Protagonist vs. supporting party:

Party trajectories in multiparty presidential systems

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Abstract:

In multiparty presidential settings, political parties have two potential pathways to follow: a protagonist role, by offering competitive candidates for the chief executive; or a supporting party role, by trying to be become a legislative partner in the governing coalition. This paper provides a formal model explaining why these two roles may be not be compatible. Econometric exercises, having Brazil as a case study, reveal that having played a protagonistic role in previous elections increases the chances of launching presidential candidates again in subsequent elections. Whereas large parties present a higher probability of joining the governing coalition, parties that launched candidates for the presidency but lost the race decrease their chances of participating in the president's coalition. Large parties switch roles less frequently. In addition, whereas left-wing parties change roles more often and consistently offer candidates for the presidency, right-wing parties prefer to follow a coalitional supporting role in congress.

Keywords: Coalition government, multiparty presidential regime, supporting party, protagonist party, party trajectories.

1) Introduction:

In parliamentary regimes, the biggest partyin Parliament holds the Executive branch. Therefore, supremacy in the Legislature is the main goal parties follow. In two-party presidential systems, political survival strategies requires both parties to strongly invest in the presidential and the legislative campaigns. Both systems are widely studied in the literature. A different, but signifficant group of political systems involves multiparty presidential regimes, where the party holding the executive seldom wins a plurality of seats in the parliament. This paper analyzes the choice political parties make with regard to following different political tracks – playing a presidential protagonist game vs. playing a legislative supporting party game – in multiparty presidential regimes.

In that institutional environment, even large and traditional parties may prefer not launching a candidate for the presidency but rather to take part of governing coalitions regardless of the ideological orientation of the elected government. That is, parties may choose to basically function as the supporting party (median legislator) in Congress sometimes avoiding the approval of extreme policies, both on the left and right. However, when it comes to fielding presidential candidates, parties may prefer to play a minor role, to say the least, by not offering credible and competitive candidates for the presidency. On the other hand, other political parties may prefer to consistently play the majoritarian game regardless of their past electoral performance. What does justify those different partisan tracks?

We address this question by offering demand-side and supply-side explanations. On the demand side, in multiparty presidential systems supporting parties are essential for achiving governability; more specifically, elected minority presidents need them to build

legislative majorities. On the supply side, parties have much to gain – in both policy influence and access to patronage – from playing a supporting role. Also, they are able to win legislative seats, as multiparty presidential democracies tend to have proportional representation electoral systems. Moreover, and interestingly, if they have difficulty fielding a competitive presidential candidate, they have a strong incentive to embrace a supporting role; indeed, if a party wants to join the president's legislative coalition, it is better not to have run *against* the president.

This paper first presents a game-theoretic model that highlight the trade-offs parties face when choosing their political trajectories, i.e., either the protagonistic or the supportive role. The model suggests a path-dependency that tend to keep larger parties in the same trajectory.

Next, the present research runs a set of econometric exercises, having Brazil as case study, to estimate the determinants of three models of partisan track-decisions: 1) running for the presidency; 2) playing the supporting party game by joning the governing coalition; and 3) switching partisan tracks. The main results are the following: whereas larger parties tend to keep in the same partisan trajectories, left wing parties change tracks more frequently; having launched a presidential candidate in previous elections increases the chances for the party to keep following the majoritarian trajectory in the next election; right wing parties and parties that are ideologically close to the president tend to join the governing coalition; and larger parties and those that do not field a presidential candidate tend to become members of the governing coalition.

This suggests that multiparty presidential regimes do not only need protagonist majoritarian parties to function, as it seems the case of two-party presidential regimes, but

these regimes also value parties specializing in the supporting legislative game in congress, in order to avoid deadlocks. In other words, in addition to be an attractable partisan trajectory to follow, supporting legislative parties make it easier for multiparty presidential regimes to be governable.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section we develop our theoretical framework, arguing that political parties in multiparty presidential regimes have two strategic choices to make. In this section, we also propose a formal model to illustrate the trajectories of partisan choices and their respective strategies and payoffs, making clear the trade-offs parties face in multiparty regimes. The third section estimates the political determinants that explain whether a party follows the supporting legislative or majoritarian tracks. In the last section we conclude by summarizing the main findings and discussing its main implications and contributions for the party politics scholarship.

2) Theoretical Framework

The great majority of the comparative literature on political parties has been intellectually rooted in the historical legacy of parliamentary regimes in Western Europe. The idea became common wisdom that strong and institutionalized political parties are synonyms of parliamentary regimes and that the study of parliamentary parties is the study of political parties. Samuels and Shugart (2010: 7) argued that the "starting point for much research is not institutional structure but rather social structure, focusing on how culture and economic cleavages translate into parties and party system."[1]

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[1] The seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) is the best example that represents this line of research.

However, it is possible to identify a substantial number of scholars that also have extensively explored party politics in presidential regimes: party system and structure (Cox and Shugart 1995); party strategic voting and coordination (Cox 1997 and 2000; Ames 1995; Amorim Neto, Cox and McCubbins 2003); party representation (Samuels 2000; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Ames 1994; Crisp 1997); how political parties are affected by different electoral systems (Durverger 1954; Shugart and Carey 1995); and the relationship between separation of powers and political parties themselves in the sense that presidential constitutions encourage the development of presidentialized parties, which are characterized by the combination of weak and nationalized parties (Samuels 2002; Samuels and Shugart 2010).[2]

Nonetheless, the literature so far has overlooked the role played by the majoritarian and proportional/consensual (Lijphart 2012) components of multiparty presidential systems on the political choice parties make to play either the supporting party role within the congress or the presidential game in elections. Even when the literature differentiates between the choice and behavior of political parties in unified and separation of power systems (Samuel and Shugart 2010), it does not make a distinction between majoritarian two-party and proportional multiparty presidential systems. Multiparty presidential systems combine the majoritarian features of a presidential race – where continuous iterations tend to restrict the number of competitive parties – with the consensual features

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[2] Samuels and Shugart (2010: 38), for instance, emphasize, "separating the executive and the legislative elements of government into two independent branches also breaks parties into two separate branches, one in the legislature and one in the executive."

of a congressional race – where the electoral design of proportional representation tends to foster multipartism.

The concept of supporting party is related here by two main features: first, to the position of a party as a coalition anchor and, second, by not launching a candidate for the presidency. As such, this party tends to be large, ideologically amorphous and flexible enough to be the pivot member of the governing coalition regardless of whoever is the coalition *formateur*. In this sense, our definition of supporting party is fundamentally applicable to multiparty systems, where no single party usually is able to enjoy electoral majority status alone and have to build post-electoral coalitions. Dalton et al. (2011: 164) show that in a large number of nations "the elections resulted in multiparty governments where a pre-election agreement was lacking, and so coalition formation began after the election." Nevertheless, if running for the presidency implies assuming a majoritarian position and abandoning the supporting party track, the theory we bring is not directly applicable to parliamentary systems either, where there is no separation of powers, but it is rather a theory to particularly understand multiparty presidential systems.

2.1) Divided authority in multiparty presidential systems: majoritarian and supporting party games

In a majoritarian institutional setting, if there were two political parties, the median voter theory, proposed by Downs (1957), predicts that those parties would tend towards the center of the ideological spectrum, producing centrist political preferences and policy results. That is, there would be endogenous survival incentives in the majoritarian electoral

system to push parties toward the position of the median voter. A party that moves to the median can always defeat the party that fails -to converge to the median.

Revisiting the Downsian paradigm, Sartori (1976) stressed that while the median voter theorem can work considerably well to explain the functioning of party systems composed of four parties or less, for multiparty systems (with more than five relevant parties), Downs' theoretical framework cannot provide a reliable explanation. What Sartori early perceived is that Downs' theory assumes a centripetal force driving parties' electoral competition that is absent in some multiparty systems. Therefore, as an electoral system that permits multipartyism, proportional representation (PR) affects the way the competitive systems operates, influencing the strategies and the functioning of political parties[3].

PR electoral systems might also be expected to produce moderate results if more centrist parties have better bargaining positions than more extremist parties, so they are more likely to join and have influence on the government (see Cox 1997; Huber and Powell 1994). Nevertheless, it is also reasonable to expect that in PR systems parties do not compete with each other over a continuous ideological spectrum. Because the PR electoral system permits a more inclusive representation of the electorate's diversity, parties can maximize their utility by focusing on subgroups of voters consistent with their preferences. Therefore, the competition in a PR system is discontinuous in the sense that it provides a maximization area that is limited to the parties' closest competitors. As a consequence, the

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[3] In spite of the fact that the basic Downsian model leads to convergence, it is noteworthy that Downs (1957) already discusses divergence. Forthermore, the literature that followed that seminal book also discusses such possibility under several assumptions. See, for example, Grofman (2004) or Portugal and Bugarin (2007).

strategies and profile that political parties decide to follow and the policies they choose to support differ under distinct institutional environments.

In a majoritarian presidential system, with direct elections, political parties have practically no choice other than playing the presidential electoral game searching for the median voter. That is, the median voter strategy and behavior of political parties are endogenous in a presidential winner-takes-all system and becomes the 'driving goal' if the party ambition is to win the election.

In a separation of powers with PR system, however, parties do have different choices to make. They may either play the protagonist majoritarian game, represented by the race for the presidency, or the legislative supporting party game, in order to obtain a relevant number of seats in the congress (Strom and Nyblade 2007).

In direct presidential races, especially in a two-round system, the majoritarian rules usually select a single median voter preference. However, legislative races, using the PR rules, tend to select several different sub-median preferences that different parties will try to maximize. It is misleading, therefore, to assume that in PR systems a party on the left is directly competing with a party on the right for voters' preferences. On the contrary, different parties on the left are competing with each other to win the representation of this specific subgroup.

Depending on the dominance and centrality (Roozendaal 1990; Jelnov 2014, Stom and Nayblade 2007) of each party after the election, they will try to locate themselves in the supporting legislative position between the government's majoritarian preference and the congress's preference. It is expected that the party that successfully manages to occupy the supporting legislative position will not be bound by strong commitments in order to

flexibly negotiate with the winner of the presidential election, and assume the position of supporting party of the governing coalition in a fragmented environment.

Whereas playing the majoritarian game means performing the role of protagonist in the executive branch, usually as the agenda-setter, the median legislative party game represents performing the 'supporting actor' role in the legislative branch, usually as agenda-taker.

Playing the majoritarian game means that a party is willing to present, through a recognized competitive leader – preferably charismatic –, a consistent policy portfolio to voters. It also means that the party is willing to manage intraparty conflicts, coordinating cohesively over a single candidate's platform in order to plausibly compete for the national median voter preferences. That is, "parties that concentrate on winning executive elections will develop different organizational forms, nominate different sorts of leaders, and adopt different electoral strategies than they would under parliamentarism" (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 162).

On the other hand, to play the supporting party game nationally in PR systems, a party must be able to gather enough seats from a single or several discontinuous median voters, spread over distinct electoral districts, and coordinate cohesively towards the center of the executive-legislative distribution of preferences. Therefore, the nature of both competition structures becomes inherently different, engendering almost contradictory demands for party organization and linkages inside either the majoritarian presidential game or the supporting party game.

Samuels and Shugart (2010), on the other hand, argued that parties in presidential systems can mostly derive benefits if they decide to run for the presidency: "operating in a

separation of powers system as a strictly 'parliamentary' party that only runs candidates for legislative seats is not likely to be a profitable strategy (…) winning the executive branch, not the legislative seats, becomes parties' driving goal" (49).

Our framework, however, claims that both the majoritarian strategy and the supporting party strategy engender costs and benefits. In the majoritarian protagonist game, for instance, parties should achieve the highest payoff by winning the presidential race. In this trajectory parties maximize the power of the presidency and the ability to allocate resources under presidential discretion. Thus, once success is achieved in the presidential election, it is very likely that this party will keep playing the majoritarian game over time, aiming at accumulating the highest payoff generated by the political system.

However, in case of losing the presidential election, majoritarian protagonist parties have to be ready to bear the costs of playing the majoritarian opposition game for a while. It necessarily means less power and fewer benefits when the party plays the opposition game because the great majority of political and financial rents generated by the political market will be allocated to the winner. Even though getting politically and financially poorer, majoritarian losers, especially runners up in close elections, might prefer to keep playing the majoritarian presidential game as opposition if they believe they have real chances and credible candidates to become winners in the next election.[4]

They may also consider adjusting their ambition and playing the supporting party game, especially if they had a poor performance in the presidential race. In that case, they

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[4] Parties may still pursue the majoritarian trajectory even when they do not have a competitive candidate. Usually as a position taken strategy. However, this strategy is commonly followed by small and ideologically driven parties.

will probably try to play what we call the "embarrassed median" legislator role. In such condition, the embarrassed median party will probably enjoy a less advantageous payoff in the short run than if it had played the supporting party game since the beginning rather than taken the risk of playing the majoritarian game. The embarrassed median faces this loss of utility for challenging the majoritarian winner during the presidential campaign. It is reasonable to expect that the winner will provide higher coalitional benefits for those parties that have provided support since the campaign and not to a party that tried to be an electoral alternative to the winner. Nevertheless, the winner may consider to make an offer to the embarrassed median to join the governing coalition in case it is needed to reach a qualified majority in Congress, but in a less advantageous manner.

Positioning as the supporting party is not costless either. The supporting legislative party, almost by definition, gives up the protagonist role of the presidency in a PR system, and the great majority of the political and financial benefits that this top position offers. On the other hand, the supporting legislative party could be able to extract some rents controlled by the executive in exchange for providing political support in congress in a typical pork for policy game (Raile et al. 2011). The supporting party path would therefore represent the equivalent of a "comfort zone," achieving an intermediate payoff between the majoritarian winner and the majoritarian loser.

2.2) The basic game-theoretic model

Parties play repeatedly two sequential noncooperative games, the *Executive Electoral Competition* (EEC) game and the *Legislative Coalition Formation* (LCF) game. In the EEC game each party decides whether to have a presidential candidate and

presidential elections take place. After the EEC game concludes, the executive winning party plays the LCF game with the other parties in the Legislature.

Therefore, when deciding whether to run for the majoritarian presidential race, a party takes into consideration the consequence of that decision on the subsequent LCF game. Let us analyze these games by backwards induction, starting with the Legislative (LCF) game.[5]

2.2.1 The Legislative Coalition Formation Game (LCF)

In this noncooperative game, the party that won the EEC game, P_1, chooses which parties to make proposals for joining the coalition of parties who will support it in the Legislature. The aim of this game is to form a Legislative governing coalition. It follows the modelling approach of the seminal work of Baron and Ferejohn (1989)[6].

Let P_1 be the executive incumbent's party and let $P_i, i = 1, ..., n$ be a generic party represented in the Legislature. If P_1 already has a majority of seats in the Legislature, then it does not need to bring new parties to its coalition and the game finishes trivially. However such a situation is not common in multi-party systems. If P_1 does not have a majority of seats, it needs to induce other parties to join its coalition at the lowset possible cost.

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[5] There is also a Legislative Electoral Competition (LEC) game, in which parties compete for seats in the Legislature. For simplicity that game is modelled marginally in an abstract way, as an opportunity cost in the other two games.

[6] See also the simplified model in Bugarin (1999).

Let $d_i \in [0,1]$ be the (unidimensional) measure of the ideological position of party i. In other to join a supporting coalition, party P_i must be compensated for any reputational costs that it may incur. The reputational cost is the key element of this theoretic modelling approach. It is measured in terms of the potential loss of seats in the following Legislative elections, which is related to the loss of popular votes a party may endure when it decides to join the supporting coalition[7] of party P_1.

If $i = 1$, then party P_i is precisely the incumbent president's party, then, there is zero (legislative electoral) cost in supporting itself. Otherwise, there is a cost, that is increasing in the ideological distance between that party and the executive incumbent's party. The cost may be of one of two types, depending on whether the party had an executive candidate or not. If the party did not compete in the executive elections, the cost is $c_n(d(1,i), s_i)$ where: $d(1,i) \in (0,1]$ is the ideological distance between parties 1 and i, $d(1,i) = |d_i - d_1|$; s_i is the share of seats party i holds in the Legislature; and $c_n(.,.)$ is an increasing function in the ideological distance and the size of the party in Parliament. The rationale for the size effect is the collective choice approach to organizations: it is easier to coordinate a smaller party than a bigger one (Olson, 1965). Alternatively, one may advance a purely "vote buying" interpretation: party leaders need to buy the support of the party representatives, and the higher the number of legislators in that party, the more expensive it is to buy that support.

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[7] The ideological distance is not the only cost a party may incur in joining a supporting coalition. For example, by joining a governing coalition, party $P_i, i \neq 1$ may incur higher costs to participate in the following presidential election, where P_1 will probably have a candidate, as discussed earlier. For the sake of simplicity, this basic model aggregates all costs into the ideological distance variable.

If party i competed in the executive and lost, then the cost of joining the supporting coalition is $c_y(d(1,i), s_i) = kc_n(d(1,i), s_i)$ where $k > 1$. In other words, the voters of a party that competed in the executive election get more disappointed when their chosen party decides to support the winning party. This is the main assumption of the present model.

These costs may represent, for instance, the amount of additional money a party needs to spend in the following Legislative electoral race to recover the votes of those citizens who are disappointed with its support to party P_1.

Party P_1 needs to consolidate a supporting majority in the Legislature to pass its political platform. If P_1 already owns a majority of seats in the Legislature, it will form a supporting coalition at zero cost. Otherwise, it will use the public administration and the national budget to transfers resources to additional parties to compensate for their Legislative electoral costs.

In the equilibrium of the LCF game, party P_1 will form a "minimum winning coalition" (Baron and Ferejohn, 1989) where typically parties with lowest costs will be part of the supporting coalition,[8] whereas the parties with highest cost will be excluded. Each party in the coalition receives a part of the budget that is at least its own (opportunity) cost of joining the coalition up to the lowest cost of the parties that are not included in the coalition, depending on the party's bargaining power. For the sake of simplicity, we assume that the president's party has all the bargaining power, i.e., all parties in the supporting coalition (other that P_1) receive exactly their opportunity costs, whereas the incumbent's

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[8] Taking into consideration the size of parties. Thus, occasionally it may be optimal, at the margin, to exclude several small parties with lower costs and keep a bigger party with a higher cost.

party P_1 receives all additional budget gains. Let b_v be P_1's gain net of the benefits it transfers to the other parties in the supporting coalition.

The equilibrium of the LCF game yields the following conclusions and testable hypothesis.

(i) In general, the higher the ideological distance between the incumbent's party P_1 and a generic party P_i, the less likely that party will join the supporting coalition in the Legislature.

(ii) Having a candidate that lost the EEC game decreases the likelihood a party will be part of the supporting coalition in the Legislature and gather the corresponding budget benefits.

(iii) There may be an equilibrium in which a party P_i that runs for president but loses the EEC game, joins the supporting coalition in the Legislature whereas a party $P_j, j \neq i$ that did not ran for president does not join that coalition. This will happen if the ideological distance between P_j and P_1 is high enough, so that $c_n\big(d(1,j), s_j\big) > kc_y\big(d(1,i), s_i\big)$. This may also occur if party P_i is smaller (thereby, imposes lower costs to join the supporting coalition) and party P_1 is able to form a majoritarian coalition with P_i, without the need to include the bigger party P_j. However, if the ideological distances are not a very high and parties have similar sizes, it should be the case that running for the Executive and losing becomes a handicap to a party in the Legislature.

Example. Suppose there are four parties: $P_j, j = 1,2,3,4$ with corresponding ideologies $d_1 = 0.2, d_2 = 0.4, d_3 = 0.5, d_4 = 0.9$. Party P_1 is the leftmost party, P_2 is a center-left

party, P_3 is a center party and P_4 is the rightmost party. Suppose, moreover, that $c_n\big(d(i,j), s_j\big) = 100|d_i - d_j|s_j$ and $c_y\big(d(i,j), s_j\big) = 200|d_i - d_j|s_j$. The distribution of seats (share) in the Legislature is: $s_1 = 0.40, s_2 = 0.15, s_3 = 0{,}15, s_4 = 0.40$.

Suppose party 1 wins the EEC game. Table 1 presents the costs the president's party incurs in order to attract each one of the parties to its coalition in the Legislature, depending on whether that party ran for president in the EEC game, as well as the optimal (cheapest) coalition for P_1.

This example brings about several insights. First, an (ideologically) extreme party may have no expected benefit from abstaining from the EEC game, since it may never be chosen to be part of a supporting coalition, due to the ideological distance to the executive election winner. This is the case of party 4 in the example.

Second, ideologically moderate parties are the ones who most benefit from abstaining from running for president, thereby becoming more attractive to the supporting coalition. Suppose that a party is ideologically moderate and, in addition, has a low probability of winning the presidential election. Then, these are two factors reinforce the incentive for that party not to run for presidency, as will become clearer in the analysis of the EEC game.

Table 1. Coalition formation costs and optimal coalition in the Legislature as a function of which parties run for president in the Executive Electoral Competition Game (EEC).

Parties that run for president	Cost for party 1 to include party i in the coalition: $\mu_i\|d_1 - d_i\|s_i$ $\mu_i = 100$ if i did not ran for president $\mu_i = 200$ if i run for president				Parties in the optimal coalition	Coalition formation cost
	1 $d_1 = 0.2$ $s_1 = 0.4$	2 $d_2 = 0.4$ $s_2 = 0.25$	3 $d_3 = 0.6$ $s_3 = 0.15$	3 $d_4 = 0.75$ $s_4 = 0.2$		
1,2,3,4	0	10	12	22	1,2	10
1,2,3	0	10	12	11	1,2	10
1,2,4	0	10	6	22	1,3	6
1,3,4	0	5	12	22	1,2	5
1,2	0	10	6	11	1,3	6
1,3	0	5	12	11	1,2	5
1,4	0	5	6	22	1,2	5

Note: Party 1 is the party of the president.
d_i is the ideological position of party $i, i = 1,2,3,4$. Party 1 is the leftmost party whereas party 4 is the rightmost party. Parties 2 and 3 are respectively center-left and center-right parties.
s_i is the share of party i is terms of seats in the Legislature.
Source: Authors' calculations.

Third, since moderate parties may be the ones more inclined to abstain from participating in the EEC game, one could expect that bigger, more competitive parties may seek to ex-ante form a supporting coalition, before the EEC game starts, to ensure future Legislative support and reduce competition in the EEC game. This is a theory of coalition formation at the majoritarian elections level, motivated, in part, by future Legislative

coalition formation. Note that this theory suggests that there will be ideological divergence in the presidential election, rather than convergence (as the typical median-voter approach of Downs 1957 suggests). The difference in these two approaches is that Downs assumes that the winning party is able to implement its platform, whereas here we assume that the party winning the presidency will still need to ensure Legislative support to pass its platform.[9]

2.2.2 The Executive Electoral Competition Game (EEC)

Running for the national executive is costly to every party. For simplicity, we assume (without loss of generality) that all parties competing in the ECC game face the same cost γ. The electoral campaign is completely financed with public funds, that are distributed to each party according to its representation in the Legislature. In particular, a party i with reduced Legislative representation may receive public funding $\phi_i < \gamma$, so that it will not participate in the EEC game[10].

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[9] To be sure, there are several other reasons for divergence, such as ideological party preferences (Aldrich, 1983; Portugal and Bugarin, 2007; Wittman, 1991), incomplete information (Morton, 1993), different campaign advertisement strategies (Spiliotes and Vavreck, 2002), multidimensional policy platform space Shipan and Lowry, 2001), etc. Here we offer one additional explanation: strategic coalition formation at the EEC game, taking into consideration the subsequent LCF game. A more detailed study of thid motive is felt here as a suggestion for further research.

[10] Note that the electoral campaign cost γ and the public campaign funds ϕ_j are included here to explain a self-selection phenomenon whereby some small and less competitive parties decide not to run for president, regardless of other considerations. This approach follows the "entry cost" model in Persson and Tabellini (2000); however, this is not essential to this paper's modelling.

Let $J = \{1, \dots, m\}$ be the set of parties j such that $\phi_j > \gamma$. These are the parties that receive enough public funds to present a candidate for the executive election. At the beginning of the electoral campaign each party $j \in J$ receives a signal $\pi_j(s_j) \in (0,1)$ that corresponds to the ex-ante expected probability of victory in the EEC game, where s_j represents the share of seats party j holds in the Legislature[11] and $\pi_j(.)$ is an increasing function of s_j. Then, if party j decides to run for president, its expected payoff is:

$$\pi_j(s_j)b_v + \left(1 - \pi_j(s_j)\right)\pi_{yc}b_c + \phi_j - \gamma$$

where b_v is the payoff that the party receives in the subsequent LCF game if it wins the EEC game, and b_c is its benefit if it loses the EEC game but enters the Legislative supporting coalition. Furthermore, π_{yc} is the probability that party j, having lost the EEC game, enters the supporting coalition of the victorious party.

On the other hand, if party j decides not to enter the EEC game, its expected payoff is:

$$\pi_{nc}b_c + \phi_j$$

where π_{nc} is the probability that party j enters the supporting coalition of the victorious party. Note that, according to the solution of the LCF game[12], $\pi_{nc} \gg \pi_{yc}$.

Therefore, a party will not run for the national executive if:

$$\pi_{nc}b_c + \phi_j > \pi_j(s_j)b_v + \left(1 - \pi_j(s_j)\right)\pi_{yc}b_c + \phi_j - \gamma$$

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[11] This assumption reflects the fact that bigger parties are usually more popular and have more public funds to spend in their electoral campaigns.

[12] In the limiting case, in a balanced Legislature where no party holds an important share of Legislative seats, one might expect that π_{yc} approaches zero, as it was the case in the previous example for party P_4.

Equivalently,

$$\left(\pi_{nc} - \left(1 - \pi_j(s_j)\right)\pi_{yc}\right)b_c + \gamma > \pi_j(s_j)b_v \qquad (*)$$

The LHS of expression $(*)$ presents the marginal benefits of not running for president: there is a higher probability of joining the supporting coalition and receiving the corresponding payoff, and there is no electoral campaign expenditure. The RHS presents the benefits of running for president: the return of becoming an incumbent net of coalition formation costs, b_v, times the probability of victory.

Expression $(*)$ yields the following conclusions.

(i) If the signal $\pi_j(s_j)$ is small, i.e. it is unlikely that party j will win the election, then, the concern with losing the opportunity of joining the supporting coalition dominates and the party will prefer not to enter the Executive competition game.

(ii) Since $\pi_j(s_j)$ is increasing in the party size in the Legislature, smaller parties are less likely to enter the EEC game.

(iii) The probability π_{nc} of entering the winner's supporting coalition (when not entering the EEC game) is higher the lower the ideological distance to the winner's ideology. Therefore, parties at the center of the ideological spectrum have higher π_{nc} values, ceteris paribus, and, therefore, are less likely to enter the EEC game.

(iv) Conversely, parties at the extremes of the ideological spectrum anticipate that they are not likely to be part the Legislative supporting coalition even if they do not enter the EEC game, i.e., π_{nc} is small for these parties. Therefore, these are the parties that will most likely choose to compete for the presidency.

(v) In order to better understand the dynamics of these successive EEC and LCF games, suppose the signal term $\pi_j(s_j)$ depends on the period t in which the EEC game is played,

$\pi_j(s_j) = \pi_j^t(s_j)$, and follows a moving average process $\pi_j^t(s_j) = \frac{1}{2}\left(\mu_j^t(s_j^t) + \mu_j^{t-1}(s_j^{t-1})\right)$ where the random variables $\mu_j^t(s_j^t)$ may be seen as party j's popularity shock at period t, as in Rogoff (1990). Suppose, moreover, that there is a relationship between the variance of $\mu_j^t(s_j^t)$ and s_j^t in the following sense: the higher s_j^t, i.e., the higher the share of a party in the Legislature, the lower the variance of the signal $\mu_j^t(s_j^t)$. Then, we expect that condition (∗) will have a degree of path-stability for large parties, i.e., if (∗) holds for an election, it is likely it will also hold for the next election. In other words, a large party will either consistently run for presidency or consistently play the Legislative supporting role. Therefore, large parties will switch trajectories less frequently than smaller ones, for which the signal has a higher variance. Next section discusses switching trajectories.

2.3) The Costs of Switching Political Tracks and Supporting parties as anchors

The majoritarian and the supporting party strategic choices function as pathways for political parties, which define their specific nature. Once a political track is chosen and consistently followed, both party members and voters rely on this path for further information and positioning. Nevertheless, choosing a particular track cannot be understood as a straitjacket. That is, once a party takes a particular track it can change to a different one. However, changing political tracks generates costs. For instance, a party that once played the supporting party role and decides to change the strategy to play the majoritarian game will have to bear the risk of losing the upcoming majoritarian presidential election and getting a smaller payoff than the supporting party strategy used to provide. Similarly, if a party plays the majoritarian track and fails, it may switch tracks and start playing the supporting party game. But depending on how bitter and competitive the

presidential campaign was, it might take a longer time for the majoritarian loser (the potential embarrassed median) to build bridges of trust and cooperation with the majoritarian winner.

It is important to remember that those costs are not the same for all parties. The costs are also affected by the probability of beating the incumbent executive. The higher the threat the former supporting party poses to the incumbent executive, the higher the probability of changing the political track. In other words, if a party evaluates that its chance of winning the election is high, this party may decide to take the risk, considering ex-ante uncertainty of playing the majoritarian protagonist game.

However, if this party turns out to be a strong contender and does perform well in the election, but not enough to be the winner, there would probably be a point of no return for this party in the majoritarian game. Why would a runner up or a close third place finisher in a majoritarian presidential race immediately join the coalition of the majoritarian winner, combining forces with the party (ies) they vociferously competed against during the campaign? It turns out that if a party poses a credible threat to the incumbent, and decides to play the majoritarian game, the reputational cost of changing track back to the supporting party become very high, sometimes unbearable.

The organizational structure of parties can also affect their ability to perform a successful switch. The protagonist and the supporting actor games create opposing pressures on a party's organizational structure, requiring different rules and routine arrangements for functioning. Thus, we can expect that the longer a party plays a single game successively, the more it loses its capacity to switch and to pursue a different path.

Another aspect is the size of the party. The supporting legislative party that has consistently enjoyed a large portion of seats in congress could be a potential track switcher. This is so because it poses a credible threat to the incumbent as long as its position in the political spectrum can support a track change. However, a large supporting legislative party tends to have a more complex and substantial party structure.

Large parties are comparable to a large ship, in which every maneuver demands a considerable amount of time and energy to complete. A quick shift in such cases, therefore, seems to be too costly and often harder to implement. Although party size may pose a credible threat to the incumbent, large parties may abstain from launching a presidential candidate and strategically use their political assets to bargain for greater political and financial resources from the majority winner (the coalition *formateur*) in an eventual governing coalition, without having to bear the costs of effectively changing the partisan track. When the (pre) electoral decision of launching or not a credible presidential candidate is on table, and when the allocation of financial resources is on debate, one cannot understand political parties as unitary entities for sure. The expected conflict over this decision usually demands an effort from party leaders to deliberate consensus through institutionalized internal party rules.

The degree of partisan fragmentation in the political system is another component influencing the partisan strategy to follow a median supporting legislator track. It is reasonable to expect that the greater the fragmentation of the party system, the higher will be the incentives for a party to play the supporting party role. In a fragmented setting, for instance, it is more difficult for a great number of parties to become credible contenders for the majoritarian track. Usually, fewer parties (especially those that present reasonable

chances of making it to the second round) take the risk of such competitive track. On the other hand, a higher likelihood of being successful in a relatively less competitive legislative race makes it much more comfortable for parties to pursue the legislative track mostly. Once a party has decided to follow this political track, the best it could do is to try to position itself as the pivot of the governing coalition in order to extract the highest payoff from the majoritarian winner.

There seems to be the need for a *political anchor* to enhance cooperation when the legislature is highly fragmented. In the absence of this political anchor, a fragmented political system would have a higher chance of becoming too polarized and hence dysfunctional. Assuming that a large mass object gravitationally attracts smaller ones, this median anchor in fragmented environment would avoid too much concentration of power at one or in both extremes of the ideological spectrum. At the limit, the existence of the large and ideologically amorphous supporting party is the reason why the system becomes truly multiparty.

Just like the creation of matter is due to the gravitational attraction between objects, the supporting party prevents two large and ideologically opposing parties from attracting smaller ones. It thus prevents the appearance of frequent partisan gridlock in the system and, thus, it provides conditions for governability in multiparty environments. Therefore, to protect itself, a fragmented multiparty system would tend generate such supporting parties. Rather than discouraging the creation of new parties, as a two-party majoritarian system usually does, the supporting party provides incentives for new parties to develop aiming to occupy this strategic position in the system. The smaller parties, on the other hand, tend to be swallowed by those two extreme poles.

The second and complementary reason for the occurrence of supporting legislative parties in fragmented environments has to do with Sartori's (1976) predictions for fragmented systems encompassing a "centrifugal competitive pattern." The center of the distribution becomes a very attractive position for parties to compete. As parties struggle for expansion and control over policies and resources, the more fragmented the party system is, the bigger the political struggle among potential supporting legislative parties. Because the supporting legislative voter usually is the pivot, it has greater chances of having access to the highest payoff among those parties that belong to the governing coalition within the legislature. Therefore, the higher the partisan fragmentation, the more parties will try to converge to the median, hoping to be more influential in policymaking and to have access to higher payoffs among coalition partners.

3) Estimating the partisan-track decision

When does a party decide to play the supporting legislative game or to follow the majoritarian track? Usually parties decide first to launch or not a candidate for the presidency. Those parties that did not launch a presidential candidate, will follow the supporting legislative game. Those who did and lost the presidential race have to decide to play the majoritarian loser game or switch track in order to play the supporting party game. In order to empirically address this question, we applied a set of econometric exercises covering the last six presidential elections in Brazil (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014).

Figure 1 illustrates such track decisions in contemporary Brazilian politics. On the horizontal axis we plotted the decision to have a presidential candidate in a particular

election and on vertical axis the decision to field a presidential candidate in the previous elections. Thus, decisions in one election can always be compared to the decisions in previous ones.

Only parties holding more than 35 seats in the lower house - the larger parties[13] - are labeled, with the respective election years. Parties are also identified regarding their ideologies, according to Power and Zucco (2012) on continuous scale that goes from 1 to 10: left (1 to 4.5), center (4.5 to 6.5) and right (6.5 to 10).

In the quadrant 1 of the Figure 1 it is located political parties without presidential candidates in the election "t" and with presidential candidates in the election "t-1". In the quadrant 2 we have parties with presidential candidate in both "t" and "t-1" elections. In the quadrant 3 we have parties with presidential candidates in the election "t" and without presidential candidates in the election "t-1". Finally, in the quadrant 4 it is ploted political parties without presidential candidates in both "t" and "t-1" elecytions.

As can be seen, whereas the trajectories of small parties vary a lot, the political trajectories of big parties are extremely stable. The only exception was the PMDB in 1994, when it changed from a majoritarian to a supporting party track. This supporting legislative track party consistently remained in this trajectory until recently, when the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 permitted the PMDB to occupy the presidency.

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[13] We observed the historical seat distribution and adopted the arbitrary number of 36 seats or more (7% of total seats available) to define a party as large, given the discontinuity around this number in the historical distribution of seats (median equals 18 seats and mean equals 31 seats).

Figure 1: Partisan track changes in Brazil – 1998-2014

Parties with >35 seats labelled (party.year)
Parties with <36 seats in dots
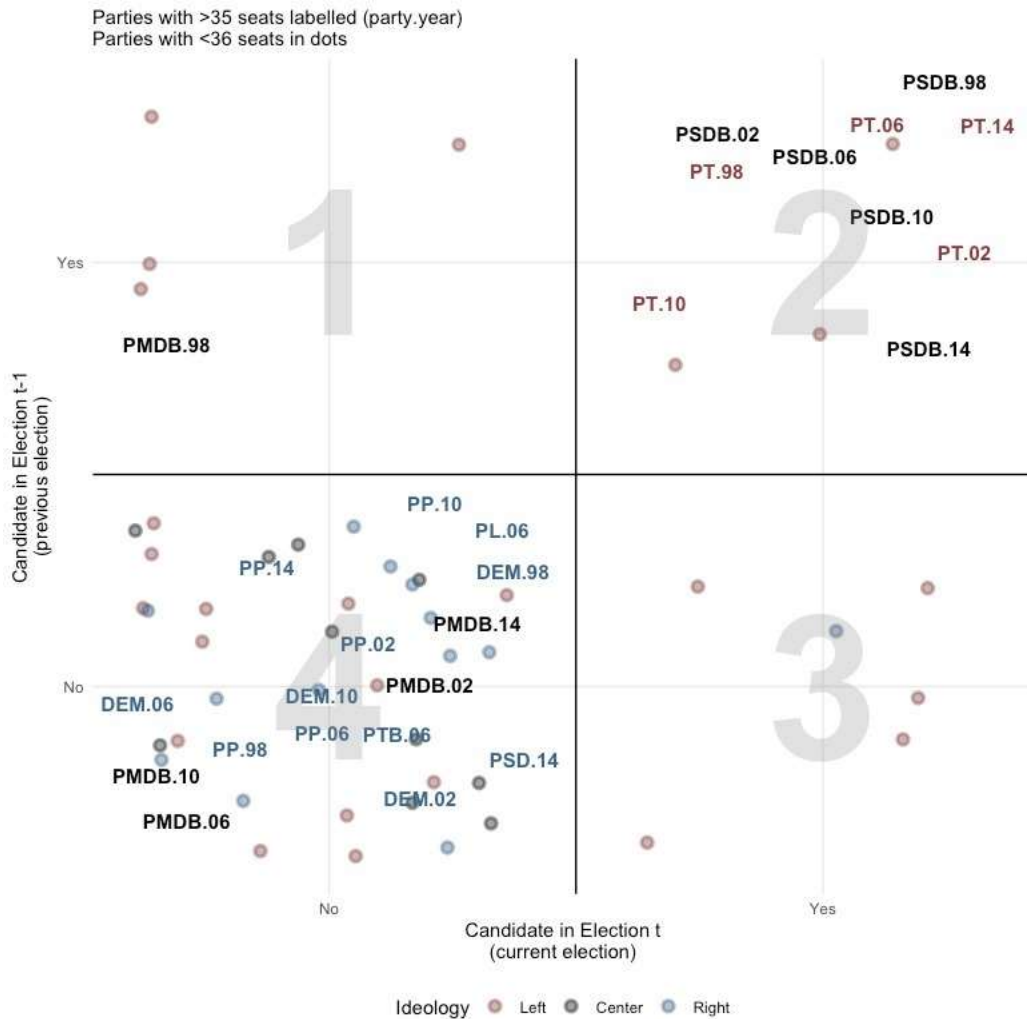
We have different sets of models with three main dependent variables representing three distinct party decisions: a) opting for a majoritarian track – a dummy with value of 1 if the party offers a presidential candidate and zero otherwise; b) joining the governing coalition – a dummy with value of 1 if the party decides to become a member of the governing coalition, and zero otherwise; and, c) changing track – a dummy with value of 1 if the party changed its political track from one election to the next, and zero otherwise.

The idea is to test theoretical expectations about the choice political parties make (track changes and majoritarian vs. supporting party) in multiparty presidential regimes. Consistent with our theoretical framework, we assume that if the party decides not to launch a presidential candidate, the second-best alternative is to become the anchor of the governing coalition as the supporting party.

As control variables for all estimations we included *partisan fragmentation*, which measures the *effective number of parties* in congress. Since there is an expectation that the higher the fragmentation, the smaller the chance a party will launch a competitive presidential candidate and also the greater the probability the party will become a member of the governing coalition, we need to control for that aspect. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, multiparty presidential regimes also require supporting parties to play the supporting legislative role in addition to protagonist parties. However, since partisan fragmentation does not vary in a given year and is specific to the institutional environment of Brazil, we preferred to use this variable as control only.

3.1) *Running for the presidency models*

1) *Presidential candidate in the previous election*, which measures if the party launched a presidential candidate in the previous election. We expect that running previously for the presidency to increase the chances that a party will field a candidate again in the next election. As illustrated in Figure 1, this relation is even stronger when small parties are excluded from the sample.

2) *Large party*. Our expectation concerning this variable is contingent to the inclusion in the model the two parties that have consistently lanched presidential candidates

in Brazil, PSDB and PT. When these paries are included in the model (1A), we expect that larger parties would increase ther chances of launcing a presidential candidate. However, when PSDB and PT are excluded from the estimation (Model 1B), the larger the party is the smaller the probability of having a presidential candidate.

3) *Ideology*. It is a control variable, which measures party ideology using a scale that goes from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (far right), borrowed from Zucco and Power.[14] Although there is not a clear theoretical relation between ideology and having a presidential candidate, for historical reasons, right wing parties have adopted a conservative approach in terms of partisan tracks, keeping themselves as legislative players rather than taking their chances in presidential elections. The legacy of the intimate association of right-wing parties with the military dictatorship in Brazil from 1964-85 (Power 2008) combined with a dominant belief of social inclusion (Pereira and Bertholini 2017; Alston et al 2016) in a society with very high-income inequality, in which the majority of voters would support redistributive policies, hindered the electoral chances of right-wing parties for the presidency.

3.2) *Joining the governing coalition models*

1) *Large party*. We expect that the larger the political party is, the higher the probability that it will take part of the governing coalition. Because a large party

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[14]   For   methodological   details   and   data,   please   refer   to https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=hdl:1902.1/14970.

holds greater political power and influence, it tends to be needed more by the president (the majoritarian winner) as a key member of the governing coalition.

2) *Ideological distance*, which measures the party's ideological distance from the elected president. We calculated the simple distance between the estimated party ideology and the president's party ideology. We expect that the greater the ideological incongruence between the president and the party, the smaller the probability of this party will be a coalition partner. A consequence of this expectation is that centrist parties with amorphous ideologies will have a greater chance of following a legislative track.

3) *Majoritarian loser*, which measures if the party launched a presidential candidate but lost the electoral race. According to our definition of embarrassed supporting party, having a presidential candidate but losing an electoral contest may reduce the chances that this party will be a coalitional partner (at least in the short run). In addition, this party tends to receive a smaller coalitional payoff.

3.3) *Partisan-track change models*

1. *Large party*, which is a dummy related to the number of seats a party holds in congress. If the percentage of seats is higher than 7%, then the party is considered a large one. It may seem odd considering a party large holding 7% of seats only. However, Brazil has a very high partisan fragmentation. We expect that the larger

the party is, the smaller the probability that it will change tracks.[15] As stated previously, large parties usually have a more complex party structure, in which every maneuver demands a considerable amount of time and energy to complete. A quick shift in such cases, therefore, seems too costly and often harder to implement.

4) *Ideology*, as in the other models, we expect that right-wing parties will launch presidential candidacies less often given their electoral disadvantage of being associated with the military regime and their political difficulties of providing redistributive policies of social inclusion in a country with very high level of income inequality.

3.4) *Models' results*

Table 2 summarizes the main results of the econometric (pooled logit) exercises.[16] All models were estimated with robust standard errors clustered by party. As a robustness check, all models were also estimated using a time fixed effect instead of partisan fragmentation, whose results proved to be very consistent. This is the reason why we used a pooled logit instead of panel-structured models.

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[15] Party size (a continuous variable) was also included in the estimations. However, in our preferred specifications we decided to include the variable *large party* (dichotomous) in order to better explain the relations identified in Figure 2. Party size also presented strong correlation with other continuous independent variables.

[16] The descriptive statistics of all variables can be found in Appendix.

The main econometric results obtained are in line with our theoretical predictions. Model 1A indicates that having a presidential candidate in the previous election, regardless if he/she is a winner or loser, increases the chances that this party will launch a presidential candidate again in the following election, which suggests a kind of path dependence generated by the partisan trajectory. When a party launces a candidate for the presidency in the previous election it has 2.75 times higher the chance of launcing again in the next election compared to those parties that have not launched a presidential candidate before. As menmtioned before, political parties have distinct internal organization and structure depending on their previous trajectories. Protagonist parties that follow the majoritarian track, for instance, tend to have a national distribution in the entire territory of the country in order to be competitive. On the other hand, supporting parties that aim at becoming the anchor of the governing coalition in Congress do not need to be organized and structured nationally, but rather on strategic states (districts) where they belive their chances of getting legislative seats are higger. Even in the case of majoritarian losers (either PSDB or PT during the period studied), they prefer to keep playing the majoritarian game with the expectation to become a winner in the next election.

The Model 1A also suggests that the size of the party seems to be irrelevant to the party decision to launch a presidential candidate. Even though small parties tend to change tracks more often, once they decide to have a presidential candidate in one election they generally stick to this strategy in the next one. On the other hand, in the model 1B, in which the two main majoritarian party contenders in six presidential elections (PT and PSDB) were excluded from the specification, the size of the party seems to matter decreasing the probability of a big part to launche a presidential candidate. With regard to the control

variable *ideology*, as expected right-wing parties tend to abstaing from launching presidential candidates when compared to left-wing parties.

In models 2A, 2B and 2C, in which we estimate the determinants of joining the governing coalition, we excluded the majoritarian winners from the sample, since the idea is to estimate the probability of playing the supporting party strategy. In models 2B and 2C, the parties PT and PSDB were excluded from the sample. In model 2C we also excluded every party that launched a candidate for the presidency.

As expected, the size of the party, measured by the variable "large party," is significant and positively correlated with the probability of participating in the governing coalition. That is, the larger the number of seats occupied by a political party in Congress, the higher the probability that this party will follow the supporting party strategy by joining the governing coalition and by trying to play to role of the median legislator.

On the other hand, having an unsuccessful presidential candidate (majoritarian loser) decreases the chance that this party will become a member of the governing coalition. It may take awhile for the majoritarian loser to build credible bridge with the winner and join the governing coalition, especially if the electoral campaign was bitter and competitive.

Finally, the greater the ideological distance between the political party and the president's party, the smaller the probability is that this party will join the governing coalition. Although mulyiparty presidential regimes allow parties to have higher flexibility, ideologically distant parties face hard time to coalesce. Usually majority winners tend to make an offer to ideologically closer parties to join the governing coalition.

Table 2: Modeling partisan track decisions

	Model 1		Model 2			Model 3
	Launch Candidate		**Join the coalition**			**Change track**
	(1A)	(1B)	(2A)	(2B)	(2C)	(3)
Candidate (lag)	1.322*	0.230				
	(0.604)	(0.750)				
Large party (>35seats)	0.655	-11.760***	0.929*	1.218**	1.210**	-1.701*
	(0.422)	(0.403)	(0.390)	(0.425)	(0.425)	(0.759)
Ideology	-0.396*	-0.326*				-0.259*
	(0.159)	(0.166)				(0.119)
Ideological Distance			-0.326	-0.338	-0.413*	
			(0.180)	(0.185)	(0.185)	
Majoritarian Loser			-1.800*	-1.142		
			(0.759)	(0.729)		
Constant	-0.234	-8.583*	-3.413	-3.438	-6.100**	5.649
	(3.293)	(3.512)	(2.142)	(2.158)	(2.158)	(3.235)
Fragmentation?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Period	1998-2014	1998-2014	1994-2014	1994-2014	1994-2014	1998-2014
# of elections	5	5	6	6	6	5
Election winner	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
PT and PSDB	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Candidate launchers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Pseudo R Sq.	0.606	0.637	0.365	0.382	0.408	0.515
Observations	91	81	108	102	80	91
Log Likelihood	-43.279	-33.770	-60.085	-57.514	-46.081	-39.806

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Model 3, which estimates a party's decision to change the electoral trajectory, shows that *Large Party* is negatively and strongly correlated with changing electoral track.

It confirms our expectation that a large party faces higher difficulties of adopting different strategies in the next elections. It takes time for a large party to make big shifts in their electoral strategies and trajectories. There are sunk costs involved with partisan modifications given that the party structure, budget and organization have been set up in order to accomplish a particular trajectory. Concerning *Ideology*, it is a good predictor of the probability of changing tracks, with right wing parties changing less often than left wing ones. We believe this trend has to do with the results obtained in models 1A and 1B. Apparently, right wing parties change partisan tracks less often given that they rarely launch presidential candidates. On the other hand, left wing parties seem to be less constrained about the strategy of launching their own presidential candidates by playing a position ideological taken role in the race.

5) Conclusion

The literature on political parties does not differentiate distinct political paths these organizations may follow. We believe that this approach does not fully account for the institutional differences between parties in the dominant institutional setting of Latin America, characterized by the combination of presidentialism and multipartyism.

This paper provides an innovative game-theoretical framework in which parties are presented with the opportunity to choose between alternative tracks: following either a majoritarian/protagonist or a legislative/supporting party strategy. This framework has important implications both for the literature on party politics and on comparative politics. The majoritarian strategy implies the party organization will play a protagonist role in the executive branch, while the supporting party strategy requires the party to perform a

'supporting actor role' of the government in the legislature. In short, this perspective brings to theoretical discussion the widely known fact that in multiparty regimes while some parties prefer to focus on the majoritarian game in pursuing their policy platforms and political agendas, other parties prefer to adjust their political pretensions by playing a supporting role in congress and trying to position themselves as the supporting pivotal party of the governing coalition. The main hypotheses generated by our theoretical model and famework were confirmed by econometric exercises implemented, which had Brazil as case study.

Those different paths create costs and benefits. In the majoritarian game, if the party wins the presidential election, it will likely achieve the highest payoff generated in the political system. But if the party loses the election, it will bear the costs of being in the opposition, which consists of having less access to political and financial resources controlled by the president. On the other hand, in the supporting party trajectory the party forgoes the protagonist role of the executive branch, and the financial and political benefits that the office offers and concentrates. However, the party in the supporting legislative position can obtain some benefits in exchange for its key political support in congress. This position is a 'comfort zone' where the party achieves the intermediate payoff between the majoritarian winner and the majoritarian looser. Changing a partisan path creates costs of all sorts. In the case of a supporting party, switching is very tempting but also risky. Institutional features of the party, such size (larger parties) and position on the ideological scale (to the center), do matter as conditions to support a track switch.

This suggests that multiparty presidential regimes do not only need protagonist majoritarian parties to function, they also need supporting parties playing the supporting

legislative game in congress. One of our key contributions to the literature, therefore, is to analyze the relation between partisan fragmentation and the presence of a supporting party not willing to play the majoritarian game. This happens because the chances of having a credible candidate for the presidency and winning the election are very low. Parties remain in the legislative branch and try to maximize their benefits as a supporting party instead.

The framework we bring in this manuscript, therefore, is neither directly applicable to parliamentary systems, where there is no separation of powers, nor to two-party presidential regimes, which lack partisan fragmentation. Rather, it is a theory particularly tailored to understand party choice in multiparty presidential systems.

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Appendix:

DESCRIPTIVES

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Track-changing	144	0.257	0.438	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000
Majoritarian loser	188	0.271	0.446	0	0	1	1
Joined gov. coalition	188	0.239	0.428	0	0	0	1
Size (absolute)	98	31.112	31.162	1.000	6.000	47.750	110.000
Large parties	188	0.176	0.381	0	0	0	1
Fragmentation	188	2.203	0.235	1.929	1.948	2.356	2.591
Ideology	114	5.062	2.382	0.000	3.052	7.032	8.773
Ideological distance	114	2.372	1.467	0.000	1.094	3.570	5.972