

Reconciling Institutions With Presidential Skills: A Framework Designed Throw a Metaphor Resource

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Abstract

Context factors and institutional aspects have dominated explanations of republic multiparty regimes, especially in developing countries. However, given the various events of high instability and institutional fragility that these countries are going through, theoretical arguments are insufficient to understand the new scenarios. In this article, we make two main arguments. First, the strategies and profile of presidential terms will only be effectively detected with the help of a skill set demonstrated or acquired by presidents. Second, the interpretation of multiparty presidentialism can be better conceived through a systemic theoretical construct. As a method, we propose the application of an integrative framework with the help of the heuristic resource of the metaphor. Using the Brazilian case as support, the inclusion of the presidential skills approach and application of the integrative framework allowed us to connect, illustrate and better understand the dynamic profile of multiparty political systems.

Key words: Presidential skills; Multiparty presidentialism; Coalitions; Governability

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INTRODUCTION

Studies that address the patterns of multiparty presidentialism in developing countries point to the strong centrality of Presidents as explanatory axes for the functioning of these systems. However, in recent years, we have seen a strong difficulty in confirming or anticipating scenarios based only on traditional institutionalist analyses, nor do the effects of social or economic crises offer sufficient elements to get a sense of the leadership strategies of these countries. In this article, we intend to highlight the importance and need to seek a theoretical synthesis that includes in its design a set of presidential skills that define their profile and their possible strategies.

The Brazilian case is very illustrative to understand the challenge of this proposal. Right after redemocratization, the beginning of the 1980s, the theoretical arguments described our Brazilian political system as very vulnerable, generating high costs of governance and leading to decision-making paralysis, due to the explosive combination of its institutions (Abranches, 2018; Mainwaring, 2022). In the first years of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) government, new research was stimulated to understand the behavior opposite to the theoretical explanations hitherto in force. In this way, a new theoretical current about the presidential system emerged, whose main argument was that the system has tools of coordination between the Executive and the Legislative, enabling governance. In this way, presidential powers and procedural norms would be able to tone down the destabilizing potential of the combination of rules. This explanatory wave remained predominant of FHC and Lula until the middle of the Rousseff government, a period from which the first signs of imbalance were noticed and that resulted in the events of the last five years in the country.

With a scenario tainted by the fall of confidence in the political class, the 2018 elections had a background polarization and anti-system narrative. So won the hitherto

unlike candidate Jair Bolsonaro, who maintained a long parliamentary career, but of little expression, having captured much of the popular discontent as someone outside the system and who would face the so-called “old politics”. By rejecting the practice of governing by coalition, proper to the grammar of the Brazilian political system, the new President refused to share power, to share decisions and to negotiate with the various agents. Without implementing a “new policy” or move forward with your schedules, Bolsonaro ended up demonstrating complete ineptitude in dealing with the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and, finally, surrendered to the conducts he criticized so much, by forming an emergency coalition with the traditional and clientelist parties.

In view of this recent and tumultuous history, one wonders: where did the stability of the system and governance that marked most of the managements of FHC and Lula end up? Would coalition presidentialism have reached balance? What was lost theoretically in later years?

Thus contingency aspect that the presence of the personal or individual element in the leadership of the Presidency of the Republic calls attention. In addition to the contextual factors of each moment, such as external crises, disasters and the political profiles presented by the party scenario, it is possible to observe characteristics of the different presidencies. We understand that the presidential profile has always been decisive, even under the same institutional bases. In this way, a third theoretical line can be added, equally complementary, but which until today has not been properly used as an explanatory possibility of presidentialism in developing countries. An approach that highlights the Presidents’ skill set.

The interpretation of multiparty presidentialism can be better conceived through a systemic theoretical construct, formed by the junction of the approaches, betting on its complementarity and not on supposed divergence or alternation, as the historical cycles may eventually reinforce. If in isolation such conceptions have a limited scope, finding a means of integrating approaches can increase the explanatory spectrum. Factors such as institutional environment, coalition management and coordination mechanisms, profile and political behavior can be tailored to address the complexity of the national political system.

In this article, we propose the application of a framework aiming at the repositioning of the current theoretical debate and the consolidation of the efforts already employed to unravel the multiparty presidentialism. To this end, we will make use of the heuristic resource of the metaphor, comparing the dynamics that involves motorsport with the functioning of Brazilian presidentialism, allowing the visualization and better understanding of the illustration that will represent the theoretical synthesis.

MOTORSPORT AND PRESIDENTIALISM: METAPHORICAL CONNECTIONS

Metaphors are ubiquitous expressions of thought, of communication, of action, in short, of everyday life. One of the fundamental factors to explain the functionality of metaphors in scientific communication is the realization of the theoretical thought with the creation of instructive images for the understanding of a phenomenon, overcoming, in various circumstances, the mere record of the text. Thus, they foster a differentiated understanding of theoretical concepts and the ability to apply them to reality.

In addition to innovation resources, metaphors are also instruments that mobilize human emotion and, therefore, exert a rhetorical effect, an argumentative function in language because they transmit values (Turner, 2014). The use of metaphors in the assimilation of theoretical constructs becomes an effective strategy because they trigger reasoning to see a more abstract construction as treatable or controllable by more objective thinking.

Metaphor is a mechanism that involves the perception of one domain of experience applied to another, that is, it allows the use of a structured and delineated concept to structure another concept. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) identify, for each metaphor, a “source domain” and a “target domain”. The source domain involves relatively concrete areas, while the target domain tends to be more abstract.

In addition to the connection between expressions of a widely shared world, metaphors can link or construct identities between concepts and integrate them in ways that form new models. These are processes known as blending *or* combination. His theory consists in making the union between inputs, generating a combined conceptual space, giving rise to new theoretical conceptions (Turner, 2014), without loss of content.

In this way, from the premise on the use of metaphors, we aim to achieve a joint attention, establishing simple references from the concrete example chosen by us and, therefore, achieve the blending or combination of the three theoretical approaches to the generation of a single framework that offers answers about presidentialism. The metaphor proposed for our argument is that of motorsport.

Why motorsport? It is a sport whose results depend on many factors and are objectively observed. Although the most prominent figures are the drivers, whose talent gives the features of the show and raises the chance of success, winning races or championships depends on a considerable range of variables, which go through the characteristics of the team (from the potential of the car, multidisciplinary staff of professionals such as the head of the team, engineers, mechanics, computer technicians, etc.), by the characteristics and challenges of the circuits, up to the climatic conditions during the events. Thus, the management and cooperation within the team must be added to the talent of the drivers to overcome opponents in different conditions.

Table 1
Motorsport and Presidentialism: references to the sense of metaphor

Motorsport	Presidentialism
Drivers want to remain competing in seasons	President wish to remain in power
The meaning of motorsport is its competitive and performance character	Permanent political competition and competition for power (re-election, successor, party stand, etc.) boosts the Presidents' performance
The permanent existence of championships motivates the performance of drivers and teams	The regularity of elections and political competition boost the performance of Presidents (to be re-elected, make his successor, his party maintain/increase the bench in Congress, win local elections etc)
Each pilot has his or her own style of driving and interacting with his or her team	Each President has a profile - a history, a career, his ideology and worldview, as well as a dynamic of dealing with his or her supporters
Each team is made up of area heads and a large working staff	The President has a team of collaborators formed by his adviser, Ministers and parties and support coalition cadres
Each team has equipment and technologies to compete	The President has the institutional tools to govern
Each circuit demand determined equipment hit and strategy to better guide the vehicle	Each mandate has its own governance agendas and challenges that arise due to circumstances and needs
Weather is a relevant and challenging factor for pilot and staff	Exogenous situations, such as international circumstances and economic circumstances, as well as contexts constructed from election results, impose specific challenging "climates"
The success of the driver is due to his competitiveness, his performance, his victories, his prestige with the public and his team and his reputation before opponents	Presidential success comes from governability, public policy results, staying in power (re-election) or as a political influencer
Rules regulate the championship, delimiting the performance of drivers and teams	Constitutional and legal rules are controlled by the Legislative, Judicial and other external control bodies

Source: Own elaboration.

Several results are possible. It is known that the choices are not always the best, that driver and team do not get the best “hit” car, and weather conditions can create huge challenges even for the most skilled. You cannot ignore that good drivers may not be on the best teams, harming their performance, just as good teams cannot perform miracles when their drivers are just average or inconsequential. And even if everything is up to expectations, talented riders on good teams can suffer not totally manageable adversities, damaging their performance.

This complex and multifaceted nature shows that motorsport may present similarities with the dynamics of multiparty and coalition presidentialism. In this case, motorsport will be our “source domain”, while multiparty presidentialism will be the “target domain”, so that we can hold the joint Attention that starts to raise some references that make sense.

For a metaphor to work, it is not necessary to exhaust the references to reality or unravel all the links that replicate the shades of the phenomenon that we are trying to explain. The metaphorical resource aims to facilitate the assimilation of the proposal of the junction of existing theoretical approaches. In this article, we seek to perform a theoretical blending for the composition of a more complete framework.

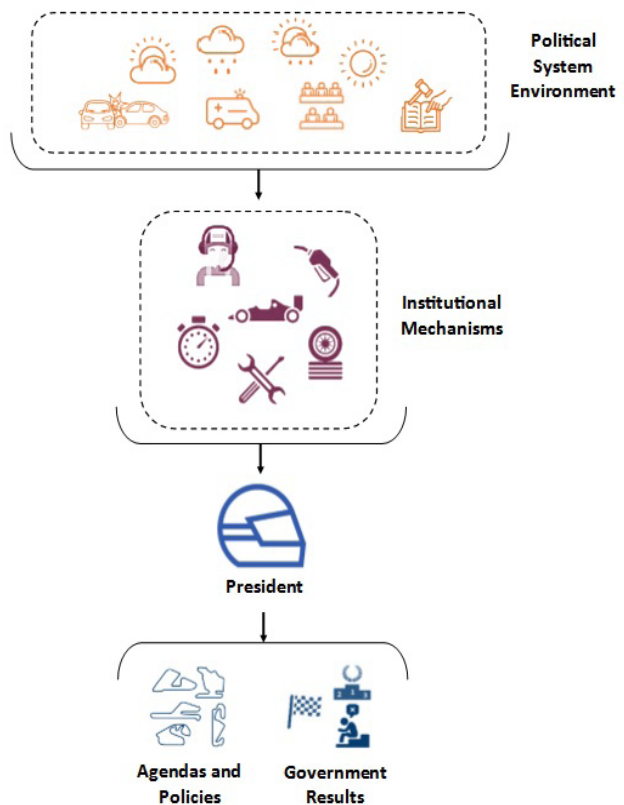


Figure 1
Automobile metaphor applied to Coalition Presidentialism

Source: Authors' elaboration

From the challenges of drivers and teams, it is possible to establish three broader dimensions that can explain the chances of success, which, in order of scope would be (i) the environment that conditions the competition, formed by the challenges imposed by the climate, the rules of the championship or any factor exogenous to the efforts of the team and the driver; (ii) the mechanisms and instruments of the team, such as the composition of the staff, the quality of its technicians and the commercial and technological options that define the competitiveness of the car, the decision-making capacity of the leaders (chiefs and chief engineers, for example); and (iii) the driver, with his skills (talent, dexterity, emotional control, speed of reasoning, physical resistance, among others).

Each of these dimensions has its own reality, but only its mutually adjusted conjunction produces the desired results. The idea of Blending is precisely to establish the relationship between the three theoretical lines by means of metaphor, thus composing a single explanatory construct.

In the following sections, we will detail each approach, trying to align the theoretical argument with the automobile metaphor.

THE METAPHOR AND PLACE OF EXPLANATORY APPROACH

Our proposal is that Brazilian presidentialism can be understood by the articulation of different explanatory variables, which, during the development of legislative studies, have undergone movements of greater or lesser emphasis. The main argument of the metaphor is the contingency aspect of the system, which can be successful or failed. As in a *grand Prix*, challenging circuits may require the skill of riders and their ability to adjust their vehicles to achieve the expected results. As with motorsport, the results depend on the confluence of three real dimensions of the world of the political system, which are explained by each theoretical approach.

The first approach will be considered as a first layer of theoretical composition, the starting point for understanding the different environments in which the coalition presidential exercise will be operated.

To represent this explanatory layer, it is proposed that the Brazilian political system provide a visualized scenario such as what the motorsport teams encounter in the preparation period and throughout the championship, according to each circuit. In this case, we are talking about aspects initially understood as exogenous to the will of driver and teams, or that are hardly manageable, such as rules, competitors, weather conditions, accidents, and other challenging circumstances in each grand Prix.

For the literature that reserved space to discuss the environment of action of the different Presidents, the combination of presidential system, multiparty and

proportional representation expresses the social, economic, political and cultural heterogeneities of Brazil, which would make the combination of its institutions explosive, leading to a high risk of instability, ungovernability and decision-making paralysis.

The process of building these coalitions, according to Abranches (2018), would involve the formation of the electoral alliance, around guidelines, the composition of the government, marked by competition for positions, and the transformation of the alliance into a governing coalition, with agenda disputes. The critical path for the consolidation of the coalition would be between the last two moments, in which the Executive has to make use of power resources to ensure governance and avoid inoperability.

In coalition presidential rule, party fragmentation imposes the sewing of a majority, often even composed of very distinct, often ideologically distant political forces. The Executive would have low freedom to rebuild forces through ministerial reform, without threatening the support bases. The coalition, in turn, would be unstable and fragile, making permanent the danger of forming veto coalitions in parliament, which would lead to decision-making paralysis, result from processes of intensification and dispersion of preferences and fragmentation of political resources, leading to permanent deadlock.

Mainwaring (2022) recognizes the difficult combination of Brazilian political institutions, arguing that this junction would not be sufficiently compensated by the presidential powers. In the same way, for Ames (2001), the governance crises in Brazil resulted from the large number of veto-players. This would result from the set of dysfunctional institutions, particularly electoral rules. In addition, party leaders could not control their benches and congressmen would end up “selling” their cooperation for the price and form that suits them most. Thus, the system would be halted by the increase of the cost and the quality of the decision-making process, which requires the Executive clientelist benefits and physiological for the progress of its projects and the change of the status quo (Ames, 2001).

The most significant contribution of these studies was the mapping of the limits imposed by the political-electoral results. This theoretical approach sought to emphasize the context of formation of coalitions, which in Brazil are permanently challenging, producing predominantly pessimistic and categorical conclusions about the results of presidential rule. It would be like predicting that, even before the competition starts, a driver, when choosing just or which team, certainly would not win races and much less the championship.

We attribute this stance to the attempt of a more normative prescription for the Brazilian system, something like a “duty-to-be”, leading to a natural shock with the assessments of presidential rule throughout the

later mandates. But there is still room, even if slower, for changes in elements that are integral to the rules of the game of the political system and in the panorama in which Presidentialism will operate, as in the case of motor racing, whose standards go through periodic reviews to maintain the spectacle, the competitiveness and safety of drivers.

Another aspect related to the rules that condition the environment of presidential rule concerns the constitutional jurisdiction and the judiciary as a controlling actor and observer of the actions of the other powers. In the wake of the phenomenon of judicialization, the Judiciary applies, modifies, reconstructs or renders invalid norms, to become a factor that potentially modifies the environment in which the President of the Republic must travel. Attention is drawn to the debate that highlights the existence of a political role of the Judiciary, notably in the procedure of composition of Supremo Tribunal Federal, by which the Executive can influence the decision-making profile of that court, with the aim of avoiding or resolving problems beyond the administration of the government.

Going back to the metaphor, the appeal of motorsport is in the form of control and overcoming challenges with machines and how to extract the best performance from them. In a race, the environment interferes, but what matters most is not the climate or the change of rules on the part of the motor racing association. Everyone wants to see the competition and how it unfolds. We will then proceed to the second approach.

The second layer of theoretical composition was driven by research and explanations largely stimulated by the presidential success of FHC, despite all the contrary indications of the previous generation of researchers. The academic efforts were mobilized in the opposite direction: how to explain the presidential success in a multiparty and heterogeneous environment? Hence the focus on the so-called “institutional bases of coalitional

presidentialism” (Limongi et al., 2017) emphasizing the various mechanisms that endow the President with the power to legislate and coordination instruments capable of acting at the pace of legislative work and thus being successful in steering his own agenda. It is an approach based on the importance of institutions as mobilizing forces of the capacity to aggregate preferences, that is, on the constitution and maintenance of a strong coalition of support.

The debate on institutional stability in Brazil has taken a turn since the mid-1990s, when the focus shifted from the thesis of ungovernability and decision paralysis to a discussion on the functioning of democracy. This second approach brings together arguments that the system has instruments that promote the coordination of action between the Executive and the Legislative, to avoid institutional immobilism and make it possible to conduct the government (Calvo et al., 2015; Limongi et al., 2017).

These instruments would summarize the President’s “power of agenda”, that is, his ability to determine which proposals will be considered by the National Congress and, more importantly, when and under what circumstances they will be analyzed. Such power of agenda is one of the requirements to give the Executive competitiveness in the political championship, which would incorporate both operational characteristics of the state and its decision-making dimension, which encompasses the characteristics of the coalition government support, of the Executive-Legislative relations and the party system, as well as the leadership and coordination capacity of the government to achieve results. This competitiveness can be translated as governability.

Making the connections with our metaphor, the second approach deals with the structure and quality of the team, because it develops the articulation of the elements of governance or competitiveness of the car/team, as we can see in Figure 2.

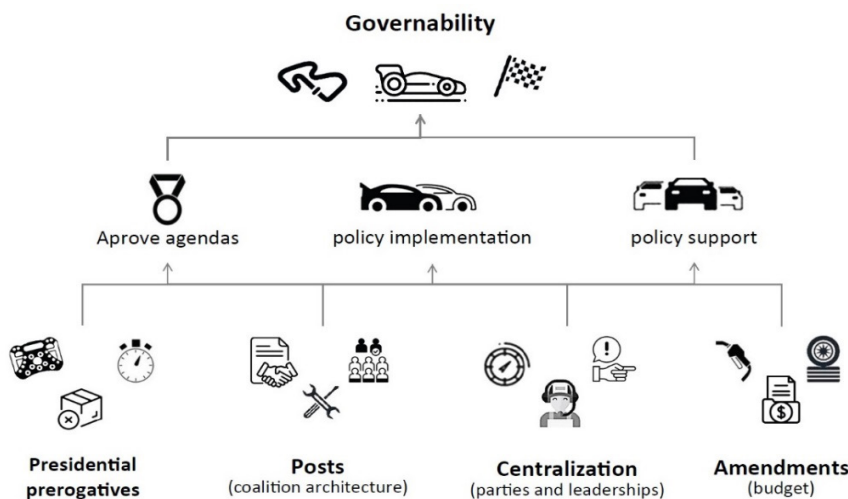


Figure 2
Institutional mechanisms and governance
 Source: Authors’ elaboration

A driver has a set of instruments and devices that a car offers for the best performance when driving. In motorsport, the steering wheel controls define not only the directions to better walk a circuit, but also a configuration of the equipment to balance performance according to the distance travelled. There are systems of communication with the pits to guide the care and strategy to enable the exercise of the driver's choice. Finally, the driver has at his disposal many resources and prerogatives inherent to his function. Making the transition from metaphor to presidential, Pereira and Melo (2012) understand that the key to functionality in the system would be a constitutionally powerful executive with the ability to be proactive and reactive, that is, change the status and avoid initiatives contrary to their interests.

Like the driver in motorsport, our system understands that Presidents need resourcefulness to guide the public machine, that is, they need to be able to exercise their choices, their policy agendas. The 1988 Constitution provided the Chief Executive with duties to deal with his relationship with the Legislature, such as the exclusive initiative of presenting legislative proposals on various topics, presenting constitutional amendments, editing provisional measures, request for urgent requests in the course of projects and the exercise of the power of veto. These are instruments that indicate both the direction and the pace of government.

It recognizes the relevance a team has in the success of a motor racing championship. Knowing how to choose and hire her can define not only your best partners, but also your opponents. It is in this sense that the link between the formation of the team and the construction of a coalition to support the government is sustained. In the Brazilian case, the currency for this "hiring" is largely located in the occupation of the spaces available in the administrative structure, that is, the coalition architecture. Therefore, the possibility of exercising power by occupying government positions represents an important resource that also guides the conduct. And this partnership will be better the more disciplined the parliamentary behavior.

When analyzing the discipline of the base in the votes, Amorim Neto (2019) concludes that it behaved positively when the composition of the presidential cabinets was proportional to the seats occupied by the parties in Congress. So, in the logic of the system, the distribution and the weight of the functions within the team have to better observe the proportionality.

But also, for all this to work, coordination is needed. Every team in motorsport seeks to combine technical and engineering of the vehicle with strategy and tactics corresponding to each circuit and the resourcefulness of the opponents. In this sense, the figures of the bosses and chief engineers of teams, who coordinate and centralize the decisions, gathering efforts of the other members in the better preparation of the car, gain relevance.

These coordinating figures are also replicated in the reality of presidentialism. Using available institutional instruments, Presidents do not negotiate individually with parliamentarians, but with parties and majorities. The government therefore has tools for intervention in legislative work, and party leaders would be the links capable of disciplining the behavior of their members in Plenary. Hence, the performance in the legislative arena would be predictable and consistent (Limongi et al., 2017).

In this perspective, Presidents and party leaders have effective centralizing instruments to control the parliamentary agenda, allowing them to overcome problems of collective action and negotiation inherent in the fragmented legislature. New regimental rules updated and approved shortly after the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution gave rights to the leaders of the parties in relation to the deputies considered individually. The leaders now have the prerogatives to determine the plenary agenda, represent all members of their party in the Legislature, restrict amendments and votes separately and appoint and replace committee members (Araújo et al., 2018).

Finally, teams need resources to function, and their amount must be carefully employed to maintain their competitiveness and the internal motivation of their members, ensuring that the chances of success are properly appropriated by all. It is in this sense that the fourth axis of this explanatory approach enters: the role of budgetary amendments.

When analyzing the budget process, Pereira and Orellana (2009) state that, although these amounts represent low values in relation to the entire budget, they are sufficient to promote the electoral success and political survival of the parliamentarians who are part of the coalition. Therefore, it is a necessary cost for the Executive to strengthen the guarantee of governability under coalition presidentialism. The authors conclude that the institutional mechanisms that give the Executive high control over the budget counterbalance the possible destabilizing effects arising from the electoral system, party and federative.

The optimism generated by the explanations offered by the institutional bases was consolidated by a significant set of new research that confirmed and legitimized its effectiveness. The approval of most of the Executive's projects in the years following 1994 passed the perception that the system itself would provide mechanisms to ensure governance, allowing the overcoming of the adversities of the political environment and the pressures of social and economic demands. The stability of the system would be well anchored in the institutionalized exchange goods to ensure the coalition's cooperation, even stating that party fragmentation would have been a key factor to achieve efficiency from the commitments established between the parties (Pereira & Melo, 2012).

This whole approach was widely applied in research and maintained robustness of explanatory arguments. But the results started to be contradictory from Dilma Rousseff, in which there were strong difficulties for the organization of coalitions and the conduct of the agendas, despite having all the institutional instruments at their disposal. Was it an erosion of theory?

If we observe the approach in an absolute way, as capable of explaining all presidential movements, including the most recent ones, it becomes fragile. The optimistic explanatory vision was sustained by the premise of the President's ability to operate and control the instruments at his disposal. Would it be prudent to imagine that the institutional bases function as automatic mechanisms, capable of responding efficiently and effectively to all "environmental" challenges? Turning to the metaphor, it is as if the teams were structured to drive cars with artificial intelligence: the successful one would be the one that built the best automaton. We found that the authors were led not to give a theoretical treatment about this aspect. The party-political environment did not remain constant, as did all the exogenous challenges imposed, such as economic, social, external crises, allegations of corruption and even arrests of political leaders, just to record some elements.

Some authors flirted with a more contingency and strategic view of institutional mechanisms, indicating an adequate management of the presidential profile, bearing in mind that the Executive-Legislative relationship has never happened in the same way since the return of democratization, it already indicated the existence of different shades on the uses of institutional instruments and political environments faced by the Presidents. On the other hand, Raile et al. (2010) proposed the "equation of governability", emphasizing interdependence and integrating the occupation of positions with the use of parliamentary amendments to raise the chance of bargaining, through strategies that respond to contextual and temporal factors. The authors adopt the expression "toolbox" to demonstrate that there is a noticeable variation between different governments about the use of these instruments to achieve the same end. Different styles, contingency and strategic behavior... and an equation to be solved. All of these findings have implied the idea that someone needs to operate all of this.

The emphasis on institutions showed a notion of "self-regulating functioning" of the mechanisms. Hence the perplexity in the field of legislative studies in these more recent times. For this reason, the connection with other approaches is essential to build answers and guarantee the explanatory space for each one of them. It is necessary to include attention to the driver. The devices have no reason to exist without the central element for the achievement of points, victories and championships. Someone needs to realize the potential that the machine has, to operate the institutional foundations of coalition presidentialism.

After all, who is the driver? What's your style? Does it accelerate towards coalition or collision?

RELEVANCE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SKILLS

The verification that coalitional presidentialism offers a great range of action to the Chief Executive leads to a challenge on the perception of their behavior patterns, to measure the profile of who performs the strategies. Presidents are the main responsible for creating expectations, signaling opportunities, and implementing development policies. Governance standards differ greatly from one to the other and are in line with their management profile, their degree of activism and management of incentives and restrictions.

The third explanatory approach considers that the profile of presidential agents matters in coalitional presidentialism. There is no consolidated field of studies in development countries about this current of thought, but there is an appeal for the growing maintenance of studies that seek to interpret the Presidents, especially the line of classification and construction of performance rankings (García-Sánchez & Rodríguez-Raga, 2019; Alkan, 2021).

As the institutional complexity of the Presidencies has grown in recent decades, the capacity of the President as articulator and manager has become decisive for his performance. Nevertheless, the institutional basis of power of presidents is not the sole source of the effectiveness and success of their government. Neustadt (1990) emphasized the importance of studies on presidential profile. The author points out that the power of persuasion or bargaining is enhanced by professional reputation and public prestige.

On the other hand, Presidents could transform their relationship with members of Congress: instead of just negotiating, they increasingly promote their policies by appealing to the public (going public), routinely engaging in this tactic to strengthen their legislative agendas, especially in the face of electronic media and social networks. Therefore, going public would mean the strategic use of public appeals to influence policy agendas and outcomes, exchanging effort of persuasion with political actors for emotional awareness of the public, seeking popular legitimacy and adherence to press the agents of the system (Cockerham et al., 2019).

However, these studies come up against the difficulty in capturing presidential personalities and measuring their impact on executive politics. This change produced a long-lasting divide between researchers interested in the "institutional" presidency and those focused on the "personal" presidency. Most presidency-oriented studies increasingly deemed the personalities of presidents as analytically incomparable and unimportant, a phenomenon that the author called "depersonalization" of the

presidency (Arana Araya, 2020). Some attributes reinforce the need to review this perspective, such as (i) proficiency as a public communicator; (ii) ability to form and structure the team, minimizing blind subordination trends and encouraging honest and authentic collaboration; (iii) insight into public policy; (iv) cognitive style with which it reflects on the advice and information addressed to it; (v) control and constructive use of one's own emotions (Nan & Lee, 2021). The relevance of institutions does not render obsolete the approach on presidential personality; by ignoring it, critics would be ruling out the possibility of a complimentary basis for institutionalist modeling (Lyons, 1997).

Given the various institutional constraints, such as the system of checks and balances, and the entire legal and political framework supporting the Presidency, it may be difficult to understand how the personality of the President generates effects on political outputs, since he doesn't rule alone. And this is precisely our fundamental argument: to strengthen the field of studies on the central role of the President as a great handler of the large toolbox at his disposal; making association with the metaphor, it is relevant to assess the talent and performance of the driver, together with the structure of his team, to investigate the achievement of certain results.

This concept gains materiality when the evolution of a process of institutionalization of the Presidency is observed, offering the "central core" an advisory structure and apparatus, whose purpose is to reduce transaction costs arising from governments of multiparty coalitions (Inácio, 2018). The government center is the center of support for the Chief Executive in the functions of political and technical coordination, strategic planning, monitoring of programs and communication, acting in the promotion and articulation with the parties, with civil society organizations, interest groups and public opinion.

All these elements would lead to the empowerment of the personal action of the Chief Executive over all areas of his administration, strengthening his figure in political control over the coalition and the bureaucracy. It is noted, however, that the studies on the center of government still emphasize the institutional aspect of this organization of the Presidency, leaving in between the *modus operandi* of this structure and pending a question: what evidence is there of the President's treatment of the center of government?

For a more dynamic evaluation of the coalitional presidentialism and formulation of the integrative proposal with the different more established approaches, it is relevant to link individual capacities of the Presidents to complete the explanatory framework. Thus, we intend to launch a preliminary proposal to highlight the potentialities of the integrating message of theories.

What skills do drivers need to succeed? Among the various characteristics, we can highlight courage, boldness, concentration, competitiveness, regularity,

teamwork, willingness to dialogue with the various actors, openness to listening, flexibility to change positions, ability to hit and exploit the car's resources, managing commitments and charges, etc. These predicates confer reputation, prestige and demonstrate leadership skills. Thus, we propose to replicate this exercise to indicate a set of skills of the "drivers" of the Executive.

To interpret and map a President, rather than place him in fixed categories, which are limiting in the face of the variety of situations and the rapid dynamics that a mandate can encompass, we decided to relate, from the inputs brought by literature, a series of skills that a Chief Executive needs to develop to deal with his challenges and his machine. Therefore, we propose that the 3rd approach uses the 1st and 2nd as targets for the list of the most outstanding skills for the exercise of the Presidency. The presidential profile approach would be an additional analytical layer to constitute the theoretical framework, and the appropriate skills to deal with each institutional mechanism. In addition, we will highlight the center of government as another of these mechanisms, given its role of backing the decisions of the President to use the instruments at his disposal.

The first skill would be *Proactivity*, or the ability to choose government agendas, to present initiative in choosing and proposing policies, to solve or anticipate problems and to be responsible for the options offered. It is the ability to maintain the protagonism and the axes of attention of society and other political actors on their proposals, making the first move of debates (Deluga, 1998, 2001; Silvester & Wyatt, 2022).

Other skill reflects a level of sensitivity to the social context, *Openness*, which is the ability to create and expand channels of reception and reception of social demands and of the political system, especially of the coalition itself, demonstrating a predisposition to take them into account. Openness could also reflect cognitive capacity, the ability to interpret reality and its context, to comprehend the social needs and other political actors to obtain the necessary inputs to find solutions and alternatives. This skill does not demand knowledge of the President's cause, something an efficient advisory structure can offer. Nevertheless, prior political experience can be an important asset to strengthen this ability (Simonton, 2006; Arana Araya & Guerrero Valencia, 2020).

The other three skills are integrated by legitimizing and building support for presidential causes. Initially, we indicated the capacity of *Persuasion*, as defended by Neustadt (1991), which would be the ability to convince by arguments and evidence, both groups of society, opinion makers, as well as political actors and bureaucracy. Persuasion involves different communication strategies, exposure strategies or use of other resources that sensitize third parties (Rottinghaus, 2021). Another skill linked to communication is the *Coordination*, that is,

the ability to clearly express the purposes and strategies of government action within the Executive and Legislative Branch, expressing the harmony and synergy with the President's direct collaborators and with the support base. And, finally, the *Negotiation*, which is the skill that reflects the disposition, the flexibility, and the ability to carry out the exchanges to obtain the necessary support for governability (Smolinski & Xiong, 2020).

There is no way to dissociate these skills, but their exercise may require different expressions for each of them. For example, when the President does not have sufficient persuasive capacity, he can compensate for this deficiency with elements of negotiation or exchange. This movement is typical of governments that invest predominantly in patronage. Otherwise, when the Persuasion exercise is carried out well, the Presidency might be relieved a little more by the weight and cost of the negotiations. Both skills should be accompanied by the Coordination, so that efforts are properly balanced among all employees.

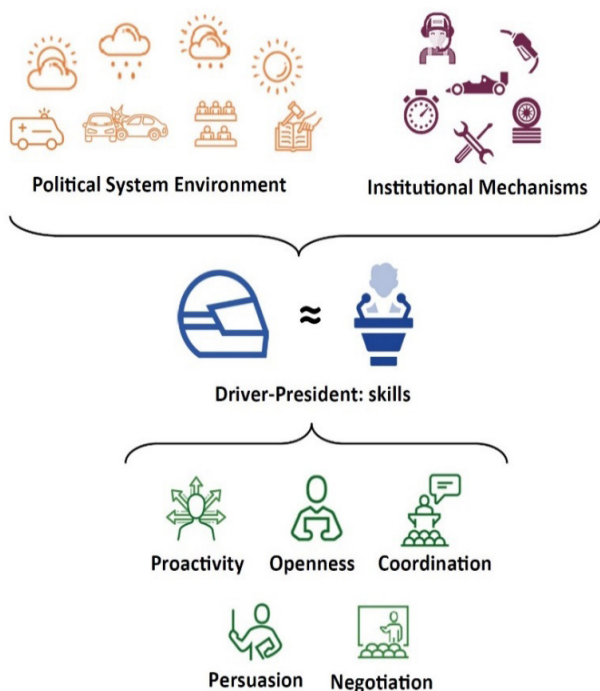


Figure 3
Presidential skills and their links with presidentialism

Source: Authors' elaboration

In the analysis of past governments, it is easier to gather evidence and consolidated analyses that illustrate the exercise of these capabilities. In recent or current mandates, this task needs to be better balanced with the facts still being consolidated, so that one can observe the unfolding of coalition presidential rule in the short term. A key aspect to address presidential profiles is again highlighted: preserving the value of evidence and

the failure of a president to qualify as “good” or “bad” to maintain the analysis of his performance in terms of governance and, because the achievement of its objectives.

The framework proposal could be applied to all presidential terms. In this work, we choose the first president considered successful in the operation of Brazilian coalition presidentialism, comparing it with the last full presidential term. Such a choice ends up coinciding with observed extremes regarding the demonstration of presidential abilities. In the application exercise that we will do, we will select the first mandate of FHC and the management of Bolsonaro, to show how it is possible to obtain through the framework analytical elements to evaluate different dimensions of presidentialism. The mandate of FHC was what strongly boosted the belief that the existence of institutions offered balance to the presidentialism. On the other hand, the mandate of Bolsonaro is what indicates to have offered greater set of challenges¹.

The “driver” FHC used all the potentialities allowed, especially the frequent use of provisional measures with successive republications, but without giving up other legislative instruments. The agenda, predominantly economic (privatization and adjustment of public accounts) and administrative (reform of the state), has been defined since the elections, and success in combating inflation provided legitimacy and backing for the President to convince his allies of the need for broad proposals to Parliament, enshrining the hypothesis of the legislative delegation to the President. It was properly built in view of the balance achieved in the distribution of positions and bargaining with the budgetary amendments of parliamentarians, ensuring a balance between different profiles of parliamentarians (low and high clergy).

During the first term of FHC, the leaders took care to ensure the legislative protagonism of the President, having less voice on the specific terms of the proposals, although they had good space for manifestation of demands to the Plateau. This relationship was also reflected in the absence of deliberation of presidential vetoes, widening the space of presidential power. It is also noteworthy that the government center had institutional impulses from FHC. The construction of the proposals was well shared by the network of collaboration formed within the government, with the governance center structures as important hubs to align coordination and information exchange, as well as political attunement with the coalition.

Regarding external problems, FHC faced several international crises (Mexican Exchange Crisis and the “Asian Tigers”) and an imbalance in the banking system. The President bypassed these crises having benefited from the synergy of his economic team and linked the proposed solutions to the government agenda that was

¹ For more details, see the appendix 1 and 2 with detailed explanation of integrative framework depicted in Figure 4.

already underway. The positive signs when it comes to governability and coalitional presidentialism are unambiguous, but they started from the management of the instrument at their disposal. FHC was a “driver” who achieved several victories, even in adverse weather conditions, showing ability to hit the car and team spirit.

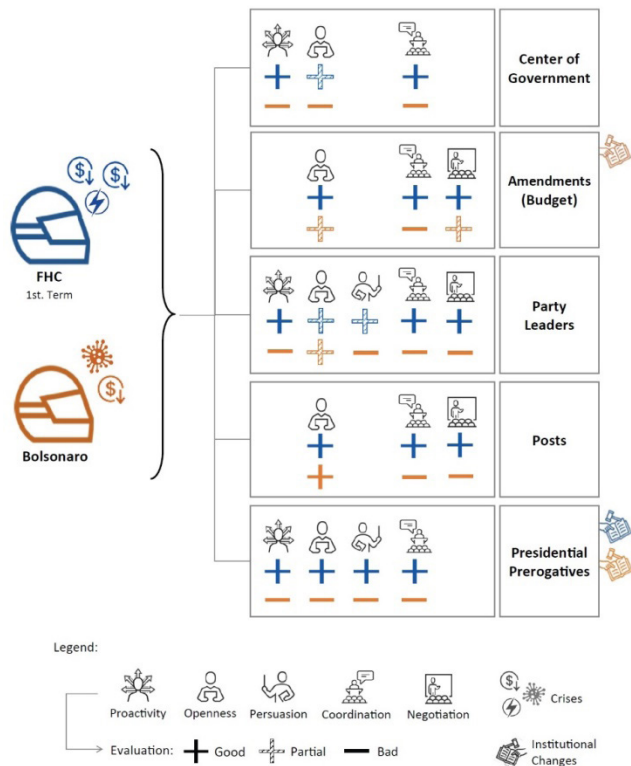


Figure 4
Integrative framework: president’s skills according to governability factors
 Source: Authors’ elaboration.

In turn, the “driver” Bolsonaro, almost 25 years later, no longer had the same instruments of FHC. If in motorsport, some rules were modified to decrease the speed of cars or ensure more balance between competitors, in the political system this can also occur. Over those years, the rules for the use of interim measures have imposed restrictions, seeking to rebalance power with the Legislature. In the same sense, Congress resumed the deliberations of vetoes and imposed changes in the budget process of parliamentary amendments (mandatory amendments to the budget). Such aspects, in themselves, already require even more presidential skill in conducting government.

Bolsonaro, since the election, already proclaimed a break with the political system, clearly indicating his unwillingness to operate the institutional instruments. He avoided forming a formal support base, preferring, for example, to ally himself with thematic parliamentary fronts, and sought to occupy various government positions with military personnel of the Armed Forces or people

with ideological ties very similar to his. This personalist tendency reflected in the party leadership, whose choice did not present a clear connection with a desire for party support.

The presidential style was also reflected in the government center, which lost much space in the coordination of actions, not having an active voice in the coordination of the other ministerial portfolios. It became a mere reflection of the profile, choices and working dynamics of the President. Command and authority are recurring elements in the manifestations of the Chief Executive, decreasing in many spaces the skills of *Openness* and *Persuasion*. The President’s dissatisfaction is not supported by evidence, causing high turnover in relevant areas, as was recently reported by the Ministry of Health, Justice, Defense and several areas of the Ministry of Economy.

Government agendas suffer numerous setbacks because of poor *Coordination*, which also has repercussions on the obvious difficulty in dealing with crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic (Campello, 2022). The success in some government agendas is attributed to the National Congress itself (Pension Reform, for example), while the government, even making indiscriminate use of provisional measures, it suffers defeats at rates far above the historical average.

Recently, the President marked the formation of an alliance with “Centrão” parties, in an attempt to contain impeachment process initiatives, flirting with the appointment of positions that link members of government and Congress. This shift in its strategy of occupying posts reflected another type of skill, not necessarily linked to the exercise of the management of presidential institutions: that of political survival. The only instrument that seems to have been exploited by Bolsonaro is the use of powers to make amendments to the budget.

Finally, the “driver” Bolsonaro is the one who visualizes that his talent is the only factor that can lead to the success of the team; ignores radio communications, attributes all errors to the equipment or the race climate; understands to be the own owner of the team, with dismissal powers from the engineer, the designer, or anyone else who is not completely attuned to their interests. For some, skid or flat tires are part of the show, or concur with the idea that the driver is suffering sabotage from the team, the direction of the race, the TV broadcast, and any other argument that dishonors their misconceptions. The spectacle, which should be of the good constitution of a coalition, in fact, shows itself as the portrait of the disaster of its management, taking the serious risk of a collision.

CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of political instability is highly complex and the multiparty presidentialism strongly suffers this

injunction, which has even reflected on the explanations themselves. In general, the literature disputes explanatory spaces with rivalry, but the production of knowledge is not only by changing paradigms from Kuhnian logic. From another point of view, the dynamics of the substitution of these can be converted by the conjunction of pre-existing theoretical elements, from which a new explanation can arise.

This was one of the objectives of this article, which sought to highlight the possibility of a synthesis of multiparty presidential explanations, highlighting that there are more ingredients of convergence and association than divergent aspects. Obviously, our space would not allow us to book a broader screening of all the important contributions that are part of each approach, imposing on us the registration of only a few studies representative of each current.

In addition to proposing a dialogue between classic perspectives that differ on the stability of the system, the other article's purpose was the consideration of an approach, which takes into account the set of skills required for the exercise of the Presidency of the Republic. Like institutions and instruments of coordination, the governance style of Presidents and their team matters. Although the different approaches have been elaborated based on the Brazilian case, we understand that researchers can perfectly make appropriate readings in different countries, using the same methodology.

Regarding the studies on the presidential profile, our proposal sought to emphasize the set of presidential skills that favor the management of institutional instruments. Obviously, each of those chosen here can have its own origin and logic, such as the political past, the history of career within parties and in elective positions. Nevertheless, for an outline mapping of the explanatory factors of coalitional presidentialism for each term, we understand that our suggestion remains applicable and in line with other approaches. Similar exercises will be very welcome in relation to the other Presidents. And, of course, criticism and improvements inherent in the dynamics of the academic field.

The search for the use of the metaphor of motorsport was relevant not only to illustrate and compare real and theoretical elements, but also to strengthen the enormous synthesis provided by the sum of theories. The complementarity between them has become clear to the extent that the scenarios, institutions, and behaviors, which are easily perceived in the world of motor racing championships, have also been embedded and associated within the three perspectives, arguing that early views of coalitional presidentialism end fatally with significantly short shelf life.

Many drivers have gone down in the history of motorsport without even winning competitions, either for the admirable feats or for the serious accidents. And a

lot of them have been champions and are just supporting agents in the story. With the presidency, the recording in the records is even more forceful, because all Presidents will be part of history, each with the offer of their legacy to their countries. In the long term, some consolidate themselves as statesmen, some are rescued and have their image revitalized, and others will be part of the traumas and painful collective learning. For them, the coalition's legacy can be a tragic collision.

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APPENDIX 1

Framework synthesis - FHC's 1st Term

Institutional mechanisms	Presidential skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center of Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low turnover in key positions ○ Actively participated in the ministerial coordination and political articulation of the Presidency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The president was in tune with his direct advisors in organizing the legislative agenda and coordinating/controlling ministries; ○ Institutional channels were widely used based on contributions from the government's consulting and collaboration network; • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ President showed clarity of purpose and objectives to the government team, as well as valued the considerations of the technical areas, which kept in permanent contact with the other parts of the administration; ○ President maintained liaison with ministers and the intermediation carried out by the Center of Government was predominantly technical; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ President in line with his direct advisors in organizing the legislative agenda and coordinating/controlling ministries; ○ Center of government became a hub of the network formed by the public administration;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments (budget) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Were enough to serve backbenchers ○ the fully centralized budgeting process from start to finish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ President did not ignore the space he should allow for budget amendments; ○ Parliamentarians had access to the leaders to forward their demands; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional and parochial demands were met so that the legislative agenda has the support of parliamentarians; ○ President managed, with the help of party leaders, to distinguish between different demands, also reaching groups of parliamentarians with less space for negotiation in the presidential legislative agenda; • Negotiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The amendments were approved/executed under the terms agreed between the President and the leaders, there have been no outstanding cases of breach of agreement;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High rates of party discipline ○ Increase in the number of parliamentarians and parties in the coalition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The economic and administrative agenda dominated the work in Congress; the leaderships did not have much space to give their opinion, with the exception of regional and parochial issues necessary to maintain the coalition; ○ The President's parliamentary experience strengthened the relationship with the leaders, who had access to dialogue channels; ○ Regarding the strategies to make the agendas viable, the leaders were frequently consulted and had an active voice; • Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was an extensive process of convincing the leaders to adhere to the presidential agenda, in view of the substantive results on the economy and on the moods of society; ○ Construction of the perception that presidential success=party success; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leaders were well informed about government directives, with broad participation from the staff of the Center of Government; this aspect offered more security in the exercise of intermediation with parliamentarians; • Negotiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Even with restrictions, the President offered a series of political assets to be used by the leaders;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have been effectively distributed among the grassroots parties ○ Turnover was not an obstacle to the maintenance of the coalition ○ Number of grassroots parties increased throughout the term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parties with greater ideological approximation managed ministries with privileged spaces for action, respecting the presidential directions; ○ Economic and regional demands were met, while sectors such as Health and Education were dealt with through networks of specialists, in tune with the current bureaucracy; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequently exercised by the President, with strong advice from the Civil House and support from the Ministries of Finance and Planning; ○ Coalition core parties won ministries with greater agility in public policy; ○ The projects of the other ministries were carefully negotiated with the intermediation of the Government Center;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential Prerogatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Broad dominance and approval rate on agendas, both above 90% ○ Strong predominance of provisional measures (PMs), at the time without thematic restrictions and reprinting allowed; ○ There was also use of bills ○ Submission of various constitutional amendments ○ Vetoes were practically not questioned by Congress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy agenda was reasonably disclosed in the electoral campaign, with a liberalizing profile, reinforcement of the state regulatory role and balance of public accounts; ○ Solutions to the crises were quickly presented; • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Broad dialogue with economic sectors, indicating the economy as the axis adopted to solve other problems, such as combating social inequalities; ○ Shy opening to social policies, with the creation and expansion of the Public Policy Council, creation of links with civil society; ○ There was a learning process in the failures; • Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With the success of the "Plano Real" (economic plan), the need to sustain the effects achieved through economic and State reforms became widespread; ○ Consumption gains and balance in the banking system consolidated greater confidence in the government; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The agenda was carried out through various legislative strategies, using different proposals and regimental actions within the Congress;

Note: Scenarios and context:

- Electoral results-maintained party fragmentation
- Relationship with the Judiciary without conflicts
- Public Ministry in strengthening process
- Various foreign exchange crises (Mexican and Asian)
- Banking crisis
- Good inflationary control and increased consumption by the poorest classes
- Weak economic growth, public debt booming
- Punctual irregularities or corruption complaints)

APPENDIX 2

Framework synthesis - Bolsonaro

Institutional Mechanisms	Presidential Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center of Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High turnover in key positions ○ Supporting role at the decision-making level, maintaining predominantly procedural advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informal channels are widely used; a direct and voluntarist strategy (going public) is preferred to legitimize the actions, disregarding technical advice; ○ Proposals coming from the staff of the Center of Government are predominantly based on the determinations of the President; • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explicit difficulty in dealing with divergent opinions; ○ Informal demonstrations via social networks show the privilege of opinions outside the advisory service itself, distancing themselves from the actions to be carried out by the ministries; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advisors work predominantly to promote the President's personal agenda; ○ Many communication noises, especially due to frequent interference from the President's family members; ○ Center of government represents just another chain of command before the ministries;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments (budget) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Widely used to serve parliamentarians across a broad spectrum; ○ Budget process remains centralized, but constrained by tax amendments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The space it should allow for budget amendments has not been ignored; ○ Parliamentarians had access to the leaders to forward their demands; ○ Amendments are the main instrument for forming majorities, albeit circumstantial; ○ Regional and parochial demands can be reached for minimal parliamentary adhesion to the legislative agenda; • Negotiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agreements on budget amendments are minimally honored;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uncertainties in party discipline; ○ Government leaders not linked to their own parties; ○ Party leaders support the government for specific interest agendas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legislative agendas disconnected from social problems; ○ Urgent matters are transferred to the responsibility of ministers, whose autonomy is precarious; • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leaders only find space to give their opinion in moments of greater tension with Congress, when congressmen's dissatisfaction becomes evident; ○ President's past parliamentary experience reinforces less institutional treatment of leaders; • Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is not understood as a competence relevant to the exercise of government; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The few guidelines determined by the President show volatility and the influence of the staff of the Center of Government is not observed; ○ The leaders are insecure and have difficulties in convincing the President regarding the strategies to make the agendas in Congress viable; ○ Leaders usually have few subsidies from the Presidency to coordinate the work with their caucuses; • Negotiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parliamentary budget amendments are the only political asset widely offered;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Division of offices does not obey party proportionality in Congress; ○ Selection criteria is beyond the party profile; ○ Massive presence of military personnel in ministries ○ High turnover rate in relevant ministries (1st and 2nd levels of command); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Political parties were passed over, with a preference for dialogue with social sectors or with supra-party organizations, such as the Parliamentary Fronts; ○ Strong membership of the military, occupying important positions; ○ After a growing crisis with Congress, the President ceded participation to conservative parties (“Centrão”); • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Frequent statements from the ministries denied by the President herself, or statements by the President being repaired and corrected by the ministries; ○ Perception of lack of autonomy of ministries and other sectors of public administration; • Negotiation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Choice of public office defined according to ideological affinity with the President; ○ Predominance of circumstantial and retail negotiations;

Institutional Mechanisms	Presidential Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential Prerogatives ○ Relevant institutional changes: restrictions on the use and legislative process of PMs (since 2013) and resumption of veto discussions by Congress; ○ Success rate in approving agendas below the historical average ○ Systematic and frequent use of PMs; ○ Only one important agenda at the constitutional level was approved; ○ Recurrent use of vetoes to oppose Congress; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policies were not disclosed in the electoral campaign, prevailing adherence to the fight against corruption and a liberal perspective for the economy; ○ Reforms with a liberalizing profile and balanced public accounts, but presented in a slow and controversial manner, allowing the protagonism of Congress; ○ Banalization of the use of PMs; • Openness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Noisy dialogue with sectors of Agriculture, industry and the financial market; ○ Restriction to formal means of social participation (Public Policy Councils, for example) and greater space for some corporatist professional categories, such as police and military; ○ Restriction to agendas linked to social policies, human rights, culture and the environment; ○ Strong harmony with more conservative sectors, giving privileged space in the legislative agenda; • Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Predominantly carried out by ministers and technical teams; ○ No willingness to convince different social segments; decisions based on the authority and moods of the President, with few initiatives supported by evidence; • Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inconsistency and incompatibility between official discourse and actions, with the recurrent use of decrees with controversial and legally questionable content; ○ Solutions to crises are not completely feasible;

Note: SCENARIOS AND CONTEXT:

- Electoral results maintained the party hyper fragmentation movement
- Judiciary more activated by political actors and maintaining a more active control posture;
- Personal relations of the President created fronts of resistance in the Judiciary
- Fiscal crisis, low economic growth and high inflation
- Ideological polarization environment
- Covid-19 pandemic and energy crisis
- Continuous Irregularities or corruption complaints