

Political Regimes and Institutional Support: How Partisanship affects Attitudes toward Presidential Power

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Abstract

We study how Americans' attitudes toward executive power are affected by their partisan alignment with the president currently in office. One perspective posits that an individual's views about presidential power depend on whether a copartisan president holds office. Another perspective suggests that attitudes about executive power are stable across time and insulated from short-term political forces. We adjudicate between these arguments with panel data from a national probability sample conducted during the transition between the Obama and Trump presidencies. We establish two primary findings. First, large majorities of Americans report stable attitudes about executive power regardless of the president currently in office. Second, among respondents who reported different attitudes toward executive power as the presidency changed from Obama to Trump, they did so in ways that reflected their partisan identification. In an era of ascendant partisanship, Americans' attitudes toward executive power are surprisingly similar and stable across party lines.

Word count: 3,955

At no time since the Civil War has the fate of the American republic been so anxiously discussed. Scholars have recently identified worrying parallels between the United States and other countries that have experienced democratic declines (e.g., Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). Concerns about the potential for democratic backsliding are often rooted in the expansion of executive authority, when elected leaders appeal to popular support to consolidate political power.

We study how Americans' attitudes toward executive power are affected by their political alignment with the president currently in office. Existing scholarship presents competing perspectives on this relationship. One body of research suggests that individuals endorse executive power when a copartisan president is in office and oppose it otherwise. According to this perspective, "Americans evaluate unilateral action through the same partisan cues and policy preferences they use to make other political judgments" (Christenson and Kriner 2020, 58). Like top-down theories of public opinion formation (Carmines and Stimson 1989), this account posits that cues from copartisan elites are especially important for shaping individuals' attitudes about presidential power.

An alternative perspective ascribes a smaller role for partisanship in shaping attitudes toward presidential power. This view characterizes Americans' democratic commitments as predictors of beliefs about presidential power and emphasizes the public's persistent "tyrannophobia" since the country's founding (Posner and Vermeule 2010). Consistent with this argument, Reeves and Rogowski (2016) show that while there are some partisan differences in attitudes toward executive power in a cross-sectional setting, beliefs about presidential power are not synonymous with support for the current president. Instead, this research shows that members of both parties disapprove of presidential power and that these views are correlated with beliefs in the rule of law. This perspective suggests that attitudes about presidential power follow bottom-up models of public opinion (Lee 2002) and are relatively stable across time.

Adjudicating between these perspectives is important for characterizing how the mass public may contribute to the development of presidential power. While the plebiscitary presidency is accompanied by greater expectations for presidential performance (Lowi 1986), it remains unclear how these expectations translate into public acceptance of executive power. If Americans simply apply their partisanship when evaluating presidential power, presidents may wield power with the full support of their copartisans in the electorate. Alternatively, if views about power are distinct from the public's partisan alignment with

the current president, a president's personal basis of support may not translate into public acceptance of their institutional power. These competing perspectives have different implications for the prospects for mass-based accountability for the exercise of power and suggest different incentives for presidents.

Recent scholarship analyzes the predictors of attitudes toward presidential power using cross-sectional surveys or survey experiments that manipulate characteristics of presidents or political context (Christenson and Kriner 2020; Lowande and Gray 2017; Reeves and Rogowski 2016).¹ However, the former approach makes it difficult to identify the predictors of attitudes toward executive power due to potential confounding and omitted variables, while the latter approach raises concerns about external validity.

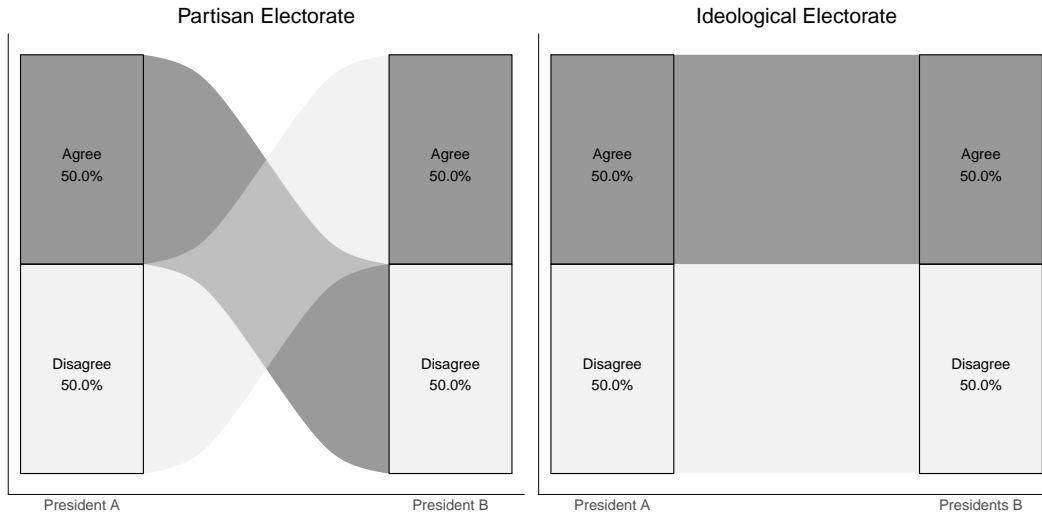
We address these limitations with a panel of survey respondents from a national probability sample from 2016 to 2017, during which time the American presidency changed hands from Obama to Trump. The transition between presidents allows us to examine how aggregate and individual-level attitudes toward executive power changed with the occupant of the White House. Overall, we find considerable stability of Americans' attitudes toward presidential power. While Democratic identifiers expressed somewhat less support for unilateral power and Republicans expressed somewhat greater support during the Trump presidency, large majorities of both groups opposed assertions of executive power regardless of the president currently in office. We further show that among respondents who reported different attitudes toward executive power as the presidency changed from Obama to Trump, they did so in ways that reflected their partisan identification. Our results provide new evidence about how public opinion toward the means of governing are responsive to the partisan identity of government leaders.

How Americans view Presidential Power

Figure 1 depicts the theoretical perspectives described above. These Sankey diagrams show the flow of public opinion over two periods when leadership changes hands from two hypothetical presidents belonging to different political parties (President A to President B). The left panel represents a purely partisan electorate. When President B from the other political party comes to power, the public *en masse* switches their opinions on presidential power because they only favor power when it is exercised by a leader they support. The right panel of Figure 1 depicts an electorate which has deep-seated views about the nature of the power of the president. Despite a change in the party of the president, the ideological electorate

¹Berliner (Forthcoming) presents evidence from panel survey, though the dependent variables describe attitudes toward executive privilege rather than institutional power.

Figure 1: Hypothetical Example of Attitudes toward Presidential Power in Times of Change



Note: The panel on the left depicts a partisan electorate where citizens realign their views of presidential power when a new president comes to power. The panel on the right depicts an ideological electorate, which holds consistent views of unilateral powers under two different presidents.

maintains its view of presidential power regardless of who holds the reins of the executive branch.

This example highlights the importance of using panel data to evaluate attitude change. In both examples, aggregate public opinion is identical. Half of the electorate supports and half opposes executive power. In the case of the partisan electorate in the left panel, this stability belies substantial (indeed, total) individual-level change. In the case of the ideological electorate, aggregate stability mirrors individual-level stability. Existing studies have limited ability to make inferences about how Americans revise their beliefs about presidential power and whether these attitudes are responsive to the public's political alignment with the president.

Measuring Attitudes toward Unilateral Powers

We leverage the transition from the Obama presidency to the Trump presidency to examine mass attitudes towards presidential power. Following previous research (Ang et al. Forthcoming; Gerber and Huber 2010), we use the change in partisan control of the White House following a close election to study how Americans' political alignment with the president affects their attitudes toward the power its occupant should wield. We used data from The American Panel Survey (TAPS), a monthly panel survey administered

by GfK/Knowledge Networks with a national probability sample. We use data from waves conducted in October 2016 before the election, after the election in November 2016, when respondents likely would have anticipated a change in presidential party, and several months after Trump's inauguration in May 2017. By analyzing data for the same respondents collected at several points in time, we can study within-respondent stability in attitudes toward presidential power and evaluate sources of its potential change.

We examine attitudes towards presidential power with three questions that evaluate various dimensions of presidential authority. First, we examine attitudes toward *unilateral policymaking*, which we define for respondents as the president's "right to enact policies without having those policies voted on by Congress." Second, we examine *unilateral judicial appointments*, which we define as the president's ability "to appoint judges of his choosing regardless of whether the U.S. Senate agrees with his selections." Third, we examine *unilateral bureaucratic implementation*, which we define as the authority "to decide how executive branch agencies will implement bills passed by Congress." For each question, we assess respondents' agreement with a five-point scale. For simplicity, we collapsed the scale into three response options indicating whether they agreed, disagreed, or neither disagreed or agreed.

Using these data, we study two questions. First, we examine whether and how Americans change their attitudes about presidential power following a change in presidential party. If the identity of the president affects Americans' views about the power of the presidency, then these patterns may vary across the two administrations that span the data. Alternatively, if Americans' attitudes about institutional arrangements persist across political regimes, we expect little change across time. Second, to the degree evaluations of presidential power vary across time, we study whether these changes reflect Americans' partisanship.

Change and Continuity in Attitudes toward Executive Power

Figure 2 presents descriptive patterns for our dependent variables from October 2016 to May 2017, the first and last waves in our analysis. These alluvial plots depict the flow of respondents between response categories. The bars, labeled "agree," "neither" [agree nor disagree], and "disagree," depict the proportions of respondents reporting each attitude in each wave. The left column shows changes in attitudes for all respondents and the center and right columns show attitudes for Democrats and Republicans, respectively.

Overall, Figure 2 provides evidence for two descriptive claims. First, during this period of presidential

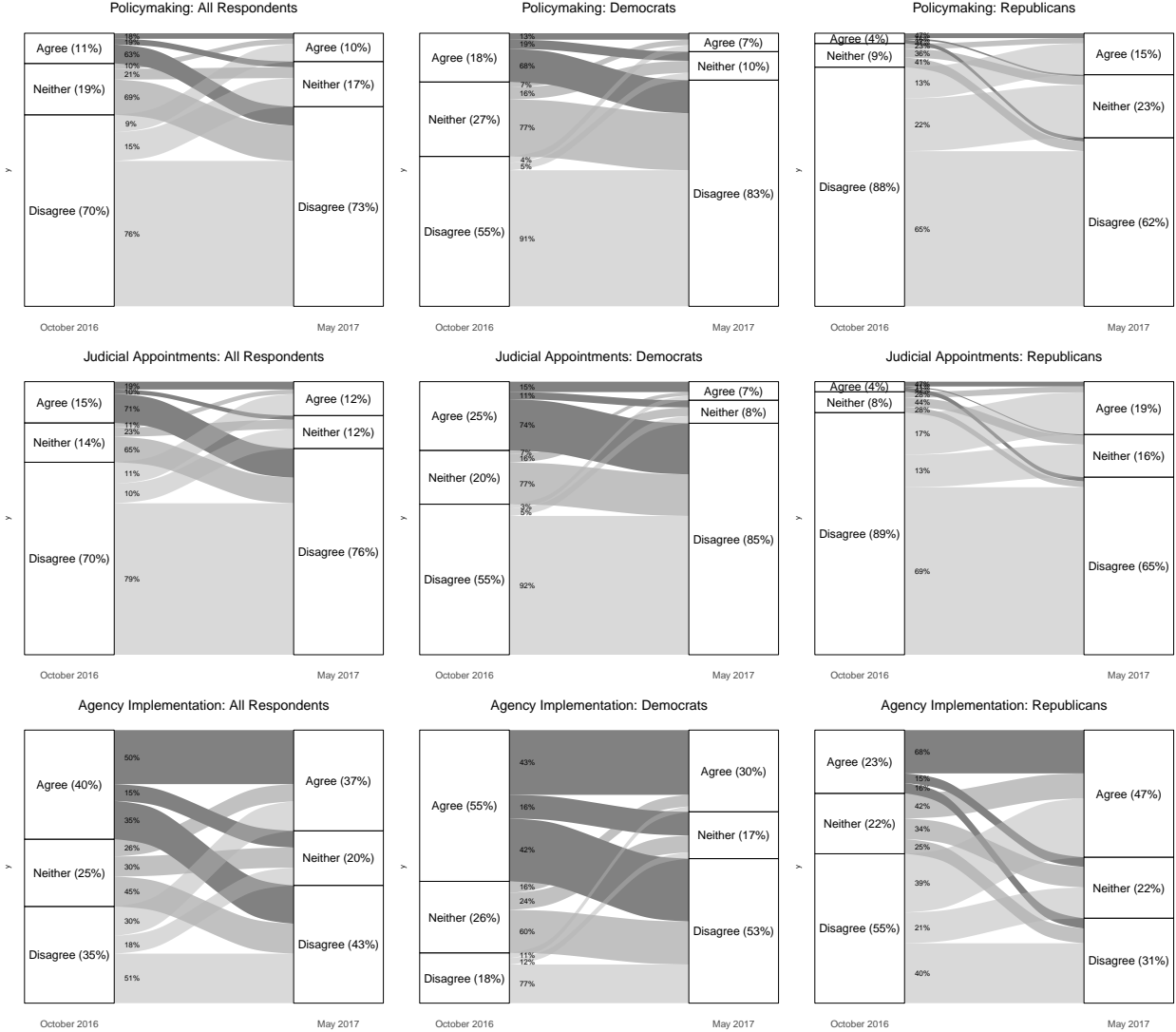
transition, large proportions of respondents expressed consistent attitudes about presidential power.² A majority of respondents reported the same attitude about unilateral policymaking (58 percent) and judicial appointments (61 percent) in May 2017 as they had seven months earlier in October 2016, and 45 percent of respondents reported the same attitude about agency implementation in both survey waves. This attitudinal consistency across the presidential transition contrasts with changes in respondents' approval rating of the sitting president. Only 17 percent of respondents expressed the same level of approval for Donald Trump in May 2017 as they did for Barack Obama seven months earlier.³ Despite the substantial change in individuals' evaluations of the sitting president, respondents had relatively consistent attitudes regarding presidential power. The stability is evident from the relatively narrow 'streams' that represent opinion change between the two waves.

Second, and more pointedly, the figure does not show that partisans exhibit wholesale movement from support to opposition (or vice versa) regarding presidential power as the presidency changes hands from one party to another. To be sure, some partisans did indeed report different views about presidential power during the Obama administration than they did a few months later during the Trump presidency. Yet as we discussed above, such movement occurs for a small share of respondents. Only 14 percent of respondents switched positions from 'agree' to 'disagree' for the unilateral policymaking variable, and the same magnitude of attitude change occurred for 19 percent of respondents for judicial appointments and for 25 percent of respondents for agency implementation. Among these changes, moreover, some are in the direction opposite what we would expect if respondents reported different attitudes to match their partisan alignment with the president.

²See also Table A.2.

³Approval ratings were measured on four-point scales and were available in both waves for 614 of our respondents.

Figure 2: Change in Support for Presidential Power, October 2016 and May 2017



Notes: Percents in small font on streams indicate the percent of each group that flows from their initial position in October 2016 to May 2017. For example, among those who disagree with unilateral policymaking in October 2016, 76 percent also disagree in May 2017, 15 percent neither agree nor disagree in May 2017, and 9 percent switch their opinion and agree with it in May 2017.

Testing the Effect of Partisanship on Attitudes toward Executive Power

The data above suggest that most Americans hold consistent and stable views about presidential power. Yet not all Americans report the same evaluations of unilateral power across different presidential administrations. To what degree are public attitudes about presidential power dependent upon whom holds office? Using our data, we test whether respondents systematically changed their views. Using a design similar to other panel studies of attitude change (Ang et al. Forthcoming; Gerber and Huber 2010), we examine how respondents' partisanship is associated with changing views of presidential power between the October 2016 wave and each of the two later waves. For each indicator of attitudes toward presidential power, we create a differenced measure that subtracts evaluations of presidential power (on a three-point scale) measured before the 2016 presidential election from evaluations reported in waves after the 2016 presidential election. For each dimension of presidential power, we create a five-point measure of change. Positive numbers indicate more favorable evaluations in the post-election wave, negative numbers indicate less favorable evaluations in the post-election wave, and zero indicates no change.

We use these dependent variables to study the effect of partisanship on evaluations of presidential power. Partisanship was measured in the May 2016 wave of TAPS, before the election outcome and subsequent change in presidential party. We use a five-point measure of partisan identification, which ranges from -2 (Strong Republican) to 2 (Strong Democrat), where leaners and weak partisans are coded +/- 1.

We use linear regression to model changes in evaluations of presidential power as a function of respondent partisanship. We also estimate models that include demographic controls, including age (in years), gender, racial/ethnic group membership, income, and education. If partisan alignment with the president causes more positive assessments of presidential power, we expect to find a negative coefficient for the partisanship variable. This would indicate that Republican identifiers were more supportive of presidential power and/or that Democratic identifiers were less supportive of presidential power after the election and presidency of Donald Trump compared with the attitudes they reported just weeks before the election.

Table 1 shows the results. Panel A shows results for the unilateral policymaking measure, Panel B shows results for the judicial appointments measure, and Panel C shows results for the agency implementation measure. The column labels indicate when the postelection dependent variable was measured. The "November 2016" columns show results when we compared attitudes from the November 2016 wave

to attitudes for the same respondents in the October 2016 (pre-election) wave. The “May 2017” columns show results when we compared attitudes from the May 2017 wave to October 2016. For each dependent variable and post-election wave, we report results from two model specifications. The first model for each dependent variable omits controls while the second includes them. We limit the analysis to respondents who completed each of the three waves (October 2016, November 2016, and May 2017).

Panel A provides some evidence that partisanship affected attitudes toward presidential power following the 2016 presidential election and the inauguration of Donald Trump. Columns (1) and (2) compare evaluations of presidential power in November 2016 post-election survey to respondents’ pre-election evaluations of presidential power. The coefficients for partisanship are negatively signed and statistically distinguishable from zero. These results provide evidence that, to the degree that public attitudes about unilateral power changed following the election of Donald Trump, they changed in ways that reflected respondents’ partisan orientations. Our models indicate that respondents who identified as more strongly Democratic had more negative evaluations of presidential power while more Republican respondents had more positive evaluations of presidential power. Based on column (2), a four-point increase in partisanship—which corresponds to the difference between a strong Republican and strong Democrat—is predicted to decrease postelection evaluations of presidential power by about 0.24 units (0.061×4) relative to respondents’ preelection attitudes. This is a relatively small change considering that the dependent variable is on a five-point scale and amounts to about one-third of a standard deviation of its values.⁴

Panels B and C provide similar results when evaluating changes in attitudes before and after the election of Donald Trump. The coefficients for partisanship in columns (1) and (2) are consistently negative and statistically significant, indicating that Democratic respondents expressed more negative views toward presidential power after the election of Trump while Republican respondents reported more positive views. The magnitudes of the relationships are somewhat larger for Panels B and C relative to Panel A. A four-point increase in partisanship is predicted to decrease evaluations of unilateral judicial appointments by about 0.50 units (0.121×4) and agency implementation by about 0.54 units (0.135×4). Each of these differences corresponds to about one-half of a standard deviation in the values of the dependent variables.⁵

⁴A standard deviation in change in attitudes toward unilateral policymaking is 0.69.

⁵A standard deviation in change in attitudes toward judicial appointments and agency implementation is 0.91 and 0.83, respectively.

As columns (3) and (4) show, however, partisanship is more strongly associated with changes in attitudes toward presidential power once Trump was in office. In each panel, the magnitudes of the coefficients for partisanship are larger in columns (3) and (4) than they are in (1) and (2). A four-unit increase in partisanship from strong Republican to strong Democrat is associated with slightly more than one standard deviation decrease in evaluations of presidential power.

Table 1: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, Before and After the 2016 Election and Change in Presidential Administration

	DV = change in attitudes between October 2016 and...			
	November 2016 (post-election)		May 2017 (post-inauguration)	
<i>Panel A: Policymaking</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.078*	-0.061*	-0.281*	-0.260*
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.020)
(Intercept)	-0.075*	-0.177	0.013	-0.142
	(0.024)	(0.145)	(0.028)	(0.172)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel B: Judicial appointments</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.137*	-0.121*	-0.298*	-0.280*
	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.021)
(Intercept)	-0.016	-0.169	-0.012	-0.017
	(0.028)	(0.172)	(0.030)	(0.185)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel C: Agency implementation</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.153*	-0.135*	-0.356*	-0.333*
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.025)
(Intercept)	-0.021	-0.345	-0.033	-0.411
	(0.031)	(0.189)	(0.035)	(0.214)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. The dependent was measured on a five-point scale that ranged from -2 to 2. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

Together, Figure 2 and Table 1 provide a more nuanced view of public attitudes about presidential

power than what is found in existing literature. Figure 2 shows that many Americans register consistent attitudes about presidential power despite changes in political context and the individual who serves as president. Yet not everyone is consistent, as between 13 and 25 percent of respondents shifted their views toward presidential power between October 2016 and May 2017. Table 1 shows that these changes in attitudes occurred in ways that reflected respondents' partisan alignment with the president. Republicans who changed their views about presidential power were more enthusiastic about it following the election and subsequent inauguration of Donald Trump, while Democrats who changed their views about power were less enthusiastic upon the election and inauguration of Trump. For this slice of the electorate, partisanship is an important factor in determining views about presidential power. But for most of the electorate, stability is the dominant feature of Americans' attitudes toward presidential power.

Conclusion

Using panel data with a nationally representative sample of Americans, we find that most Americans have stable attitudes about presidential power. For a minority of Americans, we also find that attitudes toward executive power are responsive to partisan alignment with the president. Overall, our results weigh against claims that Americans evaluate presidential power solely on the basis of partisanship or presidential approval or through elite cues. Partisanship may “dominate” how some Americans view presidential power (Christenson and Kriner 2020, 38), but for most Americans these attitudes are consistent regardless who is president.

Our study has several implications for understanding contemporary American public opinion. In an era where partisanship is widely believed to structure political and social life, Americans' attitudes toward executive power are surprisingly similar across party lines. In additional analyses shown in Appendix B.2 we explore the sources of stability in attitudes toward presidential power. The findings suggest that beliefs in the rule of law are associated with greater stability in views about the presidency. Previous scholarship has argued that these values sustain widespread points of agreement across Americans and generations (Tocqueville 1963 [1840]). Further research should explore how these commitments generate consensus on questions of institutional power.

Finally, we note several limitations of our study and identify opportunities for further research. Our public opinion data makes use of a quasi-natural experiment to study how changing political alignments

between citizens and elected executives shapes public attitudes toward the exercise of power. It is unclear, however, how these findings would translate into other presidential transitions in the U.S. and elsewhere. Moreover, we though we measured attitudes about presidential power within a relatively narrow period of time on either side of the presidential transition, our questions were asked at different political contexts within each administration. If attitudes about presidential power depend on the context in which a president governs, it may be preferable to compare attitudes at more equivalent stages of each president's term. (See Table B.1.) Finally, our survey does not allow us to examine the conditions under which Americans' reported beliefs about presidential power can be successfully mobilized to oppose actions undertaken by presidents. These are important questions for future research.

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ONLINE APPENDIX

Supplementary Analyses for

*Political Regimes and Institutional Support:
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A Robustness Checks

A.1 Sample Characteristics and Comparisons

Table A.1: Unweighted Sample Characteristics

Category	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Gender		
Men	472	56.1
Women	369	43.9
Age		
18-29	34	4.0
30-44	140	16.6
45-64	346	41.1
65+	321	38.2
Education		
No high school diploma	18	2.1
High school diploma	98	11.7
Some college	168	20.0
Associate's degree	87	10.3
Bachelors degree	232	27.6
Graduate/professional degree	238	28.3
Income		
Below \$20,000	86	10.2
\$20,000 to \$39,999	136	16.2
\$40,000 to \$59,999	167	19.9
\$60,000 to \$79,999	131	15.6
\$80,000 to \$99,999	110	13.1
\$100,000 to \$149,999	136	16.2
\$150,000 or more	75	8.9
Race/ethnicity		
Black	58	6.9
Hispanic	72	8.6
White	673	80.0
Other/not specified	38	4.5
Partisanship		
Strong Democrat	197	16.3
Weak/lean Democrat	251	29.8
Independent	7	0.8
Weak/lean Republican	249	29.6
Strong Republican	137	16.3
Ideology		
Very liberal	76	9.5
Liberal	157	19.6
Somewhat liberal	101	12.6
Moderate	201	25.2
Somewhat conservative	87	10.9
Conservative	132	16.5
Very conservative	45	5.6

Table A.2: Comparing Stability across Samples

	Limited sample		Full sample	
	Percent stable	<i>N</i>	Percent stable	<i>N</i>
Unilateral policymaking				
Oct 2016 to Nov 2016	72	841	73	1295
Oct 2016 to May 2017	58	841	59	1138
Judicial appointments				
Oct 2016 to Nov 2016	69	841	69	1293
Oct 2016 to May 2017	61	841	62	1152
Agency implementation				
Oct 2016 to Nov 2016	58	841	57	1207
Oct 2016 to May 2017	46	841	45	1076

Table A.3: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, Before and After the 2016 Election and Change in Presidential Administration (Weighted Results)

	DV = change in attitudes between October 2016 and...			
	November 2016 (post-election)		May 2017 (post-inauguration)	
<i>Panel A: Policymaking</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.135*	-0.096*	-0.281*	-0.243*
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.020)
(Intercept)	-0.121*	-0.150	-0.053	-0.307*
	(0.024)	(0.118)	(0.028)	(0.137)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel B: Judicial appointments</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.218*	-0.163*	-0.326*	-0.285*
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.023)
(Intercept)	-0.020	-0.113	0.025	0.084
	(0.029)	(0.145)	(0.032)	(0.158)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel C: Agency implementation</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.167*	-0.110*	-0.355*	-0.305*
	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.025)
(Intercept)	-0.041	-0.538*	-0.078*	-0.622*
	(0.030)	(0.148)	(0.035)	(0.173)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. The dependent was measured on a five-point scale that ranged from -2 to 2. Survey weights from the October 2016 baseline wave are included in all models. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

Table A.4: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, Before and After the 2016 Election and Change in Presidential Administration (Using all respondents in at least two waves)

DV = change in attitudes between October 2016 and...				
	November 2016 (post-election)		May 2017 (post-inauguration)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A: Policymaking</i>				
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.070*	-0.063*	-0.261*	-0.247*
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.018)
(Intercept)	-0.068*	-0.079	0.002	-0.191
	(0.019)	(0.123)	(0.025)	(0.163)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,253	1,146	1,113	1,015
<i>Panel B: Judicial appointments</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.118*	-0.106*	-0.292*	-0.276*
	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.019)
(Intercept)	-0.013	-0.112	-0.031	-0.162
	(0.023)	(0.146)	(0.026)	(0.172)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,254	1,151	1,129	1,033
<i>Panel C: Agency implementation</i>				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.140*	-0.124*	-0.355*	-0.338*
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.023)
(Intercept)	-0.008	-0.257	-0.056	-0.426*
	(0.026)	(0.166)	(0.031)	(0.206)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,175	1,074	1,054	960

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. The dependent was measured on a five-point scale that ranged from -2 to 2. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

A.2 Robustness to Measurement Choices

Table A.5: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, Before and After the 2016 Election and Change in Presidential Administration (Constructing the differenced measured from five-point scales)

	DV = change in attitudes between October 2016 and...			
	November 2016 (post-election)		May 2017 (post-inauguration)	
<i>Panel A: Policymaking</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.143*	-0.117*	-0.512*	-0.480*
	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.027)
(Intercept)	-0.149*	-0.360	-0.001	-0.332
	(0.033)	(0.199)	(0.038)	(0.233)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel B: Judicial appointments</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.224*	-0.202*	-0.558*	-0.536*
	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.029)
(Intercept)	-0.040	-0.308	-0.031	-0.242
	(0.037)	(0.230)	(0.041)	(0.248)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel C: Agency implementation</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.206*	-0.184*	-0.516*	-0.493*
	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.030)
(Intercept)	-0.006	-0.347	-0.066	-0.562*
	(0.033)	(0.205)	(0.040)	(0.264)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. The dependent was measured on a nine-point scale that ranged from -4 to 4. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

Table A.6: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, Before and After the 2016 Election and Change in Presidential Administration (Seven-Point Party ID)

	DV = change in attitudes between October 2016 and ...			
	November 2016 (post-election)		May 2017 (post-inauguration)	
<i>Panel A: Policymaking</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.054*	-0.043*	-0.185*	-0.172*
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.013)
(Intercept)	0.140*	-0.005	0.755*	0.551*
	(0.051)	(0.151)	(0.060)	(0.180)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel B: Judicial appointments</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.092*	-0.121*	-0.197*	-0.186*
	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.014)	(0.014)
(Intercept)	0.351*	-0.169	0.776*	0.734*
	(0.060)	(0.172)	(0.065)	(0.194)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel C: Agency implementation</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.102*	-0.091*	-0.238*	-0.224*
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.016)
(Intercept)	0.389*	0.022	0.920*	0.492*
	(0.066)	(0.198)	(0.074)	(0.224)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. The dependent was measured on a five-point scale that ranged from -2 to 2. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

A.3 Robustness to Estimation Strategy

Table A.7: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, Before and After the 2016 Election and Change in Presidential Administration (Ordered Probit)

	DV = change in attitudes between October 2016 and...			
	November 2016 (post-election)		May 2017 (post-inauguration)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A: Policymaking</i>				
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.133*	-0.108*	-0.402*	-0.383*
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel B: Judicial appointments</i>				
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.204*	-0.182*	-0.403*	-0.390*
	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841
<i>Panel C: Agency implementation</i>				
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.190*	-0.171*	-0.376*	-0.357*
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	841	841	841	841

Note: Entries are ordered probit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. The dependent was measured on a five-point scale that ranged from -2 to 2. Survey weights from the October 2016 baseline wave are included in all models. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

B Extensions

B.1 Comparing attitudes between January 2014 and January 2018

Table B.1: Changes in Attitudes toward Presidential Power, January 2014 to January 2018

	Unilateral policymaking		Judicial appointments		Agency implementation	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Partisanship (+=Democratic)	-0.157*	-0.143*	-0.201*	-0.183*	-0.262*	-0.245*
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.020)
(Intercept)	0.661*	0.145	0.708*	0.864*	1.038*	0.521
	(0.066)	(0.215)	(0.075)	(0.245)	(0.086)	(0.272)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	877	819	868	811	797	741

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the change in approval of presidential power between the pre-election period and the month listed at the top of the columns. Controls include indicators for age, sex, race/ethnicity, income, and education. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

B.2 Predictors of Attitudinal Stability

We evaluate the predictors of response stability over successive waves of the analysis. For each pair of waves, we constructed a binary indicator for whether respondents provided the same response (again, measured on the three-point scale) regarding each measure of presidential power. Here, 1=stable (same responses) and 0=not stable (different responses). We constructed this measure to characterize response stability between October 2016 and November 2016, and between October 2016 and May 2017.

Then, we regressed this measure on a series of covariates to explore how these covariates are associated with response stability. Several covariates are particularly important. First, we included indicators for respondents who identified as Democrats and Republicans. If partisans change their views about presidential power based on who wins elections and holds office, we would expect partisans to exhibit less stability than Independents (the omitted category). Second, we included a measure of respondents' beliefs in the rule of law. This measure was constructed based on an additive index from a five-item battery that is commonly used in studies of judicial politics (Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Gibson and Nelson 2015, 2018) and in some previous research on the predictors of attitudes toward executive power (Reeves and Rogowski 2016).⁶ The Cronbach's alpha for the five items is 0.76, and the composite measure is scored in such a way that larger values indicate greater support for the rule of law. Third, following the reviewer's suggestion, we included a standard measure of political knowledge to evaluate whether political sophistication is associated with greater stability in attitudes toward presidential power.⁷ We also include the same battery of demographic covariates that we included as controls in our other models.

Table A.6 provides limited evidence that partisans are less stable in their orientations than nonpartisans or Independents. Two of the coefficients for *Republican* are negative and statistically significant, indicating that Republican identifiers were less likely than Independents to provide stable responses across waves. The remaining four coefficients are not distinguishable from zero, with two of them positively signed and

⁶The five items were: "It is not necessary to obey a law you consider unjust", "Sometimes it might be better to ignore the law and solve problems immediately rather than wait for a legal solution," "The government should have some ability to bend the law in order to solve pressing social and political problems," "It is not necessary to obey the laws of a government that I did not vote for," "When it comes right down to it, law is not all that important; what's important is that our government solve society's problems and make us all better off." Each item was asked on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The battery was asked in May 2016.

⁷Knowledge was measured using a four-item battery that evaluated whether respondents could identify the current vice president, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the threshold required to override a presidential veto, and the party that currently held the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. This battery was asked in November 2016.

two of them negatively signed. Only one of the six coefficients for *Democrat* is statistically significant and it is signed in the wrong direction, showing that Democrats were more likely to be stable than Independents. Overall, this provides relatively little evidence that partisans have systematically less stable attitudes than Independents about presidential power during a period where the presidency changed partisan hands.

The results provide stronger evidence about the relationship between constitutional considerations and stability in beliefs about presidential power. The coefficient for *Belief in the rule of law* is positive in all six models and is statistically significant in four. (The coefficients are not significant for either model using Agency implementation, which may also be a function of the overall lower levels of stability for that measure as discussed with Figure 2.) Individuals with stronger commitments to the rule of law exhibit more stability in their views about presidential power. This provides some support for arguments that attitudes toward the presidency's institutional power are partly reflections of Americans' democratic and constitutional commitments (Reeves and Rogowski 2016), where individuals with stronger beliefs in the rule of law register greater opposition to presidential power and are more stable in this belief over time.

The table also shows that more politically knowledgeable respondents also were more likely to express stable attitudes—at least in the very short term. For both the unilateral policymaking and judicial appointments variables, the coefficient for political knowledge was positive and statistically significant when modeling stability between the pre-election (October 2016) and post-election (November 2016) waves. However, this coefficient is not statistically significant when predicting longer-term stability (October 2016 to May 2017) waves or for the agency implementation dependent variable.

Table B.2: Modeling Stability in Attitudes toward Presidential Power

	Unilateral policymaking		Judicial appointments		Agency implementation	
	Oct16-Nov16	Oct16-May17	Oct16-Nov16	Oct16-May17	Oct16-Nov16	Oct16-May17
Republican	-0.843*	-0.408*	-0.285	-0.017	0.141	0.046
	(0.192)	(0.176)	(0.185)	(0.040)	(0.174)	(0.172)
Democrat	-0.030	-0.030	0.170	0.051*	0.030	0.053
	(0.100)	(0.089)	(0.094)	(0.021)	(0.088)	(0.088)
Beliefs in rule of law (May 2016)	0.399*	0.375*	0.258*	0.073*	0.217	0.144
	(0.127)	(0.115)	(0.122)	(0.026)	(0.112)	(0.111)
Political knowledge	0.476*	-0.072	0.585*	0.003	0.127	-0.145
	(0.233)	(0.185)	(0.215)	(0.042)	(0.182)	(0.179)
Male	-0.096	-0.038	-0.040	0.045	0.237	0.222
	(0.172)	(0.152)	(0.164)	(0.035)	(0.149)	(0.148)
Income	-0.043	-0.022	0.049*	0.005	0.025	0.009
	(0.026)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.005)	(0.022)	(0.022)
White	0.875*	0.287	-0.315	-0.007	-0.276	0.024
	(0.294)	(0.283)	(0.313)	(0.065)	(0.287)	(0.279)
Black	0.012	-0.381	-0.588	-0.069	-0.501	-0.532
	(0.392)	(0.385)	(0.404)	(0.088)	(0.382)	(0.387)
Hispanic	0.489	0.547	-0.420	-0.102	-0.206	-0.253
	(0.309)	(0.282)	(0.277)	(0.062)	(0.266)	(0.267)
Education	0.068	0.099	0.081	0.022	0.014	-0.037
	(0.062)	(0.054)	(0.059)	(0.012)	(0.054)	(0.053)
Age	0.004	-0.012*	0.011*	0.002	0.001	-0.003
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.005)
(Intercept)	-1.173	-0.696	-1.729*	-0.057	-0.812	-0.705
	(0.631)	(0.573)	(0.611)	(0.131)	(0.566)	(0.563)
Observations	841	841	841	841	841	841

Note: Entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is an indicator for whether respondents expressed the same attitudes about presidential power in the survey waves shown at the top of each column. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).