1 Introduction

The United States and the United Kingdom, two of the oldest representative democracies in the world, share a long, intertwined history. The countries are culturally and politically similar with shared norms around the importance of the rule of law, a commitment to basic political rights, and a belief in free markets. One thing that they do not share, though, is a political system, at least with respect to institutions. Across the range of democratic institutions in the world today, the United States and the United Kingdom are very different, and researchers often place them on opposite ends of the spectrum. The US system is both presidential and federal, while the United Kingdom is parliamentary and unitary. Classic works on comparative political institutions discuss the United States as possessing features of "consensual democracy" and contrast it with the majoritarian, Westminster system of the United Kingdom (Lijphart 1999); or they discuss the United States as having many veto players compared with the United Kingdom's single veto player (Tsebelis 2002). UK parties are thought of as highly disciplined (Spirling and McLean 2006; Dewan and Spirling 2011) while US parties remain relatively weak, even when compared to other presidential democracies (Carey 2009). And the list could go on.

Yet other seminal works on democratic representation suggest that the incentives for politicians to engage with their voters, often through constituency service, to cultivate a "personal vote" are not so different (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987). Both countries have a two-party system and, for the most part, use first-past-the-post majoritarian electoral systems where ballots (and election campaign materials) prominently feature individual candidates, often over the parties they represent. In short, politicians in both countries seek to build personal connections with their electorates.

While scholars of democracy at least since de Tocqueville (1966) have been making comparisons between the United Kingdom and United States, very few have explicitly compared legislative behavior – the nature of activities that elected members engage in while serving in the legislature. Indeed, the large differences between American presidential and British parliamentary democracy might lead us to believe that such a comparison could bear very little fruit. Studies of voting behavior in the UK House of Commons usually note just how different the Commons is from the US Congress (Kam 2009; Spirling and McLean 2006). Recent works on party discipline in legislatures have focused on Westminster systems (Kam 2009), parliamentary systems (Proksch and Slapin 2015), or presidential systems (Carey 2009), with few making comparisons across these systems.

But if we accept that electoral systems – and the incentives that they create – affect how voters view politicians and how politicians seek votes, and if we accept that politicians (at least occasionally) attempt to represent constituents' views on the floor of the legislature, then we might expect to find some similarities in how members behave between the United States and the United Kingdom despite their many institutional differences. These similarities may, at times, be difficult to tease out as they are buried among the weeds of the political, institutional, and cultural differences that persist between the two political systems. Nevertheless, we believe that through new theorizing about the relationship between voters and politicians, we can identify similar patterns in these legislatures that teach us something new about democracy and representation in both countries.

We argue that members of the legislature – the House of Commons in the United Kingdom and Congress in the United States[1] – have similar incentives to develop a "personal" vote, that is, to develop a persona, independent from the party, to connect with constituents and win votes; and they often do so by dissenting from their party's stated position on the floor of the legislature. As political scientists have long known, aggregate patterns of dissent look quite different in these two systems; ideological moderates tend to rebel to occasionally support the opposing party in the United States, while ideological extremists are more rebellious in the United Kingdom. In this short Element, we develop a theory that helps us uncover instances of similarity. We demonstrate that ideology and majority party agenda control interact to affect the likelihood that members rebel against the majority position within their party in both countries. More precisely, members who are most ideologically extreme vote against the majority of their party with relatively greater frequency when their party controls the legislative agenda. We argue that they do so because their party's control of the legislative agenda provides them with opportunities to connect with ideologically motivated constituencies, either their own geographical constituents or ideologically demanding interests within their party.

1.1 Case Selection

As scholars of the American and British politics, we want to know what the politics of each country can tell us about politics in the other. And as scholars of comparative institutions, parties, and elections, we are interested in how the electoral motivations of parties and their candidates for office shape members' legislative activity once elected – namely, the electoral connection. Because we wish to focus on the impact of this electoral connection in two-party first-past-

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[1] Our theory applies to both the US House and Senate, but empirically we focus on the House.

the-post systems, the United States and the United Kingdom are natural cases to turn to. Recent literature on case selection, comparative methods, and mixed methods research has suggested that the best way to engage in "controlled comparison" is to demonstrate that a general theory holds across different cases that vary in meaningful ways. It argues for using large-N empirical analysis within a single case to offer evidence of the internal validity of a causal theory, and small-N empirical work across cases to explore external validity (Slater and Ziblatt 2013). We engage in case-specific quantitative work to demonstrate that our theory works in two different, but related settings.

The United Kingdom and the United States provide the optimal test cases for our theory. On a macro level, they have relatively similar political cultures including a shared legal tradition, long histories with electoral politics, and democratic norms that have evolved over centuries. They are wealthy, industrialized nations with Anglo-Saxon market economies (Hall and Soskice 2001) and possess similar welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990). Party politics in both largely conforms to competition on a single left-right ideological dimension between two main parties. In both countries, a right-wing party favors social conservatism, low taxes, and lower government spending while a left-wing party represents social liberalism and more government intervention in the economy. Moreover, American and British politicians draw inspiration from each other, as when Tony Blair sought to emulate Bill Clinton in creating a "third way" for center-left politicians, and more recently (and perhaps more bizarrely) when Nigel Farage, former leader of the UK Independence Party, campaigned with Donald Trump during his 2016 presidential campaign. In comparing the United States and United Kingdom, we can make a reasonable claim to hold constant many socio-economic and macro-political variables.

However, the political institutions of US and UK politics are quite different. Over the course of the long nineteenth century, the United Kingdom developed into a parliamentary democracy, with the government serving with the confidence of Parliament, strong and unified parties, and government agenda control (Cox 1987). Parliament and its committee system are quite weak in terms of lawmaking abilities (Mattson and Strom 1995). Although there has been devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the political system remains highly centralized with ultimate authority resting in Westminster, typically under a single-party government. We can juxtapose the UK system with the US system – both federal and presidential – which vests legislative authority in the bicameral Congress, has relatively weak parties, and gives the executive significantly less power to control the legislative agenda. The relative weakness of American parties has led scholars to even question the value of accounting

for parties in models of legislative behavior at all (Krehbiel 1998). And in contrast to the House of Commons, the US Congress is marked by powerful committees and a strong seniority norm (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Krehbiel, Shepsle, and Weingast 1987).

American and British democracy quite simply rest on different institutional models of democratic politics – except for the fact that they use single-member districts in which candidates from two main parties compete against one another for the seat. Through careful within-case analysis we offer evidence for our model.

1.2 Our Theory: An Overview

Both British and American electoral politics revolve around personal connections between candidates and voters. During campaigns, election materials prominently feature candidates' images and names. Candidates engage in constituency service, answer constituents' requests, and spend significant time in their constituency. But once we move out of the district and back to Washington and Westminster,[2] the similarities are assumed to end. Generally speaking, American members of Congress see their behavior as an extension of their own electoral campaigns (Mayhew 1974). Partisan control in Congress is relatively weak, and partisan dissent within Congress is quite common. Members view dissent as potentially electorally beneficial, and the spatial model suggests that these rebels ought to come from the ideological center (Kirkland 2014).

Research on UK legislative politics also suggests that voting against one's party can be electorally beneficial to individual MPs (Campbell et al. 2016; Vivyan and Wagner 2012). But parties are often unified, and Westminster politics is highly partisan. There are fewer opportunities to rebel on votes (divisions in British parlance), and doing so is generally costlier than it would be in the United States. Moreover, instead of coming from the center of the political space, rebels tend to come from the ideological extremes of the party (Benedetto and Hix 2007).

Given that the electoral systems of both countries encourage members to engage in behavior that helps them to distinguish themselves from their party, we seek to uncover ways in which rebelliousness in the United Kingdom and United States is similar despite the significant differences in partisan control that result from the nature of presidential and parliamentary democracy.

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[2] The difference in American and British terminology is worth noting here. The British speak of constituencies, and the Americans refer to districts. We use the country-specific terminology when writing about each country separately, but when making comparisons between the two we often use terminology interchangeably.

Extant research on party rebellion (especially in the US context) offers a relatively simplistic view of when and why representatives defect from their party's position on a vote. Based mostly on proximity models of ideological voting, existing theories suggest that legislators compare the policies produced by a bill under consideration to the policies that would result if the bill failed to pass. Additionally, depending on the sophistication of the model, legislators take into account any wrath representatives incur from party leaders for their defections and any possible rewards from voters. Most of these models (but not all) predict that defections primarily come from ideologically moderate members of opposition parties. Moderates hold ideological positions closer to the other party and governing (or majority) parties have more carrots to entice moderates to cross the aisle. While some of these patterns hold up to empirical scrutiny, others are on less-solid footing.

We offer a new theoretical explanation for party disloyalty during legislative voting. It differs from the existing literature in two ways. First, our theory provides a new account of the role of legislative agenda-setting in leading members to defect from their party, and second, it takes voters' response to defections more clearly into account. In our model of defection, legislators use disloyalty to signal ideological purity to voters when their party is in the majority (or government), but not when in the minority (or opposition). Ideologically extreme legislators from the majority (governing) party can generally expect their party's policies to pass. With this knowledge, they can take ideological positions through rebellion. They can vote against their party to draw attention to themselves and to argue that their leadership should use its time in office to pursue a more ideologically "pure" agenda. They do so while knowing that policy is likely moving in their preferred direction and their rebellion is unlikely to affect outcomes. We call this behavior "grandstanding," which we define as signaling an ideological position to voters through rebellion or opposition, even to policies that the legislator might otherwise prefer, without directly affecting policy.

Our expectations emerge from the simple notion that ideologically extreme constituents expect ideologically committed behavior from their representatives. We argue that members of the party with agenda control can differentiate themselves from the rest of the party through rebellion. They can sell an ideological message to a particular set of ideologically motivated constituents without looking as if they support the policy programs of the opposing party. Members of the party that lacks agenda control are unable to defect without appearing to lend support to the policy program of the competing party.

Over the next two sections, we illustrate our model with several examples from British Parliament and the US Congress, and lay out the general

expectations from our model, which apply to any legislative system that uses single-member electoral districts to select its members.

1.3 Data, Evidence, and Empirical Strategy

The evidence we provide is observational. We use publicly available data from legislative repositories to show how individual MPs change their behavior over time as legislative agenda control shifts. In effect, we examine within-individual changes in behavior as party control of the agenda (winning or losing a legislative majority) shifts – change in agenda control becomes our "treatment" variable.[3] We examine how individual MPs, and ideologically extreme individuals in particular, change their rebellious behavior as agenda control shifts. It is only recently that such a research design has become feasible, both for reasons of data availability, but even more importantly due to the course of history.

In the United States, Democrats controlled a majority in the US House of Representatives for 40 years from the 84th Congress in 1955 through the 103rd Congress, ending in 1995. Since then, control shifted to the Republicans during the Gingrich revolution in 1995, returned to the Democrats for two terms from 2007 to 2011, shifted back to Republicans in 2011 with the new Tea Party faction gaining seats, and returned to Democratic control in 2019. From 1955 until 1995, members could have had very long careers in Congress, having only ever served in the majority or the minority. To find members who have served in both, we would either need to return to the era of Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower, or look at the recent era from the 1990s to the present.

Likewise, for the period for which we have access to good data, British governments (and parliamentary majorities) have tended to be quite long lasting, meaning we as scholars need to wait quite a long time to view alterations in power. The Tories under Margaret Thatcher and then John Major were in power for eighteen years from 1979 until 1997. Labour under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown held power for thirteen years from 1997 until 2010. And today, the Conservatives have held power under David Cameron and Theresa May since 2010, albeit in coalition with the Liberal Democrats between 2010 and 2015. It is only recently that history has provided us with enough alterations in power to say something meaningful about agenda control and rebellion.

1.4 Plan for the Element

We begin in the next section by offering a detailed look at the politics of our two cases, and we make a case for comparing them with respect to legislative

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[3] Note that we cannot offer a true difference-in-difference design as all members of the same party are subject to shifts in agenda control at the same time.

behavior. Section 3 then presents our theoretical argument. Combining aspects of spatial proximity models and behavioral theories of voter evaluations of representatives, we develop novel expectations about how ideology, agenda control, and electoral circumstance motivate party rebellion.[4] Whereas comparative legislative scholars often learn about politics by applying models developed in the US context to other systems, here we demonstrate that we can also learn about US politics by thinking about US legislative behavior in terms of models usually reserved for studying the politics of Westminster.

In the fourth section, we present our primary empirical evidence by examining voting behavior of the British House of Commons and the US House of Representatives. We test our theory using model specifications that explicitly explore the interactive effects of ideology and legislative agenda control (governing status) to predict rebellions. We demonstrate that while in the aggregate legislative behavior looks very different in the two countries, on the margins, ideological extremists behave similarly. They are relatively more loyal when their parties are in opposition (the minority) and less loyal when in government (the majority). We then go on to examine various configurations of divided government in the United States and demonstrate that the United States looks most similar to the United Kingdom when Congress and the President are controlled by different parties. We suspect that under divided government the majority party in Congress moderates its stance to pass bills acceptable to the President, opening up ideological space for rebellion on the party's wings.

In our concluding section, we briefly reflect on the institutional differences and behavioral similarities of our two cases, and we discuss how we imagine partisan legislative politics evolving within each nation moving forward. We also discuss how our model and findings might apply to other cases beyond the United States and the United Kingdom.

2 Why the United States and United Kingdom?

We start this section with a few questions: Why compare the politics of the United States and United Kingdom? Why focus on legislative behavior? And why do so now? We start with the last question first as the answer (at least to us) seems obvious, and we will provide answers to the other two before the end of the section.

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[4] One more note regarding terminology: whereas American Congress scholars often reserve the term "rebellion" for significant unrest within the party often aimed at overthrowing the Speaker of the House or some other large-scale insurrection, British politics scholars often use the term to refer to voting against the party. Perhaps the difference arises because votes against the party are rarer and more significant in Britain. We use the terms "rebellion" and "dissent" interchangeably to refer to one or more members voting against the majority of the party in the legislature.

It would be an understatement to say that the last few years have seen significant political upheaval in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In many ways, the changes on either side of the Atlantic mirror each other. And despite the vast differences in political systems, they have made the two countries look more similar. In addition to making these cases substantively interesting to examine, we believe that some of these changes can been viewed as a consequence of the type of behavior that our model seeks to explain – ideological appeals to voters by legislators on the fringes of their party. In the final section, we re-examine these changes in light of our model and evidence.

Within the last 15 years, arguably the main parties in both countries have lost control of leadership contests for the party's highest office holder. The politics of both countries have seen waves of populism, culminating in the "Brexit" vote to leave the European Union and its aftermath in the United Kingdom, and the election of Donald Trump in the United States. But we have also seen a recent trend towards youth engagement in politics, especially during the UK 2017 election, and also in support of Bernie Sanders in 2016 in the United States. Relatedly, the main parties have seen local activists asserting power and shaping candidate selection contests in ways that have had profound effects on politics at the national levels. In both countries, these changes have led to growing fissures within the main parties. Given these changes, comparing the politics of these two countries is even more important now than ever before. We can take the opportunity to gain new insights about American politics by looking at the politics of the United States's closest ally, and new insights about Britain by peering across the pond at Americans. Far too little work in political science has made these comparisons explicitly, but rarely has there been a better time to do so.

2.1 Political Change in the United Kingdom

Anthony King, the eminent scholar of British politics, recently wrote that the nature of the British political system has changed significantly since the initial postwar period of 1945–1970 (King 2015). During the postwar period, as King eloquently describes in the opening chapter of his book, the party controlling a majority in Parliament ruled the roost; parliamentary parties were highly disciplined, in control of their leadership contests, and power was clearly centralized in Westminster. He argues that by 2015 – the time of the book's publication – much about British politics had changed. With the advent of the Brexit vote to leave the European Union and the recent Labour leadership contests, it has arguably changed even more in the interim. For our purposes,

the changes that matter most are those that have increased the role of voters in the political process and, in particular, have increased the role of ideologically driven local party activists, often the audience for MPs' rebellious dissent.[5]

King describes how MPs have ceded control over party leadership contests, and thus over who leads the party into the next election, becoming Prime Minister should the party win. In the past, the Conservative Party's sitting MPs chose the leader of the party. On the Labour side, the leader was voted on by a tripartite electoral college of sitting MPs (and Members of the European Parliament), party members, and trade unions, each group having equal weight when voting; but the MPs put forward the candidates (each requiring the support of 12.5 percent of sitting MPs and MEPs). However, these rules have changed. Tory MPs still decide on the top two candidates for party leader, but these two candidates are put to the rank-and-file membership for a vote. In 2001, the rank-and-file chose Ian Duncan Smith as party leader even though a substantial majority of Conservative MPs preferred Kenneth Clarke, who also polled better in the general electorate.

Arguably, Labour MPs have done even worse in retaining control of the leadership selection process. The parliamentary Labour Party has always fought battles with left-wing local activists who have played a large role in selecting (and less frequently, de-selecting) MPs (Tsebelis 1990; King 2015). However, with the possible exception of the leadership of Michael Foot (1980–83), the parliamentary party has always managed to maintain control of the upper echelons of the party. In the three most recent leadership contests, though, the first choice of the parliamentary Labour Party was not elected leader. And in both the 2015 and 2016 contests, their least favored candidate, Jeremy Corbyn, came out on top. Labour Party rules have long meant that the parliamentary Labour Party could be outvoted by the membership and labor unions. In 2010, Ed Miliband became Labour Party leader with strong union-backed support despite the fact that the parliamentary party and the Labour membership preferred his brother David Miliband, who also was polling better among the public. Not only did this lead to an epic rift in the Miliband family, but it led Labour to change its rules for leadership elections.

With the 2015 leadership contest, the party did away with the electoral college, instead deciding to hold all future leadership contests on the basis of "one member, one vote." The idea behind the rules change was that union members would have to opt-in as affiliate members rather than have a vote by default. The parliamentary Labour Party only retained the ability to put forward candidates,

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[5] There have been other significant changes as well, such as reforms to the House of Lords under Tony Blair's government and the introduction of the Fixed-Term Parliament Act, to name just two.

albeit with a slightly increased hurdle for support among the parliamentary party – signatures from 15 percent of MPs plus MEPs. Simultaneously, the party created a new category of membership – registered supporters – which allowed people to vote in the leadership election after paying a mere £3.

After the 2015 general election, Ed Miliband stepped down as leader following his loss. Some in the parliamentary party felt that it would be good for the slate of candidates to have more ideological diversity. So along with party frontbenchers and supposed frontrunners Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, and Liz Kendall, long-time rebel and general thorn-in-the-side-of-the-party Jeremy Corbyn found his way onto the ballot. Corbyn was not taken seriously by party insiders, who hoped that his nomination might quiet some on the left. Instead, Corbyn proved to be the resounding favorite of the Labour Party membership, winning the leadership in 2015 and then retaining it in a second contest in 2016.

But these changes are minor compared to the political earthquake that was the Brexit vote. Of course, the decision itself was decided by referendum – an unusual event in British politics. The only two previous nationwide referendums were the failed 2011 vote on introducing an alternative vote electoral system and the referendum on membership in the European Community in 1975. The 2016 referendum was the result of a split within the Tory Party that was precipitated by both anti-EU sentiment among activists within the Conservative Party and the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) (Clarke, Goodwin, and Whitely 2017). Those who voted for the United Kingdom to leave the EU were largely older voters, concerned about immigration, feeling economically vulnerable, and worried about losing British sovereignty. In the aftermath of the vote, there was an uptick in violence against foreigners, especially those from Eastern Europe – in late summer 2016 three Polish citizens were murdered in Harlow, in one example. In short, David Cameron called the vote largely to try to silence vocal anti-EU activists in the party, who were flexing relatively new muscles, and to fend off UKIP, a new party. The outcome was marked by a rise in nationalism and populist sentiment – features that had played a much lesser role in British politics only a few years earlier.

Changes in the nature of leadership contests along with the Brexit vote represent actions and appeals to mollify the ideological wings of the Labour and Conservative parties, respectively. Such actions have become increasingly common in recent years.

2.2 Political Change in the United States

Recent changes in American politics mirror those in Britain. American parties have never been as strong or as centralized as British parties, nor have they ever