming at comparing recent findings and approaches, from parliamentary to presidential systems. Through the study of Latin American experiments with coalition governments, we will stress the differential roles and mechanisms of some characteristics proper of presidential systems, and their consequences upon party structuration and behaviour. We assume, thus, that coalition governments in presidential regimes differ, in their expression from parliamentary regimes one. This proposal looks, therefore, to respond to two questions towards the interactions of presidential design and the experiment of coalition governments. First of all, does the principle of fixity of president’s mandate have an impact on both the achievement of coalition agreements and the coalition governance? Secondly, how does the separation of powers affects the realisation of coalition agreements and coalition governance?*

*To answer those questions we will “presidentialise” the theory, and show that the presidential framework presents general peculiarities, like a recurrent pre-electoral coalition formation and a trend towards the bipolarity of party competition. We shall insist, then, on three major features of presidential systems as regards coalition formation and governance so as to determine their impacts: i) the cleaving tendency of presidential election, from which derives ii) the presidential timing and iii) the impact, when it exist, of bicameralism on coalition formation and accountability.*

**Keywords: Coalition Governments, Presidentialism, Cleavages, Political Timing, Bicameralism**

## 1. Analytical Statement

The 1980-1990 decade saw most of Latin America, with the exception of Cuba, experiencing a transition to democracy in the broader framework of the *third wave* of democratization described by Huntington (1990). Never before, since the independence of the region, so many Latin American countries have observed, at the same time, similar democratic processes. These events and their consolidation led towards a field of political studies hitherto confined to western democracies. Since then, we observed a huge proliferation of original works dealing with the political systems and party systems of Latin America, whether through numerous monographs or comparative politics. However, despite the heterogeneity of research or its extent, both on the subject and on the method, cultural references and analytics are generally borrowed from European or more broadly Western canons. One of the most revealing and significant examples lies on the generalised conception of Latin American parties, according to the common criteria of "mass parties", for which mobilization abilities and programmatic linkages are central.

However, if this pattern of analysis fits well to the study of European party systems (especially of Western Europe), its application to Latin America is mostly dubious, except in some rare case like Chile. This pitfall not only generates distorted analysis, particularly in the study of the relationship between partisan elites and their electoral clientele, but conduces also to heuristic and methodological errors in terms of political alignments and typologies. Nonetheless, there are also some "traditional" fields of study of European political systems that are only too partially explored in Latin America, the study of coalition governments being one of them.

Indeed, many political scientists, and Latin American specialists have expressed their surprise towards the notorious absence of works on government coalitions, in a comparative perspective, in the region (Mainwaring and Shugart 2002; Cheibub *et al.*, 2004; Chasquetti 2008). Moreover, if some studies have appeared in recent years (mostly in the form of monographs and for the great majority towards Brazilian experiences), the quality of most of these studies is rather insufficient, or unable to bring up a solid theoretic comprehension of coalition government under presidential regimes. This is due to the fact that the tools and focus of the analysis of these phenomena are those used by the mainstream literature, i.e. the parliamentary one, without any adaptation to the constitutional context.

Then, the purpose of this research consists in a theoretical updating of the coalition theories, via an application of the analysis on the political mechanisms that are specific to Latin American presidential systems. Highly theoretical, the approach assumes, following Cheibub's (2007) path, a constant comparison between the different systems of government and the different expressions of the *coalition presidentialism*. Through a comparative analysis of coalition government phenomena in Latin America, the purpose of this investigation aims thus at identifying structural differences and

constraints in the formation and behaviour of government coalitions under presidential regimes, as compared with parliamentary systems. We assume then, following Strøm *et al*'s (1994) seminal field, that the fixity of presidential mandates, as exposed by Linz (1990), and the separation of powers, constitute remarkable constraints that have a significant impact on the coalition process, in its formation, development and conclusion. This is even more relevant when considering the principle of fixed-term government, which removes the central protagonisme of coalition partners, as the eventual departure of any of the members from the government or from the legislative coalition does not necessarily lead to the fall of the government, as it usually happens in parliamentary systems. Consequently, the research question consists to see to what extent these features -inherent to presidential systems- infer on the "coalition cycle" (Albala 2013), and how the latter differs with respect to parliamentary regimes' process as described by Strøm *et al.* (2008: 10). In other words, how coalition governments operate under presidential configuration?

Answering this question implies, first of all, to apply a hint as to the impact of institutions on the coalitional phenomenon. Indeed according to Lupia and Strøm (2008:56) "institutions, while important, are not the whole story". Thus, we will pay particular attention to coalition governments' legacy on presidential systems and their impact on government culture or historicity. Moreover, the investigation supposes a qualification of the different coalition experiments, depending on criteria based, among others, namely on i) the propensity to both *inter* and intra-partisan dialogue, ii) a study of the institutional system, iii) the political historicity and iv) a sociological analysis of party organization and leadership influence. This shall conduce us to model an "excluding-type" mechanism present in presidential regimes as opposed to the "including-type" that rules under parliamentary systems. Indeed, as emphasized by many authors (Garrido 2003, Cheibub *et al* 2004, Cheibub 2007), the "coalition options" (Axelrod 1970, De Swaan 1973) are more limited in presidential systems of government, since the *formateur* (the one in charge to *form* the government) has to be the president. This feature implies a dimension of proximity or *willingness* (Dodd 1975) more limited than what can be seen in parliamentary systems, where all parties can potentially join forces in order to obtain a majority, as messy as the result might be (Strøm 1990).

Having said that, we can preliminarily stress out three main differences between presidential and parliamentary configurations. First of all, elections under parliamentary regimes are characterised by higher uncertainty both in the results and the formation of a cabinet. For instance, recently Belgium had no government for a year and a half after 2010 elections, the Greeks had to vote twice in order to be able to get one in 2012, and Italy faced a similar problem early this year, and so on. Even Britain, whose political and electoral system used to be considered as paradigmatic for obtaining of a clear majority, experienced an unresolved majority after 2010 elections, which forced the parties into an uncommon after-the-vote bargaining to form the first coalition cabinet in Britain's history

(saved for a necessary Second World War coalition). These phenomena contrast with what occur in presidential-centred polities, where except for some cases of vote contestation (e.g. Mexico in 2006 and 2012, or the USA in 2000), the result of the elections leads almost automatically towards the formation of a cabinet. In these regimes, the election operates, therefore, as a clever *selecting* a winner whom becomes the head of the government. In other words, the electoral vote in parliamentary-centred systems gives a picture of voter preferences and party weights in the parliament, while in presidential-centred systems it has the function to determinate the head of government (who is also, simultaneously, the Head of the State).

Secondly, and as a consequence of the previous item, cabinet options seem more limited in presidential system than in parliamentary ones. Thus, both the *visibility* and *identification* (Strøm 1990) of the options towards the composition of the government appear to be more evident in presidential regime than in parliamentary regime, and so more *predictable*. As a consequence, I showed that alliances seem to be more forthcoming in presidential systems than in parliamentary ones (Albala 2013). If an expedite approach can be simply measured in time terms (weeks, months, years before the election) to develop, say, a common political agenda and a way to allocate plots of power among coalition partners; the timing of the approach is both a dimension of familiarity between the actors (Franklin and Mackie 1983), which is vital for predicting the reactions of members once actually allied in office.

Finally, contrary to the parliamentary system, the presidential one is often based on two parliamentary chambers sharing similar duties and powers<sup>1</sup>. Bicameralism supposes therefore a harder two-round procedure in the policymaking process for the president, increasing then the *shadow of the unexpected*. Indeed, unlike prime ministers in parliamentary systems, controlling one of the two chambers may not be sufficient for the president to guarantee the approval of policies. The Senate may have a different persuasion than the lower house, as their composition can generally be the result of different district sizes, different renewal days, and different proportional electoral system, particularly in federal nations. This conduces to analyse how governments proceed to policy approval when they don't have control over both houses, and also how coalition cabinets are affected by this situation.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This research follows from my Ph-D dissertation untitled *Coalition Governments and Presidential System: The Cases of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay (1989 – 2010)*, in which I conducted a study on the occurrence of formation, governance and dissolution / reconduction of government coalitions in

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<sup>1</sup> Italy is the only parliamentary polity that posses two chambers with similar duties. This explains therefore many difficulties to form a government (lately Barsani's fail) and/or to maintain the government (Prodi's fail in 2006). In South America, only three out of ten countries (Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) have a legislative branch composed by a unicameral Congress.

these three Southern Cone countries. In this thesis I showed up three elements that I pretend to develop further in this research: i) the cleaving tendency leading to bipolar competition, proper to presidential design, and its impact on the coalition options; ii) the impact of presidentialism on the coalition timing, from which I stressed out a “presidentialised coalition cycle”; and finally iii) the limitations of neo-institutionalist theories and the necessity to study structural and historical features for understanding the “coalitional governance”. The purpose now is to widen the scope and the analysis to the 25 coalition governments experienced in South American, since the return of democracy, applying diverse theories and theoretical fields to it, namely: i) coalition theories, ii) constitutional engineering, iii) theory of cleavages, and iv) theory of political realignment.

The delay noticed on the academic literature, about coalition governments in presidential regimes, lies in the concomitance between the boom of coalition theories, by the 70's-80's, with the rise of the theory on the *perils of presidentialism* initialled by Linz (1990). The basic assumption of this second field of studies was that presidential configurations tend “by essence” (Stepan and Skach 1993) to conduce to institutional deadlocks and instability, and when combined with a multiparty electoral system the probability to minority government would dramatically increase. As a result, coalitions in presidential systems were considered until the mid-1990's as accidental events (Linz 1994; Mainwaring and Shugart 1994), or undesirable because prone to conduce to *minority president* situations<sup>2</sup> (Abranches 1988; Mainwaring 1993). Even the most recent works with qualitative approaches failed to consider this field, relegating coalition presidential regimes to *divided governments* (Strøm *et al* 2008: 7).

Nevertheless, empiricism is a stubborn dimension that enjoys contradicting more elegant and logical theories. Indeed, following the wave of response in support of presidential regimes initiated by Nohlen (1991), Nohlen and Fernandez (1991, 1998) and Lanzaro (2001); several scholars among whom Deheza (1998), Zelaznik (2001), Chasquetti (2001; 2008) Santos (2003), Cheibub *et al* (2004), and Limongi (2006) showed that coalesced government were in fact quite common forms of administration in Latin American polities. Indeed, coalition governments represented more than half of all type of governments in the region, on a period running from 1958 until today (Deheza 1998; Amorim Neto 2000; Chasquetti 2001; Garrido 2003, Figueiredo *et al* 2011, Albala 2009, 2013). Moreover, during the same period, some countries, such as Brazil and Chile, have known this only type of governments.

Since it has been demonstrated that the accidental argument does not fit at all, coalition theories applied to presidentialism started in the 2000's to widen the scope of analysis. Nonetheless, most part of this second generation of studies, when realied in a comparative perspective, can be summarised into three fields: i) an effort to modelise the institutional features, more or less prone

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that this same debate on party fragmentation divided scholars on earlier discussion toward the best configuration for parliamentary democracies. See Duverger (1951), Dodd (1976) and Lijphart (1984).

for coalition formation and/ or dissolution (Amorim Neto 2000; Altman 2000; Chasquetti 2001, 2006; Garrido 2003; Aleman and Tsebelis 2004); ii) intents to map the process of formation of coalition government and the sharing of cabinet portfolios (Amorim Neto 1998, 2006; Gallo 2006; Aleman and Tsebelis 2008, 2011; Chasquetti 2008; Praça *et al.* 2010); and iii) a more recent effort to analyse the executive-legislative relations under coalition climate (Reniu 2008; Albala 2009; Figueiredo *et al.* 2011; Raile *et al.* 2011; Reniu and Albala 2012).

However, excepting the third "category", the main quest pursued by those studies has been that of modelling, instead of that establishing a broader and more comprehensive framework. As a consequence, the broader literature lacks studies about the coalition process *per se*. Indeed, the hegemonic neo-institutionalist approach, used in most of these studies is insufficient to identify and analyse by itself the mechanisms and organisation proper to this kind of government. If institutions can play as a facilitator or constraint on policy options (especially through the electoral law), political behaviour and affinities are also factors which should among others come into play when forming political alliances. Moreover, if most of the literature seems to be interested only in the *Hollywood Story* (Müller and Strøm 2000) of coalition governments, i.e. their formation (marriage) and/or dissolution (divorce), what happens in between these two points (let's say "the married life") is surprisingly almost totally neglected. In other words, we know very little things, on comparative analysis, of *coalition governance* and the perception of coalition governments, especially in terms of accountability (both vertical and horizontal).

Hence, inspired by recent works by Cheibub (2007) and Figueiredo *et al.* (2011), and in continuity with my Ph-D dissertation, I argue that a framework for understanding coalition governments on presidential regimes needs a closer comparison with recent parliamentarist studies. This comparison should, thus, integrate mechanisms proper of presidentialism, such as the double legitimacy of the president and the legislative, the impact of separation of powers and the fixity of the mandates (more particularly in the executive), and their consequences in terms of accountability. Furthermore, looking for updating and deepening the analysis of coalition governments in Latin America's presidential systems, our approach will be based on recent multivariate analysis initiated by parliamentarists scholars, keeping in mind that the application and implementation of such models to deal with presidential regimes cover only a small area of the subject of our research. Doing so, supposes then to combine our argument centred in the study of coalition governments in latin America, together with other theories like veto players theories and cleavage theories.

Indeed, only few academics have focused their scope on the analysis of political institutions and veto players so as to identify some common points between presidential and parliamentary regimes, or stress out inherent differences between them. Their attention has mostly been on veto-players

(Tsebelis 2000), accountability (Strøm 2003, Strøm and Amorim Neto 2006) and institutional behaviour (Cheibub and Limongi 2002). Nevertheless, recent works by Samuels and Shugart (2010) and Lanzaro (2012) constitute reliable and inspiring pieces of work in the analyse of constitutional design' impact on party organisation and political behaviour.

Secondly, we can stress out another dimension completely neglected by coalition theories applied to presidential configuration: the temporal one. The question is to establish whether the coalition cycles in presidential systems are similar to those under parliamentary designs. This qualitative approach would follow the path of the recent works by Golder (2006) and Debus (2009) on pre-electoral agreements, and pursue our findings presented during the Ph-D dissertation on the pre-electoral tendency of coalition pacts in presidential regimes and the *presidentialised coalition cycle*. We shall therefore adopt a two-dimensional temporal approach, both synchronic and diachronic. Indeed, no coalition agreement comes *ex nihilo*, but from events and experiences from the past (Frankie and Mackie 1983: 276), and expectations about the future (Lupia and Strøm 2008). Hence, it is necessary to identify, from the perspective of path dependence (Pierson 2000), the *critical events* (Collier and Collier 1991) that led to the formation of the pact, and its promptness regarding electoral timing. Also this would imply a study of the intensity of the "walk away value" (Lupia and Strøm 2008), among coalesced partners.

Finally, if the question of party preferences in terms of ideological positions as for influencing the formation of coalition governments, have been partially analysed in presidential regimes (Garrido 2003; Chasquetti 2008; Aleman and Tsebelis 2011), their analyses remain, mostly, superficial while they adopt a synchronic focus. Indeed, political coalitions that led to government coalitions derive and are the expression of "boundary lines" (Bartolini 2005), that can be social, political as well as symbolic, and that are organised towards a *structuring cleavage* (Zukerman 1975). Thus, based on Bartolini and Mair (1990), Mair (1997) and Deegan Krause (2007: 538-44), we will argue that presidential systems have an overlapping tendency towards cleavage lines, due to the cleaver effect of the presidential election. We also note that a partisan alignment structure does not necessarily lie on ideological or programmatic linkages (Kitschelt 2010), as it is seen more often than not. As a consequence, any reorganisation in the alignment and competition policy affects the cleavage structuring and, conversely, the projection or the appearance of a new cleavage on the structure of political competition, and thus the formation or maintenance of coalitions. These characteristics result in the need to identify the structuring cleavage of the political competition and the formation and distribution of the different "poles" around it. These last new elements of analysis enter the analysis of the study of actors' preferences and the trading conditions, factors that are also related to the institutional framework without necessarily being dependent to it. This use of structural

paradigm sheds light on the impact and understanding of critical events as "triggers" on realignments and reordering the party system.

### 3. Research Questions:

Central RQ: *How does the constitutional design affect the coalition process, under presidential regime?*

RQ1: *Does the principle of fixity of president's mandate have an impact on both coalition agreements and the "coalition governance", compared to parliamentary and semi-presidential experiments? In particular, how does bicameralism affects the functioning of the coalition government?*

RQ2: *How does the separation of powers affects the coalition accountability (vertical and horizontal), and partners' loyalty? Does presidentialism, compared with parliamentarism and semi-presidentialism, presents lower/ higher incentives for "walking away" from coalition governments?*

RQ3: *How do executive powers affect the "coalition governance"? Can we observe a correlation between the nature of the outputs distributed and the executive attributions?*

### 4. Objectives of the research

The objectives of this research, deriving from the former statements, are divided into general and specific ones, as follows:

#### *General*

- 1) Analyse the impact of the constitutional design on the formation, governance and dissolution of coalition governments on presidential systems, and propose a systematic comparison with parliamentary regimes.
- 2) Analyse the relations between the executive and the legislative and the impact of coalition governments on the legislative production and approval.

#### *Specific*

- 1) Define the meaning and impact of the figure and role of the president on the coalitional processes, and on the resolution of controversies.
- 2) Study the level of autonomy of the executive over the legislative and the rate of approval of presidential bills by the legislature.

- 3) Stress out the impact of fixed-term mandates on the accountability process, and the incentives for “walking away” among coalesced partners; with parliamentary systems reality, characterised by a majority dependence of the executive on the legislative.
- 4) Identify the structuring cleavage around which partisan competence is organised in each of the countries of the South America, and analyse the feeds back mechanisms between coalitional processes and political cleavages in a comparative perspective
- 5) Map and model the coalitional cycle under the presidential configuration

## 5. Assumptions and hypothesis

After this contextualization of the theory, it is possible to identify the “presidentialised” elements of inference specific to this study: i) temporality, as measured by the precocity of the agreement, we would thus pay particular attention to the nature of the agreements (formal/informal), ii) the critical events that lead to the formation of coalitions, iii) the structure of political competition expressed in the alignment around cleavages; iv) institutions and modes of elections; v) political and governmental culture; and vi) the context or climate of negotiations. We can observe that the field of view encompasses 'external' and internal dimensions, thus reconciling both the sociological and the institutionalist tradition. As we argue that coalition governments in presidential regimes differ in their formation and development from parliamentary regimes' one, we pose then four principal assumptions, as follow:

**Assumption 1:** Political accountability supposes a knowledge on who gets what, and who do what. And to be effective, horizontal accountability requires a

**Assumption 2:** Political cleavages are materialized by and through political parties, and express themselves in political blocks and coalitions in a top-down articulate way.

**Assumption 3:** The more definite is the election for “selecting” the head of the government, the more predictable and identifiable are the available options. In this field, cleaver elections lead to a bipolarisation of competition between winners, potential winners, and losers.

**Assumption 4:** The more identifiable and recognizable are the political options, the earlier are the interparty agreements.

Therefore, and as a function of the above assumptions, our hypotheses stand as follow:

**Hypothesis 1:** Given that party competition in presidential systems is articulated around a structuring cleavage, then it feeds back from the buildup of political coalitions, tending to the formation of a dual (or bipolar) competition, around “poles” of identity, with some high repetitive permanence of the same alliances. Thus, there is a strong interrelation between the coalitions and the cleavage system that they have produced.

**Hypothesis 2:** If political cleavages are the result of parties and coalitions, then they are endowed with a central relevance in the ordering and predictability of the party systems. And (Hyp 2.1) this predictability is crystallized in a stronger *identifiability* of the coalitional options in presidential systems, through a systematization of pre-electoral agreements

**Hypothesis 3:** The strength of the cleavage system is lower at the parliamentary level due to the local legitimacy of the parliamentary mandate. Therefore when there is a second parliamentary chamber, the ordering of the political competition and the level of compromising with the executive decreases.

**Hypothesis 4:** The fixity of presidential mandate impacts negatively on the horizontal accountability, in favour to a vertical legitimation. Therefore (Hyp. 4.1) the vote in presidential system is more a "pole" or a "coalition vote", rather than a "partisan vote".

## 6. Methodology

Our analysis will focus on various cases (7 countries/25 governments) that experienced government coalitions in South America. This is a region that experienced during the 1980s, a return to democracy but not a "democratic inception", as was usually the case for Central America. Among them, we highlight three cases considered relatively similar in terms of political and democratic culture, namely Argentina, Chile and Uruguay; two "crucial" cases in the incidence of ethnic component of its population: Bolivia and Ecuador; and two "diverse" cases (Gerring 2007: 89): Brazil and Colombia. Then following recent findings in comparative politics, we will highlight areas of convergence and divergence in the occurrence of the coalitionary phenomenon. To this end we will use the latest methods in comparative politics for "medium N", developed by Ragin (1987, 2004) and Pérez Liñán (2004) among others, which should allow us to establish necessary and/or sufficient conditions to develop some results for our case: the evidencialization of the polarization of political competition. To this end, we assume case selection bias (Collier, Mahoney and Seawright 2004), around the variable "presence of coalition governments".

Thus, due to the limited number of cases studied, for the development of this work, we will use cutoff benchmarking methods based on qualitative and quantitative methodology inspired by the works of Ragin (1987,2000) and more particularly *fuzzy sets* and QCA methods. These methods permit a better qualitative control of the unit of analysis (both at country and government levels). However, we advocate as necessary to adopt a circular type process of *retroduction*, combining both deduction and induction to our analysis. Therefore, using a heuristic approach, we will first proceed to a deconstruction of the proper concept of *coalition government* so as to narrow it to a suitable definition for our research.

Second, in terms of governance in coalition, we will use quantitative analysis of parliamentary approval rate bills initiated from the presidency, by country and government, segregating the legislature so as to assess the impact of bicameralism over presidential performance. We shall also pay attention to the mechanisms available to the president to reward legislative partners, like cabinet nominations.

Therefore, this is expected to show the methodological and epistemological pitfalls that have so far dominated the literature about government coalitions in presidential systems. Indeed, the

dominant approach through the rational choice theory, reinforced by the neo-institutionalist approach, fails to give a true image of the "real world" of coalitions. Indeed, studies focusing on the merely (neo)institutionalist path forget that 1) all players in the game affect the outcome of the political dynamics and 2) not all countries have the same level of institutionalization of political practices and, even if they exist in a high degree, there are informal practices and imagination of leaders who face the same circumstances getting different results. Because we should avoid any confusion between those two issues, which constitute normative aspiration and which produces equalization compliance with the rule and "real" policy, we shall therefore be careful not to limit our investigation to the very institutional field, but widen it via structural and cultural issues. To see the meaning and impact of leadership status in the political dynamics of these countries, and its translation in terms of accountability, we will describe the political dynamics in each country between government and opposition, as a historical reconstruction. Thus, we will examine the political and institutional position of leadership rebuilding his relationship with: 1) the coalition and / or ruling party; 2) the Parliament; 3) the Citizenry, based on levels of public approval throughout his tenure; 4) federal and regional authorities (if relevant); 5) Social actors (indigenous, peasants, social movements, etc.) and corporations (unions, military, etc.) relevant to the outcome of political competition and power struggles in each country; 6) Finally we would analyse the leadership capacity of government to generate resources and government rhetoric able to muster the citizens support of public policies.

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