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Introduction

We love to hate political parties in America. The parties in Congress, with their famous leaders and infamous gamesmanship, are particularly easy to dislike. In the view of many Americans, self-interest, not the public interest, motivates party behavior. Remarkably, the American Constitution is silent on the subject of political parties. Madison, Hamilton, and Jay argued in *The Federalist Papers* that parties were inevitable but their unfortunate effects would be minimized in a system in which governmental power is shared across two houses of Congress, a president, and a Supreme Court and across national and state institutions. Parties emerged quickly – even over the ratification of the Constitution. True to prediction, separation of powers and federalism limited party power, at least in comparison with parties that emerged in other democracies.

Legislative parties emerged in Congress's early years and were controversial from the start. They remain so. Critics dislike the way partisan considerations undermine genuine deliberation among legislators, generate conflict instead of finding a middle ground and building a consensus, and encourage gamesmanship and public relations efforts over real problem solving. Defenders insist that parties aggregate and lend order to the multiplicity of society's interests, provide a basis for organizing the large decision-making bodies of Congress, and create alternatives that give the electorate a basis for holding public officials accountable.

Critics and advocates of parties seem to agree on one thing – parties matter. That is, congressional parties affect policy choices by influencing the behavior of legislators. This is a dubious claim in the view of some scholars. It is suspect because congressional parties are created and governed by legislators themselves. It is asked, Why would legislators invent and tolerate parties that lead them to behave differently than they would otherwise? The answer to that question lies at the center of any explanation of the influence of congressional parties on legislative outcomes.

I seek to explain why congressional parties exist and to evaluate the evidence for their influence on legislative outcomes. In this book – which really is a set of essays – I proceed by

- establishing some foundations for a theory of congressional parties,
- reviewing and evaluating existing theories of congressional parties in light of those foundations,
- addressing the challenges of measuring the effects of parties on legislative outcomes and considering past efforts,
- scrutinizing the most recent claims about the nature of party influence in Congress, and
- providing an appropriately synthetic view of the role of parties in congressional decision making.

ANALYTICAL ISSUES

Party leaders are the most visible figures in the modern Congress. In recent decades, to know something about Congress meant knowing something about Speakers Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Newt Gingrich, Dennis Hastert, and Nancy Pelosi and Senate leaders Bob Dole, Tom Daschle, Bill Frist, and Harry Reid. As heads of the four congressional parties – Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate – the elected leaders are frequently interviewed and mentioned in the media, and for good reason. Party leaders and the organizations they supervise are involved in every stage of the legislative process: adopting chamber rules, appointing committees, setting the floor agenda and organizing debate, naming conference committee members, and so on. They frequently discuss and often write or endorse legislation. They

appear around the country at a wide variety of party and fundraising events. They worry about their parties' public images and consult with the president and administration officials on policy and political matters.

As leaders appeared to become more central to the legislative process in the 1980s, journalists and scholars began to give them more attention. Particularly in the House of Representatives, where the speaker began to more fully exploit his formal powers in response to demands from fellow partisans, studies began to report the importance of majority party leaders in setting the agenda, building majorities, and speaking for their parties. Political scientists returned to enduring analytical problems – how to conceptualize and measure the influence of party on legislators' behavior and legislative outcomes.

Theory about congressional parties and leadership has taken several steps forward in recent years. These theories usually have a central analogy in mind – parties are like teams, or firms, or cartels, or coalitions. As teams, firms, cartels, or coalitions, congressional parties form to pursue certain objectives or goals held in common by their members. Theorists propose somewhat different common goals for legislators and, consequently, theories emphasize different features of the legislative process and institutions.

Legislators, theorists variously propose, seek to win elections, win policy battles, or reduce uncertainty about the electoral or policy future. I share the view that congressional parties are motivated by the pursuit of both electoral and policy goals and, further, that these goals, while usually compatible, frequently force their leaders to make tradeoffs in priorities. Legislators' common electoral and policy interests lead them to form party organizations and decision-making processes, to select leaders who are charged with setting strategy and coordinating their implementation, and to create mechanisms for holding leaders accountable. These features of congressional parties did not appear at once. Rather, they emerged in response to the changing interests and demands of partisans, evolving competition between parties, and changes in chamber rules and structures, which are determined by the membership, too. Moreover, while the parallels between House and Senate parties run deep, differences in members' goals, chamber size, and institutional setting produced differences in the organization of

parties in the two houses of Congress, a consideration largely ignored in the current literature on party effects.

The search for evidence to test the various theories of congressional parties should involve many aspects of the legislative process and the use of a variety of methodological techniques. In fact, the political science literature properly reflects the complexity of the subject. Political scientists have been drawn most frequently to the roll-call voting record of Congress for evidence of party influence. The roll-call record is the most historically extensive record of quantifiable legislative behavior that we have for Congress. Legislators' votes on motions for final passage, conference reports, and veto overrides are the closest expressions of definitive policy choices that we have. Interpreting the record of roll-call voting is not easy, as I will emphasize, but it surely is a task that political scientists must take seriously in sorting out the effects of legislative parties on policy outcomes.

In the 1990s, measuring party effects in roll-call voting once again became a boom industry in political science – and for good reason. The introduction of spatial theory of legislative behavior forced reconsideration of claims about party influence, a subject considered in detail in the following chapters. Conceptual problems arise in the application of spatial theory to congressional parties, but this has not deterred analysts from applying it. The introduction of new statistical approaches and computational technology also has facilitated recent work. However, the new work has not given much attention to the interchamber differences and changing patterns of party effects that theoretical developments suggest should be important.

My purpose is a modest one – to sort through the theoretical arguments and evidence in the debate about party influence in Congress and offer a more nuanced argument that appears supported by the evidence. My working hypothesis is that the influence of congressional parties on the voting behavior of legislators and policy outcomes is a product of their efforts to achieve collective goals. The collective goals include both electoral and policy goals. These goals are not always compatible, at least in the context of a two-year Congress, which forces leaders to make controversial strategic choices for their party colleagues. The pursuit of the collective party goals entails multiple forms of party influence and varying degrees of influence on legislators' voting behavior and policy outcomes.

OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

Everyday activity in Congress leads to the inescapable inference that congressional parties seek to advance both the electoral and the policy interests of their members. I support these inferences in Chapter 2 with accounts of several recent episodes on Capitol Hill. The episodes provide circumstantial evidence for a theory that explains the multifaceted activities of congressional parties. Existing studies of party effects fail to capture the quite varied forms of party influence that are frequently observed. Instead, we must reach beyond the single-goal studies, as insightful as they might be, to explain institutional features and the patterns in floor voting that we observe in the House and Senate.

For too long, party influence was described in terms of pressure and arm-twisting. In fact, it is a more complicated matter than that. Once the types of party influence are more fully detailed, as I do in Chapter 3, we discover that they may have different origins and historical patterns. Moreover, we learn that the methods for measuring party influence must vary with the form the influence takes. There is no single measure of party influence. Confirming or disconfirming propositions about party influence by a single test of any kind does not exhaust the range of party effects that a nuanced view of the role of parties suggests are present.

Beginning with A. Lawrence Lowell's "The Influence of Party upon Legislation," a paper written for the American Historical Association in 1901, scholars have made arguments about party effects in voting on the basis of quantitative evidence. Political scientists have moved from simple counts of the frequency with which voting aligns with party affiliation to statistical models in which the effects of other factors are taken into account in efforts to evaluate party effects. Moreover, many scholars have examined partisan processes in settings beyond roll-call voting. Many of these studies are very informative, but no one has digested them to provide an appropriately nuanced discussion of the role of congressional parties. I provide such a discussion in Chapter 4.

Recent theories of congressional parties have done a better job of identifying forms of party influence and their distinguishable consequences for legislators' behavior and policy outcomes. Two theories, known as conditional party government and cartel theory, have been important in recent years. In Chapter 5, I provide a critical review of

the theories and find them wanting in a number of respects. They fail to take multiple goals into full account, place too little emphasis on party size as a variable in party strategy, and give inadequate consideration to one house of Congress, the Senate.

The major challenge to the entire "party effects" enterprise is Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics* (Krehbiel 1998), in which it is argued that legislators' policy preferences and the rules of the legislative game, not legislators' party affiliations, explain legislative outcomes. Remarkably, the theoretical foundations and empirical claims of the book have not received much attention in the ten years since its publication. I address the key issues in Chapters 5 and 6. I argue, on the basis of another look at the evidence in *Pivotal Politics* and another recent paper, that party effects are readily discernible in Krehbiel's studies and that, given the theories of party influence that motivate our search, the effects are of the predicted size and kind. I find Krehbiel's conclusions from his own analysis misleading and suggest that his model serves as a poor standard for evaluating party effects in Congress.

My principle observations, reported in Chapter 7, are that parties give order to roll-call voting patterns in both houses and in all Congresses since the end of Reconstruction, the form of party structuring varies between the House and Senate in ways that reflect their differences in the parliamentary advantages granted the majority party, and the form of party structuring varies in important ways over time. Borrowing from collaborative work with Forrest Maltzman and Eric Lawrence, I show that majority and minority parties do not exhibit symmetrical behavior – that is, with the majority favoring and the minority opposing passage of legislation (Lawrence et al. 2006). Rather, the parties typically exhibit asymmetric behavior – the majority party showing more cohesiveness than the underlying policy positions of its members would suggest, while the minority party's members are more likely to show variation in voting that is readily predicted by their general policy positions.

In the end, the evidence for the presence of party influence in congressional policy making is strong but circumstantial. Recent theories – conditional party government and cartel theories – represent important progress in the science of policy making and yet both miss important features of party influence. Recent evidence based on aggregate analyses of the historical congressional voting record shows the traces of

party influence. Most persuasive are a few studies that account for specific forms of party efforts. Even a few studies that make the case that legislators' preferences drive outcomes ultimately add to the accumulating evidence for party effects.

In sum, I develop several themes about the ingredients of a theory of congressional parties. The theory must allow for both policy and electoral goals and for sometimes conflicting collective party goals. These goals call for flexible party organizations and leadership strategies. They demand that majority party leaders seek to control the flow of legislation in their houses, seek to package legislation and time action in order to suit their needs to build winning majorities and attract public support, work closely with a president of their party, and, with some frequency, influence the vote choices of legislators. In the concluding chapter, I return to these themes:

Theme 1. The Circumstantial Evidence of Party Influence Is Strong
Theme 2. Multiple Goals Remain Active Ingredients After Parties Are Created
Theme 3. Collective Party Goals Require That We Account for Party Size
Theme 4. A Theory of Party Leader Strategies Is Needed
Theme 5. Negative Agenda Control Does Not Stand Alone
Theme 6. The Search for Direct Party Effects Will Prove Frustrating
Theme 7. The Senate Is Not Well Understood
Theme 8. The Majority and Minority Parties Are Not Mirror Images of Each Other

If I have persuaded you of the viability of these themes, I will have succeeded in making my arguments about the state of theory and empirical work on party influence in Congress.

FINAL THOUGHT

I am a little embarrassed by publishing the essays of this book. Much of what I argue is obvious to me and I have long resisted the temptation to put it down on paper. I realize that my background on Capitol Hill makes me a little impatient with the necessarily simplified constructions of theorists. The question is whether the simplification captures the

essential features of a political process. As the reader will see, I have my doubts about the recent literature on the subject.

I realize that I am needling the scholarship of friends from whom I have learned a great deal. Some of these friends, such as John Aldrich, Gary Cox, Keith Krehbiel, Mat McCubbins, Keith Poole, David Rohde, and Barbara Sinclair have been engaged in an intellectual quarrel for some time. Their different theoretical stances have not been confronted squarely, it seems to me. So, while these quarrels produce a few laughs for many of their colleagues, I take these differences seriously. I hope to raise awareness of the consequences of our theoretical choices.

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The Microfoundations of Theories of Congressional Parties

In the fall of 2005, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) was indicted by a Texas grand jury for violations of the Texas campaign finance law. As required by a House Republican Conference rule, Rep. DeLay temporarily gave up his leadership post. The rule, which Republicans had considered dropping at the beginning of the year but were compelled to reinstate to avoid further criticism, spared the party of having to vote to dethrone a leader who might prove to be embarrassing. Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) appeared to have Rules Committee Chairman David Dreier (R-CA) in line to replace DeLay, but Republicans belonging to the Republican Study Committee, an unofficial group of about 100 conservatives, demanded that Roy Blunt (R-MO) take over because Blunt was a more faithful conservative than Dreier on social issues.

Blunt's appointment was temporary, but DeLay's problems led DeLay to resign from his leadership post in January 2006, leading to a contest to replace him. The contest, which generated a challenge to Blunt from John Boehner (R-OH) and John Shadegg (R-AZ), was affected by at least two important considerations. A scandal involving a lobbyist with connections to DeLay and former DeLay staff members that implicated several House Republicans led party members to worry about the electoral fallout and produced demands that lobbying reforms be enacted. Neither Blunt nor Boehner was directly involved in the scandal, but their connections with lobbyists were questioned. In addition, neither Blunt nor Boehner was closely connected to the

Republican Study Committee, so Shadegg, who once chaired the group, entered the race. Members of both the Republican Study Committee and the Tuesday Group, a more centrist group of Republicans, expressed concerns about the policy commitments of the candidates and demanded that the leadership candidates appear before them. Ultimately, Boehner won the race for majority leader.

The DeLay episode exposed to public view the competing forces at work in congressional parties. On the one hand, the need to minimize harm to his party's standing with the public led DeLay to step aside and others to urge him to do so. The concern about the lobbying scandal raised additional concerns about public support and the party's strategies for managing the crisis. On the other hand, given that DeLay had to be replaced, Republicans wanted a leader who shared their policy views. Speaker Hastert, seeking to balance these interests, quickly accepted DeLay's temporary resignation, bent to pressure to name Blunt as DeLay's replacement, and negotiated a hybrid leadership role for Dreier.[1] And the policy views of Blunt and Boehner played a conspicuous role in the calculations of their colleagues in the subsequent election.

FOUNDING THEORY ON MULTIPLE PARTY GOALS

The lessons of the DeLay episode and others like it are ignored by most recent political science. This is done for a good reason but with serious consequences. In order to deduce propositions about the behavior of party leaders and legislators, the theorist requires a single objective (a well-behaved utility function, the theorist would say) from which to predict the best strategies of the legislators. Multiple goals that cannot be translated into a common metric or utility function yield less precise predictions of expected behavior. Thus, if the conflicting electoral and policy demands placed on Speaker Hastert in the 24-hour period following DeLay's indictment are typical of the challenges party leaders confront, single-goal theories, whether grounded in parties' electoral or

[1] John Cochran, "Debacles, DeLay and Disarray," *CQ Weekly*, October 3, 2005, pp. 2636–41; Ben Pershing, "Conservative Revolt Pushes Dreier Aside," *Roll Call*, September 29, 2005, pp. 1, 26; Patrick O'Connor, "Blunt Takes Initial Lead," *The Hill*, January 11, 2006, p. 1.