

The Missing Link: Presidents, governors and party unity

André Borges

Associate Professor - Universidade de Brasília, Brazil

Visiting Scholar – CILAS / UCSD

(andrebor75@gmail.com)

Pedro Floriano Ribeiro

Associate Professor - Universidade Federal de São Carlos, Brazil

(pfribeiro@ufscar.br)

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Comparative research has argued that disciplined and cohesive party organizations are much less likely to develop under presidentialism than parliamentarianism. A crucial reason for these differences lies in the fact that government survival is independent from legislative support in presidential countries. Under presidentialism, party (or coalition) unity has no direct impact on the odds of government survival and, therefore, having the support of a strong parliamentary organization is not a necessary condition for sustaining control over the national executive. Fused power systems create rather distinct incentives because legislators affiliated with the governing party or coalition need to stick with their parties and support the government's agenda to avoid bringing down the government and, in some cases, incurring in electoral losses due to anticipation of elections (Diermeier and Feddersen, 1998; Huber, 1996; Linz, 1990; Mainwaring, 1993; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997; Owens, 2003; Shugart and Carey, 1992).

In addition to separation of survival, presidential countries are characterized by separation of origin: executives and legislatures are elected in separate elections and, often, respond to distinct constituencies (Samuels and Shugart, 2010). In parliamentary countries, because the cabinet originates from the legislature and is tied to the same electoral majority, the electoral fortunes of legislators tend to be strongly associated with government performance. In presidential countries, in contrast, to the extent that legislators' survival depends on factors other than success of the government (or its failure, in the case of opposition parliamentarians), the incentives to create disciplined parties are much lower (Andrews and Bairett, 2014; Clark and Wittrock, 2005).

These studies are usually nationally oriented, disregarding lower tiers of government. However, processes of political and administrative decentralization have become increasingly common in the last decades. In 1990, only 31% of all existing democracies (19 out of 61) had politically autonomous subnational governments (regional or provincial); in 2010, there existed 36 federal democracies, representing 40% of the total. Federalization has been especially pronounced among countries with popularly elected executives. Indeed, only six democratic countries combined separation of powers (presidential or semi-presidential systems) and the election of regional governments in 1990, as compared to 20 in 2010. Furthermore, almost half of all pure presidential democracies (14 out of 31) relied on the direct election of regional executives by 2010¹. These trends raise important theoretical and empirical questions about the effects of political decentralization on party unity across distinct systems of government.

Recent studies have shown that party organizational structures play a substantial role in legislators' behavior (Little and Farrell, 2017). In most federal

¹ A summary table showing these figures and the respective sources is presented in the appendix.

or devolved states, or decentralized unitary countries, parties organize as multilevel statewide parties: they compete for office at the national and regional levels, and they are present in all or almost all regions of the country (Deschouwer, 2006). Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that decentralization will ultimately influence the legislative party unity, since they affect the modes of party organization.

In this article, we claim that conventional arguments about the effects of separate origin and separate survival on legislative party unity are incomplete, to the extent that they ignore the *combined* effects of the separation of powers and political decentralization. In countries where elected subnational governments are valuable political prizes that may provide substantial rewards in terms of policy, office and/or votes, party organizations will often need to accommodate potentially contradictory goals pursued by politicians at distinct levels of government. The greater the political value of regional governments relative to the central government, the greater the likelihood that parties will solve these internal tensions by developing decentralized and un-cohesive organizations that grant substantial autonomy to regional party branches (Borges, et al., 2017; Miguel, 2017; Thorlakson, 2007). As a general rule, therefore, decentralization tends to create internally divided parties, fostering lower levels of legislative discipline.

We argue that these effects are magnified in presidential countries because presidential federations reproduce electoral separation of origin within regional governments, by creating directly elected subnational executives. In parliamentary countries with politically autonomous subnational governments, in contrast, regional chief executives' political survival depends on the support (or on the tolerance, in the case of minority governments) of the legislature. Similarly to the dynamics observed in presidential elections, the existence of popularly elected executives at the subnational level induces local party branches to recruit candidates "who can cultivate a personal vote above and beyond their own party" (Samuels and Shugart, 2010, p. 127). Because governors, not different from presidents, have both incentive and opportunity to mobilize a following of their own, independent from their parties, separation of origin likely reinforces the disaggregating effects of federalism on party organization. Indeed, in countries with strong subnational governments, directly elected governors can rely on their extensive formal and informal powers to organize party factions around their own personal leadership and to escape from control exerted from above by the national party leadership. In sum, the combination of presidentialism and politically autonomous subnational governments creates centrifugal forces that likely undermine party unity in the national legislature.

We test three hypotheses in the next sections: (i) parties will be less disciplined in presidential and semi-presidential systems as compared to parliamentary countries; (ii) semi-presidential democracies will display higher levels of party unity as compared to pure presidentialism; (iii) the detrimental effect of presidentialism on party unity will increase as the level of authority and resources controlled by subnational governments increases. To test these hypotheses, we build a large data set with pooled observations for 59 countries

and various years, ranging from the 1970s to the mid-2000s. We operationalize party unity by relying on the party cohesion measure provided by the V-Dem expert survey.

We conclude that separation of powers implies lower levels of legislative party unity compared to parliamentary democracies, and these negative effects are stronger in presidential than in semi-presidential countries. Political, fiscal and administrative decentralization have a negative impact on party unity over time. Furthermore, part of the deleterious effects on legislative discipline traditionally attributed to presidentialism may actually result from the combination of separation of powers and state decentralization. Decentralized presidential countries have powerful popularly elected governors, who accumulate resources and incentives for building personalist factions or robust regional party branches. In this scenario, the regionalization of interests, preferences, and careers is the most likely outcome, at the expense of national party brands and intra-party coordination in national legislatures.

Party organization and party unity

Voting unity within legislative parties is, most often, a result of two distinct types of political processes. First, legislators may vote together because party leaders have the resources and authority to reward loyalty and punish breaches in discipline. Second, voting unity may result from party cohesion, that is, the extent to which the party's delegation is composed by legislators with similar preferences (Carey, 2007). In this article we focus on the more easily measured and directly observable phenomenon of party unity, defined as the degree to which party members act in unison (Sieberer, 2006)². We assume that variation in party unity across distinct political systems is likely to reflect variation in the willingness and capacity of party leaders (or other party principals) to enforce discipline, as well as variation in terms of shared preferences (cohesion). Discipline and cohesion are, therefore, intervening, often unobservable variables that account for the level of party unity.

As a general rule, presidential systems tend to create weak incentives for the construction of party organizations that can either enforce discipline or secure adherence of party members to the party's program. The opposite is true in parliamentary countries, where political elites have strong incentives to create legislative party organizations that can form and sustain governments. Maximizing legislative seats is a major goal of political parties in parliamentary countries because obtaining a majority (or a plurality of seats, in a multiparty legislature) is often a necessary condition for a party to have the opportunity to form the government (Clark and Wittrock, 2005; Samuels and Shugart, 2010). Once a party or coalition forms the cabinet, the members of the prime-minister's party (or coalition) need to unite behind the government's agenda to minimize the risk of early termination of the government and, eventually, anticipation of

² As explained later in this article, our dependent variable is based on V-Dem's party cohesion score (v2pscohesv), whose question is: "Is it normal for members of the legislature to vote with other members of their party on important bills?".

elections (Diermeier and Feddersen, 1998; Huber, 1996; Owens, 2003; Shugart, 1998).

In presidential countries, party-building incentives are rather distinct. First, the president's party is always and necessarily the *formateur* party, regardless of the size of the president's legislative contingent. Second, government survival does not depend on the support of any party in the legislature. Under separation of powers, therefore, controlling the executive does not require building a strong parliamentary organization. Rather the contrary, parties tend to concentrate their efforts and resources on the executive election as opposed to the legislative election (Samuels and Shugart, 2010).

Parties 'presidentialize' by specializing in competition over the presidency for two main reasons. First, the singularity and importance of the presidential election imply that presidential candidates receive the lion's share of campaign finance and national media attention (Samuels, 2002, p. 468). Furthermore, when presidential elections are held concurrently with the legislative race, voters should rely on their preferred presidential candidate as an information short-cut to help them select a candidate to the legislature, allowing co-partisan (or pre-electoral coalition) candidates competing for seats to benefit from presidential coattails (Golder, 2006; Hicken and Stoll, 2011; Shugart and Carey, 1992). Second, if the presidential candidate is elected, she will likely serve as de facto party leader during her term, even if she is not formally the party's leader. Presidents are responsible for articulating party positions, proposing legislation, in addition to appointing cabinet ministers and distributing patronage (Samuels, 2002).

Samuels and Shugart (2010) argue that separation of origin divides party organization and undermines party cohesion because vote-seeking incentives are much stronger in the presidential race than in any parliamentary election, and such incentives induce presidential candidates to move away from their own parties' ideological positions. Indeed, regardless of electoral rules, parties that nominate presidential candidates must gain the votes of a large portion of the national electorate (Samuels, 2002, p. 467-68; Samuels and Shugart, 2010, p.124). In the presence of these institutional incentives, presidential candidates will often adopt a catchall strategy, moderating ideological appeals to attract a large pool of voters. As candidates for the executive and legislative elections campaign on different grounds and respond to distinct policy demands, voters might not vote for presidents and legislators on the same national policy issues. Under parliamentarianism, in contrast, legislators and the prime minister share precisely the same vote base, collectively decide the content of their platform, and respond to the same national policy demands (Samuels and Shugart, 2010, p. 123-124). In sum, legislators' electoral survival is less likely to be associated with government performance in presidential systems as compared to parliamentarianism.

One important limitation of Samuels and Shugart's (2010) theory of party presidentialization is that it implicitly assumes a situation in which the president's party governs alone. In multiparty presidential democracies, however, coalition cabinets are far from uncommon, as minority presidents seek to obtain majority support in the legislature by distributing ministerial portfolios among one or more parties other than their own.

Although it has been argued that this coalitional variant of presidentialism is actually very similar to multiparty parliamentarianism (Cheibub, 2007; Cheibub,

et al., 2004; Colomer and Negretto, 2005; Figueiredo and Limongi, 2007), separation of origin and survival implies that coalition parties can behave opportunistically by seeking to detach themselves from an unpopular president to avoid future electoral losses (Altman, 2000; Amorim Neto and Santos, 2001). The costs of defection are lower in presidential as opposed to parliamentary systems, because voting against government proposals or leaving the coalition does not lead the cabinet to fall. In view of these aspects, government coalitions tend to display lower levels of stability and legislative unity under presidentialism.

So far, we have discussed the effects of distinct systems of government on party organization and behaviour focusing solely on the polar cases of presidentialism and parliamentarism, leaving aside mixed systems. In semi-presidential democracies, a popularly elected president coexists with a prime minister dependent on the confidence of the legislature. In this situation, incentives for party presidentialization arising from executive elections tend to be counterbalanced by the legislature's power to make and break governments. Regardless of variation in presidential powers, legislative parties in semi-presidential systems are more powerful vis-à-vis the president than they are in any pure presidential polity. Even in the situation of unified government, when both the prime minister and the president belong to the same party or coalition, inter-party or intra-party conflicts are a common cause of prime-ministerial turnover (Samuels and Shugart, 2010, p. 101). Legislative elections in and of themselves may lead to government alternation in semi-presidential settings, whereas in pure presidential countries the head of government and her party can only be replaced due to defeat in the following presidential elections or in the rare event of an impeachment. In some instances, semi-presidential countries face the experience of cohabitation, in which a parliamentary election produces a majority of legislators who oppose the president, and the former opts for nominating an opposition prime minister (Elgie, 2011, p. 12-17). In this latter scenario, government becomes effectively 'parliamentarized' in the sense that the president loses control over the cabinet.

To the extent that the organization of strong parliamentary parties is important for both obtaining and maintaining control over the executive in semi-presidential systems, these mixed regimes tend to exhibit higher levels of party unity as compared to pure presidentialism. On the other hand, because of the previously mentioned incentives for party presidentialization associated with the direct election of the president, semi-presidential countries are likely to produce weaker and less cohesive parties than pure parliamentarianism (Sauger, 2009). This is true of the two subtypes of semi-presidentialism (president-parliamentary and premier-presidential systems), and in spite of the 'parliamentarized phase' of the mixed system that can be produced by the cohabitation (Samuels and Shugart, 2010, p. 106-108). As shown in a number of country-specific studies, legislative discipline, cohesion, and party unity are central issues to the functioning of semi-presidential democracies and to the survival of governments under mixed systems (Elgie, 1999; Elgie and Moestrup, 2007). However, despite the relevance of this dimension, there is a paucity of large-N comparative studies on the interactions between legislative behavior, party organization, and the dynamics of semi-presidential democracies. We contribute to this field by hypothesizing that semi-presidential systems will be at an intermediate level between presidential and parliamentary systems in terms of legislative party unity.

The combined effects of presidentialism and federalism on party unity

The extent to which government is centralized or decentralized is yet another likely cause of variation in levels of party unity across democracies. The degree of political and fiscal decentralization largely determines politicians' incentives to build more or less nationally unified political organizations (Carey, 2007; Jones, 1997; Langston, 2010; Samuels, 2003; Swenden, 2006; Thorlakson, 2007; Thorlakson, 2009). When party systems are nationalized, parties are mostly organizations of national scope, with the capacity to act according to a national, common orientation rather than dividing across regional or subnational issues (Jones, 2010; Morgenstern, et al., 2009).

The degree of government centralization shapes candidates' and voters' preferences and strategies, favouring higher or lower levels of party nationalization. As the national government centralizes authority and resources, voters will naturally have more incentives to try to influence politics at higher levels, whereas candidates will become more inclined to take positions on national as opposed to local policy issues (Chhibber and Kollman, 2004). Furthermore, because in centralized settings the national government is the most important political prize, local candidates will have strong incentives to coordinate across districts, adopting a common party label to mobilize a national constituency (Cox, 1999; Hicken, 2009; Morgenstern, et al., 2009). Government centralization may create, therefore, parties that fit the "responsible party government" model, as representatives cultivate programmatic party labels that target categories of voters irrespective of their territorial origin³.

Under highly decentralized government structures, on the other hand, parties will have both incentive and opportunity to mobilize and respond to locally defined issues, which in turn will lead to some level of party regionalization. When government is decentralized and incentives for cross-district coordination are weak, parties will often prefer to develop policy platforms suited to local constituencies or rely on the disbursement of pork and patronage to geographically concentrated interests to reap the rewards accruing from control over regional governments (Borges, et al., 2017; Brancati, 2008; Miguel, 2017).

The degree of centralization and the model of division of competencies between levels of government directly affect the way parties organize. As parties tend to replicate the country's institutional design, high levels of fiscal and administrative centralization tend to produce parties in which the national (central) branch is the most important tier of party organization. As the competition that really matters happens at the national level, the party tends to adopt nationally unified strategies and to concentrate resources and powers in its central branch. Even if they are electorally strong in their respective territories, regional and local branches will depend on resources such as patronage and campaign finance that are controlled by the national leadership. (Filippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova, 2004; Renzsch, 2001; Swenden, 2006; Fabre,

³ Electoral and legislative (or policy) nationalization are not necessarily collinear, because a party may obtain votes all over the country because it succeeds in competing in regional elections in a large number of provinces by developing differentiated local strategies. In this latter case, the party will likely function as a federation of regional parties, lacking a common national orientation.

2008). In these settings, levels of party unity/cohesion and collaboration between legislators elected by distinct constituencies will be likely high.

The decentralization of government, on the contrary, increases the relevance of subnational elections and gives regional party branches greater access to important organizational resources. As there is much at stake in regions or provinces, the national party leadership tends to grant more resources and higher degrees of decision-making autonomy to its subnational branches, in terms of policy and territorially focused strategies (such as in candidate selection processes). In these settings, legislators will often develop careers centered around subnational offices, and strong regional leaders will have both the incentives and the opportunity to build robust regional organizations that may challenge the decisions taken by the national party organs. The greater the importance of regional offices, the greater the likelihood that national-subnational conflict will be solved in favor of state-level parties (Fabre, 2008; Filippov, et al., 2004; Renzsch, 2001; Swenden, 2006). In this scenario, the level of cohesion and coordination between representatives elected by distinct constituencies tends to be lower, which affects the degree of party unity in national parliaments.

We argue that this tendency towards weak party unity tends to be more intense in presidential as opposed to parliamentary countries, because federal constitutions under pure presidentialism reproduce separation of origin and survival at the subnational level. Semi-presidential federations, on the other hand, are almost always characterized by a parliamentary system of government at the subnational level⁴. This is to say that multilevel presidentialism is peculiar in that it is characterized by the direct election of regional executives that are not subject to the confidence of provincial assemblies.

Popularly elected governors, not different from presidents, have both incentive and opportunity to mobilize a following of their own, independent from their parties. The successful pursuit of executive office at the subnational level requires parties to recruit gubernatorial candidates that can cultivate a personal vote and mobilize a large constituency on a non-partisan basis, in much the same way as parties presidentialize at the national level. But whereas national presidentialization favors cross-district coordination and the organization of a common national party program, to the extent that presidents must gain the votes all over the country (Borges, et al., 2017; Cox, 1999; Hicken, 2009; Hicken and Stoll, 2011), executive provincialization, on the other hand, tends to promote party regionalization and to weaken national party labels.

Party organizational dynamics in multilevel presidential countries also differ from similarly decentralized parliamentary systems because regional premiers depend to a much larger extent on their own party (or on a coalition of parties) to both win and maintain power. Therefore, state governors will usually find themselves in a much stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis the national party organization than regional premiers. As governors' political survival will often depend only very weakly and indirectly on the strength and reputation of national

⁴ According to our own comparative data, Peru is the only semi-presidential country where subnational executives are popularly elected. Table A2 of the appendix shows the distribution of all existing presidential and semi-presidential democracies in 2010 according to the presence/absence of popularly elected regional executives.

party brands, they are more likely to defy the national party organization by switching parties or by creating party factions organized around their own personal leadership. National party leaders will often anticipate these potential challenges by creating decentralized and flexible organizations that do not require regional executives (and by extension, subnational party branches and provincial delegations in the national legislature) to follow strictly the national party line.

Arguably, in either presidential or parliamentary countries, decentralization may lead to the organization of regional parties that compete in a single politically defined region (province, county, municipality, etc.) (Brancati, 2008; Deschouwer, 2006). These regional parties will often participate in national elections and elect delegations strongly tied to regional interests. But note, however, that the differentiated party-building incentives across government systems that we discussed in the previous section also apply to the development of regional parties. Subnational chief executives in parliamentary systems have much stronger motive to build and/or seek the support of disciplined and cohesive legislative delegations than any state governor in a presidential country, for the simple reason that regional legislatures in the latter case have no formal powers over the making and breaking of governments.

Based on the above claims, we propose three hypotheses. All else being equal, we expect levels of party unity in national legislatures to be lower in presidential and semi-presidential countries compared to parliamentary settings (H1). Second, semi-presidential countries will display higher levels of party unity compared to pure presidentialism (H2). Finally, the detrimental impact of presidentialism on party unity will increase as the level of authority and resources controlled by subnational governments increases (H3).

Cases and data

Previous research has relied mostly on party-level and aggregate measures of legislative behavior, such as the Rice index, to operationalize party unity (Carey, 2007; Hix, 2004; Hix, et al., 2005; Sieberer, 2006). This approach has had important limitations in view of the paucity of cross-national data. In this article, we utilize an indirect measure of party unity obtained from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset (version 8, 2018). One important advantage of this measure is that it covers a very large number of countries and periods. The V-Dem project relies on expert information of 173 countries to code multiple regime characteristics, including those pertaining to political parties. The *legislative party cohesion* score is based on the averages of country expert responses to a general question on parties' voting behavior: "Is it normal for members of the legislature to vote with other members of their party on important bills?".

Responses range from zero to three. Null scores imply that many members of the legislature are elected as independents and party discipline is very weak. The maximum score is attributed to settings in which legislators vote in unison most of the time. Responses were averaged by country and year and then transformed into a standardized measure with mean zero.

We coded regime types by relying on the classification proposed by Samuels and Shugart (2010). The regression models include two categorical variables for *presidential* and *semi-presidential* countries. In addition to the classification of countries and periods listed in Samuels and Shugart (2010), we relied on various other sources to code the cases. These include the V-Dem dataset, the Database of Political Institutions (DPI), as well as countries' constitutions, obtained from the Comparative Constitutions Project⁵.

Presidentialism is defined as a system of government in which the executive is popularly elected, and the terms of the chief executive and the legislative assembly are fixed and not subject to mutual confidence. Presidentialism is further characterized by shared lawmaking powers between the president and the legislature and by presidential authority to appoint and dismiss ministers. We classified as semi-presidential all those countries in which there is a popularly elected executive, endowed with substantial constitutional authority, and a prime minister subject to the confidence of the legislature. Based on these definitions, we classified countries such as Argentina, Uruguay and Indonesia as presidential, and France, Poland and Ukraine as semi-presidential. However, we did not classify as either presidential or semi-presidential hybrid regimes in which the president is indirectly elected by the legislature and yet is not subject to early dismissal by a no-confidence vote (e.g., Guyana).

We measure decentralization by relying on the self-rule dimension of the Regional Authority Index (RAI)⁶. Niedzwiecki et al (2018) measured the level of authority displayed by regional governments by focusing on the dimensions of shared rule and self-rule. Whereas shared rule concerns the extent to which regional governments have an influence over national decision-making institutions, self-rule refers to the authority exercised by a regional government over its own territory. We focus on the latter dimension, as it captures best extent to which government authority and resources are decentralized instead of centralized.

The RAI project measured self-rule by taking into account: (1) the extent to which a regional government is autonomous rather than de-concentrated; (2)

⁵ We relied, to a substantial extent, on three measures of regime type available in the V-Dem dataset. The first indicates whether the head of government is appointed (either directly or indirectly) by the legislature (v2_exlegconhog). The second measure indicates whether the head of state is elected (v2_exelechos). Finally, we relied on a categorical variable indicating to what extent the head of state has the power to appoint the whole cabinet without confirmation of the legislature (v2exdfcbhs). When the information provided by these measures conflicted with Samuels and Shugart's (2010) classification, we sought information on other sources, including the Database of Political Institutions and countries' constitutions. For full details, see <https://www.v-dem.net/en/>; <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/wps2283-database-political-institutions>; <https://comparativeconstitutionsproject.org/>

⁶ See <https://www.arjanschakel.nl/index.php/regional-authority-index>

the range of policies for which a regional government is responsible; (3) the extent to which a regional government can independently tax its population; and (4) the extent to which a regional government is endowed with an independent legislature and executive. Separate scores for each of these dimensions were attributed to distinct tiers of regional government within countries. Where levels of self-rule varied across different regional governments within a single-tier, scores were weighted by population to arrive at an aggregate score for the tier and for the country. In federations with more than one government tier, scores for each tier were aggregated to produce a country score (Hooghe, et al., 2010; Niedzwiecki, et al., 2018).

Because our article focuses on the level of government immediately below the central government – states, provinces or departments, – we utilize a slightly modified version of the self-rule score. Instead of summing scores attributed to each tier, we relied on the original data on regions and tiers within countries to recalculate country scores by considering only the values attributed to the intermediate and usually most important level of regional government. By adopting this operationalization, we obtained a more precise measure that allows us to compare similar levels of government across time and space, and thus submit our hypotheses to empirical test⁷.

Electoral systems have been said to exert a very significant influence over legislators' behavior. Where party leaders control candidates' access to the ballot and party lists cannot be altered in any significant way by voters, it is to be expected that legislators will be highly responsive to the party leadership. On the other hand, where politicians have both incentive and opportunity to cultivate a personal vote and party leaders have little if any control over the formation of party lists, legislators' behavior will be shaped by competing pressures from voters and party leaders, therefore leading to lower levels of party unity (Carey, 2007; Hix, et al., 2005; Sieberer, 2006). Having this in mind, we control for the incentives to cultivate a personal vote by relying on the "Particularism around the World" database, developed by Wallack and Johnson (Johnson and Wallack)⁸. The database classifies 180 countries from 1978 to 2005, according to the 13 positions in Carey and Shugart's (1995) original ranking of electoral systems.

In those cases in which there were different tiers of legislators, elected according to distinct electoral rules, Wallack and Johnson (2012) attributed separate scores to each tier. We used the scores attributed to the largest or dominant tier, that is, the tier that accounts for the majority of the members in the assembly. The resulting *personal vote score* varies from 1 to 13. A hypothetical country with a score of 13 would have a tier with the largest possible rank of incentives to cultivate a personal vote and this tier would also have the largest number of legislators. A score of one, on the other hand, would indicate that the

⁷ The original operationalization attributed higher scores to countries with a larger number of government tiers. This implied that countries with several different levels of government, such as Switzerland or Belgium, received higher scores.

⁸ See <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/AMRXJA>.

electoral rules used to elect legislators in the dominant or single tier are party-centric to the highest possible extent.

Variation in legislative party unity across countries and over time may also reflect differences in the levels of maturity and stability of democratic regimes and party systems. This is mostly so because it takes time to build strong and cohesive party organizations (Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007; Randall and Svåsand, 2002). In earlier years of a democratic regime, the content of party reputations is likely more uncertain and contestable, in part due to the previous regime's legacies. Consequently, legislators tend to have weaker incentives to remain loyal to their parties (Owens, 2003). Regardless of the longevity of democracy, however, parties that have been created long time ago and have survived to regime change are more likely to develop a stable reputation and a discernible program (Frantz and Geddes, 2016; Randall and Svåsand, 2002). All else being equal, members of old parties are more likely to establish strong ties to their organizations and, therefore, levels of party unity tend to be higher than those observed for new parties.

We control for these factors by including measures of the age of democracy and the age of parties. We utilize the measure of longevity of democracy provided by the V-Dem extended dataset, originally obtained from Boix et al (2013). The average age of parties was taken from the 2017 Database of Political Institutions. It is calculated as the mean age of the two largest governing parties and the largest opposition party, or the subset of these for which age of party is known. Both variables were transformed into their natural logarithms to deal with the extreme asymmetry in their distributions.

Party development over time and the associated patterns of behavior in the legislature is also likely associated with social and economic modernization. In low-income societies characterized by low levels of geographic mobility and few channels of mass communication, and where most citizens are employed in low-skilled occupations, voters are less likely to demand collective goods provided by programmatic parties. Instead, parties will have both opportunity and incentive to develop clientelistic linkages with voters, by supplying localized benefits (Stokes, 2007). As a consequence, one should expect parties to be weaker and less cohesive in poor as compared to wealthy democracies. Our models control for these factors by including a measure of GDP per capita (in thousands of dollars), obtained from the Maddison project⁹.

Although we have data on our dependent variable for over 150 countries through a very large time span, the coverage for the self-rule index is limited to a total of 81 countries from the 1950s up to 2010. In addition, we lost a substantial number of observations due to the exclusion of non-democratic countries from our sample¹⁰. Finally, we only have data on the personal vote score from 1978 to 2005 and on party age from the 1975 onwards. The final dataset covers 59

⁹ See <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018>

¹⁰ We classified countries as democratic by relying on the classification of political regimes developed by Boix and Rosato (2013). Their dichotomous measure of democracy was extracted from the V-Dem extended dataset.

democracies from the late 1970s to the mid-2000s, with a total of 1,163 observations.

Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the mean legislative cohesion scores by system of government for all countries included in our dataset. Note that two countries appear in more than one category (semi-presidential and parliamentary) and, therefore, the sum of country-observations reported for each regime type is greater than the actual number of countries. Consistent with theoretical expectations, mean scores are substantially lower for presidential countries. On the other hand, the differences between parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies are much less substantial.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Legislative cohesion by system of government

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Countries	Obs.
Presidential	0.326	1.048	22	378
Semi-presidential	1.002	0.708	14	235
Parliamentary	1.444	0.688	25	550

Sources: V-Dem 2018 ; Samuels and Shugart (2010); Database of Political Institutions; Comparative Constitutions Project

When we consider both regime type and the presence/absence of elected regional governments, we find that over half of the presidential countries in our dataset (12 out of 22) experienced with autonomous state or provincial governments at least once throughout the period covered by the data. Within the semi-presidential group, the proportion of countries with elected regional governments is significantly lower: 28% (4 out of 14). These differences are more or less consistent with the distribution of all democratic countries in 1990 and 2010 presented in table 1.A of the appendix and, therefore, cannot be attributed to any biases resulting from the loss of country observations due to missing data.

To test whether the mean differences observed across government systems hold in the presence of adequate statistical controls and, further, whether or not these differences are conditioned by the degree of decentralization, we ran a series of statistical models, whose main results are presented below.

Because some of our independent variables change rather slowly over time (e.g., levels of decentralization), or do not change at all (dummies for presidentialism and semi-presidentialism), a fixed-effects specification would be inappropriate. Note further that the number of clusters is larger than the average number of observations per unit. Although the properties of our data might

recommend a random effects approach (Clark and Linzer, 2015), the RE specification has a major disadvantage in that it relies on the restrictive assumption that independent variables are uncorrelated with the random effects term. Furthermore, the coefficients estimated for RE models are often hard to interpret, as they constitute an average of cross-section and longitudinal effects (Bartels, 2015).

Given the limitations of both fixed and random effects models, we opted for a within-between approach utilizing a random intercept model. This approach produces separate coefficients for within-cluster and between-cluster effects (Bartels, 2015; Bell and Jones, 2015). To estimate the models, we first calculated cluster means for each independent variable (“between transformation”). Then we subtracted from each variable their respective cluster means (“within transformation”). For those variables that are invariant through time, such as our dummies for regime type, it is only possible to proceed with the between transformation and, therefore, the model only calculates cross-section effects. For the other covariates, the model estimates both within- and between-effects. Note that the “within” part of the model returns coefficients very similar to those that would be obtained by relying on a conventional fixed effects specification.

Model 1 presents the baseline specification, with no interaction terms. Model 2 includes two interactions between self-rule and regime type. The interaction terms are for the between-effects of self-rule.

Our preliminary statistical tests indicated the presence of a highly influential cluster (Bolivia). We opted for excluding it from the dataset before running the final models. Note, however, that either excluding or including the case of Bolivia does not alter our major results.

Table 2. Between-within models for the determinants of party unity¹

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Within-country effect	Between-country effect	Within-country effect	Between-country effect
Constant	*0.85 (0.46)	-	0.75 (0.48)	-
Self-rule	***-0.04 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	***-0.04 (0.01)	0.00 (0.03)
Personal vote score	***0.08 (0.01)	***-0.09 (0.03)	***0.08 (0.01)	** -0.08 (0.03)
Age of democracy (log)	***0.06 (0.02)	0.07 (0.16)	***0.06 (0.02)	0.04 (0.16)
Age of parties (log)	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.15)	0.03 (0.02)	0.06 (0.15)
GDP per capita	0.00 (0.00)	0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.00)	*0.03 (0.02)
Presidentialism	-	***-0.94 (0.28)	-	*-0.74 (0.42)
Semi-presidentialism	-	*-0.49 (0.28)	-	-0.56 (0.40)
Presidentialism x Self-rule	-	-	-	-0.03 (0.04)
Semi-presidentialism x Self-rule	-	-	-	0.02 (0.05)
Countries	58		58	
Observations	1143		1143	
AIC	307,9		311,1	
Log-likelihood	-138,9		-138,6	

Dependent variable: V-Dem's party cohesion score (v2pscohesv). ¹ Entries are coefficients for between and within effects. Standard errors are in parenthesis. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Model 1 indicates that semi-presidential and, particularly, presidential countries have lower levels of party unity as compared to the reference category (parliamentarianism), which is consistent with the theoretical expectations and supports the hypotheses H1 and H2 (however, the effect estimated for semi-presidentialism lacks significance at the 95% confidence level, p<0.1). In model 2, the coefficients for each of these dummies are the effects of presidentialism and semi-presidentialism when self-rule is equal to zero. By definition, a null self-rule score indicates a centralized, unitary constitution. Thus, model results suggest that we cannot know, with a sufficient degree of certainty, whether or not unitary democracies with elected presidents differ from non-presidential countries in what concerns average levels of party unity.

To adequately test our third hypothesis, we need to estimate the marginal effect of presidentialism conditional on levels of self-rule. That is, we need to know whether the negative impact of presidentialism on party unity increases as self-rule increases. Figure 1 below plots conditional marginal effects and the 95% confidence intervals (dashed lines). The graph shows that levels of decentralization magnify the detrimental impact of presidentialism on party unity. On the other hand, presidential constitutions do not have a significant effect on party unity for very low levels of self-rule.

Figure 1. Marginal effect of presidentialism on party unity conditional on self-rule (cross-sectional effect)

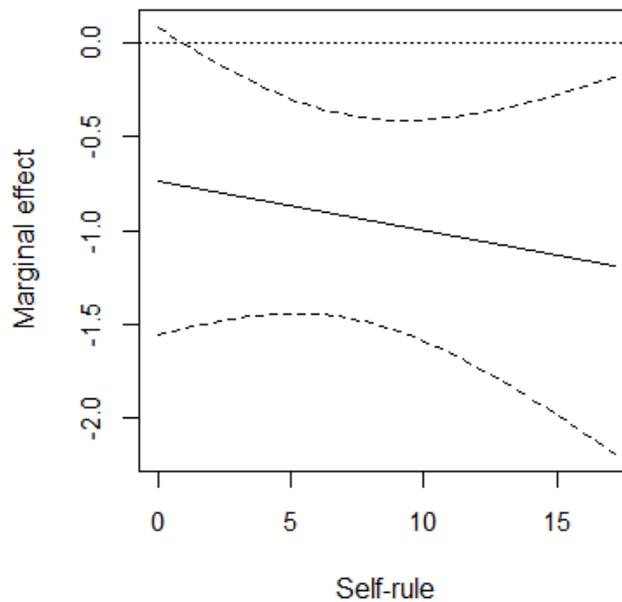
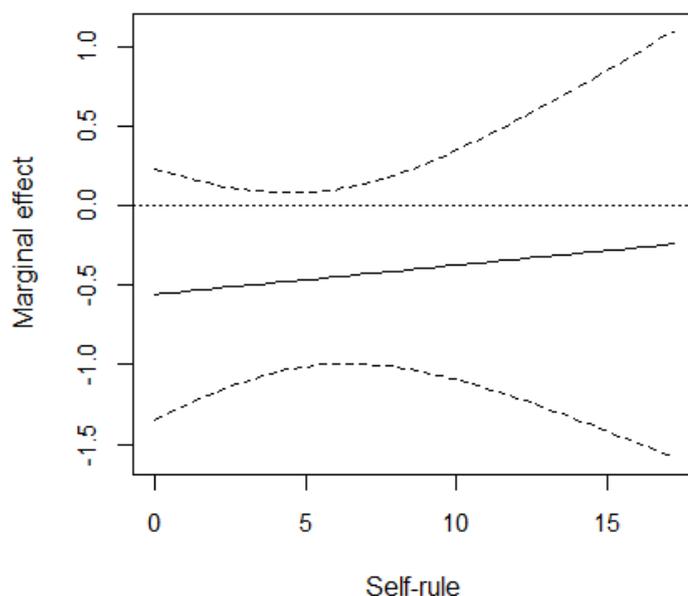


Figure 2 plots the marginal effects of semi-presidentialism conditional on self-rule. As seen in the figure, there is no relevant effect for the whole set of values of the self-rule index. The solid line indicating marginal effects is almost flat and the wide confidence intervals include both positive and negative values.

Figure 2. Marginal effect of semi-presidentialism on party unity conditional on self-rule (cross-sectional effect)



Overall, our results are supportive of our third hypothesis. Self-rule has a strong negative impact on party unity when combined with a presidential constitution, but no such effect exists for mixed, semi-presidential democracies. As already mentioned, the main difference between presidential and semi-presidential federations is that the former replicates separation of origin and survival at the subnational level by allowing for the direct election of governors. Therefore, the absence of a relevant effect of semi-presidentialism on party unity conditional on decentralization reinforces our central theoretical claim that intra-party dynamics in presidential federations are clearly distinct due to the presence of popularly elected subnational executives. Also, we find no relevant effect for the reference category (parliamentarianism): the between-country coefficient estimated for self-rule in model 2 indicates a negligible positive effect lacking statistical significance.

Models 1 and 2 show that self-rule has a strong within-country negative effect, that is, levels of party unity tend to decrease when levels of decentralization increase over time. On the other hand, the average, unconditional between-effect of self-rule estimated in model 1 is positive, but not significant.

Countries where electoral rules create stronger incentives to cultivate a personal vote are likely to have lower levels of party unity (negative between-effect for personal vote score). Strangely enough, however, the within-country effect is positive. Although we could not find a plausible explanation for these results, it is important to note that within-country variation in this variable is rather

limited in comparison with between-country differences. Electoral reforms are relatively rare events, whose effects are unlikely to be observed in the short run. Still, model diagnostics did not indicate that particular countries or observations could be driving the results.

Both model 1 and 2 indicate that increases in GDP per capita over time do not have any relevant impact on party unity. The age of democracy has a positive and significant effect over time, but the average age of democracy does not seem to differentiate between countries. Finally, the coefficients for party age came with the right sign (positive) in both models 1 and 2, but none surpassed the standard threshold of statistical significance.

Further statistical tests revealed moderate to high levels of correlation between the measures of age of democracy, age of parties and GDP per capita. We ran alternative models excluding each of these covariates, one at a time, and found that party age and GDP per capita have positive, statistically significant effects on party unity when the age of democracy is excluded from the models. However, because the other results remain virtually unchanged, we opted for reporting only the full models.

Final remarks

Overall, model results support the hypotheses presented earlier in this article. The separation of powers, in mixed or pure systems, implies lower levels of legislative party unity compared to parliamentary democracies (H1). There are significant differences, however, between presidential and semi-presidential countries, with lower levels of party unity in the former (H2). Part of the detrimental effects of presidentialism on party unity is related to fiscal and administrative decentralization. In unitary countries and/or with very low levels of self-rule, the direct election of presidents does not entail lower levels of legislative discipline. When presidentialism combines with higher degrees of decentralization, party unity in national legislatures tends to be lower (H3).

These original findings have important implications for the debates on legislative behavior and systems of government. As the results of within-country analysis show, fiscal and administrative decentralization has a detrimental effect on party unity in legislatures over time, regardless of the system of government. The micro-foundations that connect self-rule and legislative behavior lie, we argue, in the regionalization of interests and the building of more regionally decentralized parties that follow the process of state decentralization. This mechanism ends up reducing the cohesion and discipline of parliamentarians elected by the same party but subject to increasingly provincialized pressures. In this sense, the modes of multilevel party organization (Deschouwer, 2006) and other party-level attributes such as organizational strength (Little and Farrel, 2017) need to be considered in a more systematic way in comparative analysis of legislative behavior.

The main finding of this article concerns the combined effects between the system of government and the level of state decentralization. As shown by the results of the between-country analysis, presidential constitutions in unitary states do not influence party unity in a decisive way. Presidential systems in more decentralized settings do affect legislative discipline. We can conclude that part of the deleterious effects on legislative discipline traditionally attributed to presidentialism may actually result from the combination of separation of powers and political decentralization. Because this combination is innocuous in mixed systems, the causal key to this relationship is, we argue, the direct election of governors – a specificity of pure presidentialism. Decentralized presidential countries elect strong subnational executives, who accumulate resources and incentives for building personalist factions or robust regional party branches. In this scenario, the regionalization of interests, preferences, and careers is the most likely outcome, at the expense of building national party brands and the coordination among parliamentarians in national legislatures. Again, the building of poorly hierarchical, highly decentralized multilevel parties, where regional leaders command strong branches, may be a central key to understanding these mechanisms between presidentialism, decentralization, and legislative behavior.

We do not argue that other factors commonly considered in this field – e.g. the institutional toolbox available to executives to encourage legislators to act in unison, party leaders' powers, or the internal rules of legislative houses – should be ignored. What this article shows is that cross-national variations in terms of system of government can be explored in conjunction with other factors, such as party organizations and the level of self-rule, to explain legislative behavior.

Finally, insofar as legislative discipline is an important factor for the functioning of semi-presidential democracies, the specific literature on this system should consider the possible impacts of party organization and decentralization processes (especially when they mean the expansion of subnational elections) on legislators' behavior and executive-legislative relations. These factors have been largely ignored so far, and they constitute a promising path for future research.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Distribution of democratic countries by system of government and presence/absence of politically autonomous subnational governments, 1990 and 2010

System of government	1990		2010	
	No elected sub. govt	Elected subnational govt.	No elected sub. govt	Elected subnational govt.
Presidential	73.6 (14)	26.3 (5)	54.83 (17)	45.1 (14)
Semi-presidential	87.5 (7)	12.5 (1)	75 (18)	25 (6)
Parliamentary	61.8 (21)	38.2 (13)	56.7 (21)	43.2 (16)
Total	68.9 (42)	31.1 (19)	60.9 (56)	39.1 (36)

Sources : V-Dem 2018; Database of Political Institutions; Comparative Constitutions Project; RAI database. Countries were classified as democratic according to the dichotomous measure developed by Boix and Rosato (2013).

Table A.2: Absolute number of presidential / semi-presidential democracies with directly elected governors , 2010

	Subnational govt. elected	State/ Provincial governor elected
Presidential	14	13
Semi-presidential	6	1

Sources : V-Dem 2018; Database of Political Institutions; Comparative Constitutions Project; RAI database; Comparative Constitutions Project; additional sources (see explanation below).

Description of complimentary sources employed to build table A.2:

Whenever we could not find information on the rules governing the election of regional assemblies and executives or whenever we found inconsistencies across the sources listed above, we relied on secondary evidence on particular regions or countries (listed below). In a very few cases, we also looked for additional information in the Wikipedia.

Monaldi, F. (2010). Decentralizing Power in Latin America: The Role of Governors in National Policymaking. *C. Scartascini, E. Stein and M. Tommasi. How Democracy Works: Political Institutions, Actors, and Arenas in Latin American Policymaking*, 177-216.

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