

This article was downloaded by: [University of Tasmania]

On: 05 August 2014, At: 19:52

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Australian Journal of Political Science

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cajp20>

### A Rejoinder to Dowding

Glenn Kefford<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Griffith University

Published online: 25 Jun 2013.

To cite this article: Glenn Kefford (2013) A Rejoinder to Dowding, Australian Journal of Political Science, 48:2, 150-151, DOI: [10.1080/10361146.2013.787961](https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2013.787961)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2013.787961>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

# A Rejoinder to Dowding

GLENN KEFFORD

*Griffith University*

I would like to thank Professor Keith Dowding for responding to my article (Kefford 2013) and the *AJPS* for providing space for this rejoinder. In three recent articles, Dowding (2012, 2013a, 2013b) has attempted to demonstrate, unsuccessfully in my view, the superficiality of debates about presidentialisation, and that this thesis should be ‘expunged from political science vocabulary’ (Dowding 2012, 1). His argument is similar in each of these papers, and as far as I can tell, his view is based on two central claims. First, that prime ministers in Australia and the United Kingdom are becoming less, not more, like the president of the United States (US). Second, that similar forces may be affecting liberal democracies globally, but they have ‘divergent effects’ due to institutional differences (Dowding 2013b, 147).

In Dowding’s opinion, presidentialisation consists of behavioural and institutional aspects. He argues that the behavioural aspect can be seen in terms of personalisation, while the institutional aspect relates to centralisation of prime ministerial resources. In his view, both features make parliamentary systems less, not more, like presidential systems. It is hard to disagree with his overarching observation that presidentialisation has a behavioural and institutional aspect since the thesis does have both a structural and an agency focus. Nonetheless, problems emerge in Dowding’s explanation of why these factors do not equate to presidentialisation, and in his use of the US as his ideal type and primary source for counter-evidence.

In the three articles, Dowding has attempted to demonstrate why Australian and British leaders are not becoming more like the US president, and he has provided evidence from the US to highlight differences. This approach is baffling, considering that Poguntke and Webb (2005; Webb and Poguntke 2012) have clearly stated the basis for their model, which has nothing to do with the US president. Dowding (2012, 2) can disagree with what Poguntke and Webb (2005, 4) view as ‘the inherent functional logic of presidential regimes’. But his insistence on using evidence from the US to make his point muddies a debate that is already riddled with technical jargon and mired in semantics (Dowding 2012, 2013b). In the second article (2013a, 9), Dowding called for an end to ‘The use of the one-hundred-year old technique of ideal types in comparative political science’. He cannot criticise the model for being based on an ‘ideal type’, only then to refer to one of his own.

Dowding’s argument about the importance of institutions in determining the effects of global forces is well made. I highlight the importance of institutions by demonstrating the way presidentialisation unfolds, as conceptualised by Poguntke

---

Glenn Kefford is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Governance and Public Policy at Griffith University.

and Webb (2005), takes distinct forms in Australia because of Australia's particular mix of institutions. This institutional architecture combines dominant parties and long-held advantages for the prime minister. Despite Dowding's claim that I make no comparisons, I argue that: 'The executive face of presidentialisation in Australia may not reveal as much as in other systems because Australian prime ministers have always enjoyed institutional advantages that British prime ministers, for example, have not' (Kefford 2013, 143). Throughout the paper, I note how I think it contributes to the international literature that uses Poguntke and Webb's (2005) model, which by its very nature *is* comparative.

In my view, Poguntke and Webb's model provides an effective conceptual framework for comparatively examining the phenomena that are central to this debate. It is not without flaw, and elements could be conceptually clearer, but Dowding's critique obscures what the thesis is about. The thesis focuses, most notably, on whether leaders have more power resources than previously, and what they can achieve with these resources (see also Karvonen 2010). This is what is contested in the literature on presidentialisation, not whether one ideal type is better than another.

## References

- Dowding, K. 2012. The Prime Ministerialisation of the British Prime Minister. *Parliamentary Affairs*. doi:10.1093/pa/gss007
- Dowding, K. 2013a. Beneath the Surface: Replies to Three Critics. *Parliamentary Affairs*. doi:10.1093/pa/gss093
- Dowding, K. 2013b. Presidentialisation Again: A Comment on Kefford. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 48(2): 147–149.
- Karvonen, L. 2010. *The Personalisation of Politics*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Kefford, G. 2013. The Presidentialisation of Australian Politics? Kevin Rudd's Leadership of the Australian Labor Party. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 48(2): 135–146.
- Poguntke, T. and Webb, P.D. 2005. The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies. In: T. Poguntke and P. Webb, eds. *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Webb, P.D. and Poguntke, T. 2012. The Presidentialisation of Politics Thesis Defended. *Parliamentary Affairs*. doi:10.1093/pa/gss059