Using the Veto Players Theory to Explain the Stability of Semi-Presidential Regimes

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Abstract

Many new democracies have designed or chosen semi-presidential constitutions. Because of this trend, research on the relationship between semi-presidentialism and the stability of governments has become a popular subject within theoretical constitutional and empirical studies. Even though there are many differences in party systems (such as triangular relationships between the president, the prime minister, and the parliament) and ideology within these countries, we can still try to compare them using a structural analysis. This paper utilizes the "Veto Players Theory" to discuss the relationship between government stability and the party system, triangular relationships, and the distance of ideology. Although many papers already discuss this subject, using the Veto Players Theory can lump these variables together to avoid the specific characteristics of each case. Moreover, the experience of Weimar Germany and Taiwan can also provide some additional points to explain government stability with the use of the veto players theory.

Keywords: semi-presidentialism, veto players theory, party system, triangular relationships, ideology

1. Veto Players Theory and Studies About Semi-Presidentialism

The relationship between the form of government and democratic stability is always an important question in political science. The debate in the past was about the comparison between presidential and parliamentary systems. However, because many new democracies have designed semi-presidential constitutions, which are a mixed constitution with parts of both presidential and parliamentary systems, the relationship between the semi-presidential constitution and government stability is therefore an important issue when we discuss the democratization of these countries. Following the classic debate on this question, the party system, the electoral system, the president's constitutional power and the constitutional design are familiar variables, and their influence on government stability in a semi-presidential regime is evident. It is true that many variables may affect government stability. However, we also know that each regime is different. Two regimes may have the same constitutional framework but reach different outcomes. This means that case studies of semi-presidential regimes have similarly reached highly divergent conclusions about the impact of this form of regime on the survival of democracy.[1] These variables should be measured on a case by case basis. That is not to say that a general model to test the relationship between these variables and government stability is useless.

A better way is to observe the relationship between the whole structure built by these variables together and government stability. These variables will interact with each other and then as a unit affect government stability, not on an individual basis. With this in mind, this paper utilizes the "Veto Players Theory" to arrange party systems, presidential powers and the distance between different ideologies of the main players in a model.[2] Additionally, I will discuss how these variables affect government stability together. The Veto Players Theory is an analytical instrument first used in spatial theory. It can be used to analyze the changes in the status quo of a policy and government stability. As defined by George Tsebelis, the developer of the theory, veto players are individuals or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change in the status quo. It follows that a change in the status quo requires a unanimous decision of all veto players.[3] For example, in a minimum winning coalition, if a majority is a necessary condition for government formation, any party in this coalition is a veto player with regard to the survival of the government. A veto player may be a person, a party, or an institution, depending on the situation and institutions. Tsebelis used the Veto Players Theory to discuss policy stability. He demonstrated that policy stability increases with the number of veto players, their incongruence, and the internal cohesion of each.[4] This theory can also be used as a method to discuss the stability of governments.

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[1] Sophia Moestrup, "Semi-Presidentialism in Young Democracies," in *Semi-Presidentialism Outside Europe*, eds. Robert Elgie and Sophia Moestrup (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 30.

[2] Elgie defines three waves of presidential/parliamentary studies since 1990. He thinks that the third wave is founded on a very explicit methodological approach such as Veto Players Theory. Please see Robert Elgie, "From Linz to Tsebelis: Three Waves of Presidential/Parliamentary Studies?" *Democratization* 12, no.1(February 2005): 115.

[3] George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 19.

[4] George Tsebelis, "Decision Making in Political Systems," *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3 (July 1995): 293.

Before we use the Veto Players Theory to discuss government stability, a premise must first be brought out: policy stability leads to government instability.[5] If we assume the scope of the replaceable policy is broad, this means it is easy to establish a consensus within the coalition. Therefore, it is also easier to maintain the coalition government if the policy is easily replaceable. Contrarily, if a policy is stable, this means it is hard to replace, thus consensus within the coalition government will also be harder to establish. The coalition government will therefore collapse more easily. Hence, a basic proposition is that the greater the number of veto players is, the more unstable the policy is but the more stable the government will be. Even though the Veto Players Theory is methodologically attractive in explanation, there are still some pitfalls when we use this theory to explain real political situations. First, when we use the Veto Players Theory to analyze real-world experiences, the biggest problem is how to define and calculate the number of veto players. This issue should be settled before we use this theory to explain real-world experiences. In addition, how can we exactly define and measure the preferences of all veto players? Third, there might be different kinds of veto players such as parties, personages or even institutions. Are they all considered the same when we analyze the interactions among them?[6] The first two critiques are about the definition proposed by scholars. Although the Veto Players Theory provides a precise instrument to explain politics, the inferences will be still different when scholars have different definitions of the veto players or of their preferences.

These critiques do not hit the vita of veto players theory, but we should carefully consider them before we accept the conclusions from the veto players theory. The last critique about discrimination between different kinds of veto players is meaningful. We should discriminate between different kinds of veto players. Some of them are lifeless and without preference such as institutions. Some of them act collectively such as groups. And, there are also veto players who are individuals. Their preferences might change quickly and easily. Moreover, the veto players theory is an exact theoretical analysis model. However, there is still a gap between the model and real politics. For example, according to the veto players theory, the policy should be moved to the veto player's position when there is only one veto player. However, the policy is usually moved to any position in the winset but not the veto player's position. It means that the performance of the veto player will often be affected by other variables. Based on these assumptions and critiques, this paper uses the veto players theory to analyze semi-presidential constitutional operationsand modify the hypotheses to make this theory more reflective of reality.

Defining the political actors who can influence decision making or government formation under the diversified institutional conditions in the semi-presidential system is complicated. However, the veto players theory can help us focus on the characteristics of semi-presidentialism. The veto players theory is an instrument that can be used to analyze semi-presidential constitutional operations. The significance of this paper is not to renew this theory or to bring up a new theoretical framework. This paper only attempts to connect the basic concepts of the veto players theory, an analytical theory, with semi-presidentialism, an issue that is quickly gaining popularity in new democracies. This paper further attempts to incorporate some factors to render this theory more realistic. In addition, the variegation of semi-presidentialism institutions could also offer an empirical experience to help differentiate between different kinds of veto players, especially with regard to the influence of institutions. There is also a theoretical significance when using the veto players theory to explain the stability of semi-presidentialism.

Past literature explains the stability of having multiple variables such as the party system, the president's power and the relationship between the president, prime minister, and the parliament. Researchers classify semi-presidentialism into several subtypes and compare their mutual stability levels. Shugart and Carey the most typical and also the most crucial categorical study related to this. They classify semi-presidentialism into two types, presidential-parliamentary and premier-presidential, according to the president's power.[7] These independent variables can be presented in the form of a model using the veto players theory. This suggests that if the veto players are defined precisely, the stability of the government and its policies can be explained and there will no be a need to classify semi-presidentialism using multiple variables. On the other hand, when discussing the stability of a parliamentary regime, the party system will be the most important independent variable. On the other hand, the president will be the most important variable when discussing the presidential regime. How do we classify these two variables under a semi-presidential regime? The veto players theory is used to analyze these variables. With this in mind, this paper first defines the real veto players that can change a policy or form a government under a semi-presidential regime.

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[5] Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, 209.

[6] Some of these problems could be seen in Steffen Ganghof, "Promises and Pitfalls of Veto Player Analysis," *Swiss Political Science Review* 9, no. 2 (July 2003): 1-25.

[7] Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Secondly, I discuss how these veto players (they are maybe only the president, some parties or both) affect government stability. The key factors are how many veto players there are and how far the distance between them is. Finally, according to the analysis of the practical experience, calculating and defining the actors as the veto players in a semi-presidential system will be also become clearer.

2. *Numbers and Distance Between Veto Players and the Stability of Government*

As defined by Tsebelis, a veto player (VP) is an actor whose agreement is necessary for a change in the status quo (SQ). The winset of the SQ (W(SQ)) is the set of all policies that can replace the existing policy (Tsebelis, 2002: 21). If we use a spatial concept to explain the relationship between the VP, the SQ and the W(SQ), all the possible policies is W(SQ) for this veto player, as shown in Figure 1 below.
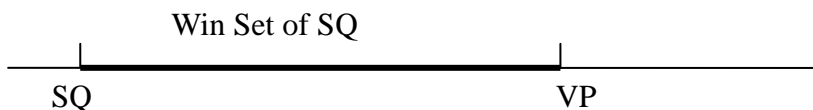

Figure 1. Veto Player, Status Quo and Winset of the Status Quo.

In a two dimensional model with two issues, the W(SQ) will form a circle with the VP at the centre, SQ on the circumference, and the distance between the VP's ideal point and the position of SQ forming the radius of the circle. This is because any policy within this circle is better than SQ to the VP. This representation is shown in Figure 2 below. What this means is any proposal of the set within this circle is better than SQ to this VP. Therefore, if there is only one veto player, the status quo policy might be replaced by any proposal in the W(SQ). The most stable policy is when the policy is at the same position as the VP's ideal point.
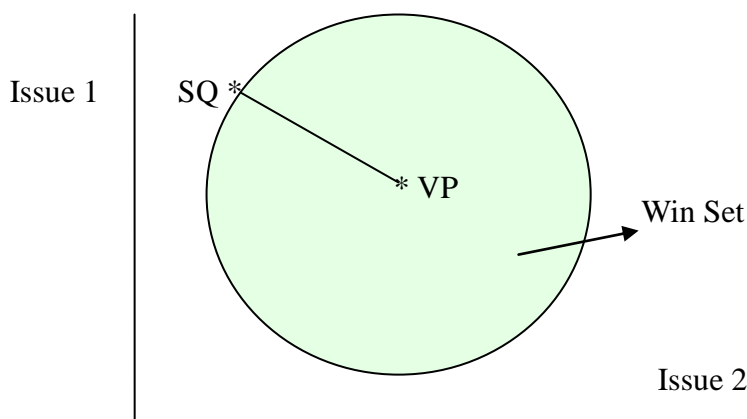

Figure 2. Veto Player, Status Quo and Winset of the Status Quo with two issues.

Now, if there is another veto player (VP2) in this two issues model, there will also be a new W(SQ) for VP2. The W(SQ) of these two veto players will be the overlap of their own W(SQ) circles. Any proposal within the area of overlap is better than SQ to both of the two veto players. This is illustrated in Figure 3. Moreover, the new W(SQ) for both VP1 and VP2 will also be smaller or at least the same one.
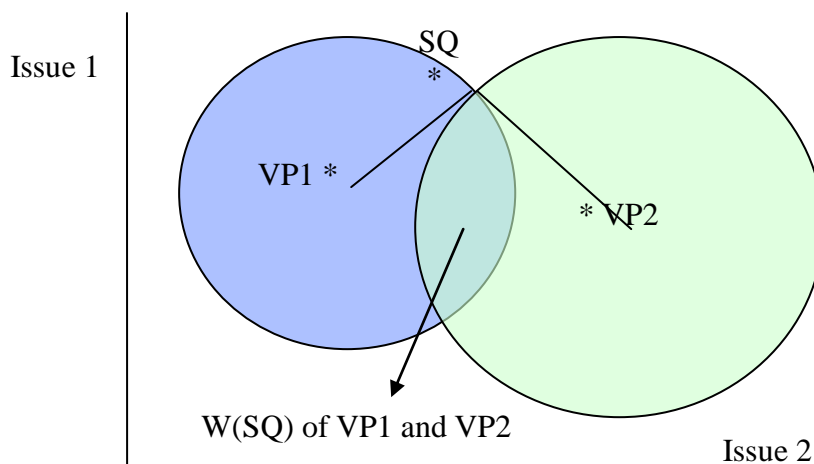

Figure 3. Two Veto Players, Status Quo and Winset of the Status Quo with two issues

In Figure 3, we can also see that VP2's W(SQ) is larger than the W(SQ) of VP1. This is because the distance between SQ and VP2's ideal point is farther. Therefore, more possible policies are better than SQ for VP2. From the discussion and the figures shown above, Tsebelis formed two hypotheses about the relationship between the number of VPs, the distance between the VP and SQ, and the area of W(SQ) as follows. First, as there are more VPs, the area of W(SQ) will become smaller or stay the same at least. The area of W(SQ) will not grow bigger even when more veto players are added. Second, the farther the distance between the VP and SQ is, the larger this VP's W(SQ) is (Tsebelis, 2002: 37).

Now, let's discuss the stability of policy and government. A basic hypothesis is that policy stability leads to government instability (Tsebelis, 2002: 209). This is because a flexible government will change its policy to accommodate changing situations. If the W(SQ) is big, it will be easy to change the SQ of the policy into the W(SQ). On the contrary, if the W(SQ) is small, it is hard to change the SQ of the policy. If the SQ is not in the area of W(SQ), the cost of moving into the W(SQ) will be higher. If the SQ is in the area of W(SQ), it will also be easy to move out from W(SQ) only when one of the VPs changes his position. Therefore, the bigger the W(SQ) is, the more flexible the policy is and the more stable the government is.

To summarize the discussion above, the three basic hypotheses of veto players are:

a. The more veto players there are, the area of W(SQ) of these VPs will therefore be smaller or at least the same.
b. The smaller the area of W(SQ) is, the harder it is to change the policy, and the more stable the policy is.[8]
c. The harder the policy is changed, the more stable the policy is, and the more difficult it becomes to establish consensus; thus the more unstable the government is.

All three of these hypotheses are contrariwise.

Besides the number of veto players, the mutual distance obviously also affects the area of W(SQ). A basic and common hypothesis is that a coalition government will be unstable if the distance between these veto players is extended. This is because the farther the distance is, the smaller W(SQ) of these veto players is. In the two issue model, if VP2 moves his ideal point to a new position and farther from VP1, the winset will therefore become smaller. This means that it is more difficult to get a consensus to replace the SQ when the distance between VP's ideal points grows. This is shown in Figure 4 below.
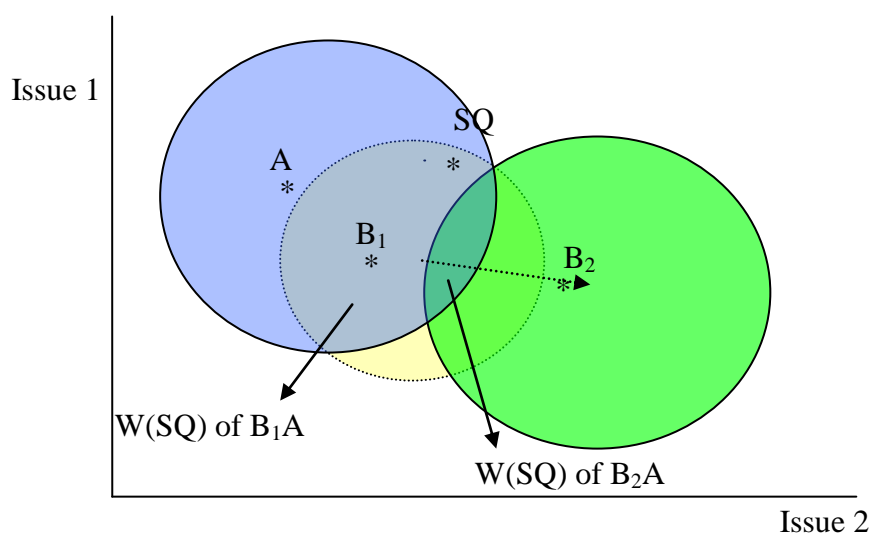

Figure 4. Winset and Distance between Veto Players.

In Figure 3 we can see that the winset of B_1A is larger than the winset of B_2A when veto player B moves his ideal position from B_1 to B_2. This means that the distance of ideology between veto players is also an important variable when veto players want to change the SQ. When these veto players are close, the cost of reaching a compromise will be relatively low. They will find a better proposal to replace the SQ more easily. Therefore, the SQ will be unstable, but the government will be relatively stable. The question is: which is more powerful when we analyze the stability of government using the Veto Players Theory? Should we pay more attention to the number of veto players, or should we consider the distance between ideal points?

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[8] However, if there is only one veto player, the new policy should be one point and thus overlaps with this veto player. But it is not necessarily so actually. This only veto player will move the SQ to any point in the W(SQ) and the new SQ will be therefore unpredictable. It is because this veto player would be still affected by other informal variables such as public opinion or the next election. I will prove this interpretation later.

It is difficult to conclude which one is more important. Besides that, even when the number of veto players and their ideal points could be defined accurately, it would still be hard to explain the process of changing a policy or forming a government individually. It can depend on the regulation, constitutional convention, political history, and even the conditions in each country at the time of government formation. Moreover, there are also some variables which will affect veto players when making a decision. However, a predictable trend would be using size and ideology principles to analyze the stability of government. The more important question is how to define and calculate the number of veto players and the mutual distance between them.

3. *Formal and Informal Veto Players in the Semi-Presidential System*

In this section, I will define the veto players when changing a policy or forming a government in a semi-presidential system. The traditional theory about government formation or coalition theories is explained in the parliamentary system by the size principle and ideological distance.[9] The basic hypotheses are derived from the parliamentary system and the party is the only actor when we analyze the issue of government formation. However, cabinets are formed in highly structured institutional settings. These institutional settings are embedded in the constitution; others are more informal.[10] Thus, how to define the real influential actors when we discuss government formation is a meaningful question. Government formation might be complicated in a semi-presidential system. This is because institutional actors may influence government formation more in a semi-presidential system. The president will also at the very least be an actor.[11]

According to the definition of semi-presidentialism, the president possesses some considerable constitutional powers. He may be powerful and active in appointing a prime minister and forming a government. There are various possibilities for institutional regulations under a semi-presidential system. Semi-presidential countries might be classified as presidentialized, balanced, or parliamentarized semi-presidential systems.[12] In addition, it is more important to compare the differences between these subtypes of semi-presidential countries and the process of government formation. One way to distinguish between these different sub types is to define the veto players in semi-presidentialism. Shugart and Carey have defined two sub-types under semi-presidentialism, the premier-presidential regime and the president-parliamentary regime. The difference between them is the relative power of the president. According to their definition, the president can appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers in a president-parliamentary regime.[13] In this situation, the agreement of the president is required when forming a government. The president therefore could be a veto player when forming a new government. However, there are also some semi-presidential regimes in which the agreement of the president is not necessary when forming a government. The constitutional operation is just like a parliamentary regime. This is what Elgie refers to as parliamentarized semi-presidential systems. Thus, an interesting question about semi-presidentialism is whether the president can be a veto player or not. This depends on the constitutional regulations, which determine whether the president is a veto player or not, and it can also cause varied forms of political practice.

A dual executive system is the most important characteristic of a semi-presidential constitution. In a dual executive system, the government can stay in office only with the confidence of the parliament (or without the opposition of the parliament). Therefore, the majority in government will certainly be a veto player. The difficulty is, in a multi-party system, a parliamentary majority is usually a coalition that is formed by more than two parties. Therefore, whether we define a party as a veto player depends on whether this party is a key actor in forming a government. This means that party system is too complex to be defined as a veto player, unlike the president. We have to observe the real states on a case by case basis. Generally speaking, size and ideology are two basic principles when forming a coalition government. But it still depends on the regulations for forming or dismissing a government.[14]

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[9] Such as Martin and Stevenson, 2001; Lijphart 1999. Laver and Shepsle analyzed government formation according to portfolio allocation. This could also be regarded as an extension of the size principle and ideological distance. For more about portfolio allocation and the government, please see Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Coalitions and Government Cabinet," *The American Political Science Review* 84, no. 3 (September 1990): 873-890.

[10] Kaara Strøm, Minority Government and Majority Rule (New York: Cambridge University, 1990), 25.

[11] Lijphart pointed out that presidential cabinets are one-party cabinets by definition. The one party is president's party because of the president's dominant status in the cabinet. Please see Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 105. The situation in the semi-presidential system is a mixed form within the parliamentary and the presidential system. It means that either the president or the parties could be the actors influencing government formation.

[12] Robert Elgie, "What is Semi-Presidentialism?" In *Semi-Presidentialism Outside Europe*, ed. Robert Elgie and Sophia Moestrup (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 10.

[13] Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, 1992: 24.

[14] Martin and Stevenson concluded that size and ideology and new institutionalism are two principles applied to the subject of forming a coalition government. See Lanny W. Martin and Randolph T. Stevenson, "Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies,"

The first situation is that a majority in the parliament is necessary when forming a new government.[15] There are two possible scenarios in this situation. In a minimum winning coalition cabinet,[16] every party within the coalition is a veto player when changing a policy. However, in a great coalition, a party would be a veto player only when the disagreement of this party would change the majority coalition into a minority. The second situation in which a party would be a veto player is when the agreement of this party is necessary to pass a no confidence vote. Therefore, it depends on the institutional regulations and party system whether a party is a veto player in forming or dismissing a government. The variable is whether a majority is necessary for forming a government. If yes, a party would be a veto player whose support or withdrawal causes a majority or minority. We can say that a party that is a veto player must be a necessary and sufficient condition when forming or dissolving a government.

As mentioned in the discussion above, the president and the parties might be veto players depending on the essence of semi-presidential constitutions. However, the president and parliamentary majority might be affected by some informal variables when changing policies or forming a government although these informal factors are not veto players and does not have force of constraint. Such informal variables make analyzing constitutional operation complete, especially with regard to the stability of government. If we use veto players theory to explain the changing of policy and the stability of government.These informal variables make the difference between theoretical analysis and the real politics. Two of these informal variables are constitutional conventions and the influence of elections. Constitutional conventions are the informal rules to restrict the actors. It may be even another source of constitutional change.[17] However, the convention is an unsettled concept. It becomes difficult when we define the conventions as the real veto player.[18] The influence of elections is another variable affecting constitutional operation. A basic hypothesis is that the status quo will be stable when facing an election of two camps of equal strength. Their position will be similar according to the median voter's theory and the cost for changing the status quo will also be higher. This means that the election will also affect policy making like the constitutional conventions do. Even so, they do not have veto power to restrict the changing of policy.

However, they will affect the performance of the president and the parliamentary majority. It this way the policy will not be moved to the veto player's position from the status quo when there is only one veto player. This is also why the duration of the coalition will be hard to forecast when the president is the only veto player.[19] To summarize the discussion above, the veto players in a semi-presidential regime could be of some different types. Under a dual executive system, the president may or may not be a veto player, depending on the regulations and the constitutional convention. We can say that the president is not a veto player in a parliamentarized semi-presidential regime or in a premier-presidential regime. In this type of system the government is accountable to the parliament and government stability depends on the party system. However, in a presidentialized semi-presidential regime or in a presidential-parliamentary regime, the president may be one or even the only veto player when forming a government. On the other hand, the convention and the influence of elections will also affect the change in the status quo. They both possess the same influence as veto players.

To illustrate these differences, the experience of the Weimar Republic and Taiwan are introduced to discuss these political practices. Weimar was a semi-presidential regime with two different experiences under the same constitutional regulation. From 1919 to 1930, Weimar can be regarded as a premier-presidential regime. The government was responsible to the parliament. After 1930, the government formation depended only on the president. Thus, the constitutional order was transferred into a presidential-parliamentary regime. Using the Veto Players Theory to discuss the two different constitutional operations of Weimar could emphasize the characteristics of the semi-presidential system. Additionally, Taiwan is also worth analyzing using the Veto Players Theory. Taiwan is a typical president-parliamentary system. The president and the parliament are both veto players when forming a government. Before and after 2008, the number of veto player has remained the same (the president and parliament).

American Journal of Political Science 45, no. 1 (January 2001): 34.

[15] As Strøm points out, if a majority is not necessarily the effective decision point to survive or function legislatively, a minority government might therefore be formed. Please see Strøm, *Minority Government and Majority Rule* , 69.

[16] According to the size principle, minimal winning coalitions will be formed in which only those parties that participate are minimally necessary to give the cabinet majority status. See Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, 92.

[17] Some countries even do not have a constitution. The most notable case is the UK.

[18] The influence of constitutional conventions is not noticeable for new democracies. The experience of constitutional democracy is not mature. There is even no convention that could be deemed as a regularized variable. The two cases in this paper, Weimar Germany and Taiwan, were both young democracies in 1919 and 1997. I will not discuss this variable in the text.

[19] I will discuss the experience of Weimar and Taiwan in the following section.

However, the ideological distance between the president and parliamentary majority became much closer after 2008. Using the Veto Players Theory to compare the experience of two presidents, Chen and Ma, could illustrate the importance of the distance.

4. The Constitutional Operation of the Weimar Republic

The Weimar Republic was one of the primal semi-presidential regimes.[20] According to the definition of semi-presidentialism, the Weimar Constitution could be defined as a semi-presidential system. First, according to Article 41, the president of the republic was elected directly by all German people. Second, this president was empowered with some considerable powers. He could dissolve the parliament (the Reichstag) according to Article 25; in Article 48, he received the right to promulgate legally binding emergency decrees. Third, in addition to a directly elected president with considerable powers, there was also a chancellor, who led the government and was responsible to the parliament. This was a typical semi-presidential constitution under Duverger's definition.[21] However, the constitutional operation of the Weimar Republic was unstable. We can find that the number of veto players and the distance of ideology between them affected the stability of government noticeably, especially the role of president. When we want to define whether or not the president is a veto player in forming a government in the semi-presidential system, we should first inspect the regulations of its constitution. Before we analyze the government stability of the Weimar Republic using the Veto Players Theory, we have to define who the veto players are, both by regulation and in reality, when forming a new government.

The "Vertical Dual Executive" of Weimar's Semi-Presidential System

The Weimar Constitution was adopted on July 31, 1919 by a vote of 262 to 75. Although the constitution was by definition a semi-presidential system, the substance of the dual executive system of the Weimar Republic was still different from Duverger's definition. According to Duverger's definition, a semi-presidential constitution is a dual executive system in which the president and the prime minister are both political leaders. They may share or compete for executive power. Therefore, the dual authority structure of semi-presidentialism allows for different balances and also for shifting prevalence of power within the executive, under the strict condition that the "autonomy potential" of each component unit of the executive does subsist.[22] The executive is therefore a horizontal dual authority. The president and the prime minister are both real political leaders with some powers. However, the substance of the Weimar Constitution was the other kind of dual executive system.

As far as Hugo Preuß, the drafter of the Weimar Constitution, was concerned, he was inspired by the experience of the Third Republic in France in enduring a paralyzing parliamentarism, which Preuß was eager to avoid in the first German Republic.[23] By no means did he favor a presidential dictatorship. On the contrary, he thought that the president had to be strong in order to defend a functioning parliamentary government. That is why, in general, Preuß diminished the president's constitutional powers, making him a passive, defensive, and preventative political actor. The president of the Weimar Constitution should be a defender of the constitution.[24] He played a role as a mediator, or an adjustor of political judgment among parties and states in Germany. More importantly, the president needed to be a moderator between the government and the Reichstag when the Reichstag had no clear majority. We can say that the Weimar Constitution constructed a special kind of dual executive: in normal times the chancellor governed, with the support of a majority of the parliament (the Reichstag), while the president was forced to live in the shadows; however, in abnormal times, when the chancellor's government was paralyzed, the president was able to assume all powers, in order to restore normality to the country, making the chancellor his henchman. This is what I mean by the vertical dual executive system. We can say that the constitutional operation is parliamentarized or like the premier-presidential system if a semi-presidential system with a vertical dual executive is practiced.

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[20] The other one is Finland. They both designed a semi-presidential constitution in 1919.

[21] According to Duverger's definition, a political regime can be considered semi-presidential if it combines the following three elements: 1. The president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; 2. He possesses quite considerable political powers; and 3. In addition to him, there exists a prime minister and ministers, who also possess executive and governmental power but depend on the support of a parliamentary majority. See Maurice Duverger, "A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidentialist Government," *European Journal of Political Research* 8, no. 2 (June 1980): 166.

[22] Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 131.

[23] Please see Hugo Preuß, *Staat, Recht und Freiheit: Aus 40 Jahren Deutscher Politik und Geschichte* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Verlag, 1926), 387 and 417.

[24] The concept "Defender of the Constitution" (*Hüter der Verfassung*) was put forward by Carl Schmitt. He thought that the president of the Weimar Constitution should be a neutral mediator, regulator, and a reserved political leader. See Carl Schmitt, *Der Hüter der Verfassung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1931), 137.

Thus, we can define different veto players in two stages. During normal times, the veto players were the parties, whose agreement was necessary when forming a new government, which depended on the size of the coalition. During abnormal times, in such a vertical dual executive system, the president may have been the only veto player when forming a government. Now, let us discuss what happened in the Weimar Republic.

The Weimar Republic from 1919 to 1930

If we analyze the constitutional order using only the articles of the Weimar Constitution, the president and the majority of the parliament would both be veto players when forming a government. However, according to the essence of the constitution and real events, the president and the parliament both could be veto players, depending on the circumstances. First, according to the essence of the Weimar Constitution, the president should be a moderator, through the people's authorization of him by way of direct elections. Although he could appoint the chancellor, this did not mean that he could lead the government. In other words, the government, led by the chancellor, should operate with the confidence of the parliament. This means that the president shouldn't get involved in constitutional politics during normal circumstances.[25] Therefore, the president was expected to be a veto player to form and lead a government only when the state fell into a state of emergency or the parliament could not operate. From 1919 to 1930, there were 16 governments. Only one of them was formed by the president, the others were formed by compromise in the parliament.[26] Therefore, the veto player in forming a government before 1930 was the party system in the parliament. This means that the real political operation and the essence of the Weimar Constitution was a premier-presidential system in which even the president was given many important powers.[27]

As the discussion above reveals, before we define the party system as a veto player, we have to review the regulations for forming a government. According to the Weimar Constitution, the agreement of a parliamentary majority was not required to form a government. However, a parliamentary majority could call for a no confidence vote to dissolve the government. The party system of the Weimar Republic was fragmentary and produced the first in a series of minority governments that accompanied Weimar parliamentarism to its very end. It was difficult to form a government with a stable majority. A fragmented party system was affected by the historical background and was worsened by a purely proportional representative electoral system. The electoral formulas used over the course of the Weimar Republic did not work to encourage majorities, but rather exacerbated an already fragmented, poorly institutionalized, and quite polarized system.[28] A tolerant minority government was normal. For a policy to be changed in a minority government there must be basic agreement of all parties within the minority government and the parties outside the government, whose agreement could avoid a successful no confidence vote when changing policy. Thus, all parties in the government and those outside, whose agreement was necessary to avoid a no confidence vote, were veto players.

Basically speaking, the party system of the Weimar Republic could be divided into three types. The "Weimar Coalition" was composed of the SPD (the Social Democratic Party of Germany, *Sozialdemokratische Partei*), the DDP (the German Democratic Party), and the Z (the Central Party, *Zentrum*). They were the main foundation supporting parliamentary democracy. The Bourgeois Coalition was composed of the DVP (the German People's Party, *Deutsche Volkspartei*), the DNVP (the German National People's Party, *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*), and the BVP (the Bavarian People's Party, *Bayerische Volkspartei*). They were conservative, right-wing, and supported a monarchical constitutional system. There were even two anti-democratic parties, the KPD (the Communist Party of Germany, *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*) and the NSDAP (the National Socialist German Workers' Party, *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*). The Weimar Coalition gained more than a three-fourths majority in 1919, but this coalition was formed through a compromise between the bourgeois and the socialists. However, differing political opinions remained.[29] This cabinet fell after only 128 days because of the Treaty of Versailles.[30]

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[25] We can say that in essence the Weimar Constitution is a parliamentary constitution. The drafter, Hugo Preuß, emphasized that the basic principle behind the constitution was parliamentarianism. See Preuß, *Staat, Recht und Freiheit*, 426.

[26] The government led by Wilhelm Cuno in 1922 was the first government that was formed by the president without the agreement of the parliament. It was also regarded as the first "President's Cabinet" (Präsidialkabinett). See Heinrich August Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2005), 185.

[27] According to Shugart and Carey's research, the Weimar was a president-parliamentary system. However, between 1919 and 1930, Presidents Ebert and Hindenburg were both neutral when forming a government. Most importantly, all the governments before 1930 were responsible to the parliament. Therefore, the political operation before 1930 can be deemed a premier-presidential system.

[28] Cindy Skach, *Borrowing Constitutional Designs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 41.

[29] Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, 102.

[30] The Weimar Coalition separated on whether to accept the Treaty of Versailles. Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann opposed accepting the treaty and left office. Please see Peter-Christian Witt, *Friedrich Ebert* (Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft Verlag, 1987), 138-139.

Distrust between the left and right worsened because of the Treaty. From that time on, most of the governments until 1930 were minority governments tolerated by the SPD. Before the breakdown of the Weimar Republic there were four kinds of coalition government: governments of the Weimar Coalition (formed by the SPD, the DDP and the Z); governments of the Bourgeois Coalition (formed by the Z, the DDP, the DVP or the BVP, and two times with the DNVP); governments of the Great Coalition (formed by the SPD, the DDP, the Z, and the DVP or the BVP); and the presidential cabinet (formed by the president without party support). Within these different coalition governments, the Z and the DDP were the most important members. The parties that could influence the government's survival were the SPD, the DVP and the DNVP. Actually, most government collapses were due to their differing opinions. The ideological position of these parties and the three kinds of coalitions are shown in Figure 5.
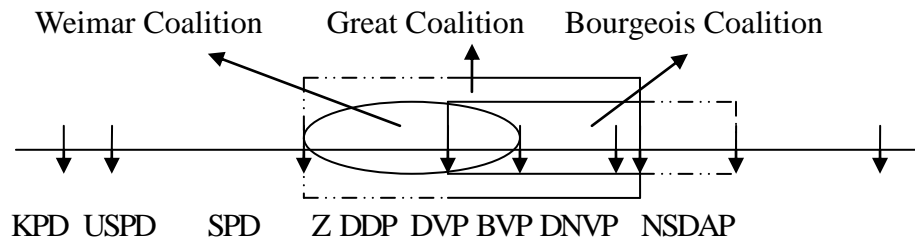

Figure 5. Party System and the Three Kinds of Coalitions in the Weimar Republic

There were different calculations in these different types of coalition governments. First, in the Weimar Coalition government, the government would break down when the members of the coalition had different policies and views. Therefore, all three parties, the SPD, the DDP and the Z were always veto players in the Weimar Coalition government. I call this government *WCG* (three veto players). Second, in the Bourgeois Coalition, there were two sub-types. If the DNVP was in the Bourgeois Coalition, then all parties in the coalition government would be veto players. This situation occurred twice. I call this government *BCG I* (three veto players). If the Bourgeois Coalition did not include the DNVP, it meant that the DNVP was against the minority government. Under this condition, the SPD would be a veto player. If the SPD did not tolerate the minority Bourgeois Coalition government, the government would also break down.[31] This is because the SPD always controlled over 20% of the parliament. If the SPD did not tolerate the minority government, the minority government could not survive.

Therefore, the agreement of the SPD was not necessary when dissolving the government under the Bourgeois Coalition without the DNVP. I call this government *BCG II* (N+1 veto players, N is the number of the coalition government). Third, in the Great Coalition, a party would be a veto player if its support or withdrawal caused a majority or minority. There were two Great Coalition governments before 1930. In 1923, a Great Coalition was formed by the SPD, the DDP, the Z, and the DVP. None of these four parties was dispensable. However, in the Great Coalition that was formed by five parties in 1928, three of the parties were not necessary to create a majority. We can say there were only two veto players in this Great Coalition. Finally, after 1930, the government was formed by the president and not by party coalition. President Paul von Hindenburg decided to form a government without the agreement of parliament. The president's cabinet was formed in 1930 by the president under Articles 53 and 48 of the Weimar Constitution. The parliament would be dissolved if the parliament was against the cabinet. From that time on, the survival of the government depended on the president's support, but not on the parliament's. The president was the only veto player when forming or dissolving a government. I will discuss this situation in detail in the next paragraph. The specifics of all the governments of the Weimar Republic from 1920 to 1932 are shown in Figure 6.[32]

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[31] The Great Coalition of 1923 fell because the SPD left. Also, in 1926, the SPD did not tolerate the minority government of the Bourgeois Coalition without the DNVP and twice initiated a no confidence vote to dissolve the government within a year's time. It was clear that the SPD would be seen as a veto player even though the SPD was not in the government.

[32] The first government under the Weimar Constitution was the government led by Gustav Bauer, not the government led by Philipp Scheidemann.

Parties within the government	Number of parties	Type of government and veto players	Duration of government (beginning and end)
SPD, DDP, Z	3	WCG / 3	279 (01/1919-03/1920)
DDP, DVP, Z	3	BCG II / 4	315 (06/1920-05/1921)
SPD, DDP, Z	3	WCG / 3	165 (05/1921-10/1921)
SPD, DDP, Z	3	WCG / 3	384 (10/1921-11/1922)
DDP, DVP, Z	3	BCG II / 4	304 (11/1922-08/1923)
SPD, DDP, DVP, Z	4	Great / 4	99 (08/1923-11/1923)
Z, DDP, DVP, BVP	4	BCG II / 5	178 (11/1923-05/1924)
Z, DDP, DVP	3	BCG II / 4	196 (06/1924-12/1924)
Z, DDP, DNVP	3	BCG I / 3	323 (01/1925-12/1925)
Z, DDP, DVP, BVP	4	BCG II / 5	111 (01/1926-05/1926)
Z, DDP, DVP, BVP	4	BCG II / 5	215 (05/1926-12/1926)
Z, DVP, DNVP	3	BCG I / 3	499 (01/1927-06/1928)
SPD, DDP, Z, BVP, DVP	5	Great / 2	637 (06/1928-03/1930)
No Parties	0	PC / 1	729 (03/1930-05/1932)

Figure 6. Parties, Veto Players, Type of Government and Duration of the Government

Next, let's check the government stability and the number of veto players. From the discussion above we know that the more veto players there are, the W(SQ) will be therefore smaller or the same. It means the policy is less flexible and the government is less stable. The experience of the Weimar Republic proves this hypothesis. The relationship between veto players and the duration of government is noticeable. A simple regression model of the number of veto players and the duration of government is shown in Figure 7. Moreover, many researchers presume that a president-parliamentary system is much more unstable than premier-presidential system. However, the experience of the Weimar illustrates that the critical factor does not lie in whom the government is responsible to, but the number of veto player who decide the survival of the government.
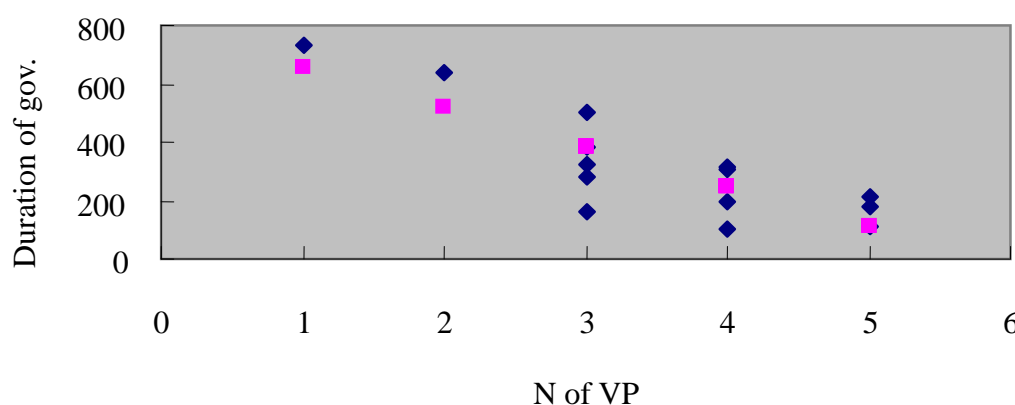
Regression Analysis	
R Square	0.6962
Standard Error	108.9469
Case Number	14
Significant	0.000206

Figure 7. Regression Analysis of Veto Players and Duration of Government

Weimar from 1930 to 1933

The principle of constitutional operation after 1930 was totally different. The president became the only veto player in Weimar's semi-presidential system. Even though the constitution was not changed, the parliament could not dissolve the government successfully. When the parliament called for a no confidence vote, the president could dissolve the parliament at once.[33]

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[33] Actually, the parliament had agreed to the president's cabinet in the beginning. The SPD called for a vote of no confidence in the Brüning government but lost the vote 253 to 187. This signified that the Reichstag supported the Reich President's Cabinet. See

According to the essential aspects of the constitution, the president could not use the emergency powers to change the principles of the constitution, including the essence of parliamentary democracy. In other words, the president could not change the mode of a parliamentary democracy, according to the principle of the republic under Article 48. However, the president's cabinet, which was formed in 1930 and operated under Article 48, was a radical change in the form of government. We can say that the political operation changed into a president-parliamentary or even a presidentialized system after 1930. The Weimar's semi-presidential constitutional structure provided the necessary institutional conditions for this. As the basic hypothesis of the Veto Players Theory, a policy will be changed easily with only one veto player. However, the replaced policy will also be ???. The experience of the Weimar Republic after 1930 also proves this hypothesis. An evident example was the prohibition of the SS (*Schutz-Staffel*) and SA (*Strom Detachments*), two armed groups of the NSDAP. In April 1932, Hindenburg decided to prohibit the SA and SS. However, the prohibition was removed two months later. Such an important policy change occurred without the concurrence of parliament.

The personalization of the decision-making was a noticeable characteristic in the last years of the Weimar Republic. It was the outcome of the semi-presidential constitution with a fragmentary party system. In June 1932, Franz von Papen was nominated chancellor by President Hindenburg without the agreement of the parliament. At the same time, Papen was empowered by Hindenburg to dissolve the parliament if the parliament called for a no-confidence vote. In September 1932, the parliament opposed Papen's cabinet 513 to 42.[34] However, Papen dissolved the parliament right away and promoted his policy under Article 48. From a jurisprudential perspective, though Papen had the power to dissolve the parliament, the no-confidence vote by the parliament was still effective. The government could not promote any policy before reelecting and forming a new government. It proved again that the President was the only veto player when the constitutional principle slid into a presidential system from a parliamentary system.

5.   The Constitutional Operation of Taiwan

Beginning in 1948, Taiwan was ruled by the Kuomintang's authoritarian Chiang Kai-shek as a dictatorship until his son, Chiang Ching-kuo died in 1987. After that, the opposition pushed hard for democratization and constitutional reform. The society strongly appealed for a constitutional revision. We can say that the major issues in Taiwan's constitutional reforms reflect the path of its democratization.[35] The first achievement was the full elections of the Legislative Yuan in 1992. After that, a series of constitutional reforms moved Taiwan toward a semi-presidential system. First, President Lee Teng-hui wanted to consolidate his ruling position through a direct election. The prevalent opinion among Lee's opponents in the KMT was the country should follow the stipulations of the constitution and the prime minister should take charge of the government and be responsible to the Legislative Yuan. However, President Lee was successful in manipulating the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) and subjugating his KMT rivals. He got direct presidential elections, removed the need for the prime minister's counter-signature for presidential appointments and removals, gained the power to issue emergency decrees, instituted the National Security Council and the National Security Bureau directly under presidential command, and appointed all the members of the Control Yuan and the Examination Yuan.[36] The president became a powerful political leader chosen by popular election in this stage.

Secondly, even though the president was empowered with many considerable powers, the government was still led by the premier. This part was also the essence of the constitution in 1947. However, the constitutional amendment in 1997 changed this structure. As amending the constitution required a majority of three-quarters in the National Assembly, President Lee had to make a deal with the DPP. In 1996, Lee made a swap with DPP Chairman Hsu Hsin-liang by offering the parliament a vote of no confidence for the presidential prerogative to appoint the prime minister without the parliament's consent.[37] According to this amendment, the constitutional structure in 1997 fit the definition of semi-presidentialism.

The "Horizontal Dual Executive" of Taiwan's Semi-Presidential System
The constitutional operation of Taiwan is totally different from that in the Weimar Republic.

Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, 377. Even if the parliament majority succeeded to pass a no confidence vote, the cabinet could still govern under the emergency power of the president. And the president could dissolve the parliament to keep the cabinet in position. This example describes the von Papen government in 1932. The parliamentary majority had not been the veto player. The president had been the only veto player under the president's cabinet since 1930.

[34] In addition, there were six abstentions. The 42 votes were almost all from the DNVP. Please see Eberhard Kolb, *Die Weimarer Republik* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 145 or Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, 522-523.

[35] Jih-wen Lin, "The Evolvement of Taiwan's Constitutional System,"in *The Political System of Taiwan*. Markus Porsche-Ludwig and Chin-peng Chu (eds) (Baden-Baden: Norms, 2009), 34.

[36] Yu-Shan Wu, "Semi-Presidentialism--Easy to Choose, Difficult to Operate," in Robert Elgie and Sophia Moestrup (eds), *Semi-presidentialism Outside Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 204.

[37] Wu, "Semi-Presidentialism--Easy to Choose, Difficult to Operate," 205.

First, the Weimar Republic was a semi-presidential with a vertical dual executive system, but Taiwan can be described as having a horizontal dual executive system. This means that the president and the premier are both political leaders and veto players at the same time in the constitutional operation.[38] The president has the power to make policy, even during normal times, especially about cross-strait relations. Additionally, the majority party in the Legislative Yuan is also a veto player when forming a government that includes the Control Yuan and the Examination Yuan. Thus, there are always at least two institutional veto players in Taiwan's semi-presidential constitution. The parties play a role as veto players in Taiwan in a more simple way than in Weimar Germany. There were three different kinds of coalitions in the Weimar Republic because of the fragmentary party system. But the party system in Taiwan is succinct in two camps, pan blue and pan green. The party system and the potential coalitions are shown in Figure 8. Under these conditions, the parliament is often a veto player due to a single party having control. The government will be stable, but the policy will change more easily when the president and the majority of the parliament belong to the same party. On the contrary, the government will be more unstable but the policy will be harder to change when the president and the majority of parliament belong to different parties.
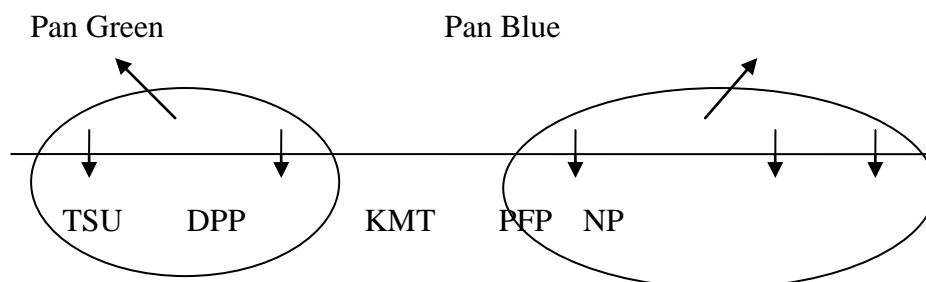
Figure 8. Party System and the Two Kinds of Coalitions in Taiwan

In 2004, President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) sent a list of nominees for the Control Yuan to the Legislative Yuan for approval. The pan-blue camp, which held a majority in the Legislative Yuan, refused to confirm the nominees. The political deadlock that resulted stopped the function of the Control Yuan from February 2005 to July 2008. This incident proved that political deadlock is a normal condition when there are two polarized veto players. Besides the president and the parliament, as the discussion above indicates, some informal variables will also act as veto players when changing policy. After the presidential election in 2000, a polarized struggle has appeared in the political system. Moreover, the struggle between the political elite has aggravated the top-down cleavage in Taiwan's society.[39] This creates a polarized and zero-sum electoral competition between the pan-blue and pan-green camps. This struggle increases the cost of changing important policies. The costs will also grow when the parties face an upcoming election. Thus, the election will function as a veto player, especially when it is drawing near. To summarize the experience of Taiwan, the status quo of policy will be unstable when the president and the parliamentary majority are of the same party or coalition, especially when the next election will not be held still for a long time. On the contrary, the status quo of policy will be most stable when the president and the parliamentary majority are of different camps, especially when facing an upcoming election.

A notable example is the issue about retaining the office of the Minister of the Department of Health, Yaung Chih-Liang in March 2010. Yaung was ready to resign because of his inability to reform the National Health Insurance system. He believed that the biggest resistance to reform was the election coming in the end of 2010. However, President Ma Ying-jeou persuaded Yaung to stay in office. The Legislative Yuan did not have influence in this event at all. President Ma was the only veto player in this case.[40] Compared with the experience of the Weimar Republic, the most notable difference is the influence of elections and the party system. This is because of the different dual executive system between the Weimar Republic, a vertical dual executive system, and Taiwan, a horizontal dual executive system. The party system will be an effective veto player in a government led by premier in a vertical dual executive system like that in Weimar Germany from 1919 to 1930.

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[38] The president's main constitutional power is to appoint the premier at his will. Moreover, he can also appoint the president of the Control Yuan and the president of the Examination Yuan.
[39] Chen-Kuo Shih, "Party Politics in Taiwan," in *The Political System of Taiwan*. Markus Porsche-Ludwig and Chin-peng Chu (eds) (Baden-Baden: Norms, 2009), 88-89.
[40] For more details, see "Health minister resigns over premium dispute," *Taipei Times* 09/Mar 2010. http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/03/09/2003467567; or "Yaung to brief Ma on health premiums," *Taipei Times* 11/Mar 2010. http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2010/03/11/2003467745.

However, the president will be the most important, perhaps even the only veto player when forming or replacing a government under a horizontal dual executive system, a president-parliamentary system like Taiwan, or when the government is led by the president in a vertical dual executive system like Weimar Germany from 1930 to 1933.

6. *Ideological Distance and the Stability of Government*

In addition to the number of veto players, the distance between the ideological positions of these veto players could also affect the stability of the government.[41] In Figure 4, we can see that even if there are only two veto players, it will still cause different results because of the different ideological distances between them. The Weimar Republic also proves this hypothesis. In the Weimar Republic, there were two kinds of Bourgeois Coalitions. One of them was a coalition formed by the DDP, the Z, and the DVP, but with the tolerance of the SPD (*BCG I*). The other was formed by the DDP, the Z, the DVP, and the DNVP, but without the tolerance of the SPD (*BCG II*). In both Bourgeois Coalitions, the Z and the DDP were two basic members in the government. They seldom objected to policies. Influencing the survival of government was the relationship between the DVP and the SPD or the relationship between the DVP and the DNVP. It was clear that the ideological positions of the DVP and the DNVP were closer than those of the DVP and the SPD. Under such conditions, when they were all veto players, BCG I was more fragile than BCG II. There were six governments formed as BCG I, and two as BCG II. The average life of BCG I was 220 days and 411 days for BCG II, two times longer than BCG I (See Figure 5). This was because the ideological distance between the SPD and the DVP was farther than the distance between the DVP and the DNVP.

In 1926, the SPD twice called for a no confidence vote against two Bourgeois Coalitions that did not include the DNVP (type BCG I), which were led by Luther and Marx, respectively. They survived for 111 and 215 days, respectively. Both Bourgeois Coalitions with the DNVP (type BCG II) collapsed because of the secession of the DNVP. They survived for 323 days and 499 days. These four experiences prove two hypotheses: first, the extreme party within a coalition will turn against the coalition more easily. Second, the farther the distance between their ideologies is, the easier it is for parties to oppose each other. Taiwan is also a typical case to prove the hypothesis about ideological distance. From 2000 to 2008, Chen Shui-bian, of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was the president of Taiwan. But the DDP was a minority party in the parliament (the Legislative Yuan). The opposition coalition, the KMT (Kuomintang), the People First Party (PFP) and the New Party (NP), won a clear and consolidated majority. Although the opposition coalition was formed by three parties, they hung together as a unit when facing President Chen and his government.

It is a typical example of two veto players. During these eight years, it was hard to change or promote important policies, and the premier changed frequently.[42] Although the premier and ministers never resigned because of a no-confidence vote by the parliament, there were many instances when the premier or ministers resigned because they couldn't promote their policies. The first premier, Tang Fei, announced his resignation five months after taking up an official post because of the issue of building a new nuclear power plant. In 2002, Minister of Finance Lee Yung-sanand Chairman of the Council of Agriculture Fan Chen-tsung resigned over the financial reform of farmers' and fishermen's credit associations. In 2006, Minister of Transportation and Communication Kuo Yao-chi also resigned because of difficultly promoting her own agenda. Not only were the cabinet members replaced frequently, but the cabinet also reorganized many times. The duration of governments from 2000 to 2008 is shown in Figure 9.

Premier	Term	Duration of government
Tang Fei	2000/0520 - 2000/1006	139
Chang Chun-hsiung	2000/1006 – 2002/0201	472
Yu Shyi-kun	2002/0201 – 2005/0201	1095
Hsieh Frank (Chang-ting)	2005/0201 – 2006/0125	359
Su Tseng-chang	2006/0125 – 2007/0521	481
Chang Chun-hsiung	2007/0521 – 2008/0520	365

Figure 9. Duration of the Governments of Taiwan from 2000 to 2008

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[41] Tsebelis, "Decision Making in Political Systems," 308.

[42] According to Taiwan's constitution, the president can appoint the premier without legislative approval. The president can also dissolve the parliament when the parliament calls a no-confidence vote. The cost of winning re-election under the SNTV (single non-transferable vote) electoral structure is very high. This means a majority coalition would rather face a minority government than issue a no-confidence vote. See Da-chi Liao and Herlin Chien, "Why No Cohabitation in Taiwan?" *China Perspectives* 58 (April 2005): 58.

During these eight years, there were also many reformative policies that were not passed because the president and the parliamentary majority were unable to agree.[43] The Arms Procurement Bill was the most reprehensive case. It was shelved more than 45 times. In 2003, the parliament had only passed 15.6% of the drafts proposed by Executive Yuan.[44] On the other hand, the Executive Yuan also refused or asked to reexamine some bills passed by the parliament such as the building of a nuclear power plant (2000), the Finance Distribution Law (2002), the Referendum Law (2003), the Annual Budget of 2006, and the reformative bill of the farmers' and fishermen's associations (2007). In March 2008, Ma Ying-jeou, of the KMT, won the presidential election. In December 2007, before the presidential election, the KMT also won an absolute majority in the Legislative Yuan. Thus, even though there are still two veto players when making and changing policies, these two veto players belong to the same party. This means that the consensus for changing policy between the government and the parliament is easy to set up, and the government is more flexible when changing policies. Moreover, the president will become the most effective veto player in this condition under a horizontal dual executive system. From May 2008 to now, many important policies have been changed or are disputant, but the government has remained stable. In addition, no ministers have resigned because of the changing or disputant policies. The changes in important policies during the last year are shown in Figure 10.

Date	Ministry	Policy content
Feb. 2009	Ministry of Health	"1.5 Generation NHI Act" would not come into effect this year.
Feb. 2009	Ministry of Education	Policy of Educational Vouchers is suspended.
Mar. 2009	Ministry of Examination	U-turn on the plan to add China's (PRC) Constitution to some national civil servant exams.
Oct. 2009	Ministry of Health	Dispute about the import of US Beef. The President, Executive Yuan and local government disagree.
Mar. 2010	Ministry of Civil Service	Proposal of Civil Servants Evaluation Act is changed many times.
Mar. 2010	Ministry of Health	Proposal of NHI is rejected by Premier Wu Den-yih but supported by President Ma. Minister Yaung Chih-liang remains in office thereafter.

Figure 10. Some Important "U-Turn" or disputant policies in Taiwan after 2008

On the other hand, some important policies which could change the status quo about cross-strait relations were adopted quickly despite Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) opposition. In June 2009, three agreements on financial cooperation, expansion of air links and joint efforts to combat crime and boost judicial cooperation became bills even without the examination of the Legislative Yuan. In June 2009, President Ma was elected chairman of KMT. Thus, he is now more influential especially with the KMT-led majority in the Legislative Yuan. The government will tend to be responsible to him. Even though the parliamentary majority remains a formal veto player, President Ma will likely continue to be the most powerful veto player for the next three years. The experiences of Taiwan and the Weimar Republic prove the hypothesis about the distance between veto players' ideology and the stability of policy and government. The farther the distance between ideologies, the smaller the winset is, and the more stable the SQ of policy is, and vice versa. Moreover, from the experience of the Weimar Republic after 1930 and the experience of Taiwan after 2008, we can also see that if the president is the only veto player, the government will be strong and independent of the parliament. The policy and the duration of the government will also be very unpredictable.

7. *Conclusion*

This paper tries to use the Veto Players Theory to emphasize the specific characteristics of semi-presidential regimes. The Veto Players Theory is a kind of spatial model used to discuss the stability of policy and the government. If we can define every veto player and the position of the status quo correctly, this theory will be a powerful tool to explain the relationship between the veto players and the stability of the government. However, more variables are needed to individually explain the processes and outcomes of changing a policy or forming a government. There is a great amount of research that discusses the stability of semi-presidential regimes in terms of the party system, the president's constitutional power, electoral formula, and the relationship between the president and the premier. Thus, using the Veto Players Theory to discuss the stability of semi-presidential regimes is succinct. We can work many different kinds of variables into one dimension to discuss the stability of policy and the government. I summarize the conclusions of this paper as follows. First, under a semi-presidential regime, whether the president is a veto player depends on the regulations of the constitution.

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[43] These policies were things like the Referendum Law and the Party Asset Bill. If drafts attempted to change the status quo, they would be difficult to pass in the Legislative Yuan.

[44] The Executive Yuan has proposed 102 drafts but only 16 drafts were passed by the Legislative Yuan.

The notable characteristic of semi-presidentialism is the dual executive system, which has two forms. One of them is a government based on the confidence of the parliament. The other is a government formed by the president. In Taiwan, the president can form a government and make policies. Thus, the president could be deemed as a veto player when changing policies. In the Weimar Republic before 1930, the president did not intervene or interfere in the constitutional operation. He was not a veto player when forming a government or changing policies. However, when the president used the emergency powers to form the presidential cabinet without the agreement of parliament in 1930, he became the only veto player.

Second, after defining the veto players, we can see that the fewer veto players there are, the bigger the winset might be. This means that the status quo is more easily replaced, and the government is therefore more flexible and more stable. According to this hypothesis, a president-parliamentary system will not necessarily be more unstable than a premier-presidential system. The critical point should be the number of veto players but not the power of the president. A premier-parliamentary system with a fragmentary party system will still be more unstable than a president-parliamentary system with a powerful president. As the experience of the Weimar Republic shows, the relationship between the number of veto players and the stability of government is notable. No matter which kind of government, when there were more veto players, the government was much more unstable. It did not matter if the government was a Great Coalition or not. Moreover, under a fragmentary party system such as the Weimar, a minority government with fewer veto players was even more stable than a Great Coalition, but with more veto players.

Third, not only could the number of veto players affect the stability of the status quo and the stability of the government, but the ideological distance between them also could. In the experience of Taiwan from 2000 to date, there have always been two veto players when changing policies. But the ideological distance between the government led by the president and the majority of the parliament from 2000 to 2008 was far, thus the winset of the status quo was very small. This means that the policy was stable but the government was unstable. The two kinds of Bourgeois Coalitions of the Weimar Republic before 1930 also prove this hypothesis.

Fourth, semi-presidentialism is a dual executive system. It is possible for the president to be the only veto player. In the Weimar's experience, the president was the only veto player according to the vertical dual executive system from 1930 to 1933. Also, in Taiwan, President Ma became the most powerful veto player after June 2009 when he was elected chairman of KMT. The more powerful the president is, the stronger and more independent of the parliament the government would be. However, it does not mean that the policies will be easy to change or the operation of government will be stable. On the contrary, the replaced policies or personal matters of the cabinet will be more unpredictable. It shows that the veto player theory needs to tie in other variables to explain the reality of politics. The experiences of the Weimar Republic and Taiwan both prove this contention.

Finally and thus, to increase the practicability and to be close to the real politics, it is worth noting that some informal factors will affect veto players, such as constitutional conventions and the influence of elections when changing policies or forming the government. The status quo will be more stable when elections are near or hard to change by the constitutional conventions. The affected variables are defined case by case. It is hard to measure but is important. These variables are without intentions but still affect veto players and are effective in stabilizing governments. However, when we use the Veto Players Theory, the most critical and difficult aspect is how to define the status quo of policy? How far apart are the positions of the status quo and the distances between each of the veto players? Indeed, we need more detailed information and knowledge about each case before using the Veto Players Theory to explain government stability. Even so, the Veto Players Theory still provides another kind of lens to explain the constitutional operation of a semi-presidential regime.

8. References

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