Presidents' Effect on Opposing Party Coordination

Nicolas Hernandez Florez

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Attempting to bridge differing perspectives between candidate and elite-driven theories of post-reform presidential nomination contests, this paper studies factors that may affect party coordination. Specifically, it examines the proportion of a party's sitting governors and senators who endorsed any candidate before the Iowa caucuses and the share of those endorsements received by the leading endorsement-getter as tandem measures of party coordination akin to those outlined by Cohen et. al (2008; 2016). Guided by literature suggesting a role for negative partisanship and ideological extremism to influence strategic voting, this paper investigates whether those factors also impact elite coordination. This paper first hypothesizes that an incumbent president viewed more unfavorably by the opposing party's voters will correlate positively with an increase in the dual coordination measures for the opposing party. Secondly, this study hypothesizes that an incumbent president viewed as more ideologically extreme will similarly correlate with the dual party coordination measures. This study runs multivariate regressions to test both hypotheses, controlling for the number of major candidates vying for the nomination. The results do not support the hypotheses proposed and therefore this paper does not find evidence that these evaluations influence elite-level coordination. However, this study does find that disapproval of the incumbent president positively correlates with the ideological extremism of the opposing party's ultimate nominee albeit at the less stringent 90% confidence interval. This may suggest that while party leaders are not influenced by these evaluations, voters may be. This study recommends further research to evaluate that supposition.

The Democratic Party planned its 1968 national convention in Chicago with President Lyndon Johnson in mind. Democratic leaders counted on the incumbent president as their nominee to such an extent that Vice President Hubert Humphrey believed the party delayed its convention until August to coincide with Johnson's birthday (Langguth, 2000).

However, Johnson's surprise announcement in March that he would not seek reelection fractured a party that was so certain of the incumbent president's candidacy. By the time of the convention, the party and the country were in a state of disarray; the assassinations of Sen. Robert Kennedy and Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. prompted national unrest and, as the war in

Created by Nicolas Hernandez Florez, Department of Political Science, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Correspondance concerning this research paper should be addressed to Nicolas Hernandez Florez, Department of Political Science, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Email:nicolash@cpp.edu

Undergraduate Journal of Political Science, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2022. Pp. 61-79

Vietnam raged on, the anti-war movement grew, manifesting itself politically into the presidential campaign of Sen. Eugene McCarthy. Both Kennedy, while he was still alive, and McCarthy battled in the Democratic Party's primary elections to gain delegates. Humphrey, who entered the race following Johnson's withdrawal, instead chose to campaign for delegates in nonprimary states, where he appealed to party elites directly who controlled delegate votes. In a chaotic convention marred by Chicago police's brutality toward protestors, Humphrey was successful in gaining the Democratic Party's nomination despite never seeking or winning a single vote from the party's electorate.

In response to internal disunity and Humphrey's ultimate loss against Richard Nixon in the general election, the Democratic Party organized the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, later known as the McGovern-Fraser Commission, to recommend reforms for the nomination process. These reforms broadly aimed to bolster democratic participation in the process and increase the representation of previously underrepresented groups. Since the implementation of the reforms, which led to a significant increase in the adoption of primary elections by both the Democratic and Republican parties, political scholars have debated the role that party leaders play in the nomination process today and whether the proverbial "smoke-filled room," where party insiders deliberate and decide among themselves who will be the party's nominee, is a political relic. Broadly, post-reform nomination literature is divided on whether nominees are now more empowered to engage in factional strategies, making the process candidate driven (Polsby, 1983), or whether party leaders adapted to the reformed system and still hold considerable influence on deciding the eventual nominee (Cohen et. al, 2008).

Early post-reform primary elections resulted the nominations of George McGovern and Jimmy Carter, candidates whose strategy was to construct a personal campaign apparatus rather than to function as conduits of their party in exchange for establishment support. Following these early contests in the 1970s, however, scholars have more recently observed a reemergence of party leaders as pivotal in presidential nominations. As signaled by endorsements, the candidate favored by party insiders has been successful in most of the contests since then, a phenomenon Cohen et al. (2008) dub the party decides theory. Yet, the stunning success of Donald Trump's factional path to the 2016 Republican nomination and Republican Party leaders' failure to coordinate around an alternative candidate when they viewed Trump as a hostile, divisive, and unelectable candidate was spectacularly counterintuitive to the theory.

Conversely, the 2020 Democratic nomination contests saw one of the most visible examples of party leaders coalescing around their preferred candidate in Joe Biden. The divergence in these two scenarios begs the question: What factors influence parties' ability to coordinate around a single candidate?

In the competing theories, the role of an incumbent president in influencing party elites' sway over the nomination process has not been widely examined. Yet, seeing as it was Johnson's unforeseen withdrawal from the 1968 race that created a power vacuum in his party and led to the nomination process' reforms in the first place, it is an issue worth investigating. Specifically, this paper seeks to study how perceptions of the incumbent president affect the willingness of party leaders to coordinate and therefore determine how successful an insurgent campaign like Trump's can be. Determining the role that evaluations of an incumbent presidents can play could serve as a bridge between the two conflicting post-reform theories, especially when the most recent nomination contests provide evidential fodder for both.

To do this, this thesis takes cues from past research demonstrating a possible effect of negative partisanship and ideological extremism on strategic voting and observes whether those factors significantly affect party leader's own strategic behavior, namely endorsement coordination during the time before the Iowa caucuses, known as the invisible primary. Specifically, this study makes use of survey data

to see how disapproval and perceived ideological extremism of the incumbent president by his opposing partisan respondents affect rates at which high-level party leaders choose to endorse any candidate during the invisible primary as well as the rate at which the leading endorsement-getter is favored.

By taking negative partisanship and perceived extremism as its independent variables, this paper observes two increasingly important trends shaping American politics and studies their effect on presidential nominations, electoral contests that were often overshadowed by the general election, but — as shown in the most recent election cycles — can tremendously affect the direction of national politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Primary elections before 1968

Following the widespread use of the party caucus and, later, the national convention, to nominate presidential candidates throughout the 19th century, primaries began to increase in frequency in the early 20th century as part of the wider litany of Progressive reforms. By 1916, 20 states had adopted direct primaries and they were used to allocate most of both parties' delegates. However, the movement stalled. By the next election cycle, the number of primaries decreased, and for more than 50 years the proportion of delegates selected via primaries hovered from mid-thirty to low forty percent (Crotty and Jackson 1985).

Writing amid this mixed-system era, Schattschneider (1942) castigated the implementation of primaries as operating under the folly impression that a political party is defined by its electorate rather than by a group of politicians, asserting, "Democracy is not to be found in the parties but between the parties" (p. 60). This is not to say that Schattschneider found the primaries to be dangerous. On the contrary, he characterized their implementation as "innocent enough," on the account there was no evidence the primary spurred changes in the party system (p. 57).

This was a sentiment shared by many observers of primaries prior to 1968. President Harry Truman in a 1952 press conference said of the primaries: "You see, all these primaries are eyewash. When it comes to the national convention meeting, it does not mean a thing" (Truman 1952). Crotty and Jackson (1985) point to the nominations of Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy as examples of candidates using the primaries to strengthen their appeal to party elites while still recognizing primaries were insufficient in securing the nomination. Polsby (1983), however, paid special attention to the Kennedy nomination in his overview of pre-1968 contests as an example of a candidate beginning to use the primaries not only to prove himself to party leaders but also to throw off some of their control as well, using his electoral strength to stave off a challenge from Ohio Governor Mike DiSalle. For Polsby, this signaled a more significant role for the primary in subsequent contests. The chaos during the Democratic National Convention of 1968 and the McGovern-Fraser reforms that followed, however, accelerated that role.

Weakened parties?

The McGovern-Fraser reforms governed the 1972 Democratic nomination contests and led to an increase in primaries once again. For the first time since 1916, a majority of delegates were selected via the primaries, including in the Republican contests which were not themselves beholden to the reforms (Crotty and Jackson 1985). While the initial proliferation of primaries on the heels of the Progressive movement was short-lived, the post-1968 reforms cemented direct primaries as the dominant avenue for prospective nominees. In 1968, the Democratic and Republican parties each held direct primaries in fifteen states. In 1972, that number jumped to 22 and 21 for the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively (Crotty and Jackson 1985). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in 2020, only three still states used caucuses for the Democratic contests and only five for the Republican contests with the rest using primaries (Zoch 2020). Democracy could now be found in the parties.

For many political scholars, this development portended the weakening of party leaders' influence and a new dynamic to presidential nominations. Polsby (1983) provided a comprehensive analysis of how a primary-dominant process fundamentally alters the behavior of candidates. "Rather than build coalitions, they must mobilize factions," he argued (p. 65). For Polsby, what caused either coalitions or factions to form were the political systems in place. Polsby agreed with James Madison's view in Federalist No. 10 that factions are inevitable in a free political system and, therefore, to effectively remedy their ills, institutions must be structured in ways that curtail their effects. Madison contended that a republican form of government was uniquely suited for this task because it avoided direct democracy's unrefined characteristics and a large republic was even better to dilute factional sentiments (Madison 1787). Polsby applied the same logic to his conceptions of factions versus coalitions, arguing that coalitions arise when no faction is large enough to achieve its goals by itself and when the political arena is structured to incentivize strategic behavior. In a primary-dominant process, Polsby contends, the goal of candidates is to "survive" (p. 67), meaning candidates will seek to exceed expectations in early contests and garner media attention, propelling them to success in later contests. To be most successful in this roadmap, candidates would need to differentiate themselves from the field to attract a loyal and ideologically distinct base of support.

Bartels (1988) pays special attention to the news media's role in this new dynamic now ubiquitously known as "momentum." An increasingly primary-dominated process incentivizes candidates to participate in the direct primaries but, at the same time, financially restricts campaigns which must now stage a national apparatus. The strategy, then, was to exploit the news media's propensity for horse-race coverage, news coverage that emphasizes candidates' standing in the polls rather than policy. Horse-race coverage in the reformed nomination contests benefits the winners of primary contests as well as losers who performed better than expected; it also lends more attention to early contests. This is the foundation for "momentum" and is most notably what buoyed Jimmy Carter in 1976 from an unknown Georgia governor to winning his party's nomination and the White House. This candidate-centered campaign strategy, Polsby (1983) argues, significantly diminished the role of party leaders in an increasingly candidate-centered process.

Party resurgence

However, save for the campaigns of Carter in 1976 and Senator George McGovern (who helped form the new rules) in 1972, the factional approach, while oft replicated, has been mostly unsuccessful in delivering candidates the nomination in the elections since. While candidates like George Bush in 1980, Gary Hart in 1984 and Paul Tsongas in 1992 have attempted to follow the momentum approach to the nomination, they have rarely netted the same results. Mayer (1996) argues that this is because the nomination contests of the 1970s were "'transitional elections'" that benefited innovative candidates like Carter and McGovern while the other players learned and adapted to the rules (p. 61).

That party leaders can eventually circumvent and adapt to reforms like those instituted by the McGovern-Fraser commission is supported by past findings. Masket (2016) finds evidence of parties adapting to Progressive era reforms like campaign finance reform, nonpartisan legislatures, recalls, and the direct primary in various states.

In the context of presidential nominations, Cohen et al. (2008) in The Party Decides argue that party establishments have indeed adapted to reforms and succeeded in nominating their preferred candidates for president in every election from 1980 to 2004 (p. 170). Party leaders can do this by coordinating around their preferred candidate in a process known as the "invisible primary." Hershey (2017) describes the invisible primary as the prospective candidates engaging in a "process of early fund-raising

and jockeying for media attention and support" (p. 224). Aldrich (2009) comes to similar conclusions when providing an overview of the post-reform nomination contests, summarizing that the 1970s were mostly dominated by primary voters and candidate strategies, the 1980s began to see the influence of voters wane, and by the 1990s, the nomination of Bill Clinton cemented the importance of the invisible primary. The Party Decides authors identify four measures of the invisible primary: media coverage, polling, fundraising, and endorsements. The authors find that endorsements were the most predictive of the ultimate nominee in the contests from 1980-2004.

Influence of endorsements

Steger (2007), writing when the prevailing view was that party elites were no longer in control of nominations, first made the finding that endorsements from party insiders were positively correlated with a candidate's total primary vote share. This finding was true for both the Democratic and Republican party contests with other measures like cash reserves and polling being significant for only one party's contests.

Cohen et al. (2008) expand on Steger's analysis with state-level voting data and with a longer timeframe within the invisible primary. They find that the effect of endorsements by party leaders on the delegates won in state nomination contests is "much larger" than that of polls, the share of media coverage, and early fundraising (p. 286). The importance of endorsements demonstrates significant influence from party leaders on who is nominated.

Further research into primary elections continues to support the importance of endorsements at multiple levels of government. Dominguez (2011) found that in congressional primary elections a candidate who earns 5 percent more endorsements than their rival is expected to win one percent more in vote share. Kousser et al. (2015) provide even further evidence in the context of California's unique top-two primary elections. Notably, their paper utilizes not just public-facing information on whether a candidate was endorsed but unique data on Democratic Party leaders' internal endorsement votes. With this data, the researchers were able to examine endorsements' effects isolated from the endogeneity inherent to a candidate's electoral strength and his or her likelihood of being endorsed. Regardless of whether a candidate just barely lost or won the Democratic Party's endorsement, the endorsement itself was positively and significantly correlated with an increase in the endorsed candidate's primary vote share.

While there is ample evidence that endorsements matter, it is not as clear why they matter. Cohen et al. (2008) ask the same question after their statistical analysis, theorizing those endorsements could serve as indicators of material benefits for candidates like mobilization of volunteers which serve to strengthen a campaign's ground game, or that endorsements may serve as cues to voters in the nominating contests. They focus especially on this latter explanation given the uniqueness of primary voters in their relative lack of turnout compared to general elections and in their lack of early information. Unlike a general election, voters in a primary or caucus do not have the party heuristic to base their vote on. As Bartels (1988) observes, this creates uncertainty in voters who, as the campaign and election go on, increasingly learn more. Bartels also finds that, on average, voters in the primary are "more attuned to politics" than others who identify with a party but do not vote (p. 147). Geer (1989) adds to our knowledge of primary voter characteristics, finding that when a primary contest is disputed between two candidates, primary voters are generally just as informed as general election voters. However, when the contest begins to involve more candidates, then unfamiliarity increases among voters.

These findings leave a vignette of primary voters being interested in politics, but, within the unique context of the nomination contests, lacking information early on, especially in contests with more than two candidates. This leads to primary voters being amenable to receiving more information. Cohen et al.

(2008) conclude, this may make voters open to suggestions from party leaders. These findings can be viewed as evidence of McClosky, Zaller, and Chong's (1985) assertion that the views of politically attentive citizens will reflect the prevailing view of political elites. However, as the authors point out, this only holds when there is general agreement among the opinion leaders. When there is disagreement among elites, that disagreement is then embodied by the public (p. 234). Therefore, despite robust evidence that party elites possess influential power through their endorsements, if they do not reach a consensus on which candidate to endorse or even to endorse in the first place, their influence over the nomination contest may be dampened.

Mixed results in recent contests

The success of Donald Trump's factional path toward the 2016 Republican nomination and Republican Party leaders' failure to coordinate around an alternative candidate when they viewed Trump as a hostile, divisive, and unelectable candidate served as a very visible counterargument to the party decides theory. In their reevaluation of the theory post-Trump, Cohen et al. (2016) point out that Trump's path toward the nomination was remarkably factional and was characteristic of the nominations Polsby feared post-reform, with little elite support for Trump but also less willingness from elites to support any candidate pre-Iowa caucuses. Cohen et al. (2016) point to (1) intra-party disharmony, (2) communication opportunities for insurgent candidates, and (3) earlier fundraising cycles as recent developments which may incentivize more factional nominees. Additionally, Noel (2018) argues that a lack of coordination from party elites may not only create a weak signal for voters to follow but it could also cause more resistance from party activists to a consensus nominee, paving an easier path for a factional candidate like Trump for the nomination.

Yet, in the most recent presidential nomination cycle, there was an exceptional show of coordination exhibited by the Democrats. As Masket (2020) points out, Joe Biden, the party's ultimate nominee, was the polling leader for the entirety of the invisible primary and racked up the most elite endorsements. While Democratic Party leaders did not endorse pre-Iowa to the extent they did in 2016, most endorsements went to Biden. The 2020 nominations then, Masket argues, were "surprisingly good" for the party decides theory (p. 47). In just four years, the communication and early fundraising opportunities for insurgent candidates had not changed and Democrats faced a larger number of candidates than Republicans had four years earlier, presenting the Democratic Party with the same barrier to coordination. Comparing the success of Democratic coordination 2020 and the failure of Republican coordination in 2016, despite similar environments, then, points to Cohen et al.'s (2016) first explanation: the importance of party harmony.

Incumbency and ideology's effect on nominations

Cohen et al. (2008) demonstrate evidence that parties, when nominating, consider their position as the party out of government and the ideology of the candidates they nominate. The authors find a trend of parties nominating more moderate candidates the longer they have been out of office (p. 92). The authors theorize that parties perform a balancing test wherein if they have been out of office for a short while, they will be more likely to take a risk with a candidate who adheres more strongly to the party's policy demands but may not be as electable. On the other hand, if the party has been out of government for a longer time, they may be more inclined to eschew policy and nominate a candidate who has a better shot of being elected.

A similar dynamic has been observed in voters during primaries. Abramson et al. (1992) show that primary voters may display both sincere voting (voting for the candidate who one prefers) and sophisticated voting (voting for the candidate one believes is more viable to win the nomination. Similarly, Rickershauser and Aldrich (2007) find that primary voters also can demonstrate strategic voting (voting for the candidate perceived to be more electable in the general election). This latter voting strategy

is the most akin to parties nominating a more moderate candidate who may not pursue the most partisan policy but is perceived to be more electable. Understanding when voters behave most strategically in their vote choice may shed light on the circumstances under which party elites decide to exhibit more coordination in pursuit of a more electable candidate.

Culbert (2015), analyzing the presidential nominating contests of 1984, 1988, 2000, and 2004 find similar results to Abramson et al. and Rickershauser and Aldrich in that voters display sincere, sophisticated, and strategic voting, but that the latter may be more determinative. Finding that voters use a combination of preference, viability, and electability to determine their ultimate vote choice, Culbert still observes that electability mattered more than candidate preference in some contests and that electability, more so than viability, can be more decisive when candidate preferences are comparable.

Mirhosseini (2015) develops a model of the trade-off between sincere and strategic voting that takes the effects of ideology into account. Specifically, Mirhosseini proposes that when primary voters view an incumbent president as more radical, they will behave strategically, opting for the primary candidate viewed to be closer to the population median, ergo moderate and more electable. Furthermore, the model suggests primary voters believe that the population ideological median shifts toward the incumbent party. When applying the model's findings to the 2004 and 2008 Democratic nomination contests, Mirhosseini suggests that in 2004, Democratic voters behaved strategically, voting for John Kerry over alternatives like Howard Dean because, amid the Bush administration, Democrats believed the national population median to have shifted toward the side of the incumbent Republican president. Yet, in 2008, Democrats may have been less reluctant to vote for Barack Obama because Bush's unpopularity may have served as a signal that the population median was shifting back toward the side of the Democratic Party.

The role that evaluations of an incumbent president plays in strategic behavior, while sparsely studied here, has not been a focus of attention for elite-level strategic behavior. Cohen et al. (2008) demonstrate that party elites do consider the number of years their party has been out of the White House when deciding to nominate a more moderate candidate, but do not indicate a similar calculus of being more likely to nominate a more moderate candidate when the opposing incumbent president is more radical. Hall and Thompson (2018) show that in U.S. House general elections, extremist nominees fared worse than their moderate counterparts. Hall (2015) describes this phenomenon as general election voters serving the role of a "moderating filter" for extremist nominees. Yet, when incumbent presidents are viewed as extremists, opposing party elites could play the same role in nominating a more moderate challenger. This would make theoretical sense if parties were viewed as a policy-oriented coalition (Bawn et al., 2012). A radical Democratic (Republican) president may inspire more urgency in Republican (Democratic) party leaders to protect their preferred policies by coordinating around a moderate challenger.

Evaluating Biden's victory in securing the Democratic Party's nomination, Masket (2020) makes a similar argument framed around the rise of negative partisanship. Negative partisanship refers to the trend of Americans not affiliating with one party or another more than they used to, but instead aligning themselves against one party (Abramowitz and Webster 2016; 2018). Masket points out Cohen et al.'s (2008) finding that parties tend to nominate a more moderate candidate if they have been out of the White House for a longer stretch of time. However, with a rise in negative partisanship, Masket suggests that viewing the opposing party's incumbent president less favorably — an operationalization of negative partisanship — may make a party more "desperate" and nominate a moderate candidate sooner than they would due to the number of years they have been out of office (p. 57).

HYPOTHESES

With opposing partisan evaluations of the incumbent president possibly playing an influential role in coordinating around a candidate in 2020, it is worth determining whether evaluations play a similar role for coordination more generally. Therefore, I propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: An incumbent president viewed more unfavorably by the opposing party's voters will correlate with a higher share of the opposing party's pre-Iowa endorsements going to a single candidate.

H1b: An incumbent president viewed more unfavorably by the opposing party's voters will correlate with a higher share of the opposing party's sitting senators and governors issuing an endorsement prior to the Iowa caucuses.

These hypotheses address the role of negative partisanship directly. The logic here follows one of Masket's (2020) explanations for Biden's victory in securing the Democratic Party's nomination: having a negative affect toward the incumbent president may inspire more urgency from the opposing party leaders to weigh in on the nomination contest and to coordinate around a single candidate.

H2a: An incumbent president viewed as more ideological extreme by the opposing party's voters will correlate with a higher share of the opposing party's pre-Iowa endorsements going to a single candidate.

H2b: An incumbent president viewed as more ideological extreme by the opposing party's voters will correlate with a higher share of the opposing party's sitting senators and governors issuing an endorsement prior to the Iowa caucuses.

This hypothesis addresses the model developed by Mirhosseini (2015). The logic here is similar, but rather than approval, it asks whether perceptions of ideological extremism inspire the same kind of urgency.

DATA

The units of analysis for these hypotheses and subsequent analyses are presidential nominations contests since 1980, specifically, the contests of the party not in the White House at that time.

Constraining the study to this unit of analysis allows observation of how established party leaders behave in their coordination efforts when faced with the common goal of trying to regain control of the presidency. Within this context, the study seeks to determine whether evaluations of the incumbent's approval and extremism influence the urgency of party leaders to coordinate around one candidate.

While this study constrained observations with the goal of seeing whether party actors act in similar ways when faced with electoral circumstances, it also comes at a cost. Using these specific presidential nomination contests as units of analysis presents the challenge of limited cases (N=11) thus increasing the statistical threshold for significant findings and diminishing the confidence of any statistically significant relationship that this study may find.

The conceptual dependent variable in this study, party coordination, is operationalized using similar measures to Cohen et al. (2008; 2016). For reference, the authors provide evidence for high levels of Democratic Party coordination around Hillary Clinton in 2016 by calculating that 81% of the party's sitting governors, senators, and House members made endorsements prior to the Iowa caucuses and 94% of those endorsements went to Clinton.

For this study, I use Cohen's 1980-2004 pre-Iowa endorsement data and an original dataset following Cohen's structure for pre-Iowa endorsements from 2008-2020 with endorsement data compiled from the Democracy in Action and FiveThirtyEight websites. Since more recent data are not as comprehensive as Cohen's 1980-2004 dataset, I subset Cohen's data to only include sitting senators and governors and only compiled endorsements from sitting senators and governors in my original dataset to ensure fewer omitted data in my analysis and more confidently compare the data from two different datasets.

In addition to just the tally of endorsements from party elites, this analysis required the rate in which each party's elites endorsed in each cycle. This necessitated acquiring data on each party's pool of potential endorsers for each election to act as the denominator for endorsement rates. For data on sitting party elites, I use Jacob Kaplan's United States

Governors 1775-2020 dataset which uses data from the National Governors Association. This dataset was then filtered to only display Democratic and Republican governors in election years. Since the NGA was missing data for more recent years, I also manually verified and added governors for the missing states. For sitting senators during election years, I imported data originally from the U.S. Senate's chronological list of senators from 1789-present using web scraping commands.

Using endorsement data from Cohen's dataset and my originally compiled dataset, as well as a pool of potential endorsers from each party's senators and governors, I develop the two coordination rates discussed by Cohen et al. (2008; 2016) and apply them as dependent variables to all the presidential nomination contests of interest from 1980-2020.

The first dependent variable is the proportion of the out-party's sitting senators and governors who elected to issue an endorsement for any candidate prior to the Iowa caucuses. This variable can serve to gauge how willing party leaders were to get involved in their party's contest and seek to decide the ultimate nominee. The second dependent variable is the share of the high-level endorsements earned by the top endorsement-getter. This second variable more directly gauges how coordinated party leaders were around a single candidate.

The first conceptual independent variable, negative partisanship, was operationalized through survey data which asked respondents to rate their approval of the incumbent president. Specifically, I used the American Nation Election Studies' cumulative data from 1948 to 2016 for the elections of interest up to 2016, and ANES' 2020 data for the most recent election. To best operationalize negative partisanship, the data from these surveys were subset to create two different datasets: Democratic respondents and Republican respondents. In the survey, approval of the president is measured on a four-point scale with 1 indicating strong approval and 4 indicating strong disapproval. From these subsets, I calculated the average approval of the incumbent president by the opposing party respondents to achieve a measure of negative partisanship consistent with the operationalization of previous studies.

The second conceptual independent variable, the perceived ideological extremism of the incumbent president, was also operationalized using survey data. Unlike the approval question, the ANES was inconsistent in asking respondents to gauge the incumbent president's ideological extremism. This lack of consistency necessitated using other data sources and recoding, which was not ideal.

For the contests from 1980 through 2004 as well as the 2012 and 2020 contests, I was able to once again use ANES data. Respondents were asked to evaluate the incumbent president on a 7-point scale with 1 indicating extreme liberal and 7 indicating extreme conservative.

However, in 2008 and 2016, the ANES did not ask respondents to evaluate the president on this scale. Therefore, when evaluating these two contests, I use Cooperative Congressional Election Study data from 2008 and 2016. While in 2016, the CCES used the same 7-point scale as ANES, in 2008 this was a 100-point scale with 0 indicating extreme liberal and 100 indicating extreme conservative. The differing scales necessitated re-coding the 2008 survey data into a 7-point scale consistent with the other measures.

Furthermore, as the 7-point scales are structured in a way that lower values correspond with more liberal evaluations and higher values with more conservative evaluations, it does not directly measure degrees of ideological extremism. Therefore, the 7-point scale for all the contests of interest needed to be re-coded as well into a "folded ideology" scale where 0 represented a moderate ranking, 1 a somewhat liberal or somewhat conservative rating, 2 a liberal or conservative rating, and 3 an extremely liberal or extremely conservative rating — all resulting in a four-point perceived ideological extremism scale. I then took the average of this measure for each year of interest to obtain the mean ideological rating of the incumbent president as perceived by his opposing party base.

The stitching together of data from two different survey firms with idiosyncratic methodologies was not ideal and is a particular point for improvement for any future analyses. Additionally, as the election surveys are generally conducted around the time of the general election in November, it would be beneficial to use data that gauges respondents' sentiments nearer to the time of the invisible primary, which is often in full swing a year before the general election.

METHODS

For its methodology, this paper utilizes data analysis, specifically multivariate regression analyses, to test the statistical significance of the relationships predicted in its hypotheses.

Since this paper seeks to observe how party coordination is affected by the evaluations of the incumbent president, I introduce a control variable into the multivariate regressions that aims to account for idiosyncratic difficulties to reach consensus from contest to contest. Given the variation in how many candidates enter the race for their party's nomination, the regression analyses control for the number of major candidates vying for the nomination. This control variable was introduced under the assumption that a contest with many viable candidates could make coordinating around a single inherently more difficult. Additionally, the number of candidates who enter the contest may also be a sign of how candidates themselves perceive the atmosphere of that contest. If prospective candidates believe that the party is largely coordinated around a single candidate, then fewer may opt to run. On the other hand, if prospective candidates believe the party is splintered and undecided in who it will support, then more may take the risk of running. By controlling for the number of major candidates running for the nomination, this study hopes to control for both the visible barriers to coordination and the invisible barriers to coordination that the number of candidates who enter the race may signal.

The first two regressions test the first two-part hypothesis assessing whether negative partisanship, measured as an incumbent president's unpopularity among the opposing party's electorate, has a significant effect on both the endorsements made by the opposing party's senators and governors as well as the distribution of those endorsements. The second two regressions test the effect of the incumbent president's perceived radicalism by the opposing party's electorate on the same two party coordination measures: (1) proportion of endorsements made by the party's governors and senators and (2) the proportion of endorsements received by the leading endorsement-getter.

All four models that these this study's hypotheses include the number of major candidates vying for the nomination as a control variable, allowing to test the significance of the independent variables of interest on coordination, separated from the effect that the number of viable candidates may have on coordination as well.

In addition to these four regressions this study concludes with another two-part multivariate regression. This final regression, instead of using endorsement measures as its dependent variables, uses the perceived ideological extremism of the party of interest's ultimate nominee as the dependent variable and continues to use the same measures of negative partisanship and perceived extremism of the incumbent president as its independent variables. The final regression uses the number of elections the party of interest has been out of office as a control variable. In effect, this multivariate regression controls for the pattern observed by Cohen et al. (2008) of the out-party moderating in response to its lengthy out-of-government status and seeks to determine whether either negative partisanship or perceived ideological extremism of the incumbent has a significant effect on the ideology of the out-party nominee.

RESULTS

Both two-part hypotheses use the proportion of endorsements made by a party's sitting governors and senators prior to the Iowa caucuses and the proportion of endorsements earned by the field's top endorsement-getter as their dependent variables.

Figure 1 represents the former measure: proportion of pre-Iowa endorsements by each respective party's sitting senators and governors. Figure 2 displays the proportion of a party's gubernatorial and senatorial endorsements achieved by the contests' leading pre-Iowa endorsement-getter.

These descriptive statistics provide an idea of levels of coordination exhibited by party leaders. In an election like the 2000 Republican

Figure 1

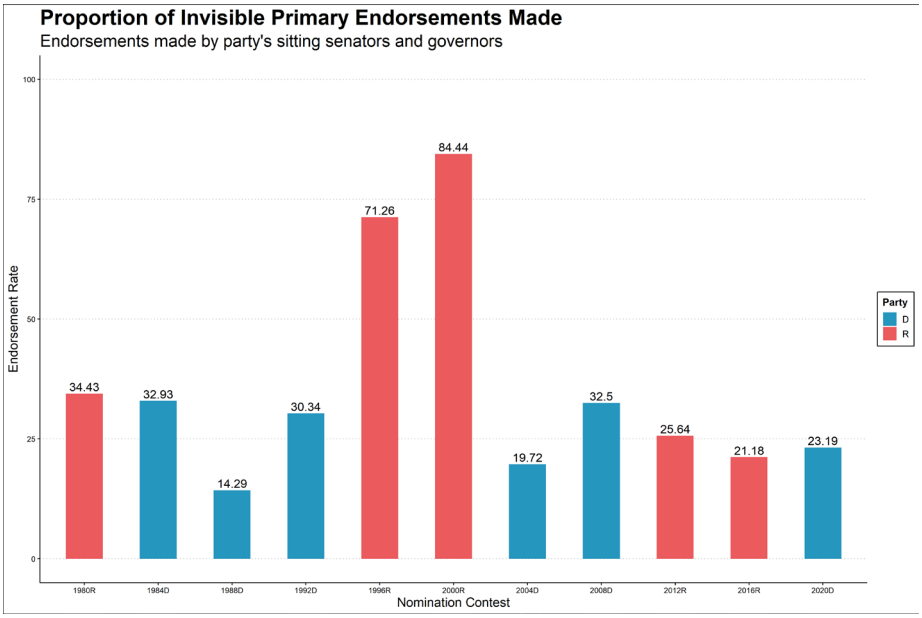
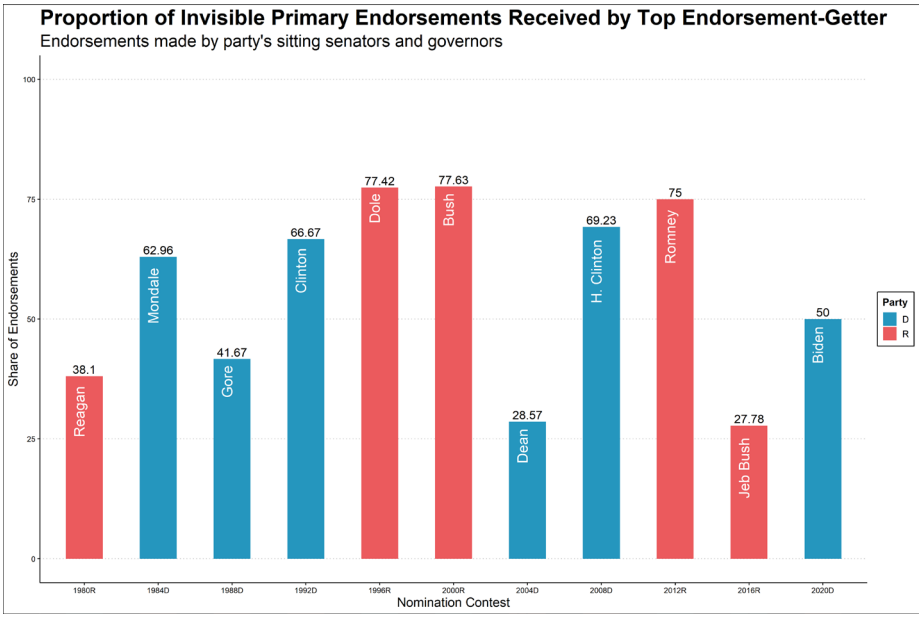


Figure 2



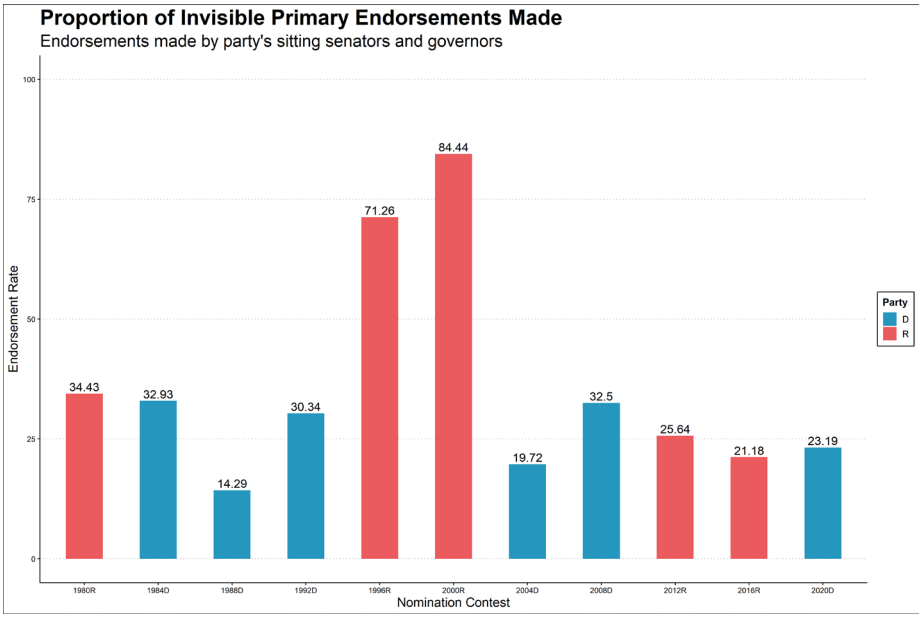
nomination contest where more than 84% of sitting Republican senators and governors endorsed a candidate and of those endorsements more than 77% went to a single candidate, George W. Bush, it can be observed that the party was remarkably unified in its coordination efforts during the invisible primary, to the benefit of Bush, the ultimate nominee. On the other hand, in the 2004 Democratic nomination contest, less than 20% of the party's sitting senators and governors endorsed any candidate and only about 28% went to the most endorsed candidate, Howard Dean, who, despite racking up the most endorsements, did not win the nomination, demonstrating the unpredictability that can arise from a lack of elite-level endorsements.

To test this study's hypotheses, both coordination measures are analyzed as the dependent variable, and first, I test how negative partisanship affects coordination. Using the previously described process of subsetting survey data to solely have responses from respondents who identify with one party, I take the average approval of the incumbent president from the opposing party's respondents. These approval averages can be seen in Figure 3 below.

For the first two-part hypothesis, this negative partisanship measure is the independent variable while the dual coordination measures are the dependent variables. The number of major candidates vying for the nomination acts as a control variable in this regression to account for the difficulty to coordination that a more saturated field of prospective nominees can pose.

Model 1, shown below, is a multivariate regression that tests the effect of negative partisanship (disapproval of the incumbent president by opposing partisans) on both (1) the proportion of endorsements made by a party's sitting senators and (2) the distribution of those endorsements on the top endorsement-getter. As can be seen below, I did not find a statistically significant relationship between this measure of negative partisanship and either of the two party coordination measures; therefore, the null hypothesis in this relationship cannot be rejected and there is no statistical evidence that the disapproval of the incumbent president by opposing partisan respondents affects the rate at which the opposing party coordinates its endorsements.

Figure 3



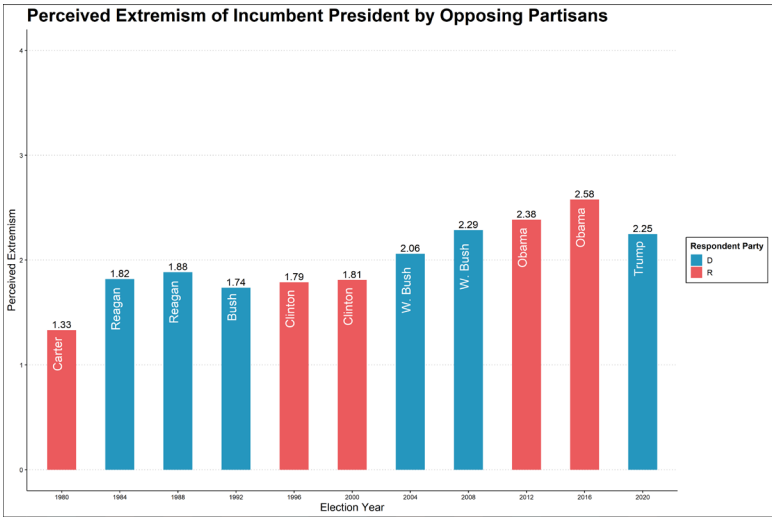
For the second two-part hypothesis, I use a second independent variable in this study, evaluations of the incumbent president's extremism by opposing partisans. This seeks to evaluate whether the theory underpinning Mirhosseini's (2015) model of a more radical president inspiring strategic voting may also inspire more urgency in elite-level coordination out of fear that a more radical opposing president would be more detrimental to the party's policy aims. Using subsets of survey data (this time from both ANES and CCES data) I specifically look at how one party's respondents evaluate the ideological extremism of the opposing party's incumbent president. As previously discussed, this involved taking a 7-point scale from extreme liberal to extreme conservative and converting it into a 4-point scale with 0 representing a moderate evaluation and 4 representing the most extreme evaluation. The averages of those evaluations for the election years of interest are shown in Figure 4 below.

A trend worth noting is that, regardless of party, the perceived ideological extremism of the

Model 1

	Dependent variable:	
	Proportion	cand_prop
	(1)	(2)
Disapproval	-30.287	-5.484
	(24.220)	(22.142)
Candidate_Num	-0.393	
	(1.042)	
Candidate_Num		-0.979
		(0.953)
Constant	140.847	83.665
	(78.579)	(71.837)
Observations	11	11
R^2	0.226	0.157
Adjusted R^2	0.033	-0.054
Residual Std. Error (df = 8)	21.706	19.844
F Statistic (df = 2; 8)	1.168	0.744
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Figure 4



incumbent president by his opposing partisans has increased. For Republican respondents, the Democratic president viewed as the least ideological extreme was Jimmy Carter in 1980 and for Democratic respondents, George Bush Sr. was perceived to be the least ideologically extreme Republican president in the last 40 years.

Unsurprisingly, President Obama in 2016, and in 2012, was perceived to be the most ideologically extreme president by Republican respondents. Somewhat less expected was that in 2008, Democrats believed President George W. Bush to be more ideologically extreme that they believed President Donald Trump to be in 2020.

Using this perceived extremism measure as a second independent variable, I test its effect on the dual elite coordination measures. Once again this takes the form of two multivariate regression analyses. The first tests the effect of this perceived extremism measure on the proportion of the party's sitting senators and governors who issued an endorsement prior to the Iowa caucuses and the second tests the effect on the share of endorsements captured by the top endorsement-getter. The number of major candidates vying for the nomination again acts as a control variable. As can be seen in Model 2 below, I do not find a statistically significant relationship between these two variables; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected and there is no statistical evidence that opposing partisan respondents' perceptions of the incumbent president's extremism affects the rates at which party elites coordinate their endorsements.

Taking these two models together, I fail to find statistical significance in any of the relationships proposed by the hypotheses, specifically, the relationships between either the disapproval or perceived extremism of the incumbent president on opposing elite-level coordination.

However, this lack of statistical significance on party leader endorsements does not necessarily mean that the two factors observed, negative partisanship and ideological extremism, have no effect at all on presidential nomination contests. Revisiting the initial pattern observed by Cohen et al. (2008) that the longer a party has been out of the White House the more likely it is to nominate an ideologically extreme candidate, motivates another set of multivariate regression analyses. While still using the same measures of negative partisanship and perceived ideological extremism for the elections of interest from 1980 to 2020, I shift from the two party endorsement measures to instead measure the perceived ideological extremism of the ultimate nominee as my dependent variable. With the

Model 2

	Dependent variable:	
	Proportion	cand_prop
	(1)	(2)
FoldedIdeo	-18.853	3.535
	(22.159)	(19.382)
Candidate_Num	-0.458	
	(1.122)	
Candidate_Num		-1.138
		(0.981)
Constant	77.399*	59.725
	(41.450)	(36.255)
Observations	11	11
R^2	0.152	0.154
Adjusted R^2	-0.061	-0.058
Residual Std. Error (df = 8)	22.727	19.878
F Statistic (df = 2; 8)	0.714	0.727
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

suspected role that both ideological extremism (Mirhosseini 2015) and negative partisanship (Masket 2020) may play in inspiring strategic behavior during the presidential nomination contests, I test whether rather than these factors inspiring more coordination in presidential nomination contests, they may inspire more moderate candidates as the ultimate outcome.

To operationalize the ideological extremism of the parties' ultimate nominees throughout the last 40 years, I use ANES data that asks respondents to measure candidates on a 1-7 scale from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. I then recode these values into the same folded, 4-point ideological scale used for incumbent president to act as the dependent variable. I once again run multivariate regressions seeking to test the effects of my measure of negative partisanship and perceived ideological extremism. This time, however, instead of controlling for the number of major candidates vying for the party's nomination, I control for the number of elections that the party has been out of the White House.

By including this control variable, this study seeks to test the significance of the independent variables I originally identified while controlling for the factor that Cohen et al. (2008) already observed as being correlated with the ultimate moderation of candidates.

Model 3 does not find a statistically significant relationship between the perceived extremism of the incumbent president and the perceived extremism of the opposing party's nominee. It does, however, find a statistically significant relationship between disapproval of the incumbent president by his party's opponents and the ideological extremism of the party's nominee, albeit at the 90% confidence interval. The model suggests that a one-point increase in the disapproval of the incumbent president (on a four-point scale) by the opposing party's electorate will result in a 0.281 increase in the ideological extremism of the opposing party's ultimate nominee. The statistically significant relationship is graphed in Figure 5 below.

In the visualization we can see some notable examples of the pattern suggested by the model in the last 40 years. In 2008, Democratic respondents disapproved of the Republican incumbent president, George W. Bush, more so than they have disapproved of

Model 3

	Dependent variable:	
	NomineeFoldedIdeo	
	(1)	(2)
Disapproval	0.281*	
	(0.137)	
PresFoldedIdeo		0.170
		(0.131)
ElectsOut	-0.076	-0.084
	(0.060)	(0.068)
Constant	0.735	1.352***
	(0.475)	(0.282)
Observations	11	11
R^2	0.429	0.280
Adjusted R^2	0.286	0.100
Residual Std. Error (df = 8)	0.131	0.147
F Statistic (df = 2; 8)	3.004	1.558
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

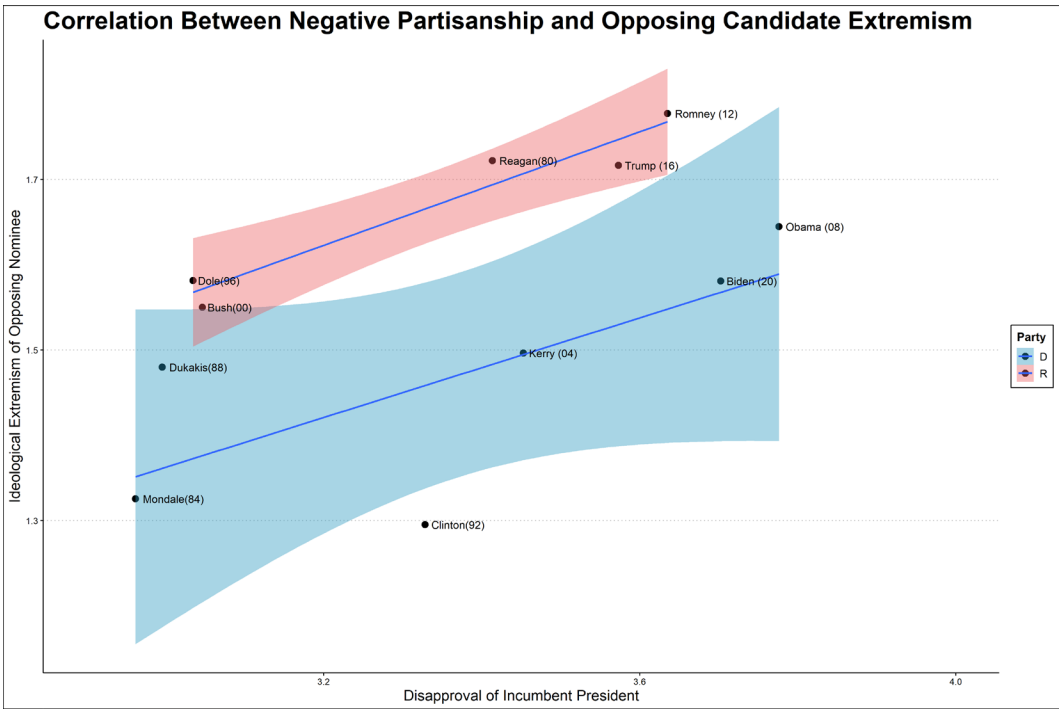
any president since 1980 and since. In response the Democratic Party nominated Barack Obama as its presidential candidate — the Democratic candidate perceived to be the most ideologically extreme in the time frame analyzed. This dynamic holds in the most recent election when Donald Trump was the second-most disapproved Republican president of the last 40 years and in response, the Democratic Party nominated Joe Biden, who was perceived to be the second-most ideologically extreme Democratic nominee of the last 40 years. While the most recent elections for the Democrats show this trend being followed quite closely, other nominees were perceived to be more ideologically distant than what the disapproval of the Republican president at the time would suggest. In 1992, for instance, Bill Clinton was a more moderate candidate than the Democratic disapproval of George H.W. Bush would suggest. These older elections cause the confidence interval to be larger for Democratic nominees.

The trend for Republicans, however, appears to be much more in line with the model's expectations. In 2012, President Obama was the most disapproved Democratic president by Republicans of the last 40 years. In response, the Republican Party nominated Mitt Romney — surprisingly viewed at the time of the election as the most ideologically extreme Republican presidential candidate in the time frame observed. In 2016, President Obama was viewed almost as unfavorably as in 2012, and the Republican Party nominated Donald Trump as its candidate, who at the time was perceived to be the third-most ideologically extreme Republican candidate of the time frame observed, just slightly behind Ronald Reagan in 1980.

DISCUSSION

The reforms instituted to U.S. presidential nomination contests after the chaotic 1968 Democratic National Convention have spurred theoretical debate concerning the role of party elites in a system dominated by primaries. The debate, predicated on whether the nomination

Figure 5



contests are candidate (Polsby 1983) or elite-driven (Cohen et. al 2008), may have been tempered for a short while with the supposition that the nomination contests of the 1970s were "'transitional'" (Mayer 1996), but more recent events have made the debate flare up once more.

Donald Trump's 2016 campaign deployed factionalism and flouted all attempts at early Republican elite-level influence in a successful bid for the party's nomination and, eventually, for the White House. The undeniable success of factionalism in 2016 calls into question what factors made such a strategy viable in that year's Republican nomination contests, especially when considering the influence that party elites can wield through endorsements. Just four years later, however, Democratic leaders were successful in coordinating around Joe Biden as their preferred nominee. These past two elections beg the question: What factors influence more coordination? Taking the proportion of high-level partisan endorsements and their distribution as dependent variables for each nomination contest, this study tested whether evaluations of the incumbent president by the opposing party's electorate influenced the levels of coordination. Specifically, the two independent variables tested were (1) the disapproval of the incumbent president as a measure of negative partisanship and (2) the perceived ideological extremism of the incumbent president. Running four multivariate regression models, this study failed to observe a statistically significant relationship for any of the proposed hypotheses and, therefore, could not find evidence for those evaluations influencing levels of coordination exhibited by party leaders.

Through another multivariate regression this study did find, however, a statistically significant relationship between the opposing electorate's disapproval of the incumbent president and the ideological extremism of the opposing party's ultimate nominee, albeit at the less stringent 90% confidence level. Specifically, this analysis found that the disapproval of the incumbent president by the opposing party's respondents was positively correlated with the ideological extremism of that party's ultimate challenger even when controlling for the number of elections the opposing party has been out of the White House.

The lack of significant relationships between the evaluations of the incumbent president and party elite coordination could suggest that the evaluations of voters simply do not motivate political elites despite the links that this study sought to demonstrate between the behavior of both.

Instead, the promising relationship this study was able to find between the disapproval of the incumbent president and the extremism of the ultimate nominee may suggest that negative partisanship may more significantly affect voters' conceptions and behavior during the nomination contests than it does elites' behaviors. Interestingly, however, the positive correlation between this study's measure of negative partisanship and the ideological extremism of the ultimate nominee is counterintuitive to the mechanism theorized by Masket (2020). Rather than negative partisanship increasing the urgency for moderation in nominees, this study hints at negative partisanship inspiring more extremism in nominees.

It must be stressed that with such limited cases, there is a lot more evidence necessary to better support this theory. While taking elections as a unit of analysis was useful in trying to observe the overall pattern in the last forty years, a more fruitful statistical analysis may instead focus just on one or two presidential nomination cycles and use contemporary polling data to measure this relationship. Individual respondents, in a future survey, could be the unit of analysis and their own perceptions of the incumbent president could act as an independent variable in an analysis that then takes their candidate preference as a dependent variable.

Being able to further tease out this preliminary relationship in a more robust statistical analysis could bolster our current thinking about the presidential nomination contests and specifically how American political party actors behave in the high-stakes goal of seeking to regain control of the White House.

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