**ONLINE APP****ENDIX 1 – Literature review of indirect (electoral/legislative) effects**

While our argument focuses on the direct, institutional effect of presidential elections, two of the main established determinants of party-system closure are the *fragmentation* of the party system—which indicates the number (and strength) of ‘streams of interaction’ (Sjöblom 1968)[[1]](#footnote-1) through a ‘statement of mechanical tendencies [predispositions]’ (Sartori 1976: 173)[[2]](#footnote-2)—and the *institutionalization* of political parties, as without continuous, strong and socially rooted party organizations, stable and predictable interactions are impossible (Casal Bértoa 2012, 2019).[[3]](#footnote-3) These two effects are represented by arrows ③ and ⑤ in Figure 1 of the main text.

The literature also points out how both party-system fragmentation and party institutionalization themselves may be influenced by the institutional design and, more specifically, by the mode the head of state is elected. In this context, we can think of a causal chain indirectly linking party-system closure to presidential elections, *via* electoral fragmentation and party institutionalization. In the paper, we estimate these two chains empirically. Here, we discuss each of them theoretically in light of the relevant literature.

Electoral fragmentation

Presidential elections are commonly thought to influence the size of the legislative party system through a coattails effect (Golder 2006; Stoll 2011),[[4]](#footnote-4) represented by arrow ② in Figure 1 of the main text. However, it is not clear in the literature (Elgie *et al*. 2014)[[5]](#footnote-5) in which direction such influence will take place: for some it will increase fragmentation (Filippov et al. 1999; Jones 1995, 1999; Booth and Robbins 2011),[[6]](#footnote-6) for others it will have a reductive character (Cox 1997; Mozaffar *et al*. 2003; Rose and Tikhomirov 1996; Shugart and Carey 1992),[[7]](#footnote-7) and a third position expects no effect at all (e.g. Samuels 2000).[[8]](#footnote-8)

One thing that seems to be clear is that such effects will be channelled by the electoral system employed. Especially under majority rules, with a possibility for a second round, popular presidential elections will tend to increase fragmentation. The main reasons are three: (1) competition for the presidency enhances the public visibility of politicians through increased media exposure and campaign contributions, boosting their options in future parliamentary elections (Elgie 2001: 219; Filippov et al. 1999);[[9]](#footnote-9) (2) “the expectation of a runoff increases the incentive to compete in the first run, either in the hope of placing among the two most favoured or of gaining bargaining power for support in the runoff of one of the two leading contenders” (Linz 1994: 22; Golder 2006);[[10]](#footnote-10) and (3) because presidents—even if not powerful—are usually seen as the leader of the nation, the weight of the presidency encourages the formation of parties to satisfy “personal” ambitions (e.g. Paksas in Lithuania, Eanes in Portugal, Snegur in Moldova). If, on the other hand, plurality rule is used, these reasons will be counteracted by the mechanical and psychological effects of single-member district elections (Cox 1997; Sartori 1997)[[11]](#footnote-11) as well as the “winner-takes-all” character of presidential races (Linz 1994).[[12]](#footnote-12) As a result, political elites will tend to form broader coalitions of *like-minded* parties, and voters may opt for strategic voting out of fear of wasting their votes (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997: 36),[[13]](#footnote-13) which may contain fragmentation (Golder 2006; Shugart and Carey 1992).[[14]](#footnote-14) In Moser’s words:

The fear of splitting the vote within a specific ideological camp’s potential electorate and allowing victory to a candidate from the opposite end of the political spectrum further reinforces impulses for consolidation [meaning concentration] (2001: 98).[[15]](#footnote-15)

Likewise, the extent to which presidential elections will have an impact on the number of parties will also depend on the electoral cycle – concretely, on the temporal proximity of presidential and legislative elections. Thus, and due to the “spillover” effect that the presidency has on the behaviour of voters and party elites in legislative elections (Mainwaring 1993), if both types of elections are held concurrently, presidential elections will have a reductive effect on the effective number of electoral parties, but only if a plurality rule is applied. Conversely, if the two elections do not coincide (as is generally the case in our European data), such reductive effect will be weaker, no matter the electoral system employed (Jones 1995; Lijphart 1994; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Amorin Neto and Cox 1997; Sedelius 2006; Shugart and Carey 1992).[[16]](#footnote-16)

Other works also made the effects of popular presidential elections dependent on the number of presidential candidates, the powers of the president, or the type of regime (i.e. presidential vs. semi-presidential). However, while for some the effects are clearly reductive (Golder 2006; Hicken and Stoll 2013),[[17]](#footnote-17) for others the relationship is much more complex (Elgie et al. 2014; Golosov and Kalinin 2017).[[18]](#footnote-18)

Party institutionalization

Numerous studies argue that popular presidential elections impede the development of institutionalized (i.e., socially rooted and organizationally stable) political parties (e.g. Linz 1994; Samuels and Shugart 2010; Booth and Robbins 2011).[[19]](#footnote-19) This effect is represented by arrow ④ in Figure 1 of the main text. Scholars propose four main reasons: (1) a popularly elected presidency encourages greater personalism, making it more difficult for parties to develop coherent programs and identities (Mainwaring 1993; Samuels 2002)[[20]](#footnote-20) and perhaps even leading to their plain instrumentalization (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997: 32; Bahro et al. 1998);[[21]](#footnote-21) (2) the personalized character of a presidential race provides no safeguard against political “outsiders” creating new parties to run for the presidency (Stepan and Suleiman 1995; Elgie 2001)[[22]](#footnote-22)—parties that, while *ad hoc*, have realistic chances of subsequent cabinet participation (Grotz and Weber 2016)[[23]](#footnote-23) or, otherwise, the prospect of being side-lined until further notice (Stepan and Skach 1993; Cadoux 2007);[[24]](#footnote-24) (3) popular presidential elections may contribute to factionalism, i.e., to the institutionalization of division within parties rather than between parties (Azebedo and Nijzink 2007),[[25]](#footnote-25) leading in the most acute case to organizational break-up; (4) presidential elections encourage the image of a president who is above, and potentially against, political parties (Linz 1994; Huskey 2007; Meleshevich 2007)[[26]](#footnote-26) and, by means of personal appointments, replaces parties as main channels of “career opportunities” and “access to power” (Meleshevich 2007: 152).[[27]](#footnote-27)

Other scholars found support for those works suggesting “that presidentialism’s effects on […] party development are greatly overstated (Power and Gasiorowski 1997; Ishiyama and Velten 1998)” (Ishiyama and Kennedy 2001: 1187).[[28]](#footnote-28) In fact, looking at the degree of party development in four newly-democratized post-Soviet countries (three of them in Europe: Russia, Ukraine and Armenia), they could not find any evidence of the “the commonly held notion that superpresidentialism is the culprit for the lack of party development in terms of continuity, gravity and penetration” (Ishiyama and Kennedy 2001: 1187).[[29]](#footnote-29) More recently, Passarelli (2020)[[30]](#footnote-30) suggested the possibility that popular presidential elections might help “presidential” parties to install what Randall and Svåsand (2002)[[31]](#footnote-31) called “uneven institutionalization”. Still, quantitative studies measuring what Rose and Munro (2003)[[32]](#footnote-32) called “supply-side volatility” (i.e., volatility caused by party de-institutionalization or excessive party turnover), have found no relationship with the existence of a presidential and/or semi-presidential regime (Powell and Tucker 2014; Weghorst and Bernhard 2014; Mainwaring at al. 2017; Lago and Torcal 2020)[[33]](#footnote-33) or the existence of a presidential run-off (Mainwaring and Su 2021).[[34]](#footnote-34)

**ONLINE APPENDIX 2 – Scope of the study**

Table A1 – Polities and elections in the dataset

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Polity | First election | Last election | Number of elections | Polity | First election | Last election | Number of elections |
| Albania | 2001 | 2017 | 5 | Latvia II | 1993 | 2018 | 9 |
| Andorra | 1993 | 2019 | 8 | Liechtenstein | 1993 | 2017 | 7 |
| Austria I | 1920 | 1930 | 4 | Lithuania | 1996 | 2020 | 7 |
| Austria II | 1945 | 2019 | 23 | Luxembourg | 1919 | 2018 | 24 |
| Belgium | 1921 | 2019 | 29 | Macedonia (N.) | 1994 | 2020 | 9 |
| Bulgaria | 1991 | 2017 | 9 | Malta | 1966 | 2017 | 12 |
| Croatia | 2000 | 2020 | 7 | Moldova | 1998 | 2019 | 8 |
| Cyprus | 1981 | 2016 | 8 | Montenegro | 2009 | 2020 | 4 |
| Czechia | 1996 | 2017 | 7 | Netherlands | 1922 | 2017 | 27 |
| Czechoslovakia | 1920 | 1935 | 4 | Norway | 1906 | 2017 | 30 |
| Denmark | 1913 | 2019 | 41 | Poland I | 1922 | 1922 | 1 |
| Estonia I | 1920 | 1932 | 5 | Poland II | 1991 | 2019 | 9 |
| Estonia II | 1992 | 2019 | 8 | Portugal I | 1911 | 1925 | 8 |
| Finland I | 1917 | 1929 | 6 | Portugal II | 1976 | 2019 | 15 |
| Finland II | 1945 | 2019 | 21 | Romania | 1996 | 2020 | 7 |
| France I | 1849 | 1849 | 1 | Russia | 1999 | 2003 | 2 |
| France II | 1876 | 1936 | 16 | San Marino I | 1923 | 1923 | 1 |
| France III | 1946 | 1956 | 3 | San Marino II | 1949 | 2019 | 18 |
| France IV | 1968 | 2017 | 12 | Serbia | 2000 | 2020 | 8 |
| Georgia | 2004 | 2020 | 5 | Slovakia | 1992 | 2020 | 9 |
| Germany I | 1919 | 1932 | 8 | Slovenia | 1992 | 2018 | 8 |
| Germany II | 1953 | 2017 | 18 | Spain I | 1901 | 1923 | 11 |
| Greece I | 1875 | 1915 | 16 | Spain II | 1931 | 1936 | 3 |
| Greece II | 1926 | 1936 | 5 | Spain III | 1982 | 2019 | 13 |
| Greece III | 1946 | 1946 | 1 | Sweden | 1920 | 2018 | 30 |
| Greece IV | 1977 | 2019 | 17 | Switzerland | 1899 | 2019 | 34 |
| Hungary | 1990 | 2018 | 8 | Turkey I | 1950 | 1950 | 1 |
| Iceland | 1946 | 2017 | 23 | Turkey II | 1961 | 1977 | 5 |
| Ireland | 1927 | 2020 | 29 | Turkey III | 1987 | 2011 | 7 |
| Italy | 1948 | 2018 | 18 | Ukraine | 1994 | 2012 | 6 |
| Kosovo | 2010 | 2019 | 4 | United Kingdom | 1918 | 2019 | 28 |
| Latvia I | 1922 | 1931 | 4 | Yugoslavia | 1920 | 1920 | 1 |

**ONLINE APPENDIX 3 – Party-system closure across space and time (Figure A1)**



Figure A1 above captures the level of party-system closure across space and time in our dataset, covering 64 party systems in 46 European countries. A first look shows that, as would be expected (Morlino 1998; Mainwaring 1999; Tavits 2005),[[35]](#footnote-35) democracy (1) generally survived in European party systems that were closed (e.g. Denmark, Malta, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom); but (2) often collapsed in those countries where partisan interactions at the executive level remained open (e.g. Turkey, Ukraine; but also inter-war Estonia, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Poland and Yugoslavia). Similarly, our measure is able to capture not only major instances of party system change (e.g. Ireland 1948, Denmark 1993, Germany 1998, Andorra 2011), but also more recent cases of party system collapse (e.g. Italy 1994, Greece 2012, Ireland 2016). Even cases of partisan re-alignment (e.g. Norway 2005, United Kingdom 2010, Spain 2016) are captured by our index. These two instances (i.e., helping us mark when the structure of inter-party competition changed, and why democracy collapsed) highlight the face validity of the concept of party-system closure and its operationalization.

For a more extensive discussion of party system closure, including construct validity, face validity, and its relationship with democratic consolidation, please see Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2021).[[36]](#footnote-36)

**ONLINE APPENDIX 4 – Ethnic fractionalization**

This appendix describes the procedures used to measure ethnic fractionalization. This variable is based on the widely used Herfindahl-Hirschman index. It expresses the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population belong to different ethnic groups. A value of 0 would indicate that a population consists of only one ethnic group, whereas a value of 1 means that each individual is of a different ethnicity. Ethnic fractionalization is thus similar to the “effective number of parties,” just that the size of ethnic groups is used in the calculation instead of parties’ vote shares in the electorate or seat shares in parliament.

The main source for the post-WWII period is Drazanova (2020).[[37]](#footnote-37) This dataset has the important advantage that it measures fractionalization on a yearly basis, and can thus be applied to a long-time range. Data are available for the years 1945-2013. The value for 2013 was also used for the years of 2014-2020.

Several countries in our study are not included in Drazanova (2020). Data were added from other sources as follows: Andorra, France, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, and San Marino from Alesina et al. (2003);[[38]](#footnote-38) Montenegro from Early Warning Project (2021);[[39]](#footnote-39) and Kosovo from Baghdasaryan and Selck (2016).[[40]](#footnote-40) However, these values are all constants. To introduce a plausible time trend, we exploited the fact that the data of Alesina et al. (2003) and Drazanova (2020) overlap for a large number of countries. By regressing Drazanova on Alesina et al. and a squared year polynomial, we generated an out-of-sample prediction that scales the constants from Alesina et al. to the same level as Drazanova, and allows them to change over time in the same way that the other European countries did.

Most data for pre-WWII democracies were obtained from Bernhard et al. (2001).[[41]](#footnote-41) For Yugoslavia 1920, we used the 1945 value from Drazanova; for France and San Marino, we used trend-mean imputation from countries that were similarly homogeneous at the time.

**ONLINE APPENDIX 5 – Descriptive statistics**

Table A2 – Descriptive statistics of all variables

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Mean | Std. dev. | Min | Max |
| Party-system closure | 80.68 | 14.34 | 31.00 | 100.00 |
| Popular presidential elections(a) | 0.29 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 |
| Majority system | 0.21 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 |
| ---, single-round election | 0.07 | 0.25 | 0 | 1 |
| ---, two-round election | 0.14 | 0.35 | 0 | 1 |
| Plurality/STV system | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0 | 1 |
| Electoral fragmentation (ENEP)(b) | 4.48 | 1.86 | 1 | 15.45 |
| Party institutionalization | 3.25 | 0.83 | 0.00 | 4.63 |
| Presidential power (*de facto*) | 0.54 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| Presidential power (*de jure*)(c) | 0.73 | 0.44 | 0 | 1 |
| Age of democracy (logged) | 3.12 | 1.02 | 0.00 | 4.83 |
| Precursor regime |  |  |  |  |
| ---, royal | 0.43 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| ---, military | 0.16 | 0.37 | 0 | 1 |
| ---, civilian | 0.41 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Economic growth (previous year) | 2.34 | 5.09 | -31.16 | 27.65 |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | 0.20 | 0.40 | 0 | 1 |
| Ethnic fractionalization | 0.23 | 0.18 | 0.01 | 0.75 |
| Vote share of leading candidate(d) | 0.46 | 0.14 | 0.20 | 0.96 |
| Percentage of non-partisan ministers | 10.64 | 17.50 | 0.00 | 100.00 |

N (elections) = 735. N (polities) = 64.

(a) While we use Elgie’s (2018) “constitutionally-based” classification as a point of departure,[[42]](#footnote-42) we code as 0 all those cases where despite constitutional provisions, presidential elections were not held for one reason or another (lack of money, military occupation, etc.).

(b) No reliable ENEP figures are available for the Kingdom of Greece (-1924), the Portuguese Republic (-1926) and the Kingdom of Spain (-1931). These values were imputed using a regression model including the effective number of *parliamentary* parties, in addition to the other variables and a quadratic year polynomial (R-squared = 0.83). This model was also used to impute values for Ukraine 1994 and 1998, which were clear outliers produced by a large number of successful independents (original ENEP was 46.1 and 29.4, respectively, with the next highest value in the entire data at 13.8).

(c) Scores available for part of the data. N=327.

(d) Vote share of the leading presidential candidate in the first (and possibly only) round of a popular election. For polities with popular presidential elections only. N=214.

**ONLINE APPENDIX 6 – Accounting for space and time**

This appendix serves to verify that the new finding of a strong direct effect of popular presidential elections on party-system closure is not an artefact of the spatial or temporal composition of our data.

To this end, Table A3 reports results when a full set of polity dummies and decade dummies are added to the regressions of Table 1 in the main text.[[43]](#footnote-43) This approach makes sure that the control variables did not miss any important institutional, regional or historical patterns that may confound our estimation strategy. As seen in M1b, the direct effect survives the test, and even comes out with a larger coefficient (-7.17, compared to -4.58 in M1). In contrast, the indirect effects are all weakened: the coefficient of fragmentation decreases to -0.71 in M1b (from -1.07 in M1), and that of institutionalization drops to an insignificant 0.97 (from 3.31 in M1); moreover, the effect received by institutionalization from popular presidential elections in M3b is essentially wiped out (-0.03, compared to -0.18 in M3). This suggests that the indirect effects may largely reflect structural clusters of variables, which are hard to attribute to one factor or another. The direct effect, however, unfolds even more of its potential once such clustering is accounted for.

M1c in Table A3 presents an alternative test, by interacting popular presidential elections with a dummy for the pre-war period (before 1939). This seeks to verify that the direct effect is not driven by a period in which many of the countries in our data were not democratic. We find that, indeed, the effect was stronger before WWII than after (the product term “Pre-WWII \* Popular presidential elections” has a negative coefficient). At the same time, the difference is far from significant, suggesting that the stronger pre-war effect also comes with large variance. More importantly, however, the effect for the *post*-war period is still strong and significant in its own right (as indicated by the coefficient of the constitutive term “Popular presidential elections”). Overall, it thus appears that the effect of popular presidential elections on party-system closure is quite general across space and time.

Table A3 – Estimated effects of popular presidential elections, with polity and period effects

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **M1b** | **M2b** | **M3b** | **M1c** |
| *Dependent variable:* | Party-system closure | Electoral fragmentation | Party institutionalization | Party-system closure |
| Popular presidential elections | -7.17\*\* | 0.35+ | -0.03 | -5.42\* |
|  | (2.30) | (0.19) | (0.05) | (2.51) |
| Electoral fragmentation | -0.71\*\* |  |  | -0.60\*\* |
|  | (0.25) |  |  | (0.20) |
| Party institutionalization | 0.97 |  |  | 0.79 |
|  | (0.96) |  |  | (0.74) |
| Age of democracy (logged) | 2.14\*\* | -0.32\*\* | 0.30\*\* | 1.50\*\* |
|  | (0.81) | (0.07) | (0.02) | (0.55) |
| Economic growth (previous year) | 0.15\*\* | -0.00 | 0.00 | 0.18\*\* |
|  | (0.05) | (0.01) | (0.00) | (0.04) |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | -0.60 | -0.27 | 0.02 | -1.28 |
|  | (1.30) | (0.19) | (0.04) | (1.00) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | 6.73 | 1.46+ | 0.18 | 4.86 |
|  | (8.38) | (0.78) | (0.23) | (6.54) |
| Pre-WWII |  |  |  | -0.09 |
|  |  |  |  | (1.40) |
| Pre-WWII \* |  |  |  | -5.30 |
| Popular presidential elections |  |  |  | (5.13) |
| Polity dummies | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Decade dummies | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Rho (autocorrelation) | 0.37 | 0.30 | 0.47 | 0.39 |
| Chi2 (Wald) | 549 | 1386 | 5685 | 716 |

FGLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

N (elections) = 735. Panels (unbalanced, heteroskedastic) = 64.

Six single-observation panels are uninformative.

\*\* significant at 99%; \* significant at 95%; + significant at 90%.

**ONLINE APPENDIX 7 – The role of the electoral system for presidential elections**

The models of direct and indirect effects of popular presidential elections in Table 1 and 2 of the main text are estimated across electoral systems, ignoring important arguments in the literature regarding the impact of (semi-)presidentialism under plurality and majority rules. This appendix discusses these arguments and explores their empirical implications.

According to the literature, and as briefly mentioned in the main text, popular presidential elections under *majority* rules are expected to have a higher impact on the level of electoral fragmentation as the adoption of run-off provisions will only “exacerbate any legislative fragmentation caused by the use of proportional representation in legislative elections” (Golder 2006: 47).[[44]](#footnote-44) In such contexts, ambitious politicians have an incentive to form a party and run in the expectation that they can make it to the second round or, at least, gain blackmail potential (Linz 1994; Stepan and Suleiman 1995; Wright and Riker 1989).[[45]](#footnote-45) This is clearly visible in countries that have (re-) introduced popular presidential elections (e.g. Slovakia, Moldova). Conversely, *plurality* rules are expected to have a lesser,[[46]](#footnote-46) or even a negative effect, as “the fear of splitting the vote within a specific ideological camp’s potential electorate and allowing victory to a candidate from the opposite end of the political spectrum further reinforces impulses for consolidation” (Moser 2001: 98).[[47]](#footnote-47) Not surprisingly, the number of new parties in countries like Finland, Iceland and Ireland, which might have led to extraordinary high levels of electoral fragmentation, has remained relatively small.

In turn, popular presidential elections are expected to hinder the institutionalization of political parties under both *plurality* and *majority* rules. This is so because presidential personalization, the main challenge to party institutionalization (White et al. 1995),[[48]](#footnote-48) can occur under all “personal-vote electoral systems” (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 127).[[49]](#footnote-49) This is because popularly elected presidents are not interested in the creation of strong party organizations, which might at some point challenge their own position of power, but mostly in their utilitarian use as electoral vehicles. Thus, no matter the electoral system employed, popular presidential elections contribute to “the creation of small and ephemeral parties, most often the personal vehicles of presidential candidates and little more” (Cadoux 2007: 96).[[50]](#footnote-50)

If the literature suggests that the impact of popular presidential elections on electoral fragmentation and party institutionalization (what we call the “indirect effects”) is conditioned by the electoral system, it also seems worth exploring the *direct* effect on party-system closure by electoral system (see Casal Bértoa 2011).[[51]](#footnote-51) Case-based impressions are equally suggestive—for example of countries like Romania, where all government coalitions appointed immediately after legislative elections (with the exception of Sorin Grindeanu’s 2017 cabinet[[52]](#footnote-52)) responded to “presidential” electoral coalitions formed either before the run-off (e.g. November 1996 and 2019) or already before the first round (e.g. November 2000 and 2004).

Exploring these expectations more systematically, Table A4 replicates the models of Table 1, with the important addition that the main independent variable (popular presidential elections) in broken down into two categories: majority and plurality systems. Parliamentary systems still serve as base category.

M8 in Table A4 shows that the direct effect of popular presidential elections on party-system closure is somewhat more pronounced under majority systems than under plurality systems (-4.88 vs. -3.68). However, these results need to be treated with caution, given that the difference between the two coefficients is far from significant. In essence, we find support of our first hypothesis under *both* electoral systems.

This finding is bolstered by the estimates of Table A5, which adds polity and decade dummies to the panel regressions (equivalent to Table A3 in [Appendix 6](#App5)). M8b shows that direct effects come out strengthened under both electoral systems. Overall, these analyses thus demonstrate that popular presidential elections affect party-system closure across different institutional provisions. This finding also gives more empirical context to our third hypothesis, which states that differences will not so much arise between electoral rules as such, but on the basis of the number of rounds that is required under majority systems to elect a winner. Table 2 in the main text tests this expectation.

Turning to the indirect paths, M9 of Table A4 shows that the effect of popular presidential elections on electoral fragmentation is about twice as large under plurality systems than under majority (and even insignificant in the latter case). One interpretation of this rather unusual finding may be that potential candidates exploit their possibilities of becoming “dark horses” (Casal Bértoa 2020: 3)[[53]](#footnote-53) when they just need to obtain relatively stronger support than other contestants,[[54]](#footnote-54) unlike in majoritarian systems, where they will be required to get more than fifty percent of the first-round vote on their own, or together with the support of other parties—something which, as we argue, will have other types of implications in the second round. This is not to deny that countries where presidential elections are held under majoritarian run-off systems also see a positive (if insignificant) effect on fragmentation. However, the fact that a second round is not always guaranteed (like it was the case in most instances in Armenia, Austria, Georgia, Montenegro or Portugal) might act as a deterrent for ambitious politicians who like to hedge their bets.

A more methodological interpretation arises from the addition of fixed effects in Table A5. As can be seen in M9b, the order of the two electoral systems in terms of effect size is reversed, with majority having the larger coefficient compared to plurality. This suggests that structural conditions, in particular of the kind that lead countries to adopt on electoral system or another, may account for some of the differences in the footprint of popular presidential elections in electoral fragmentation. One effect that does not materialize under either specification, however, is a *negative* effect under plurality systems. According to our data, this expectation may overestimate the consolidating impact of the “presidentialization” of party systems vis-à-vis the perturbing impact of competing levels of electoral coalitions.

When looking at the results party institutionalization, the coefficients of popular presidential elections are significant under both electoral systems (M10). While electoral systems have different mechanical effects on the number of parties, it appears that their effect on the process of party institutionalization is more dependent on the agency of political actors. And, as the literature has maintained, because of the personalist character and “zero-sum” game inherent to popular presidential elections, presidential candidates have few incentives to create parties that will outlive them. At the same time, the effect is somewhat stronger for plurality than for majority. This suggests, as mentioned above, that incentives in plurality systems to create strong organizations beyond charismatic-party types are underdeveloped, as candidates might win without any coalitions; in contrast, in majority systems the need for inter-party relations, especially before the run-off, requires more serious organization (in terms of personnel, strategic planning, funding, etc.).

Still, the addition of fixed effects in Table A5 reduces these effects quite dramatically. In M10b, the effect under plurality is cut in half, and the effect under majority disappears altogether. This is in line with the results of M3b in Table A3. Overall, the impression remains that the path connecting popular presidential elections to party-system closure via party institutionalization is quite contingent on contextual circumstances.

Table A4 – Estimated effects of popular presidential elections, by electoral system

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **M8** | **M9** | **M10** |
| *Dependent variable:* | Party-system closure | Electoral fragmentation | Party institutionalization |
| Popular presidential elections: |  |  |  |
| - Majority system | -4.88\*\* | 0.24 | -0.15\*\* |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (1.37) | (0.21) | (0.05) |
| - Plurality/STV system | -3.68+ | 0.50\* | -0.24\*\* |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (1.97) | (0.24) | (0.09) |
| Electoral fragmentation | -1.06\*\* |  |  |
|  | (0.17) |  |  |
| Party institutionalization | 3.30\*\* |  |  |
|  | (0.68) |  |  |
| Age of democracy (logged) | 1.41\*\* | 0.19\*\* | 0.44\*\* |
|  | (0.52) | (0.06) | (0.02) |
| Economic growth (previous year) | 0.19\*\* | -0.00 | 0.00 |
|  | (0.05) | (0.01) | (0.00) |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | 0.08 | -0.71\*\* | -0.00 |
|  | (0.87) | (0.16) | (0.04) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | -0.30 | 1.27\* | -0.52\*\* |
|  | (2.94) | (0.50) | (0.14) |
| Precursor regime: military | -0.49 | -1.02\*\* | 0.39\*\* |
| (vs. royal) | (1.74) | (0.25) | (0.07) |
| Precursor regime: civilian | -0.18 | -0.49\* | 0.34\*\* |
| (vs. royal) | (1.25) | (0.20) | (0.06) |
| Constant | 71.86\*\* | 3.82\*\* | 1.90\*\* |
|  | (2.32) | (0.27) | (0.07) |
| Rho (autocorrelation) | 0.50 | 0.70 | 0.73 |
| Chi2 (Wald) | 265 | 62 | 929 |

FGLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

N (elections) = 735. Panels (unbalanced, heteroskedastic) = 64.

Six single-observation panels are uninformative.

\*\* significant at 99%; \* significant at 95%; + significant at 90%.

Table A5 – Estimated effects of popular presidential elections, by electoral system, with fixed polity and decade effects

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **M8b** | **M9b** | **M10b** |
| *Dependent variable:* | Party-system closure | Electoral fragmentation | Party institutionalization |
| Popular presidential elections: |  |  |  |
| - Majority system | -8.89\*\* | 0.43+ | 0.01 |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (2.71) | (0.23) | (0.05) |
| - Plurality/STV system | -5.85\* | 0.31 | -0.12\* |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (2.59) | (0.22) | (0.06) |
| Electoral fragmentation | -0.71\*\* |  |  |
|  | (0.25) |  |  |
| Party institutionalization | 1.05 |  |  |
|  | (0.96) |  |  |
| Age of democracy (logged) | 2.20\*\* | -0.33\*\* | 0.30\*\* |
|  | (0.81) | (0.07) | (0.02) |
| Economic growth (previous year) | 0.14\*\* | -0.00 | 0.00 |
|  | (0.05) | (0.01) | (0.00) |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | -0.56 | -0.29 | 0.01 |
|  | (1.30) | (0.19) | (0.04) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | 6.18 | 1.51+ | 0.24 |
|  | (8.39) | (0.79) | (0.23) |
| Polity dummies | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Decade dummies | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Rho (autocorrelation) | 0.36 | 0.31 | 0.47 |
| Chi2 (Wald) | 559 | 1335 | 5803 |

FGLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

N (elections) = 735. Panels (unbalanced, heteroskedastic) = 64.

Six single-observation panels are uninformative.

\*\* significant at 99%; \* significant at 95%; + significant at 90%.

**ONLINE APPENDIX 8 – Interactions of scope conditions**

Our theory includes two scope conditions of the direct negative effects of popular presidential elections on party-system closure. The effect is expected to be stronger for powerful presidencies (H2), and for elections where the final round was bound to be decisive—either because it is the second round of a majoritarian system or because the system is plurality (H3). Table 2 in the main text provides evidence supporting each of the two hypotheses. In addition, this appendix documents the *interaction* of the two conditions.

M11 in Table A6 shows the results of a regression that includes presidential power, the electoral system, and their product terms. As can be seen, the negative effect on party-system closure is concentrated on the terms “Majority election, two rounds \* Presidential power” and “Plurality/STV election \* Presidential power.” For easier interpretation, overall effects are shown in Figure A2. A significant negative effect is found for executive presidents in two-round majority or plurality elections, but not for the other four combinations. This is exactly the pattern that results from considering the expectations of H2 and H3 together.

A more demanding test of the interaction also considers the differences that one condition makes within the other. More specifically, Figure A3 shows the effect of presidential power for each of the electoral systems. Again, we see that presidential power has a negative effect under two-round majority and plurality, but not under single-round majority or in parliamentary systems. However, as indicated by the wide confidence intervals, the effect is only weakly significant under two-round majority, not quite significant under plurality (the p-values are 0.066 and 0.121, respectively).

The lack of significance in the latter test is a result of the fact that the interaction of presidential power and electoral system effectively divides the data into eight separate combinations, which reduces statistical power. However, it turns out that such an aggressive division is not called for theoretically, because H3 does not actually stipulate separate effects for each electoral system. Rather, it predicts a negative effect on party-system closure “in elections where the final round was bound to be decisive.” This is the case under two-round majority and under plurality alike. The theoretically relevant property that unites the two is the decisiveness of the final round. A more appropriate (and statistically more powerful) test of this expectation thus joins these two combinations into one. This solution is also supported by the fact that the empirical effects of the two separate combinations seen in Figure A2 and A3 are very similar, and statistically indistinguishable.

M12 in Table A6 shows the results of an interaction with two-round majority and plurality combined into “Final round bound to be decisive.” As can be seen, the coefficient of the interaction term of this condition with presidential power is negative and significant, as expected. For greater clarity, Figure A4 and A5 replicate the patterns shown in Figure A2 and A3 for the results of M12. In Figure A4, it becomes obvious that the negative effect on party-system closure is concentrated on the expected combination (executive presidents with bound-to-be decisive elections), and Figure A5 shows that presidential power has a statistically significant effect within this group of elections.

Overall, we can conclude from these additional analyses that the scope conditions interact in the way that is implied by our hypotheses: the more powerful the presidency, and the more distinct the incentives for coalition-building in the presidential arena, the stronger is the negative effect on party-system closure.

Table A6 – Estimated effects of popular presidential elections on party-system closure, by electoral system and presidential power

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **M11** | **M12** |
| *Dependent variable:* | Party-system closure | |
| Majority election, single round | 0.75 | 1.23 |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (2.96) | (2.90) |
| Majority election, two rounds | -1.93 |  |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (2.97) |  |
| Plurality/STV election | 1.36 |  |
| (vs. parliamentary) | (4.19) |  |
| Final round bound to be decisive |  | -0.83 |
| (majority two rounds or plurality) |  | (2.47) |
| Presidential power | 0.14 | 0.21 |
| (“executive” vs. “figurehead”) | (1.32) | (1.32) |
| Majority election, single round \* | 2.28 | 2.18 |
| Presidential power | (3.79) | (3.73) |
| Majority election, two rounds \* | -5.81+ |  |
| Presidential power | (3.16) |  |
| Plurality/STV election \* | -7.46 |  |
| Presidential power | (4.81) |  |
| Final round bound to be decisive \* |  | -6.35\* |
| Presidential power |  | (2.74) |
| Vote share of leading candidate | -12.48\* | -11.81\* |
| in first round | (5.72) | (5.61) |
| Electoral fragmentation | -0.96\*\* | -0.95\*\* |
|  | (0.18) | (0.18) |
| Party institutionalization | 3.09\*\* | 3.09\*\* |
|  | (0.72) | (0.72) |
| Age of democracy (logged) | 1.38\*\* | 1.45\*\* |
|  | (0.53) | (0.53) |
| Economic growth (previous year) | 0.19\*\* | 0.19\*\* |
|  | (0.05) | (0.05) |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | -0.03 | -0.06 |
|  | (0.91) | (0.90) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | 0.29 | -0.15 |
|  | (3.00) | (2.98) |
| Precursor regime: military | -0.78 | -0.11 |
| (vs. royal) | (1.87) | (1.77) |
| Precursor regime: civilian | -0.03 | 0.17 |
| (vs. royal) | (1.32) | (1.31) |
| Constant | 77.60\*\* | 76.89\*\* |
|  | (3.97) | (3.89) |
| Rho (autocorrelation) | 0.52 | 0.52 |
| Chi2 (Wald) | 250 | 255 |

FGLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

N (elections) = 735. Panels (unbalanced, heteroskedastic) = 64.

Six single-observation panels are uninformative.

\*\* significant at 99%; \* significant at 95%; + significant at 90%.

Figure A2 – Marginal effects of popular presidential elections, by electoral system and presidential power, with 95% and 90% confidence intervals (from M11)

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

Figure A3 – Marginal effects of presidential power, by electoral system, with 95% and 90% confidence intervals (from M11)

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

Figure A4 – Marginal effects of popular presidential elections, by electoral system and presidential power, with 95% and 90% confidence intervals (from M12)

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

Figure A5 – Marginal effects of presidential power, by electoral system, with 95% and 90% confidence intervals (from M12)

Chart, box and whisker chart

Description automatically generated

**ONLINE APPENDIX 9 – Percentage of non-partisan ministers as dependent variable**

This appendix replicates all models with another dependent variable, the percentage of non-partisan cabinet positions. Non-partisanship has been associated with the presidentialization of executive politics at the expense of party-based rule (e.g. Amorim Neto and Strom 2006; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009; Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter 2015; Semenova 2020).[[55]](#footnote-55) The two dependent variables are complementary: while party-system closure expresses the structure of partisan control over the executive, non-partisanship measures the extent of that control. We would thus expect them to be affected in similar ways by presidential elections and presidential power. At the same time, the two variables are conceptually and empirically distinct. In our data, taken from Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2022),[[56]](#footnote-56) the correlation of the percentage of non-partisan ministers with party-system closure is a mere -0.24.

The regression results for non-partisanship in Table A7 are quite similar to those for party-system closure (in the main text). M1d shows that the share of non-partisan ministers is significantly higher when the president is elected by the people, and M5d adds that this effect is concentrated on powerful presidencies. We can thus conclude that elected, powerful presidents disturb the structure of party politics (closure), and they also weaken party politics as a whole (non-partisan control). The two models support the same broader theory, but they reflect different dimensions of executive politics.

With regard to electoral rules, the results differ somewhat from those for closure. In M8d, we do not find a significant effect for plurality systems. However, this appears to be an artefact of unobserved confounders. When including decade and polity fixed effects, both systems show very similar effects.[[57]](#footnote-57) Similarly, in M6d (and M7d), fixed effects bring out the effect of plurality, and reduce that of single-round majority,[[58]](#footnote-58) thus restoring the pattern shown in Table 2.

Overall, the estimates for non-partisanship are reasonably close to those of party-system closure. Given that these two variables measure different aspects of party politics, these findings are not just duplicating those of the main text. Knowing that the structure and the extent of partisan control behave in similar ways reinforces the impression that popular presidential elections play a central role in the (de-)stabilization of democratic regimes.

Table A7 – Models of non-partisan control of cabinet

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **M1d** | **M8d** | **M4d** | **M5d** | **M6d** | **M7d** |
| Popular presidential elections | 6.35\*\* |  | 6.14\*\* | 2.29 |  |  |
|  | (1.49) |  | (1.52) | (1.99) |  |  |
| Majority system |  | 11.32\*\* |  |  |  |  |
| (vs. parliamentary) |  | (2.06) |  |  |  |  |
| Plurality/STV system |  | 1.51 |  |  |  |  |
| (vs. parliamentary) |  | (1.87) |  |  |  |  |
| Presidential power |  |  | 1.12 | -0.21 |  |  |
| (“executive” vs. “figurehead”) |  |  | (1.12) | (1.20) |  |  |
| Popular presidential elections \* |  |  |  | 6.79\* |  |  |
| Presidential power |  |  |  | (2.76) |  |  |
| Majority election, single round |  |  |  |  | 9.35\*\* | 9.44\*\* |
| (vs. parliamentary) |  |  |  |  | (2.93) | (3.03) |
| Majority election, two rounds |  |  |  |  | 12.07\*\* | 11.92\*\* |
| (vs. parliamentary) |  |  |  |  | (2.25) | (2.29) |
| Plurality/STV election |  |  |  |  | 1.53 | 1.74 |
| (vs. parliamentary) |  |  |  |  | (1.87) | (1.94) |
| Vote share of leading candidate |  |  |  |  |  | -0.78 |
| in first round |  |  |  |  |  | (6.29) |
| Electoral fragmentation | 0.35 | 0.39 | 0.34 | 0.27 | 0.38 | 0.39 |
|  | (0.25) | (0.25) | (0.25) | (0.25) | (0.25) | (0.25) |
| Party institutionalization | -2.70\*\* | -2.69\*\* | -2.37\*\* | -2.94\*\* | -2.67\*\* | -2.68\*\* |
|  | (0.83) | (0.80) | (0.83) | (0.87) | (0.80) | (0.80) |
| Age of democracy (logged) | -1.53\*\* | -1.22\* | -1.66\*\* | -1.39\* | -1.24\* | -1.27\* |
|  | (0.57) | (0.56) | (0.56) | (0.57) | (0.56) | (0.56) |
| Economic growth (previous year) | -0.03 | -0.02 | -0.03 | -0.05 | -0.02 | -0.02 |
|  | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.05) | (0.05) |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | -0.02 | -0.08 | -0.20 | -0.39 | -0.10 | -0.06 |
|  | (1.24) | (1.18) | (1.22) | (1.22) | (1.18) | (1.19) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | -1.80 | -2.44 | -2.20 | -1.09 | -2.37 | -2.46 |
|  | (2.81) | (2.76) | (2.97) | (3.04) | (2.76) | (2.74) |
| Precursor regime: military | -1.73 | -0.28 | -1.64 | -1.67 | -0.30 | -0.28 |
| (vs. royal) | (1.24) | (1.32) | (1.25) | (1.25) | (1.32) | (1.32) |
| Precursor regime: civilian | 1.62 | 2.29\* | 1.82+ | 1.59 | 2.29\* | 2.30\* |
| (vs. royal) | (1.04) | (1.02) | (1.05) | (1.08) | (1.02) | (1.01) |
| Constant | 16.20\*\* | 14.39\*\* | 15.16\*\* | 16.95\*\* | 14.39\*\* | 14.84\*\* |
|  | (2.69) | (2.63) | (2.72) | (2.85) | (2.63) | (3.91) |
| Rho (autocorrelation) | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.49 |
| Chi2 (Wald) | 93 | 102 | 94 | 98 | 102 | 104 |

FGLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

N (elections) = 735. Panels (unbalanced, heteroskedastic) = 64.

Six single-observation panels are uninformative.

\*\* significant at 99%; \* significant at 95%; + significant at 90%.

**ONLINE APPENDIX 10 – Alternative measure of presidential power**

This appendix replicates our findings using the index of presidential power proposed by Doyle and Elgie (2016).[[59]](#footnote-59) This measure is based purely on constitutional provisions, in contrast to Siaroff’s measure (used in Table 2 of the main text), which assesses *de facto* power to describe the observed role of the head of state.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The two approaches both have advantages and disadvantages. As Doyle and Elgie (2016: 733) note, “There are problems with measuring the constitutional powers of presidents, because constitutions can be imperfect measures of actual political power. However, there are also problems with measuring the *de facto* power of presidents, because there is the risk of capturing the impact of factors such as party competition rather than the power of the presidency itself.”

Thus, the *de facto* approach yields more realistic measures of the actual role that the presidency plays in a political system, but the constitutional approach is better hedged against the risk of endogenous inferences. Triangulating our analysis using both approaches therefore provides valuable information.

The measure developed by Doyle and Elgie is a meta-index of presidential power, which aggregates dozens of constitutional indices proposed in the extant literature. These indices were subjected to imputation and principal components analysis to extract a measure that reflects the conceptual core of presidential power. The distribution of the resulting index in our dataset is shown in Figure A6.

As can be seen, the distribution is asymmetric, in that it features a distinct cluster in the lowest quarter of the scale. These are heads of state whose power consistently scores low in the constituent indices. In analogy with the variable used in Table 2 of the main text, we coded heads of state that fall into this group as “figureheads” (below the cutoff point of 0.25). In contrast, higher scores indicate that the head of state holds significant constitutional power. These cases are coded as “executive” heads of state, again in analogy with our main variable.

Figure A6 – Distribution of the Doyle-Elgie index



The Doyle-Elgie index is available for 327 of our 735 cases. Missing values are due to two reasons: either the head of state is a monarch, which were not considered in Doyle/Elgie, or the head of state is a president, but no constituent indices were available for the meta-analysis. The latter mostly applies to pre-WWII polities. We coded two separate “missing” categories for these cases.

Table A8 shows the regression results obtained when replacing the power variable derived from Siaroff with the one derived from Doyle/Elgie. The findings are very similar. As seen in M4e, power has a negative, insignificant effect on party-system closure, while the negative effect of popular election remains significant. This is the same as in M4 of Table 2.

Turning to the actual test of H2 in M5e, results show that power has no relevant effect on closure when the president is appointed (the coefficient of the constitutive term is small and insignificant). In contrast, a strong negative effect is found for popularly elected presidencies (the coefficient if the interaction term is large and significant). The same holds for presidencies with missing values, probably reflecting the fact that these cases are mostly from the earlier half of our historical data. Vice versa, the interaction also indicates that the negative effect of popular presidential elections on closure is concentrated on cases with executive heads of state, rather than those with figureheads. This was the expectation of H2, and concurs with the finding of M5 in Table 2.

Overall, our triangulation exercise demonstrates that the theorized effects of the election and power of the head of state hold irrespective of the conceptualization of power. *De facto* and *de jure* power both appear to play a role in reinforcing the impact of presidential interference in party politics.

Table A8 – Replication using constitutional power

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **M4e** | **M5e** |
| *Dependent variable:* | Party-system closure | |
| Popular presidential elections | -3.07\* | 5.16 |
|  | (1.49) | (4.11) |
| Presidential power | -1.62 | 0.24 |
| (“executive” vs. “figurehead”) | (2.07) | (2.33) |
| --- missing value (president) | 4.37\* | 6.27\*\* |
|  | (2.14) | (2.25) |
| --- missing value (monarch) | 1.24 | 2.94 |
|  | (2.51) | (2.59) |
| Popular presidential elections \* |  | -8.95\* |
| Presidential power |  | (4.38) |
| Popular presidential elections \* |  | -11.12\* |
| missing value (president) |  | (5.60) |
| Electoral fragmentation | -1.04\*\* | -1.02\*\* |
|  | (0.17) | (0.17) |
| Party institutionalization | 4.00\*\* | 4.05\*\* |
|  | (0.75) | (0.75) |
| Age of democracy (logged) | 1.40\*\* | 1.40\*\* |
|  | (0.53) | (0.53) |
| Economic growth (previous year) | 0.20\*\* | 0.20\*\* |
|  | (0.05) | (0.05) |
| Legislative electoral system (maj.) | 0.66 | 0.65 |
|  | (0.81) | (0.80) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | -1.23 | -1.70 |
|  | (3.06) | (3.05) |
| Precursor regime: military | -0.94 | -0.93 |
| (vs. royal) | (1.79) | (1.79) |
| Precursor regime: civilian | -2.08 | -2.46 |
| (vs. royal) | (1.77) | (1.77) |
| Constant | 69.44\*\* | 67.91\*\* |
|  | (2.78) | (2.86) |
| Rho (autocorrelation) | 0.50 | 0.50 |
| Chi2 (Wald) | 330 | 352 |

FGLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

N (elections) = 735. Panels (unbalanced, heteroskedastic) = 64.

Six single-observation panels are uninformative.

\*\* significant at 99%; \* significant at 95%; + significant at 90%.

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