Proximity, Candidates, and Presidential Power: How Directly Elected Presidents Shape the Legislative Party System

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Abstract

The impact of presidential coattails on the legislative party system is a highly intuitive idea. The coattails effect is believed to depend on the number of presidential candidates and the size of the presidential prize. This article proposes a different way of understanding this relationship. We argue that the strategic behavior of political parties and the way in which the number of presidential contenders shapes the legislative party system can only be predicted for an intermediate range of presidential power. Outside this range the effect is indeterminate. We test our proposition on democracies with direct presidential elections from 1945-2011. Our results confirm that the number of presidential candidates is an important determinant of the legislative party system and show that whether or not legislative elections are held close to presidential elections has little influence on party-system fragmentation in countries with directly elected presidents.

Introduction

There is a vast literature on the determinants of legislative party systems. At the most general level, there is basic agreement that institutional and social factors interact to generate party system structures. To this end, scholars typically focus on the effects of specific electoral systems and the impact of social heterogeneity (Cox 1997; Lijphart 1994; Mozaffar et al 2003). However, scholars have increasingly integrated other factors into the study of legislative party systems. Specifically, there is an ongoing debate about the effect of direct presidential elections. Here, there is support for the proposition that presidential coattails help to shape the legislative party system (Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Mozaffar et al 2003; Golder 2006; Samuels and Shugart 2010; Shugart 1995; Hicken and Stoll 2013; Stoll 2013). The idea that the relative proximity of presidential and legislative elections is a determinant of the electoral competition is highly intuitive. However, recent work has stressed how the effect of presidential coattails is contingent upon other factors. Amorim Neto and Cox (1997) and Golder (2006) have emphasized the interaction between the proximity of elections and the effective number of presidential candidates at the previous presidential election. In turn, Hicken and Stoll (2013) have stressed the importance of presidential power as a further interaction term.

In this article, we think differently about these factors. We argue that presidential power is likely to shape the effective number of presidential candidates in a way that will have a reductive effect on the legislative party system, but only within an intermediary range of presidential power. This is because political parties only have an incentive to coordinate their electoral behavior at presidential elections within such a range. On either side, there are incentives both for parties to stand candidates and for them not to do so, ensuring that the positive relationship between the effective number of presidential candidates and the legislative party system will not be observed. Also, in contrast to recent scholarship we argue that this proposition should be tested solely on the population of countries with direct presidential elections. We are skeptical that the language of natural experimentation can be employed to justify the inclusion of parliamentary republics and monarchies in any test of the effect of direct presidential elections on the

legislative party system. When we test our proposition on a selection of democracies with direct presidential elections in the period 1945-2011 inclusive we find good support for it. Overall, our findings suggest that the effect of presidential coattails is less important that has typically been suggested, that we need to investigate more the determinants of the effective number of candidates at presidential elections, and also that we need to think carefully about how we capture variation in presidential power when trying to estimate its effect.

Theory

The opportunity for presidential coattails to shape the outcome of legislative election occurs in countries where the president is directly elected on a separate ballot from the legislature. In these cases, the competition for the control of the executive branch of government does not pass exclusively through the legislature. This means that in contrast to pure parliamentary systems where political parties need to appeal to only a single pool of voters, parties have to compete at two separate elections. This generates the potential for what Samuels and Shugart (2010: ch. 5) call "an electoral separation of purpose". Here, there is the potential for parties to adopt different office-seeking and/or policy-seeking strategies at the two elections in order to maximize their chances of winning control of both the executive and legislative branches of government. When political parties adopt different strategies, we can say that they have undergone a process of presidentialization. According to Samuels and Shugart (ibid.: 127), presidential coattails are an indicator that political parties are presidentialized and have adapted their organization and behavior to the incentives generated by the separation of powers. Thus, we are likely to observe presidential coattail effects only in countries with direct presidential elections and when parties have become presidentialized as a result of the separation of powers system.

Even though presidential coattail effects will occur only in countries with a directly elected president, the electoral separation of purpose can vary. A low separation of purpose occurs when the presidential and legislative electorates of parties overlap. When this happens, similar to parliamentary

systems presidents neither hurt nor improve their parties' fortunes in legislative elections. A high separation of purpose occurs when the electorate for the presidential candidate is substantially different from that of candidates in the legislative race. In these circumstances, the performance of the party's presidential candidate may not necessarily improve the party's performance in the legislative election. For example, while President Lula won 49 per cent of the votes in the 2006 presidential elections in Brazil, his party won only 15 per cent of the votes in the legislative election that was held on the same day (ibid.: 139). Therefore, the proximity of presidential and legislative elections in countries with a directly elected president does not always generate presidential coattails and does not fully account for the impact of presidential elections on the legislative party system. To identify the circumstances under which presidential elections influence the legislative party system through a coattail effect, several factors have been considered.

The proximity of the presidential election to the legislative election is often considered to shape the legislative party system (Shugart 1995). There is now considerable evidence that if the presidential election is held proximately to the legislative election, then there will be a reductive effect on legislative party system (Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Mozaffar et al 2003; Golder 2006). Working on the assumption that the presidency is the most important institution in the system, the presidential election becomes the focus of electoral competition. In this context, legislative elections approach second-order elections, especially when they are held immediately after the system-defining presidential election. The primacy of presidential over legislative elections ensures that presidential elections have substantial coattails effects, shaping the legislative party system in its image. We can see an example of this effect at work in France. In 2000 a constitutional amendment ensured that reduced the length of the president's term to five years, the same as for the legislature. At the same time, legislative elections were scheduled a few weeks after the presidential election. The result is that however close the result of the presidential election, there is a strong incentive for voters at the honeymoon legislative election to confirm the result of the presidential election, returning a majority for the newly elected president. We can clearly observe this effect following both the 2002, 2007, and 2012 presidential elections. Extrapolating on the basis of this logic, when the temporal gap

between presidential and legislative elections grows, the shadow of the presidential election weakens. Thus, the coattails effect declines as the gap between the two elections increases.

Another factor is the number of candidates at the presidential election. There are good grounds to believe that the effective number of candidates who compete at the presidential election shapes the effect of the proximity of presidential and legislative elections on the legislative party system. Cox (1997: 212) argues: "[t]he nature of the coattail opportunities that face legislative candidates should be similar, the nature of the advertising economies of scale that might be exploited should be similar, and so forth". Thus, if there is a small number of candidates at the presidential election, this can reinforce the reductive effects of proximity on the legislative party system. By contrast, if the number of presidential candidates is high, then the reductive effects of proximity may be counteracted. Indeed, a high number of presidential candidates may have an inflationary effect on the legislative party system. Golder (2006) has tested and found support for this hypothesis. Specifically, he finds that presidential elections "stop having a statistically significant reductive effect on the number of electoral parties once there are more than about 2.8 effective presidential candidates" (ibid.: 40).

Recently, Hicken and Stoll (2013) have added further to this debate. They emphasize that the size of the presidential prize varies from one country to another. The direct election of the president does not imply that the president is the central political actor in the system. There are countries with directly elected but very weak presidents. Ireland is a case in point. There are similar countries with relatively strong presidents, such as France, and yet others with very powerful presidents indeed, for example Chile. In this event, there is no necessary reason to believe that presidential elections will always have primacy over legislative elections. As a result, the effect of proximity and the number of candidates at the presidential election will depend on what Hicken and Stoll (ibid.: 295) call the "horizontal centralization" of policy-making authority. This means that a weak presidency may counteract the reductive effect of very proximate presidential and legislative elections on the legislative party system even when there are few candidates at the presidential election. That said, the variation in presidential power alone does not explain why presidential elections have no coattail effects in countries like

Ireland, where the president is institutionally very weak, and in Brazil, where the president is institutionally very strong. While the electoral base of presidential and parliamentary candidates may vary significantly between countries with ceremonial presidencies and countries where the presidential office is the most important political prize, the coattails generated by candidates at each end of the continuum of presidential powers may be equally low.

To sum up the existing debate, we have good theoretical reasons to believe that the legislative party system will be shaped by the presence of directly elected presidents. In this context, the existing literature tells us that, all else equal, we need to consider interactions between the relative proximity of presidential and legislative elections, the effective number of presidential candidates at the presidential election prior to the legislative election, and the power of the presidency. Golder (2006) prioritizes the interaction between the proximity of presidential and legislative elections and the effective number of candidates at the presidential election. Hicken and Stoll (2013) prioritize the interaction between the proximity of presidential and legislative elections, the effective number of candidates at the presidential election, and the power of the presidency.

We aim to make two contributions to this debate. The first concerns the context to which it should be applied. To date, the theoretical insights of this literature have all been tested on data sets that pool countries with directly elected presidents and those without, including both parliamentary republics and parliamentary monarchies. For example, in Golder's article parliamentary systems constitute 60.7 per cent of the 603 observations in his whole sample (2006: 39). In Hicken and Stoll's study, parliamentary systems comprise 60.8 per cent of the 590 observations in their pooled model. Indeed, monarchies alone make up 41.5 per cent of their total observations (2013: 304-305). However, the inclusion of parliamentary systems is somewhat puzzling, because the theory relates solely to the effects of direct presidential elections on legislative elections. What is the theoretical justification for including parliamentary systems in the study? Surprisingly, only Hicken and Stoll (2013) provide such a justification. They state: "the ultimate counterfactual to a presidential election being held concurrently with a legislative election is no presidential election at all. In other words, at the most basic level, the

experimental "treatment" is the existence of a presidential election" (ibid: 300). They go on to say: "we compare the legislative party systems of the treatment group (legislative elections in regimes with a popularly elected president) to the legislative party systems of the control group (legislative elections in regimes without a popularly elected president)" (ibid.). Stoll (2013) reiterates this logic.

The language of natural experimentation is alluring. Even so, we can question whether these studies meet basic experimental conditions. In particular, we can question whether the assignment of the treatment is 'as if' random (Dunning 2008). For example, there may be 'demonstration effects' such that countries choose systems that are close to their neighbors. The adoption of presidentialism across Latin America is a case in point. Similarly many countries in the former Soviet Union chose semi-presidential systems within a very short space of time in the early 1990s. In addition, even if the treatment was assigned 'as if' randomly, are the treatment and control groups comparable (Sekhon and Titiunik 2012)? The same subjects are not observed before and after the application of a particular treatment or placebo. Instead, the differences within and between the subjects in the two groups are merely controlled for in the multivariate regression. This is an entirely appropriate way to test the theory, but it is not a natural experiment. Finally, when we conduct a natural experiment, we include a control group to provide us with variation in the explanatory variable. However, when we examine the effects of proximity, the effective number of presidential candidates, and presidential power on legislative party systems, we do not need the variation that comes with a control group. There is already variation within the set of countries with directly elected presidents. To put it another way, the experimental "treatment" is not the existence of a presidential election, it is the presence or absence of proximate presidential and legislative elections, a higher or lower number of effective presidential candidates, and stronger or weaker presidents. We should still be able to observe the effects of these variables solely within the population under consideration without the need for a parliamentary "control group".

In sum, we question whether parliamentary systems should be included in a test of a theory about the effects of direct presidential elections. We are skeptical as to whether their inclusion can be justified as an example

of a natural experiment. Moreover, even if they are included, we would still expect the results to be robust to their exclusion. If they are not, then this would suggest that any positive findings are being driven by their inclusion in the dataset, rather than by the substantive effect on the population to which the hypothesized effect applies.

Secondly, we think about the nature of the interaction between presidential power and the effective number of presidential candidates differently. We follow Cox (1997) above in thinking that there is a positive relationship between the effective number of presidential candidates and the legislative party system. However, we have good theoretical reasons to expect that presidential power will affect the number of candidates at the presidential election. Hicken and Stoll (2008) have already proposed such a relationship. They hypothesize that when the presidency is very weak, parties have little incentive to stand candidates. So, the number of candidates should be small. However, when presidential power increases somewhat, then parties have more of an incentive to stand, but they have little incentive to coordinate their presidential candidates, meaning that number of candidates contesting the presidential election should be relatively high. However, when presidential power increases further still, the incentive for strategic coordination is present, meaning that the number of candidates should decline. Thus, they expect a bell-shaped curve. They find some evidence to support this theory, though as presidential power increases they find that the reductive effect disappears. In fact, they find that when presidents are very powerful, there is a puzzling increase in the number of candidates once again. So, rather than a bell-shaped curve, they find a sideways, elongated S shape (ibid.: 1120). At this high level of presidential power, though, the relationship with the number of presidential candidates is not statistically significant.

We agree with Hicken and Stoll that there is likely to be a relationship between presidential power and the number of presidential candidates that will shape the legislative party system, but we think about the logic differently. We agree that when there is a very weak presidency, there may be little incentive for parties to stand a candidate at the presidential election. It may be more efficient to save the costs of campaigning for the legislative election. At the same time, though, when there is a very weak presidency the political costs of losing the presidential election are also very small. Moreover,

non-partisan candidates may have a greater incentive to stand. If the presidential election is seen as a second-order election, then partisan voting may be weak and non-partisan candidates may stand a greater chance of winning votes. Therefore, even when there is a very weak presidency, we may observe a large number of presidential candidates. Thus, a very weak presidency may be associated both with a small number of presidential candidates and a large number. Ireland is a case in point. Here, the president is very weak and since 1937 six presidential elections have been uncontested. This suggests that the presidency is a prize that is scarcely worth winning and parties do not always see an incentive to contest it. Even so, in 2011 there were seven candidates with an effective number of 3.75. In addition to party nominees, there were also non-partisan candidates, one of whom came second at the election. So, the same country has experienced both very low and relatively high numbers of presidential candidates as a function of the calculations made by partisan and non-partisan actors. We expect an equivalent dual logic when the presidency is very powerful. In this case, the prize may be so big that parties have little incentive to engage in strategic coordination. The costs of not standing and, therefore, not winning the presidency may be so great that there is an incentive for parties to stand. So, Shugart and Carey (1992: 201) point out that if the stakes are sufficiently high, then the certainty of losing the presidency by not contesting it may be much worse than the probability of losing it to another opponent. This logic is similar to the one that Hicken and Stoll (2008: 1121) suggest to explain their puzzling finding. At the same time, though, if the prize is so great, then losing may also be very costly. As they suggest elsewhere but in relation to candidates at legislative elections (Hicken and Stoll 2013: 296), when the presidency is so powerful it is important to be on the winning side. Therefore, there may be an incentive not to stand a presidential candidate, but to wait and support the candidate that emerges victorious from the contest. Thus, a strong presidency may be associated both with a small number of presidential candidates and a large number. For example, in Panama there were three candidates at the 2009 presidential election with an effective number of only 1.99. By contrast, in 1994 there were seven candidates with an effective number of 5.56. If the logic about weak and strong presidents is correct, we would only expect to observe a significant reductive effect of presidential

power on the number of presidential candidates in an intermediary range when the incentive for strategic coordination is strong. We can think of this effect in terms of the electoral separation of purpose. In this intermediary range, presidents and assemblies need to cooperate with each other in order to govern effectively and avoid political deadlock. Voters understand that presidents need the support of the assembly in order to pass the national policies on which they campaigned. Therefore, they have an incentive to support the president's party at the legislative election too. Smaller parties may also see an incentive to be part of the presidential coalition rather than presenting their own candidates. For these parties, the strongest incentive to take sides occurs when the race between two serious presidential contenders is so close that by running their own candidates minor parties might risk tipping the balance in favor of their less preferred option (Shugart and Carey 1992: 255). In sum, while we expect a positive relationship between the effective number of presidential candidates and the legislative party system, we expect presidential power to shape competition at the presidential election in a way that means we are only like to observe a reductive effect of presidential power on the legislative party system at an intermediary range of presidential power.

Finally, we are agnostic about the independent effect of proximity. There is a basic intuition from Shugart (1995) that proximate presidential and legislative elections are likely to reduce the effective number of legislative parties, but we have seen that more recent work has stressed the contingent effect of this variable. Golder (2006) argues that the key interaction is between the proximity of presidential and legislative elections and the effective number of presidential candidates, while Hicken and Stoll (2013) argue that the key interaction is between the proximity of presidential and legislative elections, the effective number of presidential candidates and presidential power. We wish to include an estimation of the effect of proximity to test for whether or not there is evidence of presidential coattails, but, given this recent work has reduced expectations about the independent effect of proximity, we do not necessarily expect it to find support for such an effect.

Overall, we differ from both Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013) in that we expect the key interaction to be between presidential power and the effective number of presidential candidates, whereas they privilege

proximity as a constituent element of their preferred interactions. In addition, whereas both Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013) expect support for their preferred interactions when countries with direct presidential elections are pooled with countries with parliamentary systems, we have no such expectations about our preferred interaction. We expect to find support for it when the population is limited to countries with directly elected presidents. What is more, we argue that even if there is evidence to support both Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll's (2013) expectations when all countries are pooled, we would expect their findings still to be robust to the exclusion of parliamentary systems, otherwise a theory about the effect of direct elections would have little direct relevance to the population to which it is meant to apply.

Variable descriptions

The dependent variable in this study is the relative fragmentation of the party system at legislative elections. Consistent with Amorim Neto and Cox (1997), Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013), we capture this variable by coding the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP). The main source of the data for this variable is Bormann and Golder's (2013) dataset recording democratic electoral systems around the world, 1946-2011. We take the figures for their enep variable. For missing observations, we complement these data with figures from Michael Gallagher's personal website (http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/D octs/effno.php – accessed 28 June 2013). There is a very strong correlation (0.99) between his ENEP figures and those recorded by Bormann and Golder. However, Gallagher records ENEP for a slightly different set of countries, allowing us to include a small number of extra observations.

We have three explanatory variables of interest. The first measures presidential power (PRESPOW). This variable is notoriously difficult to capture. There are many different measures of presidential power and the reliability of some of these measures can be questioned (Fortin 2013). Moreover, the correlation between different measures can be relatively low. For example, Tavits (2009: 48) reports that the correlation between two indices – Siaroff (2003) and Metcalf (2000) is only 0.41. Unsurprisingly, she finds that

her results vary as a function of the measure that she uses. Here, we aim to reduce the likelihood that the results of our study are sensitive to the choice of an individual measure by pooling ten separate measures of presidential power (Amorim Neto and Costa Lobo 2009; Armingeon and Carreja 2004; Cranenburgh 2008; Elgie and Moestup 2008; Johannsen 2003; Moestrup 2011; Frye 2002; Hicken and Still 2008; Shugart and Carey 1992; and Siaroff 2003). For each measure, we recorded the presidential power score for each of the countries in our data set. We then normalized the country scores for each measure on the basis of the following formula - (country score minus minimum possible value)/(maximum possible value minus minimum possible value). We then recorded the mean of all the normalized scores for each country. For example, six of the ten measures recorded a score for Romania. Shugart and Carey (1992) gave Romania a score of 4 on a scale of 0-40, or a normalized score of 0.1. By contrast, Siaroff (2003) recorded a score of 5 on his scale from 0-9, or a normalized score of 0.56. When the six scores for Romania were normalized, the mean normalized score was 0.31. In some cases, we recorded more than one score for a given country. This is because the ten measures of presidential power record new presidential power scores when a country passes a constitutional amendment that affects the president's power. So, presidential power can vary within a given country over time. The mean normalized scores lie in a range from 0 for a very weak president to 1 for a very powerful president. (The scores are reported in Table 1.) Overall, this method gives us exceptional cross-country coverage. It also allows idiosyncratic scores for individual countries from particular measures to wash out when they are pooled with the scores for the same country from other measures. Finally, while the correlations between individual measures can be low, the correlations between the scores derived from this method and those derived from a similar pooled method but different individual measures would most likely be higher because even if one whole measure was idiosyncratic its effect would be diluted when pooled with a set of other measures. Therefore, we can be as confident as possible that the results of the model are not sensitive to our measure of presidential power.

The second explanatory variable is the effective number of presidential candidates (ENPC). This variable records the ENPC figure for the presidential election that was held immediately prior to the legislative election if the

elections are not concurrent or at the concurrent presidential election if they are. We take the values of ENPC from the data set described in Bormann and Golder (2013) and their enpres variable. This means that in the event of an uncontested presidential election, such as the ones in Ireland, we record an ENPC value of 1. Consistent with the practice adopted by Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013), we record an ENPC value of 0 in countries without a directly elected president.

The third explanatory variable is measure of the proximity between presidential and legislative elections (PROXIMITY). Again, we follow standard practice and follow the basic methodology adopted by Amorim Neto and Cox (1997), Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013). The PROXIMITY measure ranges from a value of 0 when a legislative election is held at the exact mid-point between two presidential elections and 1 when the legislative election is held concurrently with the presidential election. The only change we make is that we calculate the value as a function of the days between the two types of elections. By contrast, Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013) calculate the value as a function of the years between the two types of elections. This means that we have a broader range of values for our proximity variable than Golder and Hicken and Stoll. We are confident that this amendment does not substantively change the results because Stoll (2013) has shown that Golder's results are remarkably robust whether years or days are used as the units to calculate the proximity index. Consistent with the existing literature, the PROXIMITY value for countries with a parliamentary system is always recorded as a value of 0.

We have three control variables. These are the same as the ones included in the models by Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013). The first (MAGNITUDE) captures the independent effect of the electoral system for legislative elections. MAGNITUDE is a measure of the average district magnitude in the lowest electoral tier in a country (Golder 2006: 37). It is calculated as the total number of seats allocated in an electoral tier divided by the total number of districts in that tier. We take the values from the data set described in Bormann and Golder (2013) and their tier1_avemag variable. Where there are missing observations we add a small number of values (3.8 per cent of the total observations) from Johnson and Wallack (2012) and their m dist variable. Consistent with standard practice, we log the values for this

variable. The second control variable (ENEG) captures the level of social divisions in a country. This is the effective number of ethnic groups. We take the values for ENEG from the replication data set that Golder (2007) makes available for his 2006 article. This variable is stationary within country units. Therefore, we can record a value for countries beyond the period included in Golder's study. Golder calculated the ENEG figures from Fearon's (2003) data. Therefore, where countries are missing from Golder's data set, we calculate the ENEG value directly from Fearon's data. These data are available at www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/ (accessed 1 July 2013). Thirdly, consistent with previous work, we include an interaction of MAGNITUDE*ENEG.

Data and model specifications

We test our theory on an original data set of countries and elections from 1945-2011. The list of countries and the time periods during which we record elections is listed in Table 1. To be included, countries have to register a Polity2 score of ≥+6 for at least five consecutive years. This means that some countries are included when they reached this threshold even if their Polity2 score subsequently fell below this level. We believe that it is reasonable to include these countries because there was at least a minimal period of democracy prior to the collapse during which we should be able to observe the effect of direct presidential elections on the legislative party system. This logic follows the practice of existing studies. In addition, consistent with Golder's (2006) original study we exclude countries such as Guyana where the president and the legislature are elected on a single ballot. Again consistent with Golder, we also exclude Colombia prior to 1974 because of the pact that agreed the outcome of the election in advance. When a country meets these criteria we include it when the constitution makes provision for either a directly or an indirectly elected president. That is to say, we exclude parliamentary monarchies from the data set. We have a total of 544 legislative elections in 82 countries. The number of elections per country ranges from 1 to 32.

We use the models with the same constitutive explanatory variables as Golder (2006: 37) and Hicken and Stoll (2013: 301). However, the interaction

terms and the case selection varies across the set of models. Model 1 replicates Golder's (2006) model where the interaction term of interest is PROXIMITY*ENPC. This model includes parliamentary systems. Model 2 replicates Hicken and Stoll's (2013) model where the interaction term of interest is PRESPOW*PROXIMITY*ENPC. This model includes parliamentary systems and also includes three further constitutive interaction terms PROXIMITY*ENPC, PRESPOW*ENPC and PRESPOW*PROXIMITY. Model 3 replicates Model 1 but excludes parliamentary systems. Model 4 replicates Model 2 but excludes parliamentary systems. Model 5 tests the model that we propose in this article. Here, the interaction term of interest is PRESPOW*ENPC. We include PROXIMITY as a control variable and we test the model solely on countries with a directly elected president. Overall, Models 1 and 2 are designed to determine whether or not we can replicate the original results of Golder's (2006) and Hicken and Stoll's (2013) models. If we can, then we can be confident that the case selection is not artificially driving the result. Models 3-5 test the competing hypotheses that were identified in the previous section. Model 3 tests Golder's hypothesis but only in the context of countries with a directly elected president. Model 4 tests Hicken and Stoll's hypothesis in the same context. Model 5 tests our hypothesis. We use ordinary least squares regression to estimate all the models and, consistent with Golder's (2006) preferred estimation, we report country-clustered standard errors in parentheses for Models 1 and 3, while for Models 2, 4 and 5, consistent with Hicken and Stoll's (2013: 303) preferred estimation, we report Newey-West standard errors, which are robust to both autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity, in parentheses.

Results

We report the results of the five models in Table 2. Model 1 tests Golder's hypothesis with the inclusion of parliamentary systems. It is very difficult to interpret the regression table when there are interaction terms (Brambor et al 2006). Therefore, like Golder (2006: 41, Figure 1e), Figure 1a portrays the key interaction effect graphically. Golder's original model shows that proximate presidential and legislative elections have a reductive impact on the effective number of legislative parties when the effective number of presidential

candidates is fewer than between three and four. The same model with our dataset shows the same result when the effective number of presidential candidates is fewer than about three. Therefore, we are capturing his key finding. Our model also shows a significant inflationary impact on the effective number of legislative parties when the effective number of presidential candidates is greater than about five, whereas Golder does not show this result. However, his graph ends when this figure is seven and the trend for the effective number of legislative parties is upwards. Generally, therefore, we can be confident that our dataset is generating basically the same result as Golder's original model.

Model 2 tests Hicken and Stoll's hypothesis with the inclusion of parliamentary systems. Figure 1b shows Hicken and Stoll's key interaction effect. In their article, Hicken and Stoll (2013: 307) present figures that show the interaction of the proximity of presidential and legislative elections and the effective number of presidential candidates at four values of presidential power. Given space limitations, we report the results for just one value. Figure 1b shows their original result when the president is relatively strong. On their scale this is the result for countries with a presidential power score of 14 on a scale with values from 1-22. On our scale, this is the result with a presidential power score of 0.5 on a scale with values from 0-0.7. Both results show that when there is a relatively strong president proximate presidential and legislative elections have a reductive impact on the legislative party system when the effective number of presidential candidates is about three or fewer. Like Hicken and Stoll, Figure 1b also shows that when there is a large effective number of presidential candidates, there is a significant inflationary impact on the effective number of legislative parties. The results are very similar to Hicken and Stoll's at the other three equivalent values of presidential power too. Overall, we can be confident that our dataset is generating very similar results to those reported in the original articles by Golder and Hicken and Stoll.

Model 3 tests Golder's hypothesis excluding parliamentary systems. Figure 2a graphs the key interaction effect. We see very clearly that the proximity of presidential and legislative elections has no significant effect on the legislative party system at any value for the effective number of presidential candidates. Model 4 tests Hicken and Stoll's hypothesis

excluding parliamentary systems. Figure 2b graphs the key interaction effect. Again, we report the result with a presidential power value of 0.5. Like the result for Golder, we find that at this value of presidential power the proximity of presidential and legislative elections has no effect on the legislative party system whatever the value of the effective number of presidential candidates. We do not report them, but the same result is returned at the three other equivalent vales of presidential power to the ones presented in Hicken and Stoll's article. So, we find that when we exclude parliamentary systems there is no longer any support for either Golder's or Hicken and Stoll's hypotheses.

Model 5 tests our hypothesis solely on countries with directly elected presidents. Figure 3 graphs the key interaction effect. As expected, we find that presidential power has a reductive effect on the legislative party system in an intermediate range of values for the effective number of presidential candidates. Specifically, we find a significant result for such a reduction in a range between 1 and 3 candidates. This range covers 62 per cent of the total observations in our dataset. In terms of the control variables, the interaction effect between the effective number of ethnic groups and the natural log of average district magnitude returns the expected result. The effective number of ethnic groups has a significant and positive effect on the legislative party system at values for the natural log of average district magnitude that are greater than about 0.5, namely outside pure first-past-the-post systems.

To confirm the robustness of our result, we re-estimated Model 5 using Beck and Katz's (1995) panel-corrected-standard-errors (PCSE) model. Hicken and Stoll (2013: 315) reject this estimation technique on the grounds that there is little theoretical reason to expect cross-country contemporaneous correlation in such models and that it is difficult to obtain a good estimate of this correlation when there are few common time periods across countries. However, we know that there are demonstration effects at elections across countries. For example, recent Latin American elections have increasingly manifested similar types of presidential candidates, ranging from more left-wing populist often indigenous candidates to more neo-liberal, pro-business candidates often backed by international investors. So, it is reasonable to use a PCSE model at least as a robustness test. We do not report the results here, but we find that they are very similar to the ones shown in Model 5. Also,

given we find no support for the deflationary effect of proximate presidential and legislative elections, we re-estimate the model excluding the PROXIMITY variable. Again, the results, not reported, are similar to Model 5. Here, though, there is a significant reductive effect for all values below around two effective presidential candidates. Overall, therefore, we find good support for our hypothesis and we have good reason to believe that the findings are robust.

Discussion

These results raise a number of issues. Firstly, they show that in countries with direct presidential elections the proximity of presidential elections to legislative elections has neither an independent effect on the legislative party system nor an effect that depends upon another standard institutional variable. This finding flies in the face of well-known empirical examples, such as the French case since 2002. It also goes against the findings of Shugart (1995), who identified a separate independent effect of proximate elections, as well as Amorim Neto and Cox (1997), Golder (2006) and Hicken and Stoll (2013), who all found a significant effect for proximity when interacted with other variables. We stress that our findings are probabilistic. We do not claim that there is no promixity effect anywhere. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to think that there is a proximity effect in France, whereas generally this is not the case. More substantively, though, we are struck by how the debate about the effect of proximate elections has developed over time. Shugart and Carey (1992) first discussed the notion of an independent effect of proximity, but did not submit it to rigorous testing. Shugart (1995) did test its independent effect, but on only a relatively small number of countries. Amorim Neto and Cox (1997) and Golder (2006) then tested its effect in interaction with the effective number of presidential candidates. Hicken and Stoll (2013) added a further interaction with presidential powers. One way of thinking about this debate is to say that researchers have been downgrading the independent effect of proximity over the course of time. Put another way, while the idea that presidential elections have an impact on the legislative party system is highly intuitive, work has increasingly suggested that this intuition needs to be refined. In this context, our findings merely take such a story to its logical

conclusion. What is more, we have stressed that since Amorim Neto and Cox (1997) studies of proximity have included countries with indirectly elected presidents and monarchs in their estimations. Indeed, we have noted that parliamentary countries comprise a majority of the observations in recent studies. Yet, by definition, there can be no coattails effect in these countries. For that reason, the coding of the proximity variable in them is hypothetical. The value recorded is the same as the one for elections at the exact mid-term in a country with a direct presidential election. This strategy is the best available option if parliamentary republics and monarchies are to be included. However, why include them when we have no expectations about the effect of the key variables under consideration in these regimes, when including them requires recording a hypothetical value, and when there is already variation in the key set of explanatory variables under investigation within the set of countries with direct presidential elections alone? Overall, while there has been a long-standing expectation about the effect of proximate presidential and legislative elections on the legislative party system, we find no evidence of this effect and we suggest that this finding is not as unusual as it might at first appear, given the way in which the debate has developed over time and given recent research strategies.

Secondly, we have stressed the importance of presidential power in shaping the legislative party system when interacted with the effective number of presidential candidates. We need to think carefully about how the presidential power variable is operationalized. There is a concern that current measures of presidential power are unreliable (Fortin 2013). There is also a worry that results are sensitive to the use of the particular presidential power variable that is employed (Tavits 2009). We had to decide whether to develop a new measure of presidential power and test for its effect or to work with one or more existing measures of presidential power. We preferred the latter strategy. We had no reason to believe that a specially constructed measure for the purposes of this article would be any more reliable than existing measures. We also expected that the results derived from any such measure would be sensitive to the application of alternative measures. Indeed, when we re-estimated Model 5 replacing our measure of presidential power with Siaroff's (2003) measure, we found that the results were indeed different, even though there is a strong correlation (0.92) between our measure of

presidential power and Siaroff's measure. Using Siaroff's measure, we found that presidential power had a significant effect only at a very low effective number of presidential candidates (<2) and that the effect was very weak (p = 0.091). These points reinforce the conclusion that researchers should think very carefully about how they operationalize the concept of presidential power. For example, even though Hicken and Stoll (2013) report that their results are robust to different formulations of their preferred measure of presidential power, we wonder whether they are robust to different and, arguably, equally valid measures. In this context, when capturing variation in presidential power we preferred to pool ten existing measures rather than rely on one measure. We believe that this strategy minimizes the idiosyncrasies of individual country codings and, indeed, the idiosyncrasies of individual measures, generating a more genuinely robust finding. We argue that this way of capturing presidential power should be applied more generally and that researchers should refrain from reporting results based on only one measure of presidential power.

Thirdly, we followed Amorim Neto and Cox (1997) and stressed the importance of the effective number of presidential candidates on the legislative party system when interacted with presidential power. In some form or another, all recent work on presidential coattails has underlined the importance of the effective number of presidential candidates. For this reason alone, we need to explore its determinants in more detail. Jones (1999) has shown that the electoral system used for presidential elections helps to determine the number of presidential candidates. All else equal, he finds that run-off systems generate one more effective candidate than plurality systems (ibid.: 182). Golder (2006: 44) has shown that social heterogeneity further increases the effective number of candidates under run-off systems. In this article, we follow Hicken and Stoll (2008) and argue that the size of the presidential prize will also shape the effective number of presidential candidates. However, as argued in the Theory section, we think somewhat differently about how it will do so. Specifically, rather than a bell-shaped curve or a sideways, elongated S, we think that parties will face a specific incentive to coordinate their electoral strategies only within an intermediate range of presidential power. Outside that range, the effect of presidential power is indeterminate. Yet, are there other determinants of the effective

number of candidates? For example, we know that the electoral system for presidential elections shapes the number of candidates, but what about other rules? Does it make a difference whether or not candidates can be proposed solely by political parties represented in the legislature, or whether the nomination process is open to citizens more generally? If citizens can nominate candidates, does it make a difference how many signatures are required? Rules of this sort may also shape the effective number of presidential candidates and may help us to disentangle the effects of presidential power on the number of candidates and, by extension, on the legislative party system.

Conclusion

This article builds on the existing literature about the effect of presidential coattails on the legislative party system. The idea that the legislative party system is shaped by the coattails of directly elected presidents is highly intuitive. The first studies that tested for the direct effect of this factor found some empirical support for the idea. However, recently, the effect of presidential coattails has been shown to be contingent upon other factors, namely the effective number of presidential candidates and presidential power. This article proposes that we think about the determinants of the legislative party system somewhat differently. Controlling for standard electoral system and social heterogeneity variables, we argue that the legislative party system is shaped by the effective number of presidential candidates but only within an intermediary range of presidential power. This is because presidential power itself helps to determine the effective number of presidential candidates by encouraging parties to behave strategically but only in a way that we can clearly observe within such an intermediary range. We also stress that we should think differently about how we test for the effect of this interaction. Typically, scholars have done so by pooling presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary countries, even though the effect of the variable under investigation only applies to countries with direct presidential elections. We are skeptical that parliamentary countries can be included on the basis that they constitute a natural experiment. Instead, we suggest that the effects under consideration should be tested solely in

countries with directly elected presidents. Having replicated existing studies, we find good evidence for our propositions. Our results cast doubt on the highly intuitive idea that presidential coattails shape the legislative party system. However, they reinforce the idea that the effective number of presidential candidates is an important determinant of the legislative party system, suggesting that we need to reassess the determinants of this factor. Presidential power is one of them. We argue that we need to think carefully about how we capture presidential power and stress that relying on a single measure is likely to be problematic. Instead, we encourage scholars generally to pool a multitude of measures so as to try to capture this important variable as reliably as possible.

Table 1   List of countries, time periods, and presidential power scores

Country	Period legislative elections are included (inclusive)	Mean normalized presidential power score
Albania	2005-	0.18
Argentina	1983-1994	0.56
Argentina	1995-	0.55
Austria	1949-	0.12
Bangladesh	1991-2001	0.18
Benin	1991-	0.57
Botswana	1969-	0.61
Brazil	1986-	0.55
Bulgaria	1994-	0.25
Cape Verde	1991-	0.35
Chile	1965-1969	0.58
Chile	1993-	0.61
Colombia	1974-1991	0.64
Colombia	1994-	0.43
Costa Rica	1953-	0.44
Croatia	2000	0.39
Croatia	2003-	0.33
Cyprus	1985-	0.50
Czech Republic	1992-	0.18
Dominican Republic	1998-	0.53
Ecuador	1979-1998	0.52
Ecuador	2002	0.68
El Salvador	1985-2000	0.42
El Salvador	2003-	0.67
Estonia	1992-	0.18
Finland	1948-1954	0.56
Finland	1958-1999	0.43
Finland	2003-	0.16
France	1946-1956	0.22

France	1973-	0.45
Georgia	2004-	0.56
Germany	1949-	0
Ghana	2004-	0.62
Greece	1977-1985	0.33
Greece	1989-	0
Guatemala	1999-	0.43
Guinea-Bissau	2008	0.43
Honduras	1997-	0.49
Hungary	1990-	0.18
India	1951-	0.16
Indonesia	1999-	0.07
Ireland	1948-	0.17
Israel	1949-	0.08
Italy	1948-	0.22
Kenya	2002-	0.64
Rep. of Korea	1988-	0.52
Latvia	1993-	0.12
Liberia	2011	
Lithuania	1992-	0.32
Macedonia	1994-	0.26
Madagascar	1993-1998	0.35
Madagascar	2002-2007	0.66
Malawi	1994-	0.56
Mali	1992-2007	0.47
Mauritius	1995-	0.22
Mexico	1997-	0.60
Moldova	1994-1998	0.37
Moldova	2001-	0.22
Mongolia	1992-	0.35
Myanmar	1951-1960	
Nicaragua	1990-	0.52
Nigeria	1964	0.11
Pakistan	1988-1997	0.56

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Panama	1989-	0.53
Paraguay	1993-	0.52
Peru	1980-1990	0.50
Peru	2001-	0.40
Philippines	1987-	0.46
Poland	1991-1997	0.35
Poland	2001-	0.29
Portugal	1976-1980	0.50
Portugal	1983-	0.26
Romania	1996-	0.31
South Africa	1994-	0.75
Senegal	2001-	0.69
Sierra Leone	2007	0.49
Slovakia	1994-1998	0.16
Slovakia	2002-	0.14
Slovenia	1992-	0.14
Somalia	1964	
Sri Lanka	1977	
Taiwan	1995-	0.42
Trinidad and Tobago	1976-	0.11
Turkey	1961-1969	0.22
Turkey	1973-1977	0.22
Turkey	1983-	0.38
Ukraine	1994	0.43
Ukraine	1998-2006	0.46
Ukraine	2007	0.15
USA	1946-	0.55
Venezuela	1963-2000	0.44

Note: This is the full list of countries that enter one or more of Models 1-5. Countries that meet the selection criterion for democracy, but for which there are incomplete values for other variables are not recorded e.g. Timor-Leste 2007. Countries without a value for presidential power but with full values for all other variables can still be included in Models 1 and 3.

**Table 2**   **Estimating the effective number of electoral parties**

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**
PROXIMITY	-3.60	-3.81	-0.47	0.64	0.03
	(0.65)***	(2.02)*	(0.83)	(2.96)	(0.23)
ENPC	0.11	-0.08	0.90	0.68	0.57
	(0.14)	(0.21)	(0.24)***	(0.63)	(0.41)
PROXIMITY *ENPC	1.12	1.29	0.15	-0.19	
	(0.27)***	(0.83)	(0.28)	(1.05)	
PRESPOW		-2.87		-3.34	-3.95
		(0.71)***		(3.60)	(2.44)
PRESPOW* PROXIMITY		2.63		-1.12	
		(4.29)		(6.03)	
PRESPOW* ENPC		0.92		0.70	0.89
		(0.54)*		(1.37)	(0.90)
PRESPOW* PROXIMITY* ENPC		-1.03		0.35	
		(1.78)		(2.18)	
ENEG	0.34	0.26	0.26	0.06	0.05
	(0.12)***	(0.09)***	(0.22)	(0.12)	(0.12)
MAGNITUDE	0.62	0.51	0.05	-0.38	-0.38
	(0.19)***	(0.17)***	(0.42)	(0.27)	(0.26)
MAGNITUDE* ENEG	-0.13	-0.09	0.24	0.45	0.44
	(0.06)**	(0.04)**	(0.27)	(0.16)***	(0.16)***
Constant	2.87	3.61	0.40	2.08	2.41
	(0.49)***	(0.31)***	(0.92)	(1.70)	(1.14)
N	452	443	292	291	291
R-squared	0.26	0.26	0.39	0.40	0.40
Root mean square error	1.79	1.78	1.73	1.69	1.68
	Country-clustered standard	Newey-West standard	Country-clustered standard	Newey-West standard	Newey-West standard

	errors	errors	errors	errors	errors

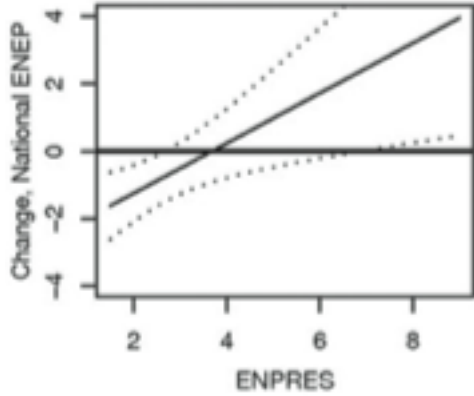**Figure 1a   Replication of Golder's model (Model 1)**
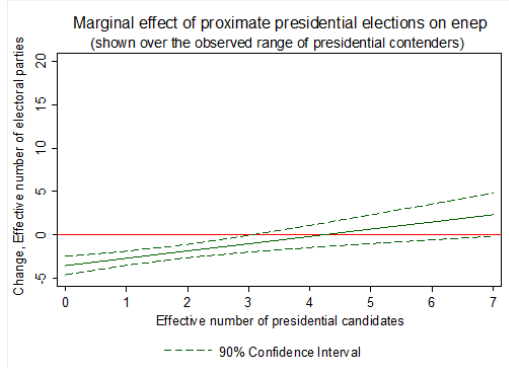
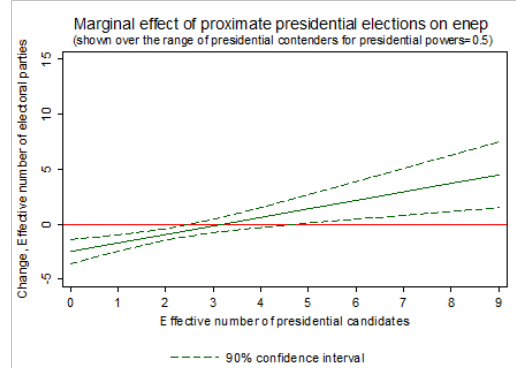Golder's model (2006: 41) original dataset
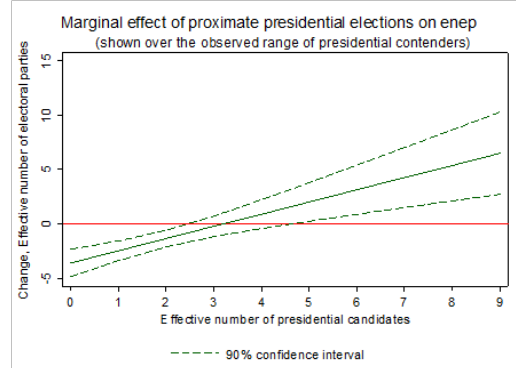
Golder's model our dataset

Figure 1b   Replication of Hicken and Stoll's model (Model 2)

Hicken and Stoll's (2013: 307) model with a relatively strong president original dataset

Hicken and Stoll's model with a relatively strong president our dataset

Figure 2a   Replication of Golder's model without parliamentary systems (Model 3)
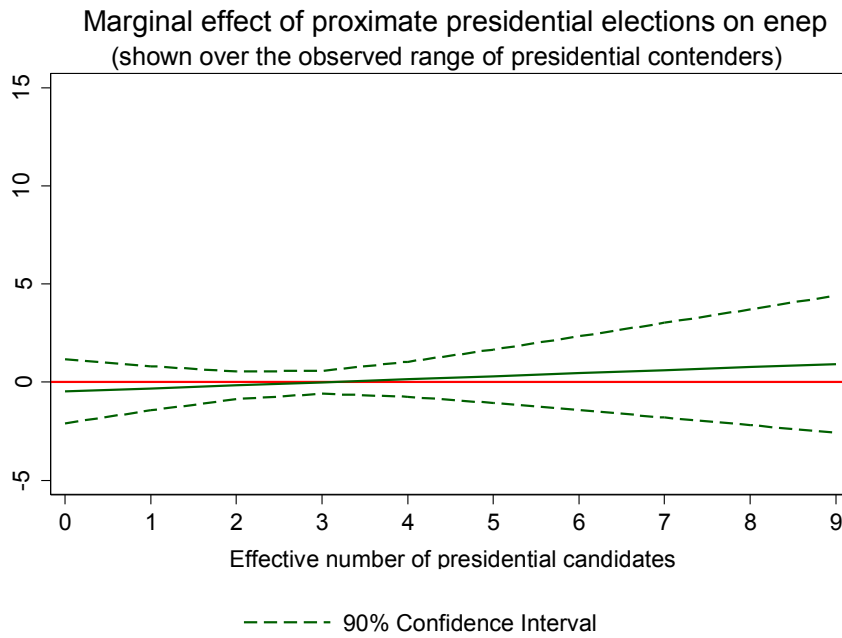
Marginal effect of proximate presidential elections on enep
(shown over the observed range of presidential contenders)

Effective number of presidential candidates

– – – – 90% Confidence Interval

Figure 2b   Replication of Hicken and Stoll's model without parliamentary systems when there is a relatively strong president (Model 4)

Marginal effect of proximate presidential elections on enep
(shown over the range of presidential contenders when presidential powers=0.5)

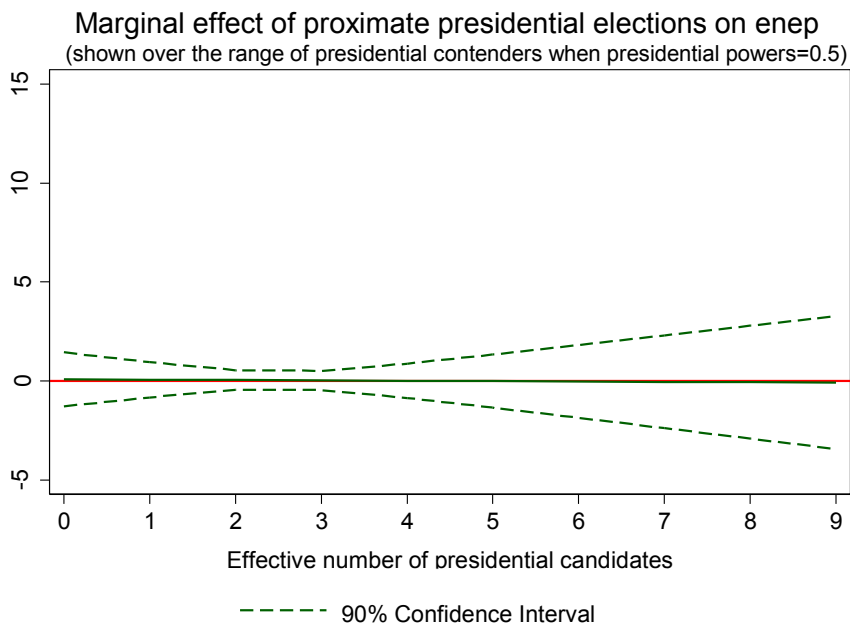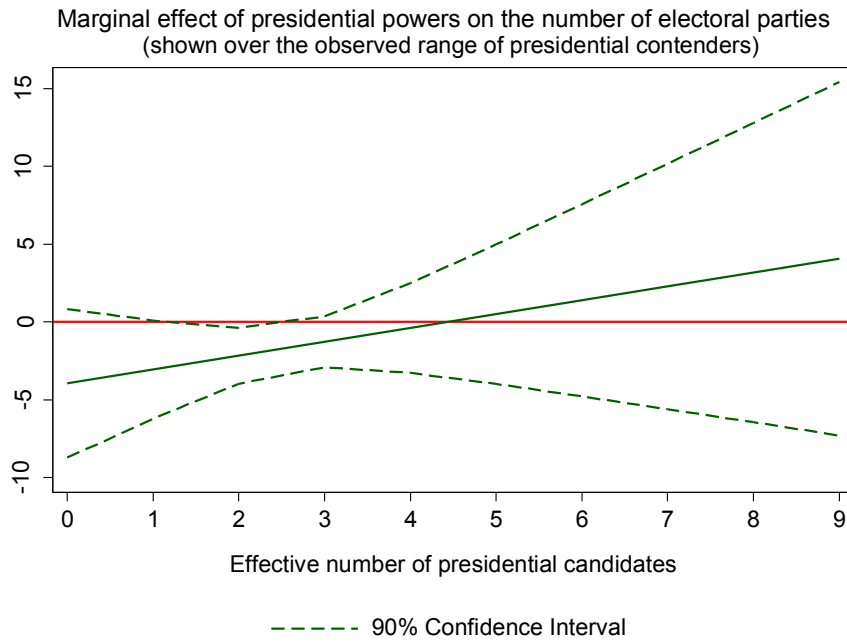Effective number of presidential candidates

– – – – 90% Confidence Interval

Figure 3   The interaction of presidential power and the effective number of presidential candidates on the legislative party system (Model 5)

Marginal effect of presidential powers on the number of electoral parties
(shown over the observed range of presidential contenders)

Effective number of presidential candidates

– – – – 90% Confidence Interval

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