How power is distributed between the executive and legislative branches significantly influences the capacity of a new constitutional order to guard against autocracy. The list of East European presidents that have strived for constitutional reforms, which would considerably increase their own spheres of power, is quite extensive. Even with the exception of outright authoritarian leaders like Lukashenko in Belarus and his counterparts in Central Asia, there are many examples. For instance, Iliescu in Romania, Kuchma and Yanukovych in Ukraine, Lucinschi and Snegur in Moldova, Wałęsa in Poland, and Yeltsin in Russia did all at some point during their incumbency challenge the constitutional order in their countries.

Semi-presidentialism is a system of government whereby a directly elected president shares executive power with a prime minister and government that enjoys the support of an elected legislature. This has become a very popular form of government worldwide and has emerged as the most common regime type in Eastern Europe, totalling twenty countries as of 2016 (Elgie 2015). Since the fall of communism, it has been debated whether presidential systems are less conducive to democracy than parliamentarism. Linz (1990) claimed that presidentialism carries a number of built-in perils that undermine the fostering of democracy, for example, the president’s fixed term in office, the winner-take-all logic of presidential elections, and the risk of presidential omnipresence and authoritarian rule. As a category in between, semi-presidentialism has been seen by some scholars as carrying similar perils as presidentialism (Linz 1994) while others have considered it as a flexible and power-sharing system with the potential of combining some of the advantages of both parliamentarism and presidentialism (Sartori 1996). In one way or the other, the majority of studies on semi-presidentialism have related to the overarching question of whether semi-presidentialism as such is good or bad for democratisation and political stability.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a review on the sub-field of semi-presidentialism, emphasising its relevance to Eastern Europe. By reviewing 327 relevant publications covering the period 1970–2015, we will map out the main trends and important findings in the field of semi-presidentialism, and indicate some research gaps for the benefit of future research.

We start by defining the distinct features of semi-presidentialism and its sub-types in relation to presidentialism and parliamentarism. Challenges of definitions and classifications are at the core of the research field’s development, and some of the key arguments will be addressed in this regard. We will then move on to a general classification of the constitutional regimes in Eastern Europe and the post-communist countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where
the variations in regime types and presidential power are reported. The subsequent sections are
devoted to a review of some of the core themes of semi-presidential research on Eastern Europe,
where we report on dominant approaches and the main findings in the literature. Finally, we
identify and suggest some relevant avenues for future research on semi-presidentialism in Eastern
Europe and beyond.

Defining parliamentarism, presidentialism, and semi-presidentialism

Adopting a distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism is quite straightforward.
Parliamentarism has an authority structure based on mutual dependence. The chief executive (the
prime minister and his cabinet) is dependent on the consent of the parliament, and parliament
in turn is dependent on the executive, which is entitled to dissolve parliament and call new
elections. The head of state (the president or monarch) upholds mainly ceremonial powers and
is not directly elected. Presidentialism, on the other hand, is defined by (1) a popularly elected
chief executive (president) who names and directs the composition of government, and in which
(2) the terms of the president and parliament are fixed, and are not contingent on mutual confi-
dence (Shugart and Carey 1992: 19).

Although many analysts would disagree that there is a single and generally accepted defini-
tion of parliamentarism and presidentialism, defining semi-presidentialism has proved an even
more complicated task. Duverger (1980) is a major landmark. He provided a definition of semi-

presidentialism including three criteria: (1) the president is elected by universal suffrage; (2) the
president possesses quite considerable powers; and (3) there is also a prime minister and other
ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only with the
consent of the parliament (1980: 4). Duverger’s definition remained dominant until the late
1990s, although the second and non-institutional criterion that “the president possesses quite
considerable powers” was a source of debate and already caused confusion early on. Different
scholars approached this vague criterion differently, and the list of semi-presidential countries
varied extensively from one study (Stepan and Skach 1993) to another (Lijphart 1999). Shugart
and Carey (1992) proposed an alternative by providing a distinction between two sub-types of
semi-presidentialism: (1) president-parliamentary systems, where (a) the president is elected by a
popular vote for a fixed term in office, (b) the president appoints and dismisses the prime minister
and other cabinet ministers, and (c) the prime minister and cabinet ministers are subjected to par-
liamentary as well as presidential confidence; and (2) premier-presidentialism systems, where (a)
the president is elected by a popular vote for a fixed term in office, (b) the president selects the prime
minister who heads the cabinet, but (c) authority to dismiss the cabinet rests exclusively with the
parliament (Shugart and Carey 1992: 23–24; Shugart 2005: 333). Elgie went even further and
removed any references to the powers of the president and proposed that semi-presidentialism
is “where a constitution makes provision for both a directly elected fixed-term president and a
prime minister and cabinet who are collectively responsible to the legislature” (1999: 13).

Since the early 2000s, Elgie’s strictly constitutional definition of semi-presidentialism and
Shugart and Carey’s two sub-types — premier-presidentialism and president-parliamentarism —
have become widely used in the literature. Quite strong critique has remained, however, and
it has predominantly concerned the variation in presidential powers between different semi-

presidential regimes, even within the same sub-category. Siaroff (2003) and Cheibub, Elkins, and
Ginsburg (2014) go as far as to argue that the whole category of semi-presidentialism is inade-
quate. Instead they suggest that scholars should stick to the distinction between presidentialism
and parliamentarism, combining this with measures of presidential powers. This kind of critique
is neither new nor irrelevant, but it ignores a basic fundament, namely that semi-presidentialism
is unique in terms of origin and survival of the government. In principal-agent terms, the government is at the mercy of two separate agents of the electorate, that is, the president and the parliament (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2010).

In line with other scholars (Elgie 2011), we suggest that the most fruitful way of approaching semi-presidentialism is to use the distinction between premier-presidentialism and president-parliamentarism in combination with measures of presidential powers. In the subsequent section, we will categorise the East European countries accordingly.

Parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes in Eastern Europe

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the constitutional arrangements in twenty-eight post-communist countries. Adopting the definitions of premier-presidentialism and president-parliamentarism, we note that semi-presidentialism is by far the most common constitutional arrangement in Eastern Europe. In fact, there are only eight cases of parliamentarism and four case of pure presidentialism. Parliamentary and premier-presidential constitutions are dominant in Central Europe, while president-parliamentarism is spread among the post-Soviet constitutions, and pure presidentialism is found only among the dictatorships in Central Asia. Among the seven countries that adopted president-parliamentarism in the 1990s, only three of them are left with this kind of semi-presidential arrangement in 2016 (Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Russia).

We also report on a measure of presidential power developed by Doyle and Elgie (2016). A considerable number of presidential power indexes are available in the literature (e.g. Siaroff 2003; Roper 2002) and the main advantage of this one is that it is based on twenty-eight of such already existing measures. In addition, Doyle and Elgie have generated their dataset on a larger number of countries with longer time series than other existing ones. The scores are in the range from 0 to 1 in separate time periods following constitutional changes of a country’s presidential powers.

The average presidential power scores confirms an expected continuum where the parliamentary countries score lowest at 0.170, followed by the premier-presidential countries at 0.243, the president-parliamentary countries at 0.482, and the presidential countries at 0.617. Over the course of the post-communist period, several countries have amended or revised their post-communist constitutions in such a comprehensive way that they have shifted from one constitutional category to another. The constitutional revisions in Croatia 2001 and Georgia 2013 represent shifts from president-parliamentarism to premier-presidentialism, by stating in their revised constitutions that the government should only be subordinated to parliamentary confidence for its survival and not, as was the case prior to these changes, to both the president and the parliament. Moldova, in 2000, changed the method of presidential elections from a popular vote to indirect elections, that is, a shift from premier-presidentialism to parliamentarism. Ukraine is the most volatile case in terms of constitutional changes and has moved back and forth along a continuum between democracy and authoritarianism throughout the post-Soviet era marked by periods of constitutional and political instability. The 1996 president-parliamentary constitution was revised through amendments into a premier-presidential system in the wake of the Orange Revolution, 2006–2010. In both cases, demands for constitutional reform – particularly to combat presidential autocracy – were central to political mobilisation. The result was constitutional change that responded to these demands, by shifting from president-parliamentarism to premier-presidentialism. These constitutional amendments were quickly reversed by the Yanukovych regime in October 2010, bringing back the president-parliamentary system again between 2010 and 2014. The Euromaidan protests once again led to the return to a premier-presidential system in early 2014.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitutional type</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Presidential power score, Normalized score (Standard error) Year interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentarism</td>
<td>Albania 1998–</td>
<td>0.141 (0.027) 1998–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>0.142 (0.036) 1993–2000, 1993–2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estonia 1992–</td>
<td>0.184 (0.032) 1992–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hungary 1990–</td>
<td>0.275 (0.045) 1991–2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latvia 1993–</td>
<td>0.133 (0.025) 1992–1997, 0.010 (–) 1998–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macedonia 1991–</td>
<td>0.116 (0.031) 1992–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moldova 2000–</td>
<td>0.272 (0.069) 2001–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia 1992–1999</td>
<td>0.173 (0.033) 1993–1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Prespow1 score</td>
<td>Armenia 2005–</td>
<td>0.650 (–) 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier-presidentialism</td>
<td>Bulgaria 1992–</td>
<td>0.183 (0.044) 1992–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Croatia 2001–</td>
<td>0.291 (0.074) 2001–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Czech Republic 2012–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Georgia 2013–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lithuania 1992–</td>
<td>0.282 (0.044) 1993–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan 2007–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moldova 1991–2000</td>
<td>0.288 (0.091) 1991–1994, 0.240 (0.059) 1995–2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montenegro 2007–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poland 1997–</td>
<td>0.241 (0.044) 1997–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romania 1991–</td>
<td>0.250 (0.033) 1992–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serbia 2006–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia 1999–</td>
<td>0.043 (0.032) 1999–2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovenia 1991–</td>
<td>0.118 (0.019) 1992–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine 2006–2010, 2014–</td>
<td>0.329 (0.206) 2005–2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Prespow1 score</td>
<td>Armenia 1995–2005</td>
<td>0.403 (0.060) 1995–2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President-parliamentarism</td>
<td>Azerbaijan 1995–</td>
<td>0.699 (0.070) 1996–2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belarus 1994–</td>
<td>0.545 (0.067) 1994–1996, 0.615 (0.094) 1997–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Croatia 1990–2001</td>
<td>0.335 (0.050) 1991–2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Georgia 1995–2013</td>
<td>0.166 (–) 1990–1995, 0.588 (0.071) 1996–2003, 0.557 (–) 2004–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan 1993–2007</td>
<td>0.459 (0.089) 1993–1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia 1993–</td>
<td>0.269 (0.073) 1992–1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ukraine 1996–2006, 2010–2014</td>
<td>0.440 (0.061) 1996–2004, 0.464 (0.065) 2011–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eastern Europe’s semi-presidential regimes

Croatia (2001 onwards), Georgia (2013 onwards), Moldova (2000 onwards), and Ukraine (2006–2010 and 2014 onwards) represent cases with constitutional changes from a president-dominated system towards government models in which the cabinet becomes explicitly anchored in the parliament. In several post-Soviet countries, the trend has been the reverse. Belarus and several of the Central Asian countries – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan – have been headed by authoritarian presidents, and constitutional amendments have been adopted in order to strengthen already strong presidencies. Generally, the post-communist countries with the strongest presidential powers are also the ones with the worst records of democracy. Proponents of parliamentarism have argued that presidential systems are less conducive to democracy and therefore that parliamentary systems should be the constitutional option for transitional regimes (Linz 1990, 1994), and we will return to these arguments later.

The pattern of democracy and autocracy in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet countries indeed lends support to arguments linking parliamentarism with democracy. However, strong presidencies have been adopted where obstacles unrelated to the constitution are at play. Thus, we have reasons to be cautious about positing causal relations between constitutional regime type and level of democracy. Still, there is no need to exaggerate this caution: the political development in several of the post-Soviet states is troublesome for any advocate of presidential solutions in transitional regimes. In countries like Belarus and Russia, the strong presidential component, introduced from the outset of independence, has contributed to legitimise and reinforce already authoritarian tendencies. The strong presidency has provided a constitutionally sanctioned tool for accumulating power in the hands of presidents that have been less than interested in promoting democratic reforms.

Semi-presidentialism: a growing research field with Eastern Europe at its core

As part of a research project on semi-presidentialism, we have recently conducted a structured literature review on semi-presidential research (Åberg and Sedelius 2016). We will report on some of our findings from this project, which are of relevance to Eastern Europe. The first part
of the review, including 327 publications, was a mapping and coding exercise with the purpose of identifying main research themes and gaps. The second part had an in-depth approach and consisted of a limited number of publications (sixty-five), where we reviewed the main theoretical and empirical directions more closely.

It is only from the late 1990s that we can observe a considerable increase in semi-presidential studies, which logically follows the transitions in Eastern Europe and the gradually developing coherence around definitions and classifications of semi-presidentialism. A series of edited volumes by Elgie and his colleagues plays a key role in the sharp rise of studies since the turn of the new millennium (Elgie 1999; Elgie et al. 2007; Elgie and Moestrup 2008; Elgie et al. 2011). By offering a common conceptual framework and a comparative orientation towards analysing political stability and democratisation in nascent and established democracies with semi-presidential constitutions, especially among the post-communist countries, these volumes sparked a new wave of scholarly interest on semi-presidentialism.

When we categorise the identified publications according to covered region, as in Table 5.2, post-communist countries make up for almost 30 per cent of all studies on semi-presidentialism. Eastern Europe is at the empirical core of the sub-field, followed by Western democracies. There are still considerably fewer publications on semi-presidentialism from other regions.

Russia, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine are among the top seven countries most frequently analysed in the literature (Table 5.3). In various ways, those countries can be considered laboratory cases for studying key aspects of the pros and cons of semi-presidentialism in a transitional context, not least on substantial questions regarding constitutional effects and regime direction (Metelska-Szaniawska 2009), variation in presidential powers, and intra-executive relations (Fortin 2013; Protsyk 2006), shifts in party system structures and executive-legislative relations, and cohabitation (Clark 2010; Elgie and McMenamin 2011; also Andrews in this volume). In addition, Russia and Ukraine (1996–2006, 2010–2014) represent two less than democratic cases of president-parliamentarism, whereas Poland and Romania are recent European Union (EU) members with premier-presidential constitutions. The French Fifth Republic – as an established democracy with a nearly sixty-year record of premier-presidentialism – continues to be the standard reference point for theoretical and empirical analysis. From our review data we also find that single case studies have been the predominant research design whenever post-communist countries are included. About 60 per cent of all studies including Eastern European cases focus on one single country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Per cent (no. of cases)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-communist countries</td>
<td>29 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western democracies</td>
<td>24 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of regions</td>
<td>22 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>9 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>8 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East including Turkey</td>
<td>4 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 (276)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Core research themes

Democratisation and the assumed perils of (semi-)presidentialism

Linz’s arguments from the early 1990s have established much of the basic elements of the regime type debate as well as the research on semi-presidentialism. Based on observations mainly in Latin America, Linz (1990, 1994) raised the argument that presidentialism is less conducive to democracy than parliamentarism. He argued that there are structural characteristics of presidential systems that make it more likely that they will encounter difficulties, which might contribute to the breakdown of democracy. He associated those difficulties to four factors: (1) the president’s fixed term in office; (2) dual legitimacy, that is, both the president and the parliament rely on a popular mandate; (3) the winner-take-all character of presidential elections; and (4) the risk of personalisation of power. Linz claimed that semi-presidentialism shares these features of presidentialism and, moreover, that the responsibility in a semi-presidential system is diffuse and that conflicts therefore are possible and even likely (Linz 1994: 52). His warning that semi-presidentialism (and presidentialism) becomes dependent on the personality and abilities of the president is certainly relevant to East European countries where different presidents, in different ways, have set their imprints on the whole shaping of the political systems.

We should recall the difference between the two sub-types of semi-presidentialism, however. Under premier-presidentialism the government is subjected to parliamentary support only for its survival. President-parliamentarism, by contrast, provides both the parliament and the president with powers over cabinet termination. So, in addition to the risk of authoritarian dominance by the president (e.g. Russia), the dependent and uncertain political position of the government in-between the president and the parliament (e.g. Ukraine 1996–2006) is an additional factor in president-parliamentary regimes. The dual loyalty of the government is thus likely to produce conflict and political stalemate. Sokolowski (2001) showed how the budget process in Russia under Yeltsin was severely hampered by president-parliamentarism. The government, caught between the demands of the president and the parliament, repeatedly adopted unrealistic budgets and upheld economic policies without fiscal discipline. While distancing himself from the responsibility of the economic policies, Yeltsin intervened and directed the course of the budget priorities. The cabinet was very much left on its own, and the budgets, consequently, became products designed to satisfy all kinds of demands. Furthermore, president-parliamentarism usually gives the president the power to dissolve the parliament, which in addition to the powers over both government formation and termination, places the president in a very strong position.

### Table 5.3 Top seven countries covered in studies on semi-presidentialism, percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Per cent (no. of cases)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>31 (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>14 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>13 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>13 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>11 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>10 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>8 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 (149)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73
Considering that the president-parliamentary countries in Eastern Europe also provided considerable legislative and appointive powers to their presidents during the 1990s (Table 5.1), presidential dictatorship was to be expected in several cases.

Premier-presidentialism, on the contrary, provides the possibility of combining an often perceived need of presidential leadership with a government firmly anchored in parliament. A visible president with abilities of channelling hope and unity under turbulent periods could work for political stability and democratisation. The popular mandate upheld by the premier-presidential president adds a dimension of increased legitimacy and status. A popularly elected president is capable of functioning as an agent of the electorate, rather than of the parties. In addition, the relatively larger share of formal powers vested in the premier-presidential presidency as compared to its counterpart in parliamentary systems might work to the benefit of the president as an arbiter of the constitution, and of national stability. There is also a major pitfall, however, illustrated by several of the countries in Eastern Europe. Rather than serving as a safeguard of the constitution, a number of post-communist presidents have instead worked to undermine the constitutional order by proposing extensive demands for increased power, also under premier-presidentialism. During their incumbency, Ilișcu, Lucinschi, Snegur, Wałęsa, and Yushchenko did all at some point challenge the premier-presidential order in their respective country. Not vastly different from their authoritarian counterparts in Belarus and Central Asia, they campaigned for a larger share of power to be invested in the presidency and for constitutional changes towards stronger presidential rule. Imposing constitutional changes is a high-risk strategy in terms of democratisation and political stability. For example, the repeated attempts by Lucinschi (1997–2000) in Moldova to alter the means of power in favour of the presidency resulted in increased polarisation between the executive and legislative branches, widespread popular cynicism, and legislative blocking of Lucinschi’s proposals even in policy areas not directly related to the constitution. In addition, challenging the constitution demands considerable political resources and attention. Other policy issues tend to be secondary in relation to the overarching goal of settling the constitutional disputes. The recurring constitutional clashes in Ukraine – under both forms of semi-presidentialism – have hindered effective policy work by demanding immense political attention, while at the same time reinforcing widespread cynicism among the citizens (Sedelius 2015). In such contexts, the institutional arrangement of semi-presidentialism in both its forms may contribute to undermining the legitimacy of the constitution and ultimately the prospects for democratic governance.

**Intra-executive conflict and cohabitation**

As showed by the constitutional pattern earlier, the democratic record of president-parliamentarism in Eastern Europe is considerably weaker than for premier-presidentialism. A key factor favouring premier-presidentialism over president-parliamentarism is that the former provides the possibility of combining presidential leadership with a government anchored in parliament, which is positive for fostering more institutionalised political party structures. On the other hand, premier-presidential countries show higher levels of intra-executive conflicts, that is conflicts between the president and prime minister, which have been a core issue of semi-presidential research.

In premier-presidential systems, executive-legislative divides between the president and parliament are likely to appear as intra-executive conflict between the president and the cabinet. Because the legislature has the exclusive power to dismiss the prime minister, the cabinet is dependent on parliamentary support for claiming authority to control the executive branch, and its political orientation is likely to be in the parliament’s favour rather than in the president’s.
Intra-executive conflicts are thus to be expected, and especially during cohabitation, that is, “where the president and prime minister are from opposing parties and where the president’s party is not represented in cabinet” (Elgie 2011: 12).

Cohabitation has been labelled the Achilles heel of semi-presidentialism (Elgie and McMenamin 2011) as it increases the risk of intra-executive tension between the president and the prime minister (Strom 2000). Although the French Fifth Republic showed abilities to overcome the challenges of cohabitation early on, Suleiman (1994) warned that it might not work smoothly in other circumstances. In a transitional context, the conflict potential is exacerbated by ambiguous and fluid distribution of authority and by low levels of institutionalisation (Skach 2005). Cohabitation is a potential peril as it carries the risk of conflict and stalemate. For instance, Romania’s periods of cohabitation between President Băsescu and Prime Minister Popescu-Tăriceanu in 2007–2008, and between President Băsescu and Prime Minister Ponta in 2012–2014, were marked by intense conflict and government crises, which escalated into attempts of impeachment against President Băsescu (Gherghina and Miscoiu 2013). Cohabitation is, however, not only portrayed as a risk, but as a built-in flexibility of semi-presidentialism. In fact it is difficult to identify cases of regime collapse as a consequence of cohabitation (Elgie 2010, 2011) and it has often proven to be quite well-managed (Elgie and McMenamin 2011).

Intra-executive conflict, however, does not occur only under cohabitation, and different studies have reported on the frequency of intra-executive conflict in Eastern Europe (Protsyk 2006). Sedelius and Mashtaler (2013) showed that intra-executive conflict occurred in about one third of all the president-cabinet relations analysed in eight post-communist countries during the period 1991–2011. Some instances of these conflicts – for example, between President Wałęsa and several prime ministers in Poland in 1991–1995, between President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yanukovych in Ukraine in 2006–2007, and between President Băsescu and Prime Minister Ponta in Romania in 2012 – resulted in political instability and impasse. Sedelius and Ekman (2010) find a statistically significant effect between intra-executive conflict and pre-term resignation of governments under both premier-presidential and president-parliamentary systems in Eastern Europe. They argue that the president’s constitutionally weaker position vis-à-vis the prime minister is outweighed by the president’s stronger prestige and popularity. Survey data in Eastern Europe report that trust in the president is consistently higher than for any other political institution including the prime minister (see e.g. Ekman et al. 2014; New Europe Barometer 1991–2005; New Russia Barometer 1992–2012). By publicly criticising the government through media and official speeches the president can make it difficult for the prime minister to stay in office. Particularly in the 1990s, this was effectively used by presidents to force certain prime ministers to step down as a consequence, for example, President Wałęsa against the Pawlak cabinet in Poland in 1995; President Zhelev against the Videnov cabinet in Bulgaria in 1997; and President Adamkus against the Vagnorious cabinet in Lithuania in 1999 (Sedelius 2006).

The greater popularity of presidents as compared to the prime ministers is related to the limits placed on their governmental powers. Presidents in premier-presidential regimes are not closely associated with unpopular economic measures or with the day-to-day squabbling in parliament. They have projected themselves to be above party politics, being somewhat elevated from the usual political quarrels. A telling example is Wałęsa, who often claimed to speak for the unrepresented part of the public and exploited his earned popularity as the determined political dissident during the early transition. Some of the prevailing trust in the presidency can be viewed in light of the early popularity of characters such as Havel, Wałęsa, and Zhelev, who earned much of their reputation as political dissidents in the late communist era, which propelled them to positions of prominence in the early post-communist period. Post-communist prime ministers, by contrast, have in many cases been more anonymous figures. This is obviously a source of conflict within
the executive. In a nutshell, this relates to the dual legitimacy structure built into the premier-presidential system. Both the president and the prime minister can claim legitimacy on popular elections, but the former leans on a direct electoral mandate while the latter is indirectly elected through parliamentary elections.

Conflict over appointments, dismissals, policy reforms, and constitutional prerogatives are logical expressions of the institutional competition embedded into the dual executive structure of semi-presidentialism. But they also reflect some of the specific and contextual challenges that the post-communist countries have faced in the process of institutionalisation and transition. Still, we find no clear evidence for arguing that intra-executive conflict by itself has been behind any regime breakdowns in Eastern Europe, although it has clearly been an involved factor in severe constitutional struggles, for example, in Romania and Ukraine.

**Presidentialisation and party system factors**

In accordance with Linz’s arguments for parliamentarism over presidentialism, scholars have stressed the importance of a strong and coherent parliamentary arena as well as a consolidated party system in order for semi-presidential democracies to avoid the risk of presidential dictatorship (Kitschelt 1999; Protsyk 2006).

A common feature of the premier-presidential constitutions is that the latter is required to be above partisan politics. The Lithuanian constitution, for example, requires that the president must suspend his activities in political parties until a new presidential election campaign, and the Polish constitution prohibits the president from holding other offices and other public functions. These provisions, primarily aimed at keeping the president politically independent and as serving the whole nation, may complicate the efforts of the presidents to mobilise support for their initiatives, thereby weakening the links between the president and the parliament. In practice, however, there are differences with respect to the strength of the links between the presidents and their affiliated parties despite the constitutional requirements to relinquish all such links. The Lithuanian and Polish cases show that presidents who have no clear party identification prior to their term in office, for example, Adamkus and Wałęsa, tend to resort to the appeals of popular support and legitimacy more often than their counterparts – for example, Brazauskas and Kwaśniewski, who had identifiable, although informal, party links (Pugaciauskas 2000).

Semi-presidentialism includes aspects of presidentialisation of political parties (Passarelli 2015). Samuels and Shugart (2010) have as one of their main claims that in particular president-parliamentarism, just like presidentialism, will tend to have “presidentialised parties”. By party presidentialisation they mean that parties – in organising to win presidential elections – delegate considerable discretion to their leaders-as-executives to shape their electoral and governing strategies, and thereby lose the ability to hold their agents to account (2010: 37).

The presidential effects on the party system are also related to the electoral system. Whereas most of the premier-presidential countries in Eastern Europe have employed proportional representation (PR) electoral systems, providing a stronger role to the parties in the parliament, president-parliamentary countries in the post-Soviet region have mainly opted for mixed or majoritarian electoral formulas, producing more non-affiliated candidates and weaker party systems (Protsyk 2006; also Birch in this volume). For instance, Ukraine has tried out three different electoral systems for parliamentary elections: a single member district (SMD) system in 1994-1998, a parallel mixed system in 1998-2002, a closed List PR system in 2006-2007, and a return to the mixed electoral system in 2012. Party system development in Ukraine, as in many other post-Soviet countries, has been characterised less by ideology and programmatic appeals than by patronage and clientelistic linkages (Protsyk and Wilson 2003). The electoral systems have indeed
encouraged personalised campaign strategies, and aspiring politicians have prioritised local clientelistic networks over collective efforts of party-building. President-parliamentarism in combination with a strong majority component in the electoral system tends to discourage efforts of party-building while supporting single individual leaders and more personalised politics. As such, the weak system of checks and balances and strong presidential dominance under the president-parliamentary systems in the post-Soviet countries has largely allowed the presidents to be intentional in creating barriers for party development (Chaisty, Cheeseman, and Power 2012).

Underexplored issues on semi-presidentialism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere

During the course of our literature review, we identified a number of research issues that have received surprisingly little attention. We will mention three of them briefly with some general comments: (1) the prime minister’s relative power and position; (2) the role of the bureaucracy and public administration; and (3) implications of the EU on the dual executive structure.

The prime minister’s relative power and position

The influence of Linz’s arguments on the perils of presidentialism has steered scholarly attention towards the president as the natural starting point for semi-presidential research. As mentioned earlier, there are many variants of presidential power indexes existing in the literature – a considerable number of studies analysing intra-executive relations, divided government, and cohabitation – and we seem to know a great deal on the president’s position vis-à-vis the party system. As such, it is rather surprising to see how few studies that actually address the prime minister’s power position. In our review of abstracts, we identified only 1 out of 327 publications where the main focus was on the side of the prime minister. In the full-text analysis the picture became somewhat more nuanced, but we found only four out of sixty-five publications examining this issue. The prime minister is thus treated as a second-order issue in the research, and we believe that there are good reasons to counter this imbalance.

The ambitions of the prime minister are known to affect the level of intra-executive conflict (Lazardeux 2014), and certain powers on appointment and foreign policy, for example, are often shared between the prime minister and the president (Elgie and Griggs 2013). We seem to lack a proper structure for describing the various features and powers separating one prime minister from the other, which obstructs the ability to properly compare changes in real use of such powers, for example, under cohabitation and non-cohabitation.

The role of the bureaucracy and public administration

The link between the dual executive and the bureaucratic apparatus has received little attention in semi-presidential studies. In our sample, only 7 out of 327 semi-presidential publications have bureaucracy issues as a main focus, and countries in Eastern Europe are present in only 3 of them. The bureaucracy is a central part of the democratic chain of representation and accountability (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2010; Strøm 2000) and in theories on veto players, the bureaucratic actors are identified as crucial in the policy process and its outcomes (Tsebelis 2000). Semi-presidential studies have a clear focus on presidential powers but most often without including bureaucratic resources as part of presidential powers and abilities. When creating an index of the strength of the legislatures in a number of post-communist countries, Fish (2006) includes administrative resources as part of the legislature’s overall capacity and
finds, for example, that the Russian Duma is not only weak in its constitutional and party basis, but also in terms of relative administrative resources. To the extent that many East European countries are institutionalising their political system, the bureaucracy as such is often far behind (Zubek and Goetz 2010; also Meyer-Sahling in this volume). We believe that research on semi-presidentialism would benefit from more studies on the bureaucratic state apparatus in order to better grasp the variation of intra-executive politics and policy co-ordination in different semi-presidential regimes.

**The EU and semi-presidentialism**

The extent to which the EU is important to intra-executive and executive-legislative politics in semi-presidential countries is another aspect that deserves more research attention. Only 7 out of 327 publications in our review treat EU-related issues as a main focus. For example, we have very little research on the role and division of power between the president and the prime minister in relation to the EU institutions. In terms of intra-executive relations between the president and prime minister, EU membership and representation challenge the division of labour between the two actors, as foreign policy cannot be easily separated from domestic issues at the EU level. In some cases representation and coordination of EU policy have surfaced into open conflict, such as in Poland between President Kaczyński and Prime Minister Tusk in 2008, and in Romania between President Băsescu and Prime Minister Ponta in 2012 (Jasiewicz and Jasiewicz-Bertkiewicz 2009; Raunio 2012). Raunio (2012) finds that EU membership tends to strengthen the prime minister’s relative powers vis-à-vis the president by means of representation in EU as well as by increased importance of the prime minister’s office – at the expense of the foreign policy department and the presidency. How the East European EU-member states operate EU-policy and representation is of relevance for understanding the real world of semi-presidential decision making. Future studies on rules, organisational arrangements, and conventions that structure the coordination between the president and the prime minister in this regard would also need to go beyond both nation state borders and formal constitutional rules to identify institutional solutions that facilitate successful policymaking.

**Conclusions**

Variants of semi-presidentialism are the most common constitutional choice in Eastern Europe. Following the post-communist transitions, parliamentarism and premier-presidentialism prevailed in Central Europe, whereas president-parliamentarism was installed among the majority of the post-Soviet countries. More recently, the trend has been to limit presidential powers even among the post-Soviet countries and also to abandon president-parliamentarism (Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine). As of 2016, only the authoritarian regimes of Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Russia are left with president-parliamentary constitutions. The pattern of democratisation in Eastern Europe indeed lends support to the warnings once raised by Linz and his followers. The post-communist countries with the strongest power vested in their presidencies are also the ones with the worst records of democratisation, and president-parliamentarism as such finds no evident support in the academic literature.

Our literature review shows that comparative studies of post-communist semi-presidentialism, including many single-case analyses, have been essential to the advancement of theory testing and new research questions. Although Linz’s arguments on the perils of presidentialism (and semi-presidentialism) are still highly influential, the sub-field has largely left the strategy of using semi-presidentialism as a single independent variable in itself. Instead more recent studies are
occupied with issues such as the variation and logics behind intra-executive and executive-legislative relations, and the president’s powers and relation to the political parties.

We finally identified some research issues that we think have received too little attention in the literature on semi-presidentialism. We mentioned the lack of studies on the position and powers of the prime minister, the role and importance of the bureaucratic apparatus, and the potential effects of EU membership on executive-legislative politics in semi-presidential regimes. We believe that more studies on these and related aspects would take the semi-presidential research further – and the semi-presidential countries in Eastern Europe are indeed critical cases in these regards.

Notes
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1 We searched mainly in two databases, Web of Science and the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, where we limited our search by a set of semantic varieties on the term “semi-presidentialism”. We also added the most relevant items including books and articles found in the list of publications from the website The Semi-Presidential One by Robert Elgie (2007–2015), and from searches on Google Scholar.

References


Thomas Sedelius and Jenny Åberg


Eastern Europe’s semi-presidential regimes


