

**Taking Regime Type Seriously:
Theories of Party Systems Revisited**

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A significant debate in comparative politics concerns the relationship between political institutions and party systems. Current theories only offer basic models of how regime types—the ideal types of presidentialism, parliamentarism, semi-presidentialism, and president-parliamentarism, for example, as well as their hybrids—interact with electoral systems and social cleavages to produce party systems. These models usually take the form of distinguishing between presidential and parliamentary systems, where presidential systems are generally held to reduce the effective number of legislative parties relative to parliamentary ones, dependent upon the electoral cycle and the permissiveness of the presidential electoral system. Surely, however, this is not the only difference in regime type that matters: it is now well acknowledged that significant differences exist within regimes broadly classified as presidential or parliamentary. Further, there are the less common ideal types of semi-presidential and president-parliamentary regimes to consider, not to mention the many hybrids that do not exactly approximate any one ideal type.

The lack of theorizing on this matter is surprising because the type of regime in which political competition takes place certainly affects the strategic calculations of voters and political elites alike. The decision to vote strategically is not only a function of the electoral system but also of the way in which political power is structured within a regime. Similarly, the strategic choices faced by party leaders about how to fight elections—when, if, and what kind of alliances with other parties should be formed—are at least partially a function of the regime type under which elections are held. In other words, this paper agrees with existing theories that both the propensity for and the qualitative kinds of strategic behavior that actors engage in vary with the type of political regime, as different regimes confront actors with coordination problems of varying difficulty that impose varying penalties for coordination failures. However, this paper argues that existing theories fail to account for significant cross-national and cross-temporal variation in party systems because they only model the variable of regime type as a dichotomy between parliamentarism and presidentialism. The paper extends existing models by hypothesizing that the strategic incentives for coordination in electoral contests vary with the distribution of political power within a regime: the more that a regime concentrates political power in one political body such as the executive or the legislature, the greater the incentive for actors to construct strategic alliances in the electoral contest for that body, and thus the greater consolidatory pressure on the party system surrounding it.

This paper demonstrates the short-comings of existing theories by examining Israel's experience with a novel political regime from 1996-2001, a natural experiment where regime type is allowed to vary but social cleavages and electoral system are held relatively constant. It

provides further evidence to this effect by comparing Israel's executive party system with the executive party systems of France and Peru, polities that are somewhat similar in social cleavages and that employ the same electoral system in the selection of their executive, yet operate under different political regimes. After illustrating the problems with existing models of party systems, the paper will develop an alternative approach that rejects the conventional presidential-parliamentary dichotomy for a more detailed classification of regimes by the distribution of political power (political constraints) within each regime.

Accordingly, the paper first reviews the literature relating political institutions and social cleavages to party systems. It then derives testable hypotheses from this literature about how party systems should vary when variables such as social cleavages are controlled for and other variables such as regime type are allowed to vary. It turns to the Israeli case to test these hypotheses. Finally, it concludes that existing models need further refinement and outlines the logic of such an alternative (more refined) model; in doing so, it suggests how strategic coordination might vary from regime to regime.

Academic Literature: Party Systems

This section of the paper analyzes the academic literature surrounding the dependent variables of the national legislative and executive party systems. By national legislative party system, I refer primarily to the effective number of parties winning seats in the national legislature, a statistic that characterizes a party system by both the number of competitors and their relative sizes.¹ Similarly, by national executive party system, I refer to the number of candidates (or the number of parties) running for the national executive office, if the executive is elected separately from the legislature. Usually, but not always, this executive is termed a president. In brief, three independent variables have been utilized to explain both cross-national and cross-temporal variance in party systems: social cleavages, electoral systems, and—more recently—regime type. The latter two variables could clearly be subsumed by a more broadly defined variable of political institutions. As illustrated in Figure 1, a reasonable consensus has developed in the literature that party systems are best understood by studying the interaction between political institutions and social cleavages. The focus of this paper is on the former, although it does not of course ignore the latter.

¹ I will describe this index in greater detail later in the paper.

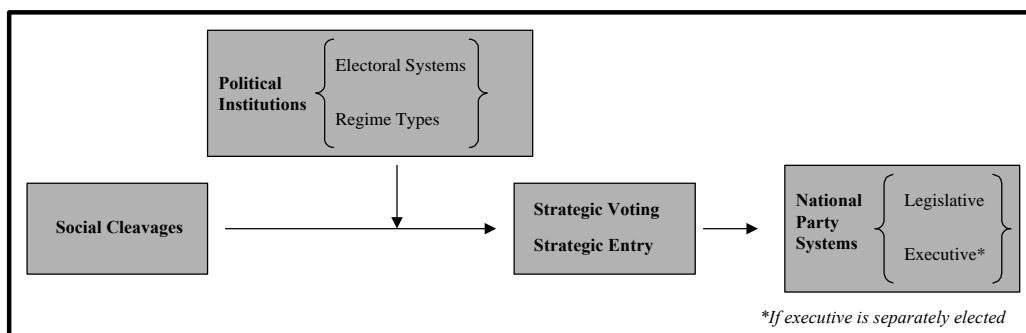


Figure 1. Independent Variables in the Party Systems Literature.

Accordingly, I shall trace the development of the literature relating the political institutional independent variables to party systems. While much ink has been spilled in comparative politics investigating the relationship of political institutions to legislative party systems, much less focus has been given to executive party systems. I shall focus on both legislative and executive party systems here.

Cox (1997) argues that democratic politics can be thought of as a series of choices by which a government is chosen from the citizenry, where coordination problems obtain at each stage of the choice. The goal of actors is to coordinate so as to obtain their most preferred outcomes. At issue is how the political institutions structuring the choice process influence the selection of the various arms of government, such as the executive and the legislature: the electoral alliances that are encouraged in these contests and the number of competitors that are accordingly sustainable in equilibrium. In this manner, political institutions influence two groups of actors: voters, in terms of their propensity to vote strategically, and elites, in terms of their strategic decisions about entry (i.e., for candidates, whether or not to contest races; for elites more generally, which candidates to support).

Electoral systems have traditionally been the most important political institution examined in this respect. The most important components of an electoral system are the electoral formula and district magnitude (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989): proportionality increases with district magnitude and the permissiveness of the electoral formula. The more disproportional an electoral system, the fewer the effective number of parliamentary parties (Lijphart 1999, 165-8). Furthermore, as disproportionality of an electoral system increases, the incentives for strategic coordination (both voting and entry) increase, and vice versa. Duverger's famous law about

electoral district-level ‘party’ systems,² as re-formulated by Cox (1997), is that many electoral systems will in equilibrium support an upper bound of $M+1$ candidates or lists in the district, where M is the district magnitude (or the number of candidates advancing to the second round in the case of top- M majority run-off).³ These equilibrium upper bounds result from strategic voting on one hand and strategic entry decisions on the other, in addition to purely mechanical effects.⁴ With respect to strategic voting, voters will abandon their preferred trailing candidate for a more viable if less preferred one in order to make their votes count. With respect to strategic entry, anticipation of strategic voting will deter candidates if clear expectations about the viability of candidacies exist, such as that provided by party labels; thus we get the Duvergerian argument that minor party candidates will be deterred (Cox 1997, 170-1).⁵ Note that the discussion here refers to the number of candidates, lists, or party labels sustainable at the district level. Note also that the upper bound requirement allows social cleavages to play an important role, as noted earlier: social cleavages initially determine the number of competitors, and only if this ‘natural’ number is greater than carrying capacity of the system will the electoral rules act as a constraint.⁶ Thus, at the district level, strategic voting and entry decisions in one-seat districts with plurality rule will tend to produce no more than two viable candidates; in multi-seat districts with proportional representation, they will tend to produce $M+1$ viable candidates.⁷ In sum, then, in a

² Many polities elect their legislative assemblies using electoral districts, where constituents from particular geographical areas (districts) elect one to several assembly members. The literature thus differentiates between the effective number of parties competing in a particular district (the district-level legislative party system) and the effective number of parties competing at the national level (the national-level legislative party system). The key question is how district-level competition is aggregated to the national level. Only a few polities, such as Israel and the Netherlands, elect their legislative assemblies using one district for the entire nation. In these cases, we still need to ask why it is that electoral coordination takes place to reduce the effective number of parties to less than what is theoretically sustainable given the extremely permissive electoral systems employed in the ‘districts’ of these two polities. Most executives are elected in a single nation-wide district (or approximately so) when the executive is separately elected from the assembly, and thus it usually makes sense to speak only of a national-level executive party system.

³ Cox’s model makes two key assumptions about voters: first, that they are short-term instrumentally rational and second, that they possess rational expectations. It also assumes that voters will have enough information to identify those candidates who are trailing in the race.

⁴ All electoral systems introduce disproportionality into the translation of votes into seats, reducing the number of parties winning seats relative to the number of parties standing for election.

⁵ In addition to assuming that it is clear who will be subject to strategic desertion, expectations usually generated by party labels in established democracies, it is also necessary to assume that political elites and/or candidates will only be concerned with winning the current election. Entry will not be deterred if they hold different goals, where they “are willing to suffer a string of losses in the hopes of eventual victory or policy concessions” (Cox 1997, 170).

⁶ Ergo, a district may have few competitors either because there are few social cleavages or because a strong electoral system acts to ‘weed out’ competitors in a situation of great social diversity. Conversely, many competitors are sustained by social diversity combined with a permissive electoral system.

⁷ The conventional statement of Duverger’s law, which makes the assumption that district-level effects will carry over to the national level, is that single-member districts and a plurality electoral system will produce a two-party system; multi-member districts with a proportional representation electoral system will produce

single electoral district for any given office, different electoral systems will promote greater or lesser degrees of strategic coordination and thus will support in equilibrium a varying upper bound on the number of candidates or parties. Electoral systems act as an intervening variable between the independent variable of social cleavages and the dependent variable of ‘party’ system (candidate- or party label- carrying capacity) in a district.

How, though, is competition at the district level linked to competition at the national one? Regression analyses of cross-national variation in legislative party systems have found that electoral laws do have consequences (Rae 1967; Taagepara and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1990) and that there is a significant interaction effect between social heterogeneity and electoral structure (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994) at the national level. These studies lend empirical support to the general Duvergerian argument that both electoral systems and social structures must factor into our theories of national-level party systems. However, Duverger’s Law is incomplete as a theoretical generalization at the national level, despite its empirical merits: Cox argues that the Duvergerian logic by which district-level patterns of competition are aggregated into a national pattern is unclear (1997, 275). To complete the argument, he suggests that we consider the end goal of political competition: that is, the ability to govern, which requires parties to gain control of the executive, however it is constituted. The selection of the national executive, like the selection of district-level legislative candidates, poses citizens, legislators, and political elites with a coordination problem, which encourages the formation of cross-district strategic alliances. As argued above, the electoral system governing the executive choice procedure sets particular upper bounds on the number of viable candidates for the executive office. The key question is how the strategic alliances formed in this contest will affect cross-district legislative alliances—the legislative party system at a national level—and vice versa. Thus, in accounting for national-level party systems, we must ask about other kinds of political institutions than electoral systems. Specifically, we must consider where governing power rests in a polity: how the executive is constituted and the balance of power between the executive and the legislature. This variable of regime type interacts with the district-level relationship between social cleavages, electoral systems, and party systems discussed above to give rise to national party systems.

The paper will first examine the literature that addresses how the quest to govern impacts the national legislative party system before turning to the reverse relationship. Most studies that address this issue take as their baseline parliamentary regimes, where governing power (the executive) arises from the legislature. Controlling the executive involves, loosely speaking,

a multi-party system; and single-member districts with a dual-ballot electoral system will produce multi-partism tempered with alliances.

controlling a majority of legislative seats, so executive and legislative party systems are effectively one and the same: the quest for the legislature is the quest for governing power. Accordingly, the focus here is on cross-national variance in electoral systems and social factors, which affects the incentives of parties to ally in legislative elections with the goal of winning enough seats to form a government.⁸ Other studies ask if presidential regimes, where the executive is elected separately from the legislature and governing power distributed between the two bodies in some manner, might produce a deviation from this baseline, all else being equal. Powell (1982) and Lijphart (1994) investigate the effect of presidential executives on legislative fractionalization and find them to discourage fractionalization. Both employ a simple dummy variable for presidential regimes in their analyses. Shugart and Carey (1992) agree that parliamentary and presidential regimes differ, but point out that two factors—the electoral rules by which the presidential executive is elected and the timing of elections—are crucial.⁹ Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) primarily study Latin American presidential regimes and concur that the electoral cycle and presidential electoral system have a significant effect on the effective number of legislative parties. Summarizing the findings of these studies, Lijphart argues that “presidential systems can have an indirect but strong effect on the effective number of parliamentary parties” (1999, 155). Cox 1997 offers a more integrated theoretical perspective on the matter. He suggests that the number of legislative parties at the national level is a joint product of legislative and executive electoral rules, which both interact with the social cleavage structure. He develops a model along these lines, testing his theoretical hypothesis that the national legislative party system depends interactively on the degree of integration of executive

⁸ Note that the cross-national studies cited earlier do not address this issue, although some (such as Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994) recognize that other political institutions than district magnitude should be investigated.

⁹ Their first variable simply determines the equilibrium upper bound of candidates (or party labels) in the presidential election, as discussed above; presaging Cox’s theoretical treatise, Shugart and Carey’s empirical generalization is that a plurality electoral formula for the presidential executive tends to induce the formation of two blocs to contest it, while majority elections do not (1992, 219-26). Their second crucial variable, the timing of elections, is what links the national legislative party system to the regime type. With concurrent legislative and executive elections, there is a ‘spillover effect’ from the executive to the national legislative party system. They accordingly argue that proportional representation assembly elections concurrent with plurality presidential elections will have a lower number of legislative parties at any given district magnitude relative to parliamentary systems using a similar assembly electoral formula. Concurrent double-ballot or majoritarian presidential elections will have an uncertain effect. When elections are non-concurrent, separate party systems for the executive and assembly can be supported, with a two-party system for the presidency and a multi-party system for the legislature (1992, 226-58). Note that Shugart and Carey take conflicting positions on the effect of majoritarian presidential elections on the legislative party system. They argue that the electoral cycle does not matter much in this case, but their data shows that non-concurrent elections reduce the number of legislative parties relative to concurrent ones. The latter finding resonates with another more general argument they make that majoritarian electoral rules for the presidency may actually encourage legislative fragmentation.

and legislative elections and the strength of the executive choice procedure (Cox 1997, 204).¹⁰ A scaled proximity variable is used to capture the degree of concurrence between legislative and executive elections; the effective number of presidential candidates serves as a variable reflecting the interaction between social cleavages and presidential electoral rules, given his argument that the presidential election in a polity indirectly (via the presidential party system) affects the legislative party system.¹¹ Cox's findings confirm earlier results that the effective number of legislative parties depends on the interaction of social heterogeneity and electoral permissiveness as well as regime type (in the form of the existence, nature, and timing of presidential elections).

Second, the literature examining the reverse relationship—the effect of the national legislative party system upon the executive party system—is much spottier. Shugart and Carey's data show that non-concurrent elections of a majoritarian president and an assembly reduce the number of presidential candidates relative to concurrent ones, their argument that electoral cycles have little effect in this case notwithstanding (1992, 220 and 223). Non-concurrent elections of a plurality president and an assembly allow separate party systems to form, while 'mutual contamination' from concurrent elections leads to an increased number of presidential candidates (an imperfect two-party presidential system) relative to what we would expect in the absence of the assembly election (1992, 240). Cox does not really address this issue, arguing that while the legislative party system almost certainly impacts the presidential one, "the direction of influence is primarily from executive to legislative elections" (1997, 212). Making such an assumption facilitates the testing of his model. While Shugart and Carey present some data supporting the conclusion that the causal arrows do run in both directions, from legislative to executive as well as executive to legislative party systems, not much work has been done on this issue.

To foreshadow a later section of the paper, it is worth noting that the existing literature, whether empirical or theoretical, does not offer comprehensive hypotheses about the impact of regime type on national-level party systems. The impact of presidentialism, broadly defined, is tested by comparing polities with presidential executives to those without; similarly, more detailed investigations into the impact of presidentialism have focused on both the electoral system by which the executive is chosen and the electoral cycle. These studies do not really ask how the institutional structure of a state matters beyond the broad dichotomization of polities into

¹⁰ Cox models presidential elections as impacting the legislative party system in a two-step process, where presidential election rules combine interactively with social diversity to produce an effective number of presidential candidates, and where the effective number of presidential candidates then affects the effective number of legislative competitors. The size of the latter effect depends on the proximity of the two elections.

¹¹ Mainwaring and Shugart (1997), by way of contrast, tested for the direct impact of presidential electoral rules on legislative fractionalization.

parliamentary and presidential regimes. It is now well-acknowledged that there are great differences in the substantive functioning of polities broadly classed as presidential (Shugart and Carey 1992). Likewise, the notion that polities broadly classed as parliamentary function according to the same logic has increasingly come under attack (Tsebelis 1995).¹² Shugart and Carey (1992) in fact propose a classification system embracing four ‘ideal types’ of regimes: pure presidentialism, pure parliamentarism, president-parliamentary, and premier-presidential. While some polities can be classed as one of these four ideal types, they argue, many cannot, being best thought of as hybrids combining features of the ideal types.¹³ Further, Shugart and Carey codify presidential powers in order to reveal the great variation in the functioning of even purely presidential regimes. Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) echo this point. On the parliamentary front, much ado has been made about the differences between parliamentary regimes that experience single-party majority government and those that tend towards coalition government, where the latter category can be further sub-divided by the types of coalition government often experienced (Strom 1990; Lijphart 1999).

In short, the comparative politics literature recognizes that making a dichotomous distinction between parliamentary and presidential regimes types is both theoretically and empirically untenable: even in the realm of ideal types, we need to think in a more nuanced fashion. Moreover, significant variations exist within ideal types. At the same time, however, comparative politics theories about the impact of regime type on national party systems have not sufficiently addressed these concerns.

Testing Existing Theories

This paper agrees with earlier studies that the interaction between regime type, electoral system, and social structure of a polity gives rise to its national-level party system. It differs from prior studies in its hypothesis about how regime type matters. The following sections of the paper will demonstrate that existing theories cannot account for either cross-temporal variation in legislative

¹² Students of coalition politics have also long been aware of this fact (Laver and Schofield 1990).

¹³ Shugart and Carey’s (1992) schema utilizes two criteria for differentiating between ideal types of regimes: the nature of the cabinet and the degree of separation of powers (specifically, the degree of separation of origin and survival) of the assembly and the executive. Presidential regimes are characterized by maximal presidential authority over the cabinet as well as maximum separation of assembly and cabinet origin and survival; parliamentary regimes by no presidential authority over the cabinet and some separation of assembly and cabinet survival if not origin; president-parliamentary by maximal presidential authority over the cabinet and no separation of assembly and cabinet survival; and premier-presidential by no presidential authority over the cabinet and no separation of assembly and cabinet survival. Hybrid

party systems, controlling for social cleavages and the legislative electoral system, or for a significant amount of cross-national variation in executive party systems, controlling for the executive electoral system and social cleavages. Given the failure of existing theories, I will argue in this paper for a more nuanced theoretical treatment of regime type. My proposition, which will be developed in section four, is that regimes that diffuse executive power, all else being equal, seem to provide fewer incentives for strategic behavior among both voters and elites than those that concentrate executive power. The former types of regimes thus sustain higher equilibrium numbers of candidates or party labels than do the latter. However, this paper will first derive and test hypotheses drawn from the existing literature before developing an alternative approach.

With respect to cross-temporal variation, existing theories make predictions about the effect of the introduction or removal of a separately elected (presidential) executive, all else being equal, on the national legislative party system. It is worth re-iterating that existing theories of party systems can only classify regimes as either parliamentary or presidential, and thus model regime type primarily as a dichotomous variable.

- **Proposition 1:** The addition of a separately elected executive, i.e. the shift from a parliamentary to a presidential regime, will have a consolidatory effect on the legislative party system provided that the legislative and executive elections are reasonably concurrent and the executive electoral system is reasonably restrictive relative to the legislative electoral system, all else being equal.

That is, given reasonably concurrent elections and a relatively restrictive executive electoral system, strategic coordination in the contest for the executive will promote greater strategic coordination in the legislative electoral contest than was promoted in the past by the parliamentary regime. This is Cox's (1997) argument that the impact of a presidential regime on the legislative party system will be mediated via the presidential party system. Executive electoral systems are almost always restrictive due to their small magnitude (only one candidate can capture the office) and thus almost always promote a reasonable amount of strategic behavior, particularly when compared to the permissive legislative electoral systems that obtain in many polities with parliamentary regimes. The incentives for strategic coordination in the executive contest do vary, however, due to the differing electoral formulas that can be used to govern the executive choice procedure. Thus, existing theories also make predictions about the national executive party system that is likely to arise following the introduction of a directly

regime types fall somewhere in-between the ideal types on these two dimensions. I will discuss some of these ideal types in greater detail later in the paper.

elected executive (cross-temporal variation), as well as about how executive party systems across polities should vary with the executive electoral system employed, all else being equal (cross-national variation). The following proposition can accordingly be viewed as accounting for either cross-temporal or cross-national variation.

- **Proposition 2:** Holding social cleavages constant, a directly elected executive selected using a permissive electoral system such a majority run-off electoral formula will have a higher carrying capacity and thus will sustain more candidates in equilibrium in the executive contest than less permissive ones such as a plurality electoral formula, and vice versa.

By extension, we can make an even more specific prediction.

- **Proposition 3:** Holding social cleavages, the congruence of executive and legislative elections, and executive electoral systems constant, there will be no variance in cross-national executive party systems.

In other words, there should be no observed variation in the executive party systems of regimes with separately elected executives (presidential regimes) if social cleavages, the congruence of executive and legislative elections, and the executive electoral systems are all controlled for. Note that similar propositions to 2 and 3 could be drawn up with respect to national legislative party systems; however, this paper will only address cross-temporal variation in legislative party systems.

To test these propositions drawn from the existing literature on party systems, this paper will conduct a case study that it will then attempt to place in comparative perspective. Israel's 1996-2001 experience with a new set of political institutions is in many respects a natural experiment with which to test the above hypotheses. Social cleavages and the electoral system are controlled for by the experiment, while the regime type is allowed to vary. The existing academic literature agrees for the most part with popular conceptions at the time of the reform that a presidential executive was added to existing Israeli institutions: that is, that the Israeli regime was changed from a parliamentary to a presidential one in 1996, with the implications for Israel's legislative and executive party systems as outlined above. However, as I will shortly discuss, Israel's political regime from 1996-2001 was in fact a unique institutional arrangement best characterized as a president-parliamentary regime according to Shugart and Carey's criteria. Will existing theories nevertheless prove to be accurate in accounting for Israel's experience, as they do not recognize such fine-grained distinctions between regime types? As suggested above, the Israeli case will instead demonstrate that existing theories fall short of an acceptable explanatory mark: that we must do more than dichotomize regimes into presidential and

parliamentary types. Instead of the addition of a separately elected executive promoting consolidation in the legislative party system, legislative party fragmentation was observed; this legislative party system fragmentation occurred despite the executive contest being characterized by a perfect two-party system. Existing models such as Cox's, as outlined above, would predict that strategic alliances formed for the 'presidential' contest would carry over to the legislative one, exerting a downward pressure on the carrying capacity of the legislative party system. Yet this did not happen in Israel. Other anomalies that lead me to reject the prior hypotheses will also be recounted.

It is worth briefly elaborating upon the experimental controls before continuing. First, along with the regime change, minute adjustments were made to Israel's electoral system: the electoral threshold for representation in the Knesset was raised by 0.5% and major parties began selecting their candidates via party primaries. However, it seems acceptable to view the legislative electoral system as effectively constant across the two regimes due to the minor nature of the change in the threshold. At any rate, the data do not show the electoral threshold having the predicted effect of consolidating the legislative party system. Further, I do not believe that the party primaries can alone account for the changes in Israel's legislative party system, nor for the surprising development of its executive party system, although I do not provide evidence for this claim in the paper; future work should re-visit this issue. Second, of course Israeli society changed in the six-year period at hand; nevertheless, it seems that six years is too short a period for radical social re-alignments to take place, at least to the extent that social changes alone could account for the developments in the party systems. Israel's next few elections will provide a natural test of the social versus political change hypotheses: with subsequent elections being held under its original pre-1996 political institutions, if social change drove the party system developments from 1996-2001 to be recounted below, then the same patterns should persist despite the change in political institutions.

This paper will accordingly compare Israel's legislative party system under two different political regimes: the parliamentary regime that it utilized for most of its history and the novel regime type that it adopted from 1996-2001. It will then consider the developments in the executive party system under the new regime, for which there is no earlier correlate. Finally, the paper will attempt to place the developments in Israel in comparative perspective in order to further test the hypotheses drawn from the existing literature regarding the link between regime types and party systems. To do so, it will briefly compare the French, Israeli, and Peruvian national-level executive party systems.

The Case of Israel

Pre-Reform Israel: 1949-1992

Israel has long been a unitary and highly centralized state, and its electoral system one of the purest and most democratic. It is also one of the few democracies without a written constitution, the United Kingdom being the other prominent example. This section of the paper will discuss Israel's pre-1992 political institutions and party system.

The democratic institutions structuring the Israeli polity were given legal status by a multi-document constitution consisting of individual Basic Laws that were formulated and adopted over time by the Knesset, a compromise that resolved disagreements about the fundamental nature of the Israeli state (Hazan 1997, 329-30).¹⁴ Israel was established as a parliamentary system, where the executive (the prime minister and cabinet) were drawn from and responsible to the 120-member legislature. The Basic Law: The Knesset established two of the four key features of the electoral system, a single nation-wide district and an extremely proportional PR electoral formula for the parliamentary elections.¹⁵ Section 83 of the Knesset Election Law of 1969 established a third key feature, the closed list system (Bogdanor 1993, 84). Fourth and finally, the threshold for representation in the legislature was set at an extremely low one percent of the national vote. The Knesset elected Israel's president, its head of state.

These institutional features ensured scholarly interest in Israel, as its electoral system was one of the most proportional in the world. For example, Lijphart found its average disproportionality (the deviation between vote and seat shares) from 1945 to 1980 to be 1.1%, and from 1945-96 to be 2.27%.¹⁶ For the latter period, only The Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden had lower disproportionality scores, with 1.30% (The Netherlands) being the lowest. By way of comparison, the mean disproportionality of all 36 democracies investigated by Lijphart was 8.26% (1993, 115; 1999, 162-3). Furthermore, only The Netherlands and Israel used a nation-wide constituency for their elections. Note that the existence of a single legislative electoral district for the polity as a whole obviates the need to link the district-level party system with the national-level one in the simple sense that the district and polity are one and the same.

¹⁴ These basic laws include the 1958 Basic Law: The Knesset; the 1964 Basic Law: State President; and the 1968 Basic Law: The Government, among others.

¹⁵ In 1973, the electoral formula was changed from Hare's largest remainder to D'Hondt, a less proportional formula favoring large parties (Diskin and Diskin 1995, 31-2).

¹⁶ The former is the average disproportionality for the two largest parties, and the latter for all parties (using the Gallagher index). The latter is higher due to the introduction of the d'Hondt electoral formula in 1973.

However, actors still face coordination problems in the form of gaining control of the executive, particularly given the large district magnitude; coordination merely takes place within the district instead of both within and across districts.

Partially due to this permissive electoral system and partially due to its many social cleavages, Israel had a multi-party system characterized by centrifugal competition during the period of 1949-92. Israel has never had a majority party, although from 1949-77, Mapai (the forerunner of Labor) controlled the pivotal point in the party system; many academics consider it to have been a dominant party during this period, as it (from 1949 to 1965) and its 'Alignment' of smaller, ideologically sympathetic parties (from 1965 to 1977) obtained between 37.5% and 46.7% of the Knesset seats (Diskin and Diskin 1995, 34-5). In 1977, a coalition of several right-wing groups led by Herut emerged as Israel's largest political party, the Likud, and dealt the Alignment a stunning defeat. From 1977 to the early 1990s, the Israeli party system polarized into competition between the left (Labor plus smaller Jewish and Arab left-wing parties) and right (Likud plus smaller right-wing parties), with small religious parties holding the pivotal center position. These parties enjoyed a greater affinity with Likud and thus tended to back the right after 1977, but were willing to enter into coalitions with Labor (Ibid., 36-9). Over the entire period, the effective number of political parties in the Israeli polity was 4.42 (Ibid., 34),¹⁷ placing Israel in the same party system class as countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, and Finland (Lijphart 1999, 76).

The 1992 Reforms

Institutional reform has been a popular topic of discussion in Israel since the state's founding. Public dissatisfaction increased greatly in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a result of the "negotiating excesses that occurred in forming and maintaining the government coalition in the 12th Knesset" as well as during the March 1990 coalition crisis (Doron and Kay 1995, 299-300). Specifically, voters were unhappy due to the perceived lack of government accountability, stalemated policy initiatives, and disproportionate power exercised by the small religious parties. The 1992 reforms were supposed to address these issues. It is worth noting that while public justifications for the reform proposals largely relied upon these concerns about the political system, such concerns fall far short of explaining why reforms took the specific form they did. But the search for an explanation of Israel's institutional changes must be taken up at a later time

Although the 1945-96 period does not quite correspond to the one we are considering (1949-92), the scores for the two should not be too different.

and by another paper; this section of the paper describes the reforms made to the Israeli electoral system and regime.

During the final days of the 12th Knesset (1988-1992), several institutional changes were made. First, the most significant of these was the March 1992 amendment of the Basic Law: The Government, the result of which was that Israel became the first country to directly elect its prime minister in the 1996 elections for the 14th Knesset. Israeli politics were conducted under this political regime from 1996 until 2001, when the Knesset voted to restore the one-vote parliamentary system of government that had operated prior to the 1996 elections.¹⁸ Note that although the regime change did not go into effect until 1996, some scholars argue that it nevertheless impacted the 1992 elections, as politicians began to anticipate the forthcoming direct election of the prime minister (Hazan 1997, 331; Shamir and Arian 1995, 10). Due to both theoretical and empirical difficulties with this argument, I will only focus on the 1996 and 1999 legislative elections under the new regime.¹⁹ Second, an electoral reform that increased the national threshold for representation from 1% to 1.5% of the valid votes cast was voted upon at the same time; it went into immediate effect, in time for the 1992 elections to the 13th Knesset. Third, changes in the candidate selection procedures of the major parties—the introduction of party primaries—were also made in 1992. I will first focus upon the electoral system reforms and then discuss the change in regime type.

Israel's main electoral reform was relatively straightforward. Increasing the national threshold for representation from 1% to 1.5% of the valid votes cast made the Israeli electoral system less proportional, although clearly not by much. Parties are now faced with a greater hurdle to overcome in order to gain representation in the Knesset. As mentioned earlier, this straightforward and relatively minor reform is not the focus of this paper. Such a marginal adjustment in the electoral threshold cannot be considered a significant change to the electoral system. Nor will this paper focus on the effects of the introduction of party primaries by both Labor and Likud; interested readers should see Rahat and Sher-Hadar 1999 for a discussion.

The main focus of this paper is the change in regime. This reform—the addition of a separately elected executive, analogous to a president despite still technically being termed a prime minister—was designed to complement the electoral reform in weakening the power of

¹⁷ Lijphart (1999, 65) arrives at the average figure of 4.55 for the 1945-96 period.

¹⁸ The 7 March 2001 vote was part of the deal between Likud and One Israel (Labor) under which a national unity coalition was formed with Sharon at its head.

¹⁹ Labor selected its prime ministerial and Knesset candidates via a closed (open only to party members) primary for the first time in 1992. Likud followed by electing its chairperson via primaries immediately after the election; several parties adopted primaries for electing their candidates in 1993 municipal

small parties, producing more stable governments, and ultimately leading to a less consensual policy process.²⁰ Opinion amongst academic commentators on Israeli politics, however, was divided as to whether this or the opposite effect—the strengthening of small parties— would occur.²¹ Arian and Shamir (1999) summarize the changes made by the constitutional reform. Amendments to the Basic Law stipulated that the prime minister was to be directly selected by the electorate using a majoritarian double-ballot electoral system, similar to that used in France. That is, a second round run-off between the two candidates with the highest number of votes would take place if no candidate received a majority in the first round. The prime minister alone was given the power to form and to head the cabinet. Both the prime minister and the Knesset were given powers of dissolution, though: by a special vote of 80 members, the Knesset could dismiss the prime minister and force a new election for the prime ministership; likewise, the prime minister could dissolve the Knesset with the president's approval, forcing new elections for both the assembly and the prime ministership; finally, the Knesset could bring about double elections either by a vote of no confidence or by failing to pass the national budget, both of which required a majority vote in favor. Thus, prime ministerial and legislative elections sometimes but not always coincided. The Knesset continued to be elected using a closed list system of proportional representation in one national constituency, although the threshold for representation increased to 1.5% as previously discussed.

At the most general level, the addition of a directly and separately elected executive moved Israel away from a parliamentary regime to one of a unique format that was neither presidential nor semi-presidential.²² Shugart and Carey argue that the defining characteristic of presidentialism is the separate sources of origin (separate popular elections) and survival

elections; and both Labor and Likud used primaries to select their candidates for the 14th Knesset. See Hazan 1997, 331.

²⁰ Doron and Kay (1995, 313) argued that reform advocates hoped it would obviate much of the friction created in building a government coalition by making the prime minister less dependent upon the favor of other parties. Specifically, the influence of the small religious parties, which regularly blackmailed the government using their pivotal positions to extract state funds for their religious institutions, would be diminished. Nachimas and Sened (1999) argued more generally that the reformers designed the regime change to weaken the powers of small parties and accordingly to strengthen large ones.

²¹ Academic commentators focused upon different aspects of the institutional reform and thus came to different conclusions. Diskin and Diskin (1995) predicted that the reform would strengthen instead of weaken small parties. Bogdanor (1993, 98) conversely predicted the opposite; in line with the reformers, he thought that the new regime would induce centripetal rather than centrifugal competition and strengthen the bipolarity of the party system. Lijphart (1993, 118-21) believed that direct election of the prime minister would move Israel in a majoritarian direction, a dangerous situation given its highly plural social nature, and result in more, not less, policy immobility. Sartori (1997) predicted that such a system would be unstable, leading to frequent elections. Hazan (1997) echoed Lijphart in describing the reform as strengthening the majoritarian character of politics. It is surprising that so few academics correctly predicted the impact of the regime change, as we shall see, for the writing (so to speak) was on the wall.

²² I agree with Hazan 1996 and Hazan 1997 on this point.

(separate fixed terms) of the legislature and executive (1992, 18-22). Conversely, parliamentarism is a fused power system, where the executive originates in the legislature and survives for only as long as it maintains the legislature's confidence. Israel's 1996-2001 regime does not clearly fit into either category: the direct election of the prime minister gave the executive branch of government a separate source of origin from the legislative branch, but the survival of the executive branch still depended upon legislative confidence, and vice versa (either branch could dissolve the other). Nor is Israel's now-defunct regime semi-presidential, as is the French 5th Republic, where a directly elected president coexists with a government headed by a premier reliant upon parliamentary confidence; this kind of regime is usually described as alternating between parliamentary and presidential phases, depending upon whether or not the legislative majority supports the president (Duverger 1980).²³ Obviously, if we amalgamate Israel's prime minister to the French president, we are left without the second executive of semi-presidentialism who heads a government responsible to the legislature. So what type of regime did operate in Israel from 1996-2001?

Shugart and Carey discuss a fourth hybrid regime, which they label "president-parliamentary" (1992, 24-7). Again amalgamating the prime minister to the 'president,' here both the president and the parliament have authority over the composition of cabinets. That is, the president both appoints and dismisses cabinet ministers, who are subject to parliamentary confidence. This gives both branches equal authority to dismiss members of the cabinet, unlike the other regime types where this authority is asymmetrically distributed. There is also a lack of independent survival of legislative and executive powers. This seems to approximate the Israeli regime of 1996-2001. Lijphart (1999, 199-224) has more difficulty dealing with it, describing it as "uncharted territory." He ends up characterizing the regime as presidential, however, unlike Shugart and Carey—an odd classificatory decision. By all of his own criteria, it belongs in the class labeled "Hybrid VI," which he argues has no real-world examples; the Hybrid VI executive is selected by voters and the one-person executive is dependent on legislative confidence, a reasonable description of the defunct Israeli system. Sartori (1997) subsumes both Israel and France within one broad semi-presidential category. Obviously, we are in a classificatory conundrum with respect to 1996-2001 Israel. I shall adopt Shugart and Carey's classification, as it reflects my belief that the post-1996 Israeli system is a unique one—neither presidential,

²³ Also discussed in Shugart and Carey 1992, 23-4 and in Sartori 1997, 121-40. Shugart and Carey and Sartori all reject viewing semi-presidentialism as alternating between two phases, as this misses the point that it is a unique type of regime that never truly approximates either presidentialism or parliamentarism. Sartori suggests oscillation instead of alternation, as the former is a 'within-system' movement, i.e. a system with a flexible dual authority structure.

parliamentary, nor semi-presidential.²⁴ Existing theories of party systems, however, focus solely upon the presence or absence of a separately elected executive (a president) and must accordingly classify the Israeli polity during this period as a presidential regime.

Institutional Reform: Results

Now we arrive at the key question of the paper: what were the effects of these reforms on the Israeli party systems? Specifically, what was the impact of adding a separately elected executive and changing the regime from a parliamentary to a president-parliamentary type? First of all, it is worth noting that there are some difficulties in empirically separating out the impact of the 1996 regime change on 1996-2001 elections from the impact of the earlier 1992 reforms (Labor party primaries and the increase in the threshold), as well as from the impact of concurrent further changes in the candidate selection process (Likud party primaries). Likewise, while we can assess the 1992 threshold and candidate selection changes independently of the 1996 regime change by studying the 1992 elections, we will not be able to completely disentangle the two 1992 reforms from each other. Nevertheless, as I argued earlier, I do not think that the changes in the electoral threshold and candidate selection procedures within parties together constitute a significant change in the electoral system during the period at hand.

This section of the paper will begin with an analysis of the reforms' effects on the legislative party system in Israel before turning to the development of a party system around the contest for the executive. First, the legislative party system. Following Lijphart (1999), I characterize the legislative party system by the effective number of parliamentary parties, an index originally developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979). This index is calculated as follows:

$$N_p = \frac{1}{\sum (s_i^2)},$$

where s_i is the proportion of seats of the i -th party. As Lijphart points out, this index carries the same information as Rae and Taylor's index of fragmentation, F (1999, p. 68). Throughout, I count an electoral list as a party. That is, if several parties ran together as an official list in a particular election, I counted them as one party. While the fractionalization and volatile nature of the Israeli party system make breaking lists down into their component parts a difficult process,

²⁴ Hazan 1996 took a similar approach.

one opening the analyst up to charges of inconsistencies, simply counting lists is consistent and reflects the common conviction in the literature that closely allied parties can often be counted as one in characterizing a party system (1999, p. 69-71).²⁵ This is particularly the case in Israel, where certain parties running as lists (e.g. the Alignment of the Labor Party and Mapam from 1969-84) can be considered one party by all of Lijphart's criteria. If anything, then, my estimates of the effective number of parliamentary parties are underestimates, particularly with respect to the 1996 and 1999 elections.²⁶ These estimates are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties by Knesset Election

Knesset	Year	Np
1	1949	4.73
2	1951	4.83
3	1955	6.00
4	1959	4.92
5	1961	5.37
6	1965	4.72
7	1969	3.57
8	1973	3.35
9	1977	4.37
10	1981	3.13
11	1984	3.86

²⁵ Lijphart argues that closely allied parties can be considered one party for analytic purposes when they (1) do not compete for votes in elections; (2) cooperate in parliament, that is, form a single parliamentary party group and caucus together; (3) behave like one party in cabinet formation, i.e. they are either in cabinet together or in opposition together; and (4) have a long history of close collaboration (1999, p. 70-1). Obviously, these criteria leave much up to the analyst's judgement. In the case of Israel, however, many lists do deserve to be counted as one party by these criteria, such as the aforementioned Alignment of Labor and Mapam.

²⁶ In 1996 and 1999, several parties that do not normally run together ran as lists and, by my counting rule, were treated as one party in calculating Np; good arguments could be made for counting them separately, however, as they do not satisfy Lijphart's criteria for closely allied parties. For example, in 1996, Likud, Gesher, and Tsomet ran as a list, and in 1999, Gesher, Meimad, and Labor ran as the "One Israel" list. Accordingly, the effective number of parliamentary parties for these two years, which I calculated by counting lists, is best considered a lower bound. Of course, similar situations obtain for earlier elections as well, so the net effect of undercounting in 1996 and 1999 may be negligible after taking into account undercounting in earlier elections.

12	1988	4.38
13	1992	4.41
14	1996	5.61
15	1999	8.74

The same information is presented graphically in Figure 2 below.

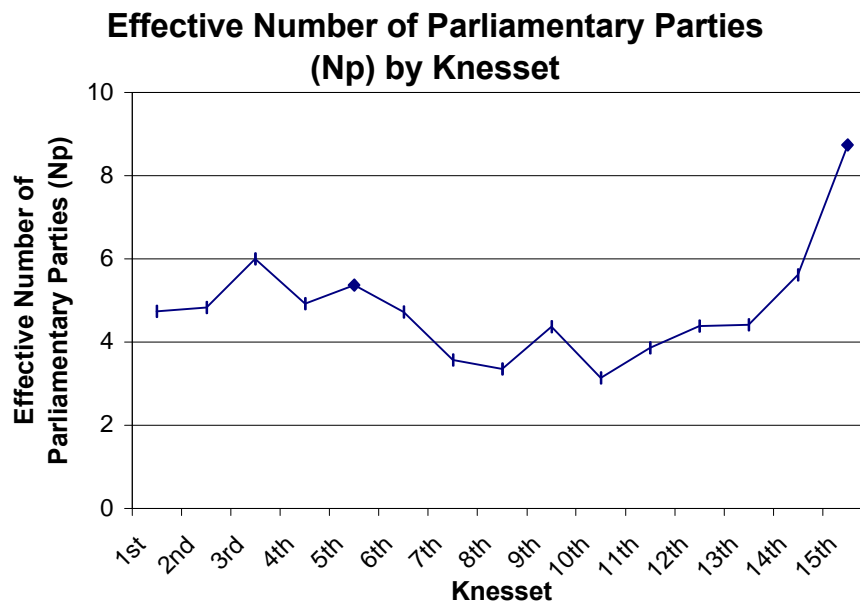


Figure 2. The effective number of parliamentary parties by Knesset election.

Data for 1949-1996 from The Knesset's webpage, www.knesset.gov.il; data for 1999 from Hazan and Diskin 2000, p. 633.

First, the 1996 and 1999 Knesset elections were held concurrently with prime ministerial elections. Two-way feedback would accordingly be expected only in the 1996 and 1999 elections. It certainly appears at first glance as if there has been an upward trend in the effective number of parliamentary parties following the 1996 reforms, as in both 1996 and 1999 the effective number of parties is much greater than in preceding elections. This is not so for 1992,

however, which impressionistically suggests that the 1992 reforms did not have an immediate effect on the legislative party system. These impressions are further reinforced by a comparison of descriptive statistics such as the mean effective number of parliamentary parties in the pre- and post-reform periods. The mean effective number of parties prior to the 1992 reforms is 4.43, and this statistic following the 1992 reforms (that is, for the 1992, 1996, and 1999 elections) is 6.25. Analogously, the mean number of effective parties prior to the 1996 reforms is 4.43 and following the 1996 reforms 7.17. Thus, the effective numbers of parliamentary parties for the 1996 and 1999 Knesset elections appear to deviate significantly from the mean number in the pre-reform period.

Two hypotheses relating the regime type to the party system should to be tested. In no particular order, the hypotheses are as follows.

- Hypothesis 1: the mean number of effective legislative parties following the 1996 regime change (for the 1996 and 1999 elections) is greater than that for prior elections, and this difference is statistically significant.

- Hypothesis 2: the mean number of effective legislative parties following the 1992 electoral reforms and 1996 regime change (for the 1992, 1996, and 1999 elections) is greater than that for prior elections, and this difference is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 1 looks for the impact of the 1996 regime change on the party system, despite the fact that it is impossible to completely isolate the effects of this reform from any effects of changes to the electoral system in 1992. Hypothesis 2 considers the overall impact of both the 1992 and 1996 reforms.

These hypotheses can be tested statistically using a series of standard linear regressions, one method of comparing the means of groups. Given the small number of cases available for analysis, findings cannot be viewed as definitive. Estimating the regression equation

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X,$$

where Y is the effective number of parliamentary parties and X is a dummy variable for the set of political institutions under which the Knesset elections were held, tests the two hypotheses. For Hypothesis 1, the post-reform group of elections (1996 and 1999) is denoted by X = 1, and the

pre-reform group by $X = 0$. Running this model results in the following parameter estimates and standard errors:

Table 2. Parameter Estimates for Hypothesis 1.

	$\hat{\mathbf{a}}$	$\hat{\mathbf{o}}$
\mathbf{b}_0	4.43	.275
\mathbf{b}_1	2.74	0.752

Both of these estimates are significant at the 0.001 level. Thus, β_0 represents the mean effective number of parliamentary parties in the pre-1996 period, 4.43. β_1 represents the combined effects of the 1996 regime change and the earlier 1992 reforms, i.e., the difference in the mean effective number of legislative parties between the pre- and post-reform periods, which is estimated to be an increase of 2.74. The post-1996 reform mean effective number of legislative parties is accordingly estimated to be 7.17. These results support the hypothesis that the configuration of the Israeli party system following the 1996 and 1999 elections differed from its configuration in earlier years, although I must again stress that we cannot be too confident in these findings, given the small number of cases overall (and, in particular, the small number of cases in the ‘reform regime’ group). To check the robustness of these findings, I ran a two-sample t-test for the equality of means. Assuming equal variances, the t statistic is -3.644 with 13 degrees of freedom; this is significant at the 0.003 level. Not assuming equal variances, the t statistic is -1.734 with 1.041 degrees of freedom; this is highly insignificant. Thus, the data analysis is suggestive but far from conclusive. Note that Knesset elections in these two years coincided with elections for the prime minister under the new president-parliamentary regime type.

Estimating the same model but with different groupings of elections in order to test Hypothesis 2 ($X = 0$ for 1949-1988 and $X = 1$ for 1992-1999) yields similar, if less strong, results. Parameter estimates are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Parameter Estimates for Hypothesis 2.

	$\hat{\mathbf{a}}$	$\hat{\mathbf{o}}$
\mathbf{b}_0	4.43	.275
\mathbf{b}_1	1.82	0.756

β_1 here is significant at the 0.01 level and reflects an increase of 1.82 in the mean number of parties following the both the 1992 and the later 1996 reforms. This again is consistent with initial impressions and can be interpreted as supporting Hypothesis 2, with the same prior caveat about confidence in the findings as a result of the small sample size. As before, I ran a two-sample t-test for the equality of means to check robustness. Assuming equal variance, the t-statistic is -2.403 with thirteen degrees of freedom; it is significant at the 0.032 level. Not assuming equal variance, the t-statistic is -1.384 with 2.145 degrees of freedom; it is highly insignificant. The data therefore suggest that the mean effective number of parties during the entire reform period, not just following the 1996 regime change, was greater than that in the pre-reform period, but does not provide conclusive support for this proposition; likewise, the findings comparing the mean of the 1992, 1996, and 1999 elections to that of prior ones seem less strong than those comparing the mean number of parties in 1996 and 1999 to that of prior ones.

As noted previously, while we cannot rule out the hypothesis that the 1992 electoral reforms contributed to the increase in the effective number of parliamentary parties in the 1996 and 1999 Knesset elections, there are two problems with this hypothesis that allow us to discount it. First, the 1992 reforms did not impressionistically appear to have a significant impact on the 1992 Knesset election; second, such a hypothesis is in part theoretically nonsensical, as the academic consensus on the impact of the increased threshold is that it should decrease the effective number of legislative parties. Also as noted previously, two reforms were made in 1992: the increased electoral threshold and the Labor party primaries. Certainly, the fact that we never see the increased electoral threshold having the predicted effect could simply be due to the other, simultaneous reform (Labor party primaries) having an opposite effect of similar magnitude in 1992, and the later regime change and Likud party primaries having an opposite effect of much greater magnitude in 1996 and 1999.

As far as more qualitative descriptions of changes in the party system in the 1990s go, Hazan (1997 and 1999) and Hazan and Rahat (2000) point out the extent to which the vote and seat share of the two largest parties (today, Labor and Likud) have fallen dramatically.²⁷ The vote and seat share of sectarian parties, in contrast, have dramatically increased: religious, Arab, and immigrant parties controlled more seats than the largest party for the first time ever in 1996 (Hazan and Rahat, 2000, p. 1323-4). The pivots in the party system remain the small sectarian parties, particularly the religious ones—not the result expected by the Israeli electorate and politicians from the reforms. Hazan and Rahat (2000) argue that sectarian “representation as presence” has dominated the Knesset elections at the expense of ideational representation, which came instead to dominate the prime ministerial elections. This is a common phenomenon in presidential systems, where legislators are elected to serve partisan interests and presidents to serve national ones; the fact that commentators have noted such a shift in Israeli politics underscores one key effect of the regime change. Additionally, Hazan (1999) notes that centripetal competition characterized the 1996 election, as both the prime ministerial candidates and most parties running for Knesset seats moved to the center of the political spectrum.

In sum, the impressionistic and statistical evidence suggests that the Israeli legislative party system experienced significant fragmentation following the 1996 and 1999 elections. It seems highly improbable that these observed changes in the legislative party system are not due to the 1996 change in regime. This analysis illustrates the extent to which the reformers’ goals were not realized: contrary to their expectations, the introduction of a directly-elected prime minister (a new type of regime, which I have argued is best described as president-parliamentary) did not result in legislative party system consolidation; in fact, it resulted in further fragmentation. We cannot, however, completely rule out the hypothesis that party system fragmentation resulted from exogenous social changes in the Israeli electorate. Some commentators do argue for such a hypothesis, at least in part.²⁸ For reasons already discussed, I do not think that such social changes alone can explain either the timing or the magnitude of the legislative party system fragmentation; in fact, I suggest that social cleavages can probably be treated as reasonably

²⁷ This is similar to developments in many European states, where partisan de-alignment is undermining the dominance of many long-established parties; varied hypotheses have been proposed to explain the phenomenon.

²⁸ Hazan and Diskin (2000, p. 635) argue that the changes in the Israeli party system in 1999 are due to four main factors: (1) the regime change and other institutional reforms; (2) changes in the characteristics of party leadership, partially stemming from the use of party primaries; (3) changes in the structure of Israeli society; and (4) changes in the agendas of voters, parties and candidates where less emphasis is placed on foreign policy and more emphasis on social cleavages. Thus, social changes play a large role in their analysis. Certainly an explanation for the rise of immigrant parties, for example, must look both to

constant over at least the short run period investigated by this paper.²⁹ As stated earlier, what happens to the legislative party system following the next few Knesset elections, which will be conducted under the old parliamentary type of regime, will be a natural test of the social change versus institutional hypotheses.

We can conclude from this case study of cross-temporal variation in the Israeli legislative party system that Proposition 1 is not supported by the empirical evidence and should be rejected. (Recall that Proposition 1 predicted that the addition of a 'presidential' executive would place consolidatory pressure on the legislative party system, given concurrent legislative and executive elections and a reasonably restrictive executive electoral system relative to the legislative one.) Despite strong strategic incentives for coordination in the executive electoral contest, which as we will soon see resulted in a perfect two-party executive party system, these strategic alliances did not carry over into the legislative contest despite concurrent legislative and executive elections in 1996 and 1999 as Cox's model would predict. In fact, the opposite happened: voters and elites seemed to feel less of an incentive to coordinate strategically in the Knesset elections. Note that while Shugart and Carey's predictions (1992) that legislative fragmentation would result from concurrent executive and legislative elections where the executive was elected using a majoritarian electoral system were borne out, there is no logic to their argument, particularly in light of the fact that this somewhat permissive executive electoral system did not lead to a multi-party executive party system. The existing literature on party systems cannot explain the observed developments in the Israeli legislative party system.

Second, the creation of a new executive office of course spurred parties to compete for control of it. How many candidates competed for executive office in the three executive elections held under the president-parliamentary regime? Particularly, how many candidates ran in the first round of balloting? (Recall that the executive was elected by a double-ballot electoral system, where the top two contestants proceeded to a second round if no contestant received a majority in the first round of balloting.) In other words, what did Israel's short-lived executive party system look like? The results of the 1996, 1999, and 2001 prime ministerial elections appear below in Table 5. The 1996 and 1999 elections were held concurrently with Knesset elections, while the 2001 election was held independently (non-concurrently) following the resignation of Prime

institutional reforms but also to the massive influx of immigrants (particularly from the former Soviet Union) and the social dislocation engendered by their arrival.

²⁹Changes in the voting behavior of existing Labor and Likud voters, which will be discussed shortly, strengthens the hypothesis that the regime change affected the strategic incentives facing both voters and elites, and thus that changes in the party system are independent at least in part of social changes. Further, the 1996 and 1999 elections were conducted prior to the recent intifada and breakdown of the Oslo peace

Minister Barak. As noted in the previous section, two-way feedback would accordingly be expected only in the 1996 and 1999 elections.

Table 5. Results for the Direct Prime Ministerial Elections

Percent of Valid Votes in First Round					
	1996		1999		2001
Netanyahu	50.5	Netanyahu	43.9	Barak	37.6
Peres	49.5	Barak	56.1	Sharon	62.4

Data for 2001 from www.embassy-of-israel.dk/elections2001; data for 1996 and 1999 from Hazan and Diskin 2000, p. 631.

Israel's prime ministerial election results are surprising, given the double-ballot electoral system under which they were conducted. By election day, only two candidates remained in each of the three election races; furthermore, a majority was attained in each election with only one round of voting. In 1999, for example, while there were initially 5 candidates running for the prime ministership, three dropped out of the race in the two days prior to the election when their preferred candidate (Barak) pulled ahead in the polls (Hazan and Diskin, 2000). I argue that these results are surprising given the electoral system in use because majoritarian run-offs impose an upper bound of $M+1$ on the number of candidates, where M is the number of candidates advancing to the second round (Cox 1997). In this case, 3 candidates or party labels were theoretically sustainable in equilibrium. Of course, the latter is only an upper bound; a polity with few social cleavages might actually support fewer candidates or party labels. But Israel, as we have seen, has many social cleavages that certainly were not channeled into a strong, two-party system at the legislative level; accordingly, the argument that a fewer number of executive candidates were sustained due to the Israeli polity not possessing many social cleavages does not appear to go through with respect to the executive party system. We are left, then, with strange developments in the executive party system under the president-parliamentary regime: an almost

accords, so the social and ideological chaos currently characterizing Israeli politics could not have been a factor in these two elections.

perfect two-party system ($Np=2$) contesting elections for the executive. The prime ministerial elections look as if they were conducted under a very strong electoral system, when they were in fact conducted under a reasonably permissive one.

Other facts worth noting include the following. Shugart and Carey point out that the party of the 'presidential' candidate usually benefits in the assembly elections. In post-reform Israel, however, this does not appear to be the case. Between 1992 and 1996, despite Netanyahu's 1996 victory in the prime ministerial race, the Likud list's share of Knesset seats remained constant at roughly 27%, and Labor actually emerged as the largest parliamentary party with 28% of the seats in 1996. In 1999, while One Israel's parliamentary seat share of 22% made it the largest party in line with the victory of its prime ministerial candidate, Barak, this is a significant decline in seat share from the prior election. Clearly, voters from parties other than Likud and Labor were voting for one of the two mainstream candidates in the prime ministerial elections (an unsurprising fact, given that the Likud- and Labor-led alliances fielded the only two candidates) while casting their parliamentary ballot for their own parties.³⁰ At the same time, voters who had previously voted for Likud and Labor were abandoning their parties in the parliamentary elections. Clearly, a casualty of the reform has been the two major parties. Hazan and Rahat (2000) discuss this ballot splitting, although any discussion of the phenomenon begs the question of why a two-party system developed around the executive electoral contest.

Once again, then, the existing literature fails to explain these developments. The electoral formula governing the executive choice process, majoritarian run-off (or double-ballot), is viewed as permissive in the literature relative to other formulae such as a plurality rule. As stated earlier, Cox (1997) argues that an electoral system utilizing a majoritarian run-off electoral formula will impose an upper bound equivalent to one plus the number of candidates or party lists allowed into the second round of balloting. In this case, then, we would expect three candidates or party labels to be sustainable in equilibrium in the executive contest. Empirically, this prediction seems an underestimate, as majoritarian run-off elections often sustain even more party labels than Cox's model predicts (Shugart and Carey 1992; Lijphart 1999; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997). At any rate, we would expect to see at least a three (if not a four) party system develop around the contest for the executive. By way of contrast, a less permissive electoral system such as one utilizing a plurality formula is both theoretically and empirically predicted to

³⁰ Hazan (1999) discusses pre-election alliances formed by smaller parties with either Likud or Labor, where the strategy was for smaller parties to instruct their members to vote for either Netanyahu or Peres in the 1996 prime ministerial election and to case their Knesset ballot for their own party. Likud and Labor both focused overwhelmingly on the prime ministerial race, as they perceived that it was the only one that mattered, and encouraged just this kind of ballot splitting by the members of smaller parties.

produce perfect or close-to-perfect two-party systems, as the incentives for strategic coordination are greater under such systems. The logic underlying the position that double-ballot electoral systems will sustain a larger equilibrium number of party lists than plurality systems is that trailing candidates or lists have a strategic incentive to run in the first round; reasons for this range from demonstrating vote-garnering strength to drawing votes away from likely second-place finishers to allow a more preferred likely third-place finisher into the second round of balloting. Proposition 2 is accordingly weakened by the evidence from the Israeli case, where more strategic coordination took place than existing theories expected. (Recall that Proposition 2 predicted that the electoral system governing the executive choice procedure would account for the executive party system, all else being equal.) Existing theories cannot, in fact, explain why a perfect two-party system characterized the Israeli executive contest in 1996, 1999 and 2001.

Comparative Perspective

Proposition 3, the final proposition proposed earlier in the paper, can be tested by placing the Israeli case in comparative perspective. Recall that Proposition 3 predicted that there would be no variance in cross-national executive party systems if social cleavages, the congruence of executive and legislative elections, and executive electoral systems were all held constant. I argued earlier that a similar proposition could be derived from the existing literature with respect to cross-national variation in legislative party systems, controlling additionally for regime type (that is, presidential versus parliamentary regimes). With respect to only the executive party system for the sake of brevity, let us consider cases of other polities that utilize the same electoral system, have reasonably similar social cleavages to Israel, and at the same time operate under a different kind of political regime. I should note at this point that controlling for social cleavages across polities in the manner adopted by this paper is problematic. I am merely grossly categorizing polities as diverse, an exercise that is inherently subjective. Further analyses should operationalize the variable of social cleavages in a more replicable manner, perhaps following Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994) in utilizing ethnic heterogeneity as a proxy. Certainly, some of the variance in the executive party systems to be considered below is due to differences in social cleavages between the polities. Despite such problems with this reasonably brief comparative exercise, comparing Israel to other polities does aid the analyst in assessing the power of existing theories and may help to shed light on alternative approaches that should be considered. More in-depth cross-national comparisons can be conducted at a future date.

Perusing the literature on presidential regimes yields two polities that seem apt cases for comparison with Israel. According to the party systems literature, they can both be considered presidential as they have executives that are elected separately from their legislatures, as did Israel from 1996-2001. Both use the majoritarian run-off (double-ballot) electoral system for the selection of their executives, again as did Israel. Both are reasonably large polities that have experienced political instability if not outright civil conflict over racial (ethnic), socio-economic, and religious issues, as (yet again) has Israel. These two polities are France and Peru.³¹ At the same time, however, these two polities do not share Israel's president-parliamentary type of regime. The question is obviously whether or not these differences in regime type, which the existing literature does not take into account, will correlate with differences in the executive party systems.

First, consider the case of France, a polity that is considered by most academics to have serious social cleavages and that utilizes the majoritarian run-off (double ballot) electoral system, as mentioned above. France's political regime (the Fifth Republic), however, is classed as semi-presidential or premier-presidential. What does its executive (presidential) party system look like? This information is summarized below.

Table 6. Number of effective presidential candidates in France (Fifth Republic)

Election Year	Np
1965	3.1
1969	3.4
1974	3.1
1981	4.9
1988	4.8
1995	5.9

Statistics calculated using data from Pierce (1995).

The average effective number of presidential candidates in France over all Fifth Republic elections is 4.2, compared to the Israeli 2.0 over the three president-parliamentary regime elections. Obviously, the French executive party system sustains more candidates (party labels)

³¹ Brazil also seems a candidate for comparative analysis, but again for the sake of brevity I will confine my comparative exercise solely to France and Peru.

than the Israeli one does, despite both polities having numerous social cleavages and utilizing the same electoral system in the executive choice process. The second case to consider is that of Peru, which also utilizes a majoritarian run-off (double ballot) electoral system and has a reasonably plural society, again as mentioned above, but which operates under a pure presidential regime. It has a median effective number of presidential candidates of 3.4 (Shugart and Carey 1992, 220), a contrast yet again to the perfect two-party executive party system of the Israeli polity. These statistics are shown below in Table 7.

Table 7. Average or Median Executive Candidates, First Round

Polity	Number of Candidates
France	4.2
Peru	3.4
Israel	2.0

Clearly, Proposition 3 is not supported by the empirical evidence that results from placing the Israeli case in comparative perspective. Something must be causing both voters and elites to behave differently in the three systems, where the most strategic coordination is taking place in the Israeli executive contest and the least in the French. As noted earlier, however, some of the observed variance in the executive party systems is probably due to differences in social structures amongst the three polities. Nevertheless, the existing literature does not do a good job in explaining this cross-national variation. The logical explanatory candidate is regime type, where this political institutional variable is not simply modeled as a dichotomy between presidential and parliamentary regimes.

An Alternative Approach

How can we account for the cross-temporal developments in the Israeli legislative and executive party systems from 1996-2001? Similarly, how do we account for the kind of cross-national variance in executive party systems sketched out above? This paper has shown that existing theories of party systems fall far short of the explanatory mark. I suggested earlier in the paper that an alternative approach that took the variable of regime type seriously might offer us some explanatory leverage. That is, we need to employ a more nuanced theoretical treatment of regime

type in order to fully account for cross-temporal and cross-national variation in party systems. My proposition, which will be developed in this section, is that regimes that diffuse executive power, all else being equal, seem to provide fewer incentives for strategic behavior to both voters and elites than those that concentrate executive power. The former types of regimes thus sustain higher equilibrium numbers of candidates or party labels than do the latter. Thus, with respect to the observed developments in the Israeli party systems, the change from a parliamentary to a president-parliamentary political regime is the factor most proximately responsible. Studying the coordination problems faced by actors under this type of regime allows us to explain their behavior and its end result—the party systems—that existing theories cannot explain. This section of the paper will first outline the logic underlying my proposition and then clarify it with respect to different types of regimes; it will finally provide an account of the empirical data presented in this paper with respect to the Israeli case study.

Recall that it is the national-level coordination problem of selection of the executive that prompts the formation of cross-district strategic alliances, giving rise to national-level legislative and executive party systems. Political elites must make strategic decisions about how to contest elections— to pool resources under one party label, to maintain separate party labels but enter into a formal alliance where the alliance partners draw up a common list of candidates, or to offer other parties tacit support, for example. These strategic decisions are made with the goal of capturing the executive, whether that is done by winning a majority in the legislature and subsequently forming a government or by having one's candidate elected president. The crucial point behind this view of the political process is that the strategic decisions of both voters and political elites are in part a function of the wider institutional setting. This is especially the case for political elites, who make the first moves in the coordination game, presenting voters with a set of candidates or lists from which to choose. If a party leader's goal is to gain political power, then the strategy that he or she adopts will hinge upon how political power is constituted in his or her polity. Existing studies accept this point when they argue that there is a different set of strategic incentives facing actors in parliamentary and presidential systems; my argument is simply that the existing argument does not go far enough. Thinking solely of the electoral rules governing the executive choice process does not tell us how important it is to control the executive relative to other components of the political system; likewise, thinking solely of the overall dynamics of the game with respect to the existence or non-existence of a presidential executive also obscures this key fact. Simply put, if the president is not important, it does not matter much if voters and elites fail to coordinate in competing for the office. Thus, regime types

confront actors with different coordination problems and accordingly provide varying incentives for strategic behavior, which result in varying degrees of strategic coordination.

In addition to differences in the degree of pressure for strategic coordination, regime types may also vary in the qualitative kinds of strategic coordination that they promote. Cox 1997 argues that there are different kinds of strategic voting by voters and by extension that there are different kinds of strategic entry decisions by political elites. Most existing studies focus on seat-maximizing strategic behavior, where the goal of voters and elites is to make votes count in the allocation of legislative seats. Cox points out that “if voters [and by extension elites] look ahead to the government formation stage, and the coordination problems that arise at that state, they may face incentives to cast “portfolio-maximizing” strategic votes, intended to make votes count in the allocation of government portfolios” (1997, 272). Thus Cox discusses strategic sequencing, voting to ensure that a particular party has the first opportunity to form a government; strategic balancing, voting to take advantage of separations of power; and threshold insurance, voting to ensure that a coalition partner clears an electoral threshold (1997, 194-8). All of these forms of strategic behavior have clear correlates in the strategic maneuverings of political elites. Once again, some types of regimes may promote portfolio-maximizing strategic behavior over the seat-maximizing variant, and vice versa. The argument that this paper is making is implied in the work of Cox and others; however, while Cox comes the closest to systematizing the idea that regime type has an independent interactive effect on the party system via the strategic behavior it promotes,³² he nevertheless does not do so.

A few concrete examples may help to illuminate the point. Take as an example France, a premier- (or semi-) presidential regime. The Fifth Republic vested executive power both in the prime minister and in the president. Elections for both the legislature, from which the prime minister and his cabinet are drawn, and the president are conducted under a majoritarian, double-ballot electoral system. Party leaders and voters should ideally want to coordinate so as to capture control of both executives, a significant coordination problem, one exacerbated by France’s many social cleavages and historic pattern of party weakness. Since the Fifth Republic’s introduction, a multi-party legislative party system has co-existed with a like executive party system, but both have been characterized by strong bi-polar (left-right) competition (Broughton and Donovan 1998): alliances after the first round of balloting have informally consolidated competition into two ideological blocks. The somewhat restrictive electoral system used for both the presidential and the legislative contests combined with the

³² He does descriptively discuss how particular regimes have promoted one or more variants of portfolio-maximizing strategic behavior (1997, 194-8).

necessity to coordinate on a system-wide basis to capture the two executives provides an incentive for elites to form consolidatory strategic alliances both in and across the legislative and presidential contests. At the same time, however, the fact that executive power is divided between two centers lowers the stakes, in that if a party fails to capture one power center it can still aim for the other; this regime characteristic provides a contradictory incentive against consolidatory strategic behavior, sustaining a multi-party system of informal alliances.

Take as a second example a Latin American-style pure presidential regime with a very powerful president elected under a strong electoral system. In this system, the penalty for failing to coordinate is much greater, with so much at stake in the quest for control of the presidency. Under such a system, there should be greater pressure for strategic coordination and thus greater consolidatory pressure on the executive party system. The implications for the legislative party system seem unclear, but if the legislature is indeed very weak, then there may not be much incentive for alliances to carry over from the executive to the legislative party system. Similarly, parliamentary regimes with restrictive electoral systems that lack strong committees and other such structures that allow for a significant opposition role in policy-making also severely punish failures to coordinate in legislative contests, as the executive is drawn solely from the legislature.

Now consider a pure presidential system where the president has fewer powers, along the lines of the U.S. presidency. Under this type of regime, there should be less of a penalty for coordination failure relative to that under the more powerful presidential regime and thus less incentive for strategic coordination in both executive and legislative national-level party systems, when other variables such as the electoral system are controlled for. Likewise, consider a parliamentary regime with a permissive electoral system and committee structures that provide the opposition with a role in policy-making. Under this type of regime, the price of coordination failure is less than in parliamentary systems with restrictive electoral systems, and the incentive for strategic coordination is reduced, again controlling for other variables.

Finally, take the president-parliamentary regime type, approximated by Israel's institutional structure from 1996-2001. The party that wins the direct prime ministerial executive is given the power to form the government, regardless of its strength in the legislature. The pressure to form strategic alliances to coordinate in the contest for the prime ministership is great in this type of regime, so we would expect an even greater consolidatory pressure on the national executive party system relative to other regime types such as that of France—a pressure similar to that under powerful presidencies. The situation here for the national legislative party system is again similar to that of a powerful presidential regime.

In other words, strategic behavior is encouraged in executive contests when the regime type concentrates governing power in the executive and discouraged when the regime type diffuses it throughout a myriad of political offices and institutions. As the stakes go up, so too does the incentive for strategic behavior by both voters and elites, but particularly by the latter. Likewise, the incentives for strategic behavior in legislative contests vary with the stakes and thus with the distribution of governing power throughout the political regime.

Explaining the cross-national variation in the executive party systems of Israel, France, and Peru observed in the prior section now becomes possible. According to Shugart and Carey's coding of presidential powers, Peru has a moderately powerful to weak president; by the logic sketched out above, we would not expect as much strategic behavior in the executive contest of such a regime relative to that in the Israeli regime. In Peru, alternative centers of political power exist in the form of the legislature and the judiciary, so the price paid by groups failing to capture the presidency is not too great. By the same logic, the French premier-presidential regime provides actors with less incentive for strategic behavior relative to both the Israeli and the Peruvian cases; accordingly, voters do not practice as much strategic voting and elites do not enter into as many alliances in the French executive (presidential) contest. Thus, the fact that the French and Peruvian regimes diffuse executive power amongst several political institutions while the Israeli regime concentrates it in one office would lead us to expect greater strategic behavior in the Israeli executive contest, the result of which is evidenced by both elite and voter coordination around two party labels in the Israeli case and less coordination around multiple party labels in the French and Peruvian cases. While not comprehensively testing the paper's hypothesis, which would require a cross-national statistical analysis, this comparative data does lend it support.

What about the cross-temporal developments in the Israeli executive and legislative party systems? The proposition sketched out above, that strategic coordination varies with regime type, once again allows us to account for the developments that the existing literature could not explain. Let us re-consider the series of coordination problems faced by political elites and voters in the Israeli polity. Israel's legislature and later its separate executive were (and still are, in the former case) both elected in one nation-wide district, so coordination takes place within the district; elites, in particular, do not have to coordinate cross-district linkages. But coordination is still necessary in order to gain control of the executive. Under the pre-1996 parliamentary regime, where the executive (the prime minister and his or her cabinet) was drawn from the legislature, the coordination problem essentially involved the formation of formal or tacit alliances at the elite level that enabled a set of parties to control a majority of legislative seats.

Incentives for strategic behavior certainly existed in the pre-reform Israeli polity: such incentives exist in all political regimes whenever political power is at stake. Yet under this type of regime and electoral system, neither voters nor elites faced severe coordination problems where they would pay a steep price for a failure to coordinate. Voters, for example, did not much have to worry about wasting their votes due to the permissiveness of the electoral system combined with the fact that executive emerged from the legislature that they elected. Thus, the pre-reform Israeli polity was characterized by a multi-party system where informal and often fleeting alliances underpinned many executive coalitions.

Under the 1996-2001 president-parliamentary regime, voters and elites were faced with a different set of strategic incentives. The executive was now directly elected, sometimes concurrently with the legislature and other times not, and controlling this executive was the key to political power. Political elites accordingly faced a severe coordination dilemma: failure to coordinate in the executive contest meant an almost sure exclusion from government and thus from policy-making influence, particularly for members of the two major parties. The development of a two-party system around the executive contest becomes explicable only when we think about political institutions more generally: the electoral system governing the executive choice procedure taken together with the structure of political power, i.e. the regime type. The president-parliamentary regime type necessitated tight coordination in the contest for the executive. Voters did not want to waste their votes; political elites knew that they had to coordinate so as to avoid being subject to strategic desertion by voters looking to make their votes count. Thus, party leaders engaged in strategic bargaining to coordinate behind one of the two major parties, the only two that had a chance to win a majority—Likud and Labor. Smaller parties agreed not to run their own candidates and instead to throw their support to either Labor or Likud; elites encouraged voters traditionally supporting other parties to vote for the Labor or Likud candidate in the prime ministerial race and to then vote for their most preferred party in the legislative race, as discussed earlier in the paper. The end result of the great pressure for strategic coordination exerted on voters and elites alike in the executive choice process under the president-parliamentary regime was a pure two-party system at the executive level.

Turning to the legislative party system, much of the academic literature discussed earlier holds that presidentialism reduces legislative fragmentation; the reformers in Israel took this tack when they argued that the introduction of a ‘president’ would have a consolidatory effect on the legislative party system. Clearly these predictions were not borne out in the Israeli case. The problem with these theories, as argued throughout this paper, is that they merely dichotomize regime types into presidential versus parliamentary bundles of institutions, therefore failing to

account for the way in which political power is distributed within the regime. Certainly, political power in the Israeli president-parliamentary regime was constituted differently than in conventional presidential regimes. Exclusive power to form the government was vested in the prime minister, so intense strategic behavior around its capture was promoted by the fact that power-minded parties could not exercise maximal influence without it. While it is true that the prime minister could not govern alone, the legislature had little to no independent governing power, unlike in conventional presidential regimes. The Israeli regime established a series of coordination problems confronting voters and elites whereby maximal strategic behavior was promoted in the executive contest (placing one's most preferred viable candidate in the prime minister's office), but little strategic behavior was promoted in the legislative contest. Voters did not fear wasting their votes; likewise, political elites saw little reason to coordinate around particular party labels in the Knesset elections, i.e. to form alliances and engage in strategic withdrawal. Voters no doubt reasoned that having done their best to ensure that their most preferred political *bloc* (viable party) controlled the composition of the government, their interests were then best furthered by supporting the party in the legislative contest that they sincerely preferred, with which the less preferred governing party would then have to deal. In fact, we observe voters behaving in just this manner in the 1996 and 1999 Knesset elections: voters who had supported Labor and Likud in past legislative elections for strategic reasons, that doing so denied a less-preferred alternative the chance to form the government, had in 1996 and 1999 cast this strategic vote in the prime ministerial election and were accordingly freed to vote sincerely for the legislature. In sum, the permissive electoral system combined with structure of political power under the new regime to provide few incentives for strategic behavior in the legislative elections. Consequently, voters and elites both behaved less strategically in the 1996 and 1999 legislative contests, resulting in legislative party system fragmentation under the president-parliamentary regime.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that comparative politics theories of party systems need to pay more attention to political regimes; party systems cannot only be explained as functions of electoral systems, social cleavages, and the presence or lack of a separately elected (presidential) executive. Rather, political regimes structure the coordination problems that actors face in democratic polities: incentives for strategic behavior vary with the complexity of the coordination dilemma and the penalties imposed should actors fail to coordinate in the quest for

political power. Different regimes may also encourage qualitatively different kinds of strategic behavior, although the paper has not provided much in the way of hypotheses for or evidence in support of this proposition. Existing theories do recognize that regime type matters. However, they merely introduce an effectively dichotomous variable with a presidential and a parliamentary dimension into their models. Through an analysis of Israel's experience with a unique president-parliamentary political regime from 1996-2001, this paper demonstrated that such a crude presidential-parliamentary dichotomy does not provide sufficient explanatory leverage to account for the observed variation in the strategic incentives confronting actors, their subsequent behavior, and the resulting party systems. Rather, the specific type of political regime employed in Israel explains the cross-national and cross-temporal variation in the executive and legislative party systems uncovered by the case study. We need to develop a more nuanced typology of political regimes and to integrate this variable into our existing models for comprehensive testing. I have suggested in this paper that regimes that diffuse executive power seem to provide fewer incentives for strategic behavior, all else being equal, and thus to sustain higher equilibrium numbers of candidates or party labels than those that concentrate executive power. This paper has not comprehensively tested my proposition; doing so is beyond its scope. Fleshing out an integrated theory of party systems and testing it via a cross-national statistical analysis is a task for future work.

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