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Electoral Accountability and the Variety of Democratic Regimes

TIMOTHY HELLWIG AND DAVID SAMUELS*

Do voters reward or punish incumbents in different democratic regimes similarly for retrospective performance? Despite debates on the merits of different regimes, little research has investigated the implications of constitutional design on voters' ability to hold politicians to accounts. This article shows that regime type determines the way and extent to which elections enable voters to reward or sanction incumbents. These regime effects are separate from and conceptually prior to factors previously identified in the literature on comparative economic voting. Analysis of elections from seventy-five countries reveals that, all else equal, voters have greater potential to hold incumbents to accounts under the separation of powers than under parliamentarism. Moreover, variables particular to separation of powers systems – the electoral cycle in pure presidential systems and instances of cohabitation in semi-presidential systems – affect the relative impact of the attribution of responsibility. The results contribute to ongoing debates about the relative advantages of different constitutional formats for democratic performance.

The degree to which voters can hold elected officials to account is a central concern for democratic theory. Most empirical research on electoral accountability has explored a relatively limited set of established democracies, nearly all of which have parliamentary forms of government. However, the 'Third Wave' of democratization has dramatically increased the variety among the world's democratic systems.[1] As of 2002, of the seventy-five democracies with a population greater than one million, thirty-one were parliamentary, while twenty-five were presidential and nineteen were semi-presidential. This relatively new institutional diversity pushes us to re-examine enduring questions about democratic performance: how and to what extent does this variety affect voters' ability to hold governments accountable at the polls? Do particular institutional dynamics reduce or enhance the prospects for electoral accountability? More specifically, do voters reward or punish incumbent governments, presidents and legislators in parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems similarly for retrospective performance, and to the same degree?

Little research has explored this question across the world's democracies. This is surprising, for two reasons. First, controversy persists about the relative merits of different democratic regimes. Some of our most prominent scholars disparage presidentialism: for example, Lijphart argues that parliamentarism is superior in terms of the 'quality of

* Department of Political Science, University of Houston; and Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota. The authors wish to thank Jason Arnold, Kanchan Chandra, Bill Clark, Paul Collins, Ray Duch, John Freeman, Barbara Geddes, Karen Remmer, Jason Roberts, Tom Rudolph, Rein Taagepera, the participants in the MIT Parties and Elections Reading Group and the *Journal*'s anonymous reviewers for comments, and the Graduate Research Partnership Program at the University of Minnesota's College of Liberal Arts for research funding. A version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C. 2005. Statistical analyses are performed using STATA 9.0.

[1] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

democracy and democratic representation',[2] while Linz suggests that presidentialism's 'dual democratic legitimacies' confuses voters and that presidential autonomy inhibits accountability.[3] In contrast, Persson, Roland and Tabellini suggest that presidentialism is superior in terms of fostering accountability.[4] By institutionalizing conflicts of interest between branches of government, they suggest that presidentialism encourages the revelation of information, thus aiding voters' efforts to discern responsibility for policy. And Shugart and Carey assert that the separation of powers could be superior because it offers voters the opportunity to hold politicians in different branches of government accountable for different things, which is impossible under parliamentarism.[5]

Secondly, a vast literature examines the relationship between economic performance and elections. Recent comparative research has focused on how political institutions and party-system configurations mediate the economy–vote relationship. Powell and Whitten have argued that voters' propensity to reward or punish incumbents depends on the way political context obscures the 'clarity of political responsibility'.[6] Samuels recently considered the workings of accountability relationships within presidential regimes.[7] However, studies of the attribution of responsibility have yet to consider how electoral accountability operates *across* different democratic constitutional regimes.[8] Scholars have yet to explore – either theoretically or empirically – the relative advantages of different democratic regimes for citizen control over policy makers at the polls.

We provide the first head-to-head comparison of electoral accountability across the world's democracies. We argue that the 'clarity of responsibility' cannot explain hypothesized or observed accountability relationships in presidential and semi-presidential systems. We then provide a way to overcome this theoretical shortcoming, through a broader conception of political context. Drawing on this argument we then introduce a set of hypotheses and test them with aggregate data from 560 elections held in seventy-five countries – virtually every election in every country classified as democratic since 1978. Building on previous research on how political context shapes voters' evaluations of retrospective government performance, this article thus provides a framework for understanding accountability in democratic regimes around the world. In doing so, our

[2] Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 303.

[3] Juan J. Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, 1 (1990), 51–69; Linz, 'Presidential versus Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?' in Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy, Volume 2: The Case of Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins, 1994), pp. 3–90. See also Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the US Constitution?* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003); Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism', *World Politics*, 46 (1993), 1–22.

[4] Torsten Persson, Gérard Roland and Guido Tabellini, 'Separation of Powers and Political Accountability', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112 (1997), 1163–203.

[5] Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[6] G. Bingham Powell Jr and Guy D. Whitten, 'A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context', *American Journal of Political Science*, 37 (1993), 391–414.

[7] David Samuels, 'Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy in Comparative Perspective', *American Political Science Review*, 98 (2004), 425–36.

[8] Cheibub and Przeworski provide a partial exception, although they define accountability differently, focusing on incumbents' 'survival in office'. José Antonio Cheibub and Adam Przeworski, 'Democracy, Elections, and Accountability for Economic Outcomes', in Adam Przeworski, Susan Stokes and Bernard Manin, eds, *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* (New York: Cambridge, 1999), pp. 222–50.

findings illuminate the limits of explanations that rest on accepted understandings of the clarity of government responsibility and contribute to ongoing debates about the relative advantages of different constitutional formats for democratic performance.

WHAT DETERMINES ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE ECONOMY?

What determines electoral accountability? This question lies at the heart of political representation and democratic responsiveness. Answers to this question are often framed in terms of reward–punishment theories of retrospective voting: in good times voters reward the incumbent, and when conditions take a turn for the worse voters punish the incumbent. Empirical analyses find with great regularity that 'when economic conditions are bad, citizens vote against the ruling party'.[9]

Comparative research, however, discovered that the strength of the ties of accountability varies widely across democratic systems.[10] Motivated by this observation, Powell and Whitten investigated the extent to which political context affects how electorates assign responsibility for good or bad outcomes.[11] They created an index of political variables, labelled the 'clarity of responsibility', and found that voters reward or punish the incumbent party for the state of the economy if the clarity of responsibility is high, but not if it is low. Subsequent work has extended, formalized and qualified Powell and Whitten's findings.[12]

The great insight from this research programme is its identification of institutional variables that affect voters' capacity to assign responsibility for policy outcomes. The voter's decision is made easier, for example, when a single party controls the executive and/or legislative branches of government. Conversely, decision making at the polls is considerably more difficult when multiple parties share control of executive and legislative powers, as is the case of coalition or minority government. Existing research, however, has been largely limited to West European parliamentary systems and thus has yet to explore the relationship between political context, policy outcomes and the vote across the full range of contemporary democratic systems. We can only venture that the reason for this is related to the availability of economic and political data from established Western democracies, most of which are pure parliamentary systems.[13] Yet even when scholars

[9] Michael S. Lewis-Beck. 'Introduction', in Helmut Norpoth, Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Jean-Dominique Lafay, eds, *Economics and Politics: The Calculus of Support* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

[10] Martin Paldam, 'How Robust is the Vote Function? A Study of Seventeen Nations over Four Decades', in Norpoth *et al.*, eds, *Economics and Politics,* pp. 9–31.

[11] Powell and Whitten, 'A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting'.

[12] Cameron D. Anderson, 'Economic Voting and Multi-level Governance', *American Journal of Political Science*, 50 (2006), forthcoming; Christopher Anderson, 'Economic Voting and Political Context: A Comparative Perspective', *Electoral Studies*, 19 (2000), 151–70; Raymond M. Duch and Randy Stevenson, 'Voting in Context: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition the Economic Vote' (unpublished, University of Houston and Rice University); Richard Nadeau, Richard Niemi and Antoine Yoshinaka, 'A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context across Time and Nations', *Electoral Studies*, 21 (2002), 403–23; Terry R. Royed, Kevin M. Leyden and Stephen A. Borrelli, 'Is "Clarity of Responsibility" Important for Economic Voting? Revisiting Powell and Whitten's Hypothesis', *British Journal of Political Science*, 30 (2000), 669–98; Guy D. Whitten and Harvey D. Palmer, 'Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting', *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 49–67.

[13] For example, in their expanded analysis of the Powell–Whitten hypothesis, Whitten and Palmer acknowledge that their tests are 'constrained … by the limited amount of variation in our data set of 142 elections.' Whitten and Palmer, 'Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting', p. 56.

include separation-of-powers systems in their analyses they stop short of exploring the potential differences between executive and legislative elections.[14]

We suggest that there are good theoretical reasons to believe that accountability dynamics differ across parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems. Scholars have focused on how institutional and partisan arrangements obscure voters' *ability to assign* responsibility for policy outcomes. However, a second dimension of accountability exists that must be distinguished from this notion of the clarity of responsibility. One must separate voters' ability to *assign* responsibility from their *ability to use the vote to act on the basis of that assignment*.[15] Voters' ability to assign responsibility aside, democratic systems offer voters different opportunities to sanction or reward incumbent politicians. As we discuss below, the variables associated with the clarity of responsibility as conceived by Powell and Whitten and others cannot account for this second dimension of accountability.

Three key institutional factors differentiate separation-of-powers systems (presidentialism and semi-presidentialism) from parliamentary systems along this second dimension and thus generate different theoretical expectations about the nature of accountability relationships across all democratic regimes. These factors include provision for separate executive and legislative elections, variation in the electoral cycle for executive and legislative elections and the possibility of cohabitation in semi-presidential systems. We show that each of these factors affects electoral accountability, but in a conceptually distinct way from the clarity of responsibility. In doing so, this study extends theoretical and empirical research on the dynamics of electoral accountability across the full range of the world's democracies and generates implications for debates about the virtues and vices attached to different democratic regimes.

ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE VARIETY OF DEMOCRATIC REGIMES

As instruments of citizen control over politicians, elections are imperfect tools. Yet electoral accountability is perhaps the best-known and simplest understanding of democratic accountability. Understood as the voters' capacity to reward or sanction incumbents, accountability depends on two sets of conditions: voters' ability to assign responsibility for performance outcomes to incumbents and voters' ability to act upon those assignments of responsibility. If voters know who is responsible but cannot act upon that attribution, accountability is impossible. In this section we identify components

[14] When examining the relationship between clarity of responsibility and accountability in the US case, Powell includes only concurrent legislative elections, thus excluding half of all legislative elections and all executive elections. See G. Bingham Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000). Tucker and Duch and Stevenson compare the economic vote across different regimes, but only across a small number of countries. See Joshua A. Tucker, *Regional Economic Voting: Russia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Russia, 1990–99* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming); Duch and Stevenson, *Voting in Context.* A few other studies include greater institutional diversity, but such variance is not the focus of their investigations and is not addressed theoretically or empirically. Cf. Alexander C. Pacek and Benjamin Radcliff, 'The Political Economy of Competitive Elections in the Developing World', *American Journal of Political Science*, 39 (1995), 745–59; Sam Wilkin, Brandon Haller and Helmut Norpoth, 'From Argentina to Zambia: A World-Wide Test of Economic Voting', *Electoral Studies*, 16 (1997), 301–16. Samuels explores only presidential systems (Samuels, 'Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy').

[15] See, for example, Thomas J. Rudolph, 'Who's Responsible for the Economy? The Formation and Consequences of Responsibility Attributions', *American Journal of Political Science,* 47 (2004), 698–713.

of these conditions and then use them to motivate our hypotheses about attributions of responsibility across the world's democratic regimes.

The first of these conditions is well established in the literature: electoral accountability is shaped by whether voters' can differentiate between political actors and, accordingly, *assign* policy responsibility. Powell and Whitten and others identify four factors assumed to affect this ability: majority/minority status of the government, party cohesion, opposition committee chairs and opposition control of upper chambers in systems with strong bicameralism. More recent work by Powell shows that government majority status captures most of the variance in voters' ability to assign responsibility: the assignment of responsibility is enhanced when a single party has majority control the executive and diminished under conditions of minority control or when multiple parties share executive control.[16]

Apart from voters' ability to assign responsibility for policy, elections in different political systems vary in the extent to which they give voters the opportunity to act upon their judgements. This is the second – and heretofore neglected – set of factors that conditions the attribution of responsibility. Political context may clearly indicate whom voters *should* hold accountable for policy outcomes, yet democratic accountability may be compromised if the constitutional structure limits voters' *ability* to reward or sanction policy makers on the basis of that assignment. Clarity of responsibility notwithstanding, the variety of the world's constitutional designs suggests that in some political systems elections provide better opportunities to hold policy makers to account than others.

We identify three factors that affect voters' ability to act upon their assignments of responsibility. The first of these is the existence of separate executive and legislative elections, as under presidential and semi-presidential constitutions. There is good theoretical reason to believe accountability is stronger in systems where power is separated, all else equal.[17] This hypothesized difference does not follow from the simple fact that directly-elected presidents are individuals and are thus 'easy' targets for voters to consider. Rather, variation in the extent of accountability derives from the fundamental institutional differences between democratic regimes: the separation of origin and survival of branches of government.[18]

In separation of powers systems, voters elect both the legislative and executive branches of government directly. In pure presidential systems voters elect both branches for fixed terms, while in semi-presidential systems only the president is elected for a fixed term. In contrast, a defining feature of parliamentary government is that the executive serves at the pleasure of the legislature – members of parliament, not voters, select the executive and can hold it to account between regularly scheduled elections. The dependence of the executive on a legislative majority and the absence of fixed terms that characterize parliamentarism affect electoral accountability. As Cheibub and Przeworski note, almost half of all cases of prime ministerial turnover in parliamentary systems result from factors other than elections: members of parliament (MPs) often sanction the executive themselves between scheduled elections.[19] For example, no-confidence procedures permit either

[16] Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*.

[17] Our theoretical expectation differs from Persson *et al*., who focus on competition between politicians in different branches of government but ignore the potential that collusion by these same politicians could cancel out the effects of competition (Persson *et al*., 'Separation of Powers and Political Accountability').

[18] Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*; Robert Elgie, 'The Politics of Semi-Presidentialism', in Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1–21.

[19] Cheibub and Przeworski, 'Democracy, Elections, and Accountability for Economic Outcomes', pp. 232–3.

government or opposition MPs to remove the government, with no consideration of voters' preferences. By removing those perceived responsible for policy outcomes, MPs can limit voters' ability to reward or, more likely, to sanction members of the government, *even if the attribution of responsibility is clear.*

The second factor affecting the nature of accountability is variation in the cycle of national elections. The existence of separate executive and legislative elections creates opportunities for concurrent and non-concurrent elections, an impossibility in pure parliamentary systems. The electoral cycle may affect the relative clarity of responsibility indirectly through its direct effect on party-system fragmentation,[20] but it also has a more direct effect. In systems with separate executive and legislative elections, concurrence should enhance and non-concurrence should attenuate electoral accountability. Concurrence not only sharpens the focus on the entire government's performance, it also gives voters who believe both branches are co-responsible for policy performance the ability to hold both branches to accounts.[21] In contrast, non-concurrence draws attention to candidates' personal qualities (in the case of executive elections) or local issues (in the case of legislative elections), and takes away voters' ability to cast a vote on overall government performance.

The third factor that affects voters' ability to act on their attribution of policy responsibility is the possibility of cohabitation, a phenomenon unique to semi-presidentialism. Cohabitation occurs when the president and prime minister come from different parties or party coalitions. Cohabitation is not the same as minority government under parliamentarism or divided government under pure presidentialism, which obscure the clarity of responsibility.[22] Minority government under pure parliamentarism occurs when the prime minister (PM) lacks a parliamentary majority. Cohabitation can occur, however, when the PM has a majority. Similarly, divided government under pure presidentialism occurs when the president lacks a legislative majority. However, in pure presidentialism the president remains head of government regardless of whether he or she has a legislative majority.

Cohabitation does not obscure responsibility for policy outcomes, it switches – or displaces – responsibility from one incumbent to another. Compared to pure presidentialism, executive power under semi-presidentialism depends far more on whether or not the president controls a legislative majority.[23] When the president and the PM are from the same party or coalition, the president is the effective head of government, and voters should reward or punish both the president and his party, which also happens to be the prime minister's party. Under cohabitation, in contrast, the PM is the effective head of government and voters should transfer retrospective performance evaluations onto the prime minister and his or her party only, ignoring the president's party.

These expectations are inconsistent with a hypothesis that cohabitation 'obscures' responsibility, and are consistent with a hypothesis that implies that voters in semi-presidential regimes are sophisticated enough to recognize that elections provide them with different opportunities to hold different components of the political executive

[20] Matthew S. Shugart, 'The Electoral Cycle and Institutional Sources of Divided Presidential Government', *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), 327–43.

[21] Samuels, 'Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy in Comparative Perspective'.

[22] Roy Pierce, 'The Executive Divided Against Itself: Cohabitation in France, 1986–1988', *Governance*, 4 (1991), 270–94.

[23] Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*; Elgie, 'The Politics of Semi-Presidentialism'.

to accounts.[24] In short, independently of how the clarity of responsibility facilitates the assignment of credit or blame to the incumbent, divided or unified control of the executive in semi-presidential systems give voters distinct opportunities to hold incumbent politicians to account.

By considering the effects of the separation of powers, the electoral cycle and cohabitation, our approach provides a broader conception of political context to explain electoral accountability across different democratic regimes than existing research. Voters' capacity to reward or sanction incumbents is conditional on two dimensions: (1) their capacity to assign responsibility for outcomes to incumbents and (2) their ability to act upon their attribution of responsibility. Our argument, then, predicts how electoral accountability varies according to these two dimensions. The empirical analyses that follow are designed to assess the following hypotheses:

(1) Electoral accountability for the economy is stronger in separation of powers systems than in pure parliamentary systems, *ceteris paribus.*
(2) In separation of powers systems, electoral accountability is relatively greater in executive as compared to legislative elections, *ceteris paribus.*
(3) In pure presidential systems, electoral accountability is conditional on the electoral cycle: economic voting is stronger under concurrence and weaker under non-concurrence.
(4) In semi-presidential systems, electoral accountability is conditional on the composition of the executive: under unified government, voters assign responsibility to the president and his party and, under cohabitation, voters assign responsibility to the prime minister's party but not to the president or his party.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

We explore accountability in every national-level executive and legislative election from 1975 – the start of the 'Third Wave' of democratization – to 2002 in every country with a population of one million or more that received a democracy rating of $+6$ or better on Polity IV's ranking of democratic quality (the range is -10 to $+10$):[25] 562 elections from seventy-five countries fit these criteria. The number of cases we include is several times larger than existing comparative research on electoral accountability.

[24] This hypothesis is derived from analyses of voting behaviour in the most-studied semi-presidential case, France. Lewis-Beck suggests that French presidents' executive powers are 'extensive and unchallenged' under unified rule but that under cohabitation the prime minister 'assert[s] the authority of his office over the national economy'. Voters should therefore reward or punish the relevant 'political economic incumbent'. The political economic incumbent in pure presidentialism is always the president and his or her party, and in parliamentarism it is always the PM. However, in semi-presidentialism the political-economic incumbent could be either the president and his or her party or the PM and his or her party, depending on whose party or coalition controls the parliamentary majority. Lewis-Beck empirically confirmed that 'cohabitation encourages the public perception that the Prime Minister directs the national economy', whereas under unified government voters blame or reward the president (see Michael Lewis-Beck, 'Who's the Chef? Economic Voting under a Dual Executive', *European Journal of Political Research*, 31 (1997), 315–25.

[25] In the few cases where Polity IV does not rank a country, we included a case if it ranked 3.5 or lower on Freedom House's average democratic quality score, which ranges from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free).

Our dependent variable, *Incumbent Vote*, is the percentage of votes received by the incumbent head of government's party.[26] To control for past election outcomes we include the incumbent party's percentage of the vote in the previous election (*Previous Vote*). Including *Previous Vote* requires us to omit each country's initial election from regression analysis. Thus, the number of cases we explore statistically is 442: 331 legislative/parliamentary elections (407 elections minus one from each of the seventy-five countries in the sample) and 111 executive elections (153 elections minus one from forty-two countries that held direct presidential elections. Of these, we dropped sixteen cases (3.6 per cent). See Appendix I for the elections included for each country, the country's political regime and information on missing cases. Appendix II provides information on data sources for election results.

We distinguish between regimes along the following lines: in presidential systems both branches of government are directly elected and the head of government is not accountable to the legislature.[27] Scholars dispute the definition of semi-presidentialism,[28] so we adopt the simplest and broadest definition: both branches of government are directly elected, but the head of government (the prime minister) is accountable to the legislature.[29] Since our focus is on the accountability relationship between voters and elected officials, for purposes of this article we define parliamentary systems as those in which no directly elected executive exists.

Scholars of economic voting typically employ one of the following variables as the indicator of economic performance: growth in gross domestic product (GDP), inflation or unemployment. Only information on GDP is available for our sample of seventy-five countries, so we employ the percentage change in real per capita GDP.[30] We use GDP change in year '$t-1$' if the election was held in the first six months of the year, and the change in year 't' if the election was held later in the year.[31] We call this variable *Economy*. If the economy matters, this variable should have a positive and significant coefficient.

To contrast the impact of electoral accountability for the economy in separation of powers systems versus parliamentary systems we explored the impact of *Concurrence* and *Cohabitation*. *Concurrence* applies to pure presidential regimes only and indicates whether or not the executive and legislative elections occurred simultaneously.[32] *Cohabitation* occurs only in semi-presidential systems and indicates when the president and prime minister come from different parties that are also not in coalition with each other.

[26] For executive elections we use results from the first or only round of elections. We also ran analyses using the change in incumbent vote in election t from election $t-1$. Results do not change.

[27] Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*.

[28] Elgie, 'The Politics of Semi-Presidentialism'; Steven D. Roper, 'Are All Semipresidential Regimes the Same? A Comparison of Premier-Presidential Regimes', *Comparative Politics*, 34 (2002), 253–73.

[29] Alan Siaroff, 'Comparative Presidencies: The Inadequacy of the Presidential, Semi-Presidential and Parliamentary Distinction', *European Journal of Political Research*, 42 (2003), 287–312.

[30] World Bank, 'World Development Indicators' [CD-ROM] (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2004). Even without data constraints, we would have reservations about using alternative measures for economic performance. Unemployment figures from less-developed economies have been found to be unreliable. See Pierre-Richard Agénor and Peter J. Montiel, *Development Macroeconomics*, 2nd edn (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). And expectations about the impact of inflation are far less clear than for that of GDP growth, because it is not obvious whether voters should respond to the level or change in the inflation rate.

[31] Pacek and Radcliff, 'The Political Economy of Competitive Elections in the Developing World'. Quarterly figures would be preferable but are unavailable for most countries in the sample.

[32] We do not explore the effects of concurrence in semi-presidential regimes due to its rarity. In our dataset there are a total of only ten concurrent elections in semi-presidential systems (five executive and five legislative).

To relate our study with previous research, we also employ a measure of *Clarity of Responsibility* applicable to all cases. Following Powell's most recent discussion of the concept, we measure clarity of responsibility in terms of the majority status of the incumbent government at the time of the election.[33] Elections in which a single party controls the executive and/or legislature suggest the clearest degree of responsibility and accordingly are coded as 'high clarity'. All other elections are coded as 'low clarity'.[34] Clarity of responsibility conditions the expectations for our four main hypotheses. Following Powell and Whitten and Samuels, we expect *Clarity of Responsibility* to mediate economic voting in parliamentary elections and legislative elections in separation of powers systems, but to have no such effect on executive elections in separation of powers systems.[35]

Finally, the models include a set of controls. In presidential and semi-presidential systems we include a dummy variable for whether the incumbent president was running for re-election (*Re-election*). This variable should return a positive coefficient because incumbents running again have advantages in terms of recognition and organization. Consequently, they (or their party, in the case of legislative elections, due to potential coat-tail effects) should receive a higher vote percentage. To account for differences associated with election in new and mature democracies, we include *Age of Democracy* equal to the election year minus the year in which the country first scores + 6 or above on Polity IV. To the extent that more mature democracies exhibit less electoral volatility, we expect the coefficient on this variable to be positively signed. To account for the declining marginal impact of experience with democracy, we also include *Age of Democracy* squared with the expectation that this non-linear term will carry a negative coefficient. Additional control variables were examined, including the effective number of legislative parties, electoral rules and presidential powers, but those variables did not substantively influence the results. Measures to capture differences in income and 'level' of democracy were excluded due to collinearity with *Age of Democracy*.[36] We also tested for region-specific effects on electoral volatility by interacting regional dummies with *Previous Vote* and found no effects.

[33] Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Representation*, pp. 50–8. Cross-national studies of economic voting have also included measures of party cohesion, opposition control of committee chairs and bicameral opposition. We do not do so because for most of the countries in our dataset no data exist on party cohesion or opposition committee chairs, and because in preliminary analyses we found that bicameral opposition did not affect our results. More importantly, Powell has found that with the possible exception of party cohesion (which has proven difficult to measure cross-nationally), government majority status captures most of the variance in clarity of responsibility effects (see Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Representation*, pp. 64–7).

[34] We initially adopted a three-category measure of the clarity of responsibility, separating elections in which the incumbent party leads a majority coalition ('mixed' clarity) from those where the incumbent head of government's party heads a minority government, either alone or in coalition ('low' clarity). However, analyses revealed no substantive differences between mixed and low clarity elections.

[35] Powell and Whitten, 'A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting'; Samuels, 'Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy in Comparative Perspective'.

[36] Bivariate correlations between age of democracy, level of democracy and national income are all above 0.6. Models have been estimated that substitute level of democracy or national income for age of democracy and they do not differ substantially from what we report below. To address concerns about variance in the distribution of powers of directly-elected executives across countries, we tested for the impact of presidential powers using a measure developed by Alan Siaroff. Including this variable did not affect the results we report below. See Siaroff, 'Comparative Presidencies'.

ANALYSIS

Table 1 explores the impact of the *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* in *all* elections, differentiating cases according to the degree of *Clarity of Responsibility*. To control for potential heteroscedasticity within country-groups, all models are estimated with Huber–White robust standard errors clustered according to country.[37] Findings appear to confirm recent research, but for a far broader sample of cases: the economy affects election results, but does so consistently only when *Clarity of Responsibility* is high. *Previous Vote* performs as in previous research: past levels of incumbent support have a greater impact on current incumbent vote shares when clarity is low compared to when clarity is high.[38] These findings, however, beg our main question: do voters in different democratic regimes reward or punish incumbent presidents, legislators and prime ministers similarly for retrospective performance?

TABLE 1 *Electoral Accountability and Clarity of Responsibility*

Independent variable	High clarity elections	Low clarity elections
Previous Vote	0.45**	0.71**
	(0.18)	(0.06)
Economy	0.55*	0.28
	(0.38)	(0.28)
Re-election	7.96*	6.31**
	(4.66)	(2.08)
Age of Democracy	0.44**	0.02
	(0.18)	(0.09)
Age of Democracy^2	− 0.005**	0.00
	(0.002)	(0.001)
Constant	13.60	5.19*
	(9.13)	(2.88)
R^2	0.29	0.52
F-statistic of model fit	4.90**	46.54**
N	108	318

Note: Dependent variable is the percentage vote for president's party for elections in presidential and semi-presidential regimes and for prime minister's party for elections in parliamentary regimes. Cells report OLS parameter estimates with Huber–White standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.10$ (two-tailed test).

[37] While estimating linear interactive models using OLS produces estimates that are unbiased and consistent, standard errors may be inaccurate when researchers fail to account for the common error components within units, in our case, countries. The Huber–White standard errors clustered within country-units are appropriate for datasets where the number of observations exceeds the number of non-missing within-panel time periods. The errors are robust to any type of error correlation within each country-group and assume only that observations are independent across country-groups. Furthermore, two characteristics of our data suggest against estimating models using procedures developed specifically for pooled time-series cross-sectional data. First, within-country series are non-continuous and contain very few years in common across countries. Secondly, in many instances a country experienced more than one national-level election within the year. We have no theoretical reason to assume the presence of serial or cross-unit correlation of errors.

[38] Whitten and Palmer, 'Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting'.

Cross-regime Comparison I: Parliamentarism vs. Presidentialism

To test our hypotheses on the relative influence of constitutional regimes on electoral accountability, we first compare elections in parliamentary systems against elections in pure presidential systems (in all regressions that follow, parliamentary elections are the baseline category). To obtain estimates of the effect of economic performance on incumbent fortunes we employ a series of interaction terms, multiplying *Economy* with one or more contextual variables. The models in Figure 1 progressively test our hypotheses as regards presidentialism. Cells report coefficients and standard errors for the effect of a 1 per cent change in GDP per capita on the percentage of votes received by the incumbent *conditional* on the particular regime, institutional and political characteristics.[39] The figure is akin to an inverted 'results tree' in that coefficients and standard errors report the impact of *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* only for cases that satisfy all conditions down a given branch of the tree.[40] We repeat the procedure for semi-presidentialism below in Figure 2. The full models used to produce these conditional coefficients and standard errors – including the influence of control variables and estimates of model fit – are relegated to Appendix Tables A1, A2 and A3.

Model 1a assesses whether retrospective accountability varies between presidential and parliamentary systems, *ceteris paribus*, thereby testing Hypothesis 1. No other political–contextual variables are included. The results confirm that, all else equal, electoral accountability for the economy is stronger in systems where powers are separated than in pure parliamentary systems: in presidential systems, a 1 per cent increase in economic growth in the period before the election produces a rise in the incumbent's vote by three-quarters of a point. In parliamentary systems the influence of *Economy* is considerably smaller and is imprecisely estimated.

Model 1a is merely a starting point for our comparison. Model 1b controls for the difference between executive and legislative elections in pure presidential systems, comparing both of those types of elections against parliamentary elections. Within presidential systems we observe greater accountability for the economy in executive relative to legislative elections, thereby supporting our second hypothesis. For example, an annual per capita growth rate of 3 per cent increases the vote share for the incumbent head of government's party by over 3.5 per cent in presidential elections but only by 1.5 per cent in legislative elections. Moreover, parameter estimates for both types of

[39] Models are multiplicative interaction regression equations of the general form $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + \beta_3 XZ + \varepsilon$ where Y is *Incumbent Vote*, X is *Economy* and Z is a dichotomous variable that equals 1 when the required contextual condition is met and 0 otherwise. The conditional effect of X on Y is then $\partial Y/\partial X = \beta_1 + \beta_3 Z$ with standard error

$$\sigma_{\frac{\partial Y}{\partial X}} = \sqrt{\text{var}\,(\beta_1) + Z^2\,\text{var}\,(\beta_3) + 2Z\,\text{cov}\,(\beta_1\beta_3)}.$$

When $Z = 0$ the effect of one unit change in X on Y simplifies toβ_1 with standard error $\sqrt{\text{var}\,(\beta_1)}$. For additional discussion and extensions to three-way interactions, see Thomas Brambor, William R. Clark and Matthew Golder, 'Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses', *Political Analysis*, 14 (2006), 63–82; and Cindy D. Kam and Robert J. Franzese Jr, 'Modeling and Interpreting Interactive Hypotheses in Regression Analysis: A Refresher and Some Practical Advice' (unpublished paper, University of Michigan. http://www-personal.umich.edu/~franzese/KamFranzese.Interactions.UMP.final.pdf, accessed 28 February, 2006).

[40] As Brambor *et al.* argue, traditional results tables from multivariate regressions do not provide readers with the necessary information to assess hypotheses based on interaction terms (see Brambor, Clark and Golder, 'Understanding Interaction Models').

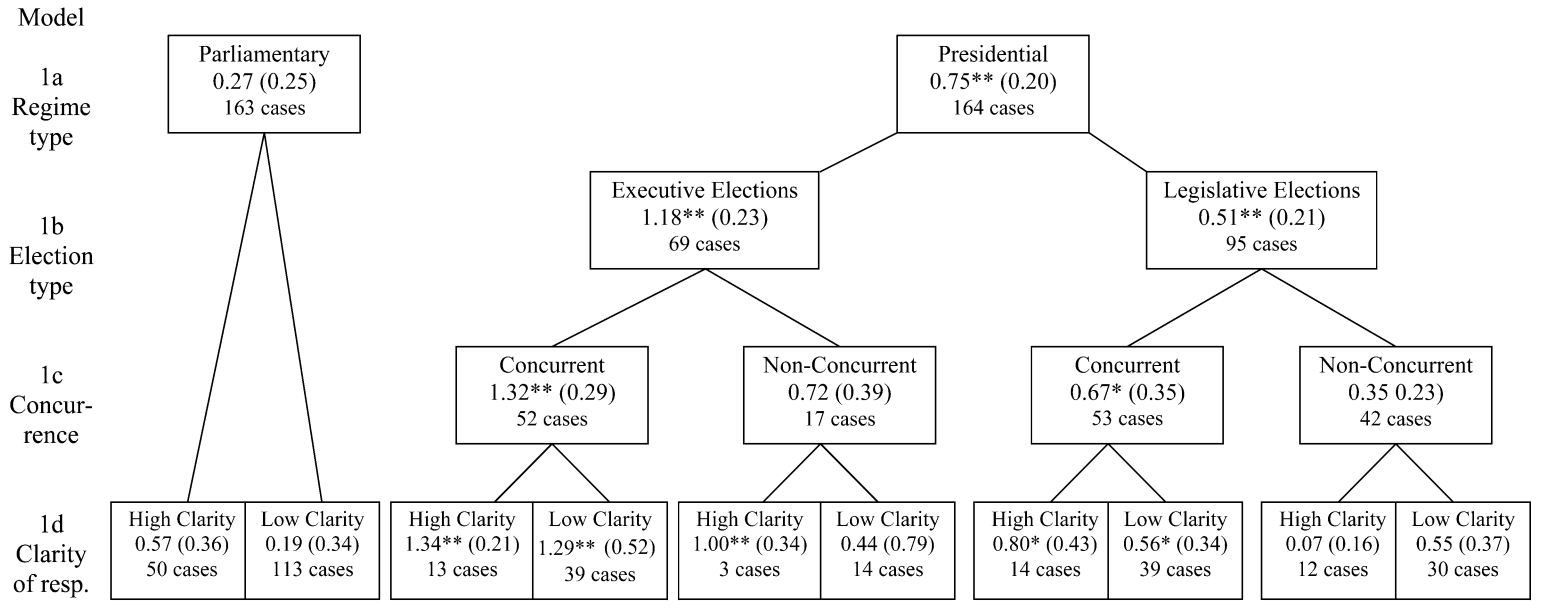

Fig. 1. Electoral accountability for the economy in parliamentary and pure presidential systems

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote for the president's party for elections in presidential regimes and for the prime minister's party for elections in parliamentary regimes. Cells report conditional co efficients and standard errors for effect of *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote*, as discussed in text and fn. 38. Number of cases is the number of observations satisfying the conditions. The number of observations in each regression and full model results are reported in Appendix Tables A1, A2 and A3. $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.10$, two-tailed test, based on Huber–White standard errors clustered by country.

elections in presidential systems remain greater than the coefficient on all parliamentary elections, thereby providing additional confirmation for our first hypothesis. Model 1c incorporates information about the electoral cycle, thus testing our third hypothesis. Results strongly confirm our expectations: in both executive and legislative elections in presidential systems, electoral accountability is stronger in concurrent than in non-concurrent elections. In addition, when elections are concurrent, electoral accountability remains stronger in presidential systems than in parliamentary systems.

These findings illustrate that voters' ability to act on the basis of their attributions of responsibility, our second dimension of accountability, strongly influences the impact of retrospective performance evaluations on incumbent fortunes. But to what extent are these findings affected by the first dimension, the clarity of responsibility? Model 1d controls for the clarity of responsibility in both parliamentary and presidential elections.[41] Note first that in the parliamentary elections, cases with high clarity of responsibility nearly attain conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = 0.106$, two-tailed test), while low clarity cases exhibit no electoral accountability for the economy. This result is largely consistent with existing studies on comparative economic voting.

We can now compare all situations in presidential systems against the best case scenario for accountability under parliamentarism, high clarity of responsibility. Results support our hypotheses. First, concurrent executive elections in presidential systems, regardless of the clarity of responsibility, exhibit greater responsiveness to economic conditions than high clarity parliamentary elections. Secondly, the results on non-concurrent executive elections suggest that high clarity *may* compensate for non-concurrence. However, this result is hardly robust, as only three cases satisfy this condition. Thirdly, moving to legislative elections in presidential systems, we see that the coefficient on both high *and* low clarity concurrent elections are greater in size and are estimated more precisely than elections in high-clarity parliamentary systems. However, as expected, concurrence conditions electoral accountability in legislative elections – we observe no accountability for the economy in non-concurrent legislative elections, regardless of the clarity of responsibility.

The results from Figure 1 provide solid support for our first three hypotheses. While data constraints prevent us from fully assessing the relative impact of the clarity of responsibility with respect to separation of powers and electoral cycle effects, our analyses support the notion that the clarity of responsibility is insufficient to explain either electoral accountability within separation of powers systems or differences across presidential and parliamentary systems.

Our results also call into question claims that presidentialism is generally worse for voters' capacity to hold incumbents to accounts.[42] Although we cannot confirm that the

[41] We were unable to attain conditional coefficients and standard errors from models with quadruple interaction terms (e.g., *Economy* × *Executive Election* × *Concurrence* × *High Clarity*). Thus, the coefficients and standard errors we report for these models are produced by estimating models on subsamples of the data, stratified according to low and high *Clarity of Responsibility*. While reducing the sample size, this approach does not introduce bias into the models or cause inference problems. See Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 137. Full regression results and calculations used to generate conditional coefficients for the clarity of responsibility models (1d, 2d, 3d) are available at http://www.polsci.uh.edu/hellwig/.

[42] Linz, 'Presidential versus Parliamentary Democracy'; Arturo Valenzuela, 'Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime', in Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds, *Democracy in Developing Countries, Vol. 4: Latin America* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1994), pp. 159–206.

'amount' of accountability is greater under presidentialism, the tendency does point in that direction. The magnitude of the effect of *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* conditional on presidentialism always exceeds that of parliamentarism, except under conditions of non-concurrence. The question is then *how frequently* we observe electoral accountability in both systems, and in this regard presidentialism wins out: High clarity of responsibility occurs in only 30 per cent of the parliamentary elections in our sample, but concurrence occurs in 75 per cent of presidential elections and 55 per cent of legislative elections. In short, we are more likely to observe electoral accountability for the economy under presidentialism than under parliamentarism.

Cross-regime Comparison II: Parliamentarism vs. Semi-presidentialism

We now compare elections in parliamentary systems against elections in semi-presidential systems. We expect the main difference to derive from the possibility of cohabitation, a situation that is impossible under parliamentarism: under unified government voters only reward or punish the incumbent president's party in executive elections, while under cohabitation voters shift responsibility for past performance to the incumbent prime minister's party in the legislative election and do not hold the president and his or her party to accounts. Figure 2 presents the results.

At first glance, Figure 2 appears to offer little in the way of distinguishing regime types. Model 2a shows no difference across systems and no evidence of electoral accountability for the economy in either parliamentary or semi-presidential systems. In Model 2b, we also fail to find evidence of electoral accountability when we separate out executive and legislative elections in semi-presidential systems. These first two models, however, merely serve to set up our test of the impact of cohabitation.

This claim is assessed in Model 2c. First, a look at the presidential elections branch compared to the assembly elections branch shows that voters reward or punish incumbent presidents to far greater extent than they reward or punish parliamentary parties in semi-presidential systems, *but only under conditions of unified government*. In contrast, under cohabitation, in presidential elections the coefficient on *Economy* is negative and imprecisely estimated. Cohabitation shields presidents from blame for poor outcomes (and credit for good ones).

Turning to the assembly elections branch, recall that we hypothesized that, regardless of the clarity of responsibility, voters will attribute responsibility to the prime minister's party under conditions of cohabitation. The dependent variable here is the vote for the president's party, which under cohabitation differs from the PM's party. The results show no relationship between the economy and the vote under unified government, when the president and the PM come from the same party. In contrast, under cohabitation the vote for the president's party *decreases* when the economy improves – perhaps because the vote for the PM's party is *increasing* (see below).[43] Though at odds with reward–punishment theories of economic voting, this latter result supports the hypothesis that the division of executive rule strongly influences attributions of responsibility.

[43] Consider the following example: In Macedonia in 1999 the economy was faring well: the growth rate had increased to over 4 per cent after several years of stagnation. However, the party of the incumbent president lost nearly 20 per cent of its vote compared to the previous election. And in the subsequent legislative election, voters rewarded the PM's party, not the president's party, which conforms to our hypothesis.

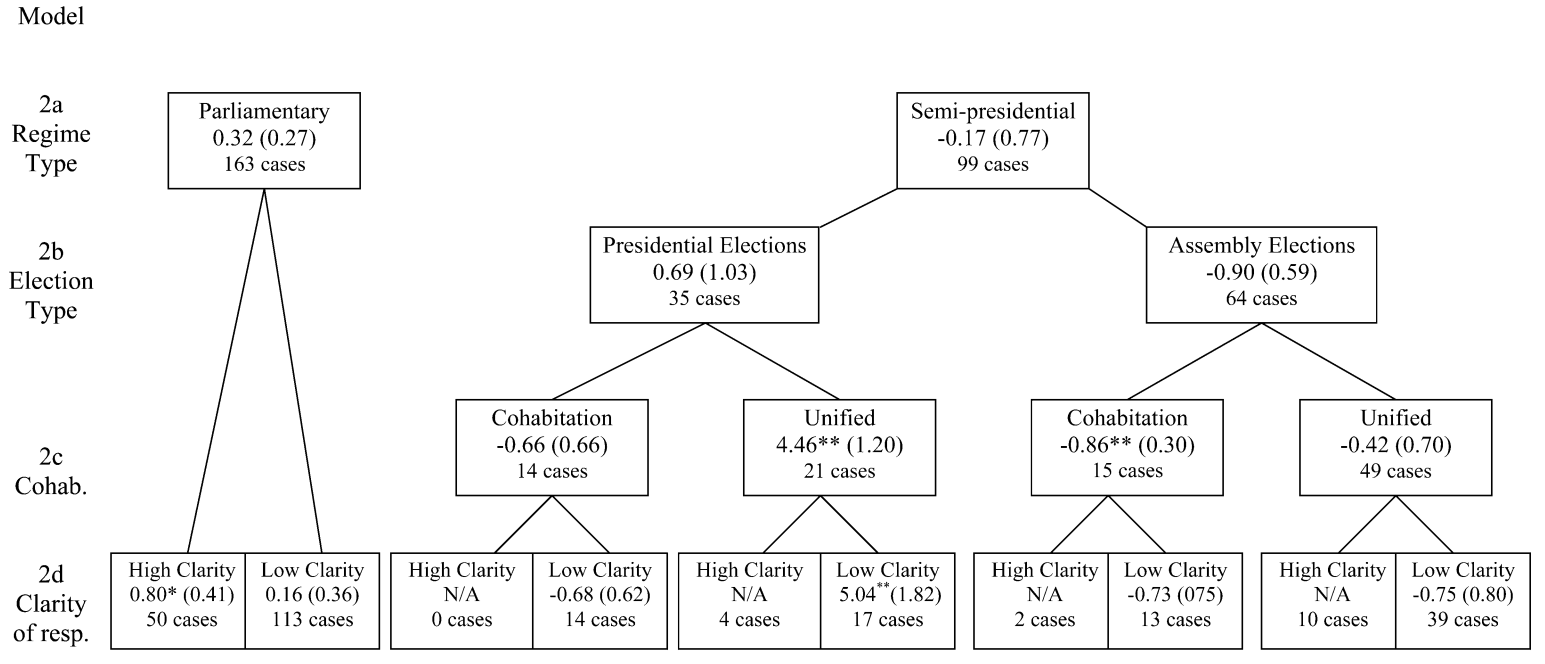

Fig. 2. Electoral accountability for the economy in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems when the dependent variable is the president's party

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote for the president's party for elections in semi-presidential regimes and for the prime minister's party for elections in parliamentary regimes. Cells report conditional coefficients and standard errors for effect of *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* as discussed in text and fn. 38. Number of cases is the number of observations satisfying the conditions. The number of observations in each regression and full model results are reported in Appendix Tables A1, A2 and A3. N/A = Regression output could not be obtained due to small sample size. $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.10$, two-tailed test, based on Huber–White standard errors clustered by country.

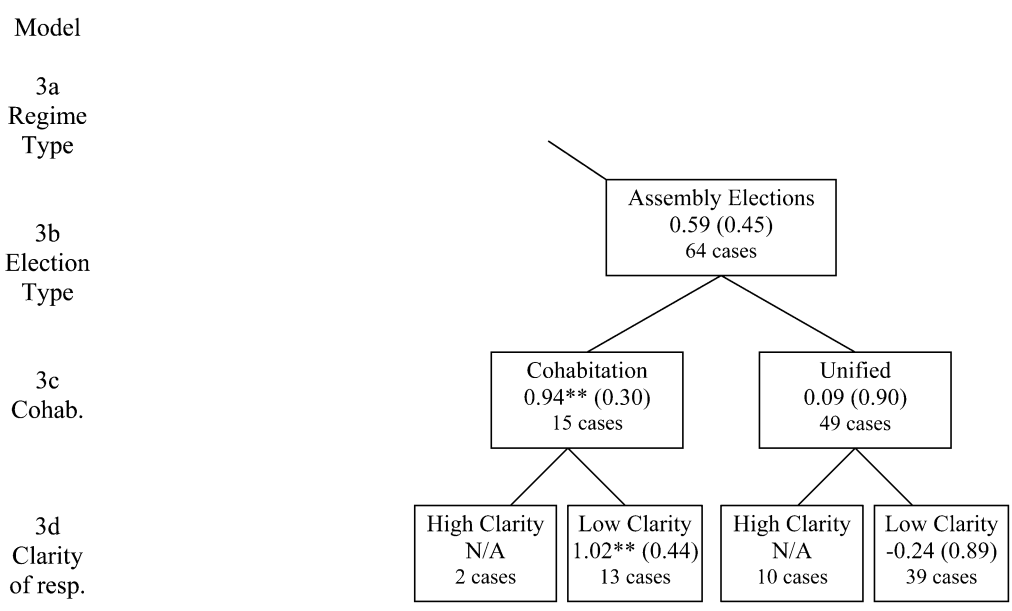

Fig. 3. Electoral accountability for the economy in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems when the dependent variable is the prime minister's party

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage vote for the prime minister's party for elections in both semi-presidential and parliamentary regimes. Cells report conditional coefficients and standard errors for effect of *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* as discussed in text and fn. 38. Number of cases is the number of observations satisfying the conditions. The number of observations in each regression and full model results are reported in Appendix Tables A1, A2 and A3. N/A = Regression output could not be obtained due to small sample size. $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.10$, two-tailed test, based on Huber–White standard errors clustered by country.

Results reported in Figure 3 provide further support for our argument about the impact of cohabitation. In these models we substitute the data from the president's party with corresponding data for the PM's party. In most cases of unified government these are one and the same, but in all cases of cohabitation they differ. We run the same regressions for assembly elections as in Figure 2, this time using the PM's party. The coefficient conditional on *Cohabitation* = 1 is now positive and of substantial magnitude. The results strongly confirm our hypothesis: voters only reward or punish the PM's party under conditions of cohabitation.

Two additional findings are important regarding accountability in semi-presidential systems. First, in both Figure 2 and Figure 3 we attempted to control for clarity of responsibility. However, our sample of semi-presidential elections is heavily weighted towards low-clarity cases. This prevents us from differentiating the impact of high-clarity and low-clarity elections under semi-presidentialism. Yet this suggests that the distinction between unified government and cohabitation overwhelms the impact of *low* clarity of responsibility in semi-presidential systems: if we had a larger sample of *high*-clarity elections, we would expect yet stronger accountability relationships under the conditions we have described.

Secondly, the results yield something of an unexpected implication: when the party of the president is the same as that of the prime minister (unified government), voters do *not*

reward the president's party (which is the PM's party) in the assembly (Model 2c). Perhaps the reason for this is that most elections under semi-presidentialism are non-concurrent, meaning that voters treat assembly elections under unified government in semi-presidential systems similarly to non-concurrent legislative elections under pure presidentialism.

In sum, despite mainly non-concurrent and low-clarity elections, we found strong evidence of accountability for economic performance under two specific conditions: for the president's party in executive elections held under unified government, and for both the president's and the PM's party in assembly elections held under cohabitation. In the case of the president's party, the relationship between performance and the vote contradicts standard referendum theories of economic voting. This suggests that neither concurrence nor clarity of responsibility is primarily responsible for enhancing or attenuating electoral accountability under semi-presidentialism; rather, cohabitation or unified government plays the critical role.

We conducted extensive tests to confirm that our results are not a function of the president's formal powers or of contextual conditions particular to one country. Thus, the results also raise interesting questions as to why voters generally reward and punish incumbent executives under unified government, if in many countries these executives lack substantial formal political powers. We suggest that the president's formal control over setting agendas and policy making – which varies considerably across these hybrid systems – is largely independent of the degree of voter *assignment of credit and blame*, and that the scholarly emphasis on such formal powers may be irrelevant to questions of electoral accountability. Greater attention should be paid to the extent to which the constitutional regime provides voters with the opportunity to sanction political executives. Similarly, additional research is necessary to understand why voters only reward or punish the incumbent PM's party under cohabitation. Tremendous institutional variation characterizes semi-presidential regimes, but the fact remains that results from a sample dominated by low-clarity elections reveal a robust relationship between the economy and the vote for the PM's party, but only under cohabitation.

Our results also raise a broader question: why do the dynamics of electoral accountability appear to differ so substantially between pure parliamentary systems and semi-presidential systems? We find that the direct election of a president – *whether powerful or weak* – introduces a special element into electoral politics under semi-presidentialism not present in pure parliamentary systems. Future research should attempt to unpack the differences in voter behaviour between these two regimes.

Revisiting Accountability for the Economy in Parliamentary Regimes

In this article we have focused on the institutional factors that differentiate pure and semi-presidential systems from parliamentary systems. We have said less, however, about parliamentary regimes themselves. Results in Models 1d and 2d suggest that the first dimension of accountability – voters' capacity to assign policy responsibility to incumbents – is present in parliamentary systems under some conditions. But what about the second dimension? Does variation in the voters' ability to *act* upon attributions of responsibility affect accountability for the economy in parliamentary democracies?

One factor which might affect the degree to which voters in parliamentary systems can act upon their attribution of responsibility is whether the political actors in charge of policy at the time of the election are the same actors who controlled policy following the previous election. Of the parliamentary elections in our dataset, 60 per cent had experienced at least

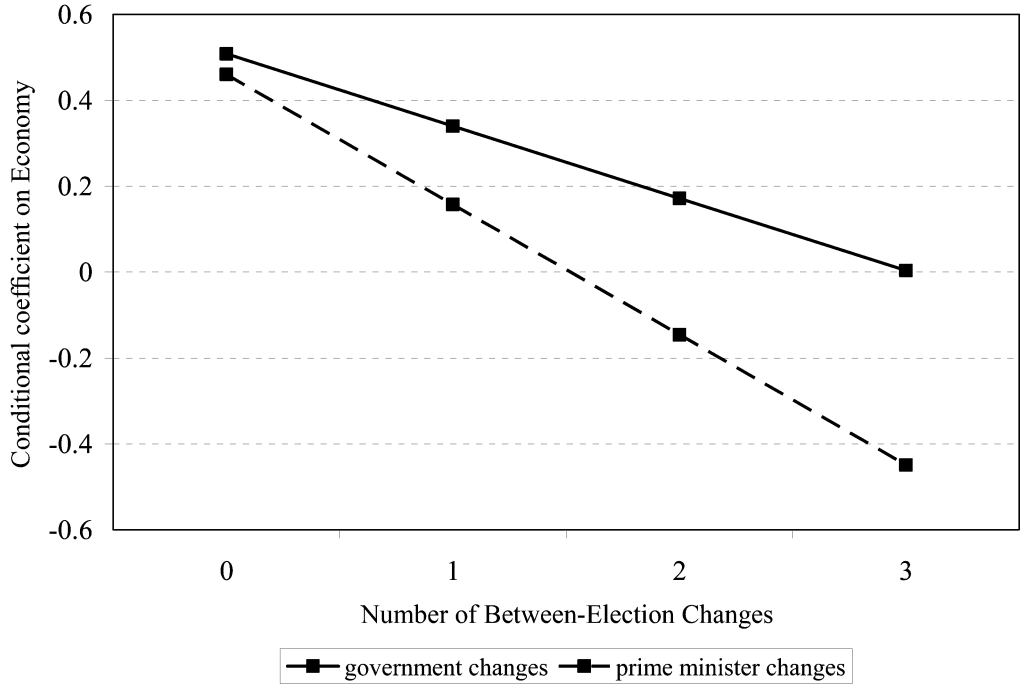

Fig. 4. Effect of between-election government and prime minister changes on accountability for the economy in parliamentary elections
Note: Figure reports effect of *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* under different numbers of between-election government changes (cabinet reshuffles) and prime ministerial changes. Regression estimates used to produce figure are reported in fn. 44.

one government reshuffle and 38 per cent at least one change of prime minister between election $t-1$ and election t. Cheibub and Przeworski suggested that cabinet reshuffles can limit voters' ability to reward or, more likely, to sanction members of the government in parliamentary systems.[44] To what extent is this true?

To test this hypothesis, we regress *Incumbent Vote* on *Economy*, the number of between-election government or prime ministerial changes, the interaction of *Economy* and government/PM changes, and the other controls for our set of elections in parliamentary democracies.[45] Figure 4 presents the results by graphing the effect of the *Economy* on *Incumbent Vote* over a range of values for between-election government and PM changes. As expected, the slopes of the conditional coefficients are negative: as the number of between-election changes in government composition increases, the positive

[44] Cheibub and Przeworski, 'Democracy, Elections, and Accountability for Economic Outcomes', pp. 232–3.
[45] Regression estimates are as follows; for between-election government changes (*BEGC*): $Incumbent\ Vote = 0.49 + 0.79(Previous\ Vote)^{*} + 0.51(Economy) - 0.44(BEGC) - 0.17(Economy \times BEGC) + 0.19(Age) - 0.002(Age^2)^{*}$, and for between-election prime minister changes (*BEPMC*): $Incumbent\ Vote = -0.26 + 0.79(Previous\ Vote)^{*} + 0.46(Economy) - 0.30(BEPMC) - 0.18(Economy \times BEPMC) + 0.21(Age) - 0.002(Age^2)^{*}$, where * denotes statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ for Huber–White standard errors clustered by country. For both models $R^2 = 0.67$, $N = 163$.

effect of economic performance on the vote decreases. The effects of these reshuffles are not estimated with precision, however, suggesting that more data are needed to test this claim statistically.[46] Nonetheless, the results provide some additional support for our claim that elections are instruments of accountability only to the extent that they provide voters (and not politicians) with the means to evaluate and potentially reward or sanction incumbent policy makers.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Elections serve several purposes. They can legitimize the powers of the elected, provide opportunities for voters to send signals to elites regarding the direction of policy and give voters the opportunity to hold incumbents to account for policy performance. This study has drawn attention to the last of these purposes. We showed that different democratic constitutional formats are associated with different patterns of electoral accountability. By moving beyond the effect of the 'clarity of responsibility' on voters' ability to assign responsibility, this study provides a fuller understanding of how electoral accountability works across the world's democratic regimes.

Our results clearly contrast with the main finding of the research spawned by Powell and Whitten's seminal article and suggest that in most of the world's democracies the clarity of responsibility is *not* the most important factor affecting accountability linkages between citizens and governments. Instead of the factors that Powell and others have identified, dynamics particular to separation-of-powers systems are critical. In particular, the electoral cycle and the possibility of cohabitation, neither of which is possible under pure parliamentarism, drive accountability under pure and semi-presidential systems. By separating the public's ability to assign responsibility from their ability to use the vote to act on that assignment in the first place, this study contributes to our understanding of comparative electoral accountability.

This study also carries several implications for scholarly debates that range beyond the 'economic voting' literature. First, our findings suggest that an important implication of Powell's investigation of electoral responsiveness in comparative perspective requires reassessment.[47] Powell concluded that 'majoritarian' and 'proportional' systems perform well on their own terms – that is, proportional systems offer greater opportunities for (prospective) interest representation, while majoritarian systems offer greater opportunities for (retrospective) accountability. Unfortunately, pure and semi-presidential systems do not fit easily on a 'majoritarian – proportional' continuum, but they do appear to provide the potential for 'the best of both worlds' – an ability to combine proportional and majoritarian elements. Scholars must therefore incorporate variations in constitutional structure into an account of the nature and extent of the ability for elections to serve as instruments of representation and accountability across political systems.[48]

[46] Bivariate correlations between *Incumbent Vote* and *Economy* are positive for parliamentary elections with no between election government or prime minister changes and negative for parliamentary elections with one or more changes.

[47] Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Representation.*

[48] David Samuels and Matthew Shugart, 'Presidentialism, Elections and Representation', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 15 (2003), 33–60.

Secondly, as noted, our findings also call into question the critique that presidentialism generally permits relatively 'less' accountability than other forms of democracy.[49] For example, Juan Linz has argued that accountability is stronger under parliamentarism because 'parties are identified with highly visible leaders', whereas under presidentialism voters do not identify leaders with parties.[50] Our findings suggest that *in the absence of electoral cycle effects, voters under presidentialism hold incumbents to accounts to at least similar degrees as under parliamentarism*. Given the relative infrequency of high-clarity elections to begin with under all systems, scholars have either underestimated voters' ability to hold incumbents to accounts in presidential systems or overestimated voters' capacity to identify responsible incumbents in parliamentary systems.

At base, Linz's argument assumes that 'strong parties' are necessary for accountability. However, our results suggest that across the world's democratic systems it is not parties *per se* that shape voters' cognitive attributions of vengeance and reward. Instead, it is the combination of constitutional structure *and* party-system attributes that together mediate accountability linkages. Given this, the underlying theory behind Linz's argument, based on the classic notion that stronger parties tend to enhance accountability, might require rethinking.

By highlighting the implications of political regime type – such as the electoral cycle and the presence or absence of a divided executive – our findings also qualify the argument of Persson *et al*., who contend that the separation of powers is always superior in terms of accountability.[51] Our results clearly indicate that the 'always' does not hold, because non-concurrence attenuates accountability under presidentialism. Quite plainly, their theory also cannot explain the results for semi-presidential systems.

Finally, our results also have normative implications. Scholars debate the degree to which incumbents *should* be accountable to voters (i.e. the 'delegate' versus the 'trustee' models of representation and accountability), but all agree that some accountability is a good thing and that no accountability is a bad thing. Elections are imperfect instruments to foster accountability between citizens and elected officials, but at a minimum they provide incumbents with a signal that voters are pleased or displeased with policy outcomes. Our results indicate that presidentialism is not generally worse than other forms of government and that under many conditions accountability also functions under the hybrid semi-presidential system. In fact, parliamentarism may be considered the worst form of government for voters to send politicians strong signals with any regularity. Informed by the institutional diversity of the world's democratic systems, future work should explore the degree to which these signals result in changes in government composition or policy across democratic regimes.

[49] Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy;* Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski and Susan Stokes, 'Elections and Representation', in Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin, eds, *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* (New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 29–54.

[50] Linz, 'Presidential versus Parliamentary Democracy', p. 11

[51] Persson, Roland and Tabellini, 'Separation of Powers and Political Accountability'.

APPENDIX I: CASES

Counry	Constitutional regime	Election at $t-1$	Country	Constitutional regime	Election at $t-1$
Argentina	PRES	1983	Malawi	PRES	1994
Australia	PARL	1975	Mali	SEMI	1992
Austria	SEMI	1975	Mexico	PRES	1997
Bangladesh	PARL	1991	Moldova	SEMI, PARL (2000–)	1994
Belgium	PARL	1977	Mozambique	SEMI	1994
Benin	PRES	1991	Namibia	PRES	1994
Bolivia	PRES	1985	Netherlands	PARL	1977
Botswana	PARL	1979	New Zealand	PARL	1975
Brazil	PRES	1986	Nicaragua	PRES	1990
Bulgaria	SEMI	1990	Norway	PARL	1977
Canada	PARL	1979	Panama	PRES	1994
Chile	PRES	1989	Papua New Guinea	PARL	1977
Colombia	PRES	1978	Paraguay	PRES	1993
Costa Rica	PRES	1978	Peru	PRES	1985
Czech Republic	PARL	1996	Philippines	PRES	1986
Denmark	PARL	1975	Poland	SEMI	1990
Dominican Rep.	PRES	1978	Portugal	SEMI	1976
Ecuador	PRES	1979	Romania	SEMI	1992
El Salvador	PRES	1984	Russia	SEMI	1996
Estonia	PARL	1992	Senegal	SEMI	1993
Finland	SEMI	1975	Seychelles	PRES	1993
France	SEMI	1978	Slovakia	PARL	1994–98
				SEMI	1999
Germany	PARL	1976	Slovenia	SEMI	1992
Greece	PARL	1977	South Africa	PARL	1994
Honduras	PRES	1985	Spain	PARL	1979
Hungary	PARL	1990	Sri Lanka	PRES	2000
India	PARL	1977	Sweden	PARL	1976
Ireland	SEMI	1976	Switzerland	PARL	1975
Israel	PARL, SEMI (1996–99)	1977	Taiwan	SEMI	1995
Italy	PARL	1976	Thailand	PARL	1992
Jamaica	PARL	1976	Trinidad and Tobago	PARL	1976
Japan	PARL	1976	Turkey	PARL	1979
Korea, Rep. of	PRES	1988	Ukraine	SEMI	1994
Latvia	PARL	1993	United Kingdom	PARL	1979
Lesotho	PARL	1998	United States	PRES	1976
Lithuania	SEMI	1992	Uruguay	PRES	1989
Macedonia	SEMI	1994	Venezuela	PRES	1978
Madagascar	SEMI	1993			

Notes: We could not identify the 1 incumbent party for the following elections: Austria, 1999 and 2002 legislative elections (president's legislative party; incumbent presidents were independents); Benin, 1995 legislative elections; Colombia, 2002, presidential elections; Ecuador, 1998 and 2002 presidential elections; Slovakia, 1999 presidential election; and Slovenia, 2002 presidential election (incumbent candidate was an independent). We could not locate electoral data for: Madagascar, 1993, 1998, and 2002 legislative elections; Mali, 2002 legislative election; Philippines, 1987, 1992 and 2001 legislative elections, and Ukraine, 1998 parliamentary election. We also note that the following elections do not enter the *universe* of cases, even though the country might otherwise have qualified, because the elections were uncontested: Ireland, 1990; Jamaica, 1983.

APPENDIX II: LIST OF SOURCES FOR ELECTION RESULTS AND IDENTIFICATION OF INCUMBENTS

Election Results Archive, Center on Democratic Performance, Binghamton University. http://cdp.binghamton.edu/era/.

Parties and Elections in Europe: http://www.parties-and-elections.de/indexe.html

Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Eastern Europe, University of Essex: http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/

Political Database of the Americas, Georgetown University: http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Elecdata/elecdata.html#data.

Elections Around the World: www.electionworld.org.

Election Resources on the Internet: http://electionresources.org/.

Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1976–2004.

Zárate's European Governments: http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00europa.htm

Zárate's World Political Leaders: http://www.terra.es/personal2/monolith/00index.htm

Rulers: www.rulers.org.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems' Election Guide: http://www.ifes.org/eguide/elecguide.html.

Inter-American Development Bank, *Democracies in Development* (Washington: IDB (CD-ROM), 2002).

Dieter Nohlen, ed., *Enciclopedia Electoral Latinoamericana y del Caribe* (San José: Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, 1993).

Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich and Bernhard Thibaut, eds., *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Dieter Nohlen, Florian Grotz and Christof Hartmann, eds., *Elections in Asia,* two volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Eric Magar and Kevin J. Middlebrook, 'Statistical Appendix: National Election Results, 1980s and 1990s, for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Peru, and Venezuela', in Kevin Middlebrook, ed., *Conservative Parties, the Right, and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 293–328.

Grace Ivana Deheza, 'Gobiernos de Coalición en el Sistema Presidencial: América del Sur' (unpublished doctoral thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 1997).

For additional information from several African nations, we relied on data compiled by Professor Shaheen Mozaffar, Bridgewater State University. For additional information on cabinet composition in Latin America, we relied upon Professor Octavio Amorim Neto, Getúlio Vargas Foundation, Rio de Janeiro.

Other sources for particular countries included:

Bangladesh: Mahfuzul H. Chowdhury, *Democratization in South Asia: Lessons from American Institutions* (Aldershot, Surrey: Ashgate, 2003).

Bolivia: Eduardo Gamarra and James Malloy, 'The Patrimonial Dynamics of Party Politics in Bolivia', in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 399–433.

Brazil: Jairo Nicolau, 'Dados Eleitorais do Brasil', www.iuperj.br/deb/port/ (November 2003).

Chile: Chilean government website, www.elecciones.gov.cl (November 2003).

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Ecuador: Andrés Mejía-Acosta, 'Weak Coalitions and Policy Making in the Ecuadorian Congress (1979–1996)' (Presented at the annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, 2000).

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TABLE A1 *Regression Results Used to Produce Figure 1*

Independent variable	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c (executive)	Model 1c (legislative)
Previous Vote	0.79 (0.05)	0.80 (0.05)	0.80 (0.05)	0.80 (0.05)
Economy	0.27 (0.26)	0.26 (0.25)	0.26 (0.26)	0.26 (0.26)
Presidential System	− 0.28 (1.54)			
Executive Election		− 1.45 (1.83)	− 0.99 (2.23)	− 0.99 (2.23)
Legislative Election		0.37 (1.53)	1.82 (1.66)	1.82 (1.66)
Concurrence			− 2.60 (1.71)	− 0.51 (1.54)
Economy × Presidential System	0.48 (0.32)			
Economy × Executive Election		0.92 (0.35)	0.46 (0.48)	0.46 (0.48)
Economy × Legislative Election		0.25 (0.33)	0.09 (0.35)	0.09 (0.35)
Economy × Concurrence			0.32 (0.47)	0.60 (0.52)
Executive Election × Concurrence			2.09 (1.92)	
Legislative Election × Concurrence				− 2.09 (1.92)
Economy × Executive Election × Concurrence			0.28 (0.54)	
Economy × Legislative Election × Concurrence				− 0.28 (0.54)
Re-election	6.05 (1.96)	6.20 (2.00)	6.43 (2.12)	6.43 (2.12)
Age of Democracy	0.02 (0.08)	0.02 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)
Age of Democracy^2	0.00 (0.001)	0.00 (0.001)	0.00 (0.001)	0.00 (0.001)
Constant	2.52 (2.33)	2.30 (2.35)	2.62 (2.35)	2.62 (2.36)
R^2	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66
F-statistic of model fit	65.31	74.70	67.24	67.24
N	327	327	327	327

Notes: Dependent variable is the percentage vote for president's party for elections in presidential regimes and for prime minister's party for elections in parliamentary regimes. Cells report OLS parameter estimates, with Huber–White standard errors clustered by country in parentheses.

TABLE A2 *Regression Results Used to Produce Figure 2*

Independent variable	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c (presidential)	Model 2c (assembly)
Previous Vote	0.63 (0.06)	0.67 (0.06)	0.69 (0.06)	0.69 (0.06)
Economy	0.32 (0.27)	0.32 (0.26)	0.35 (0.26)	0.35 (0.26)
Semi-Presidential System	0.16 (2.63)			
Executive Election		− 7.64 (4.59)	− 17.93 (4.52)	− 17.93 (4.52)
Legislative Election		3.46 (2.12)	0.21 (2.86)	0.21 (2.86)
Economy × Semi-Presidential System	− 0.49 (0.81)			
Economy × Executive Election		0.37 (1.06)	4.11 (1.23)	4.11** (1.23)
Economy × Legislative Election		− 1.23 (0.64)	− 0.77 (0.74)	− 0.77 (0.74)
Cohabitation			10.91 (3.28)	15.90 (4.81)
Economy × Cohabitation			− 0.44 (0.77)	− 5.12 (1.33)
Executive Election × Cohabitation			4.99 (4.45)	
Economy × Cohabitation × Executive Election			− 4.68 (1.43)	
Legislative Election × Cohabitation				− 4.99 (4.45)
Economy × Cohabitation × Legislative Election				4.68 (1.43)
Re-election	6.65 (3.03)	10.98 (5.05)	12.58 (4.66)	12.58 (4.66)
Age of Democracy	0.25 (0.12)	0.24 (0.11)	0.29 (0.12)	0.29 (0.12)
Age of Democracy^2	− 0.003 (0.001)	− 0.003 (0.001)	− 0.003 (0.001)	− 0.003 (0.001)
Constant	5.22 (3.43)	3.87 (3.23)	1.85 (3.10)	1.85 (3.10)
R^2	0.47	0.50	0.55	0.55
F-statistic of model fit	23.74	26.55	33.50	33.50
N	262	262	262	262

Notes: Dependent variable is the percentage vote for president's party for elections in semi-presidential regimes and for prime minister's party for elections in parliamentary regimes. Cells report OLS parameter estimates, with Huber–White standard errors clustered by country in parentheses.

TABLE A3 *Regression Results Used to Produce Figure 3*

Independent variable	Model 3a	Model 3c
Previous Vote	0.66 (0.06)	0.68 (0.06)
Economy	0.33 (0.27)	0.34 (0.26)
Executive Election	− 7.45 (4.58)	− 17.88 (4.43)
Legislative Election	− 1.80 (2.12)	− 1.41 (3.22)
Economy × Executive Election	0.35 (1.07)	4.12 (1.21)
Economy × Legislative Election	0.26 (0.52)	− 0.24 (0.92)
Cohabitation		15.72 (4.69)
Economy × Cohabitation		− 5.12 (1.29)
Legislative Election × Cohabitation		− 14.65 (4.32)
Economy × Cohabitation × Legislative Election		5.97 (1.31)
Re-election	11.16 (4.75)	12.37 (4.48)
Age of Democracy	0.26 (0.12)	0.26 (0.13)
Age of Democracy^2	− 0.003 (0.001)	− 0.003 (0.001)
Constant	3.72 (3.37)	2.80 (3.23)
R^2	0.48	0.52
F-statistic of model fit	24.44	26.00
N	262	262

Note: Dependent variable is the percentage vote for prime minister's party for elections in semi-presidential regimes and for prime minister's party for elections in parliamentary regimes. Cells report OLS parameter estimates, with Huber–White standard errors clustered by country in parentheses.