

The Party Politics of Presidential Rhetoric

By bringing together two bodies of literature – the presidency and political parties – this book makes two important contributions. First, it addresses the gap between presidential public actions and the perceived limited effect they have on public opinion. By examining the short-term effect of speeches of presidents on the entire public, the long-term effect of the speeches on their partisans, and on the reputations of their parties for handling policy, the book shows that presidents are effective leaders of public opinion. Second, the book adds to the scholarly interest in how political parties are viewed by the electorate in terms of policy substance. It suggests that Americans possess coherent reputations of the parties for handling policy challenges, and that these reputations contribute to the party identifications of Americans. The effect of presidents on the reputations and, in turn, party attachments position them as leaders of the party system.

Amnon Cavari is Assistant Professor of Government at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel. His research focuses on the American presidency, public opinion and political parties and the interrelationship between them, and on American elite and mass attitudes toward Israel. He is the coeditor of the 2012 Presidential Election: Forecasts, Outcomes and Consequences and is the founder and head of the American Public Opinion toward Israel project at the IDC.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-60445-8 — The Party Politics of Presidential Rhetoric
Amnon Cavari
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

The Party Politics of Presidential Rhetoric

AMNON CAVARI

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya



Cambridge University Press
 978-1-316-60445-8 — The Party Politics of Presidential Rhetoric
 Amnon Cavari
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York NY 10006, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107150034

© Amnon Cavari 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cavari, Amnon, author.

The party politics of presidential rhetoric / Amnon Cavari, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Israel).

New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. | Includes bibliographical references.
 LCCN 2016016316 | ISBN 9781107150034 (hardback)

LCSH: Presidents – United States. | Rhetoric – Political aspects – United States. | Political leadership – United States. | Communication in politics – United States. | Public opinion – Political aspects – United States. | BISAC: POLITICAL SCIENCE / Government / General.

LCC JK516 .C39 2016 | DDC 352.23/80973–dc23
 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016016316>

ISBN 978-1-107-15003-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-60445-8 — The Party Politics of Presidential Rhetoric
Amnon Cavari
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

To Inbal

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 Presidents, Public Opinion, and the Political Parties	1
2 Assessing Presidential Rhetoric	22
3 The Effect of Presidential Rhetoric on the Attentive Audience	43
4 The Short-Term Effect of Presidential Rhetoric	70
5 Presidential Leadership of Partisan Opinion	92
6 The Public Agenda and the Reputations of the Parties for Handling Policy	116
7 Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda	147
8 Presidential Rhetoric and Party Reputations for Handling Policy	172
9 The Interplay of Macrohandling and Macropartisanship	194
10 The Party Politics of Presidential Rhetoric	209
<i>References</i>	219
<i>Index</i>	235

Acknowledgments

This project grew out of my doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. At Wisconsin, I was fortunate to study from and work with excellent scholars from whom I nurtured an interest in the American presidency, the political parties, and the relationship between them. First thanks go to my dissertation committee who nurtured my interest in the topic, taught me the tools to investigate it, and helped me formulate my arguments and findings. John Coleman, my advisor, has been involved with this project at every step. In class seminars and long discussions in his office or local cafés, John ignited my desire to understand what American political parties mean and how they relate to the political system. Barry Burden helped me develop the tool of public opinion to investigate the relationship between the president, the parties, and the American people. Ken Mayer sparked my interest in studying the American presidency, introduced me to the puzzle of presidential public leadership that motivates this research, and encouraged me to collect genuine data to examine it. Byron Shafer encouraged me to expand the scope of my research and showed me how each part of this project connects to broader questions in political science and how the empirical results made sense in real-politics. Susan Yackee insisted that I find the policy implications of presidential actions: rhetoric would turn to speeches, ideas to policies. Their tough and encouraging mentorship helped me develop my own voice and connect it to the real world of American politics. Their ongoing friendship strengthened my desire to continue studying it.

In working on this project I also received assistance from other colleagues at Wisconsin who shared with me their knowledge and

expertise. Dave Weimer helped me with selecting the statistical models and interpreting some unusual results. Deven Carlson helped with designing and interpreting the difference-in-differences model. Jon Pevehouse shared with me data on American foreign involvement and helped me sort through them. Leticia Bode, Josh Cowen, Ken Goldstein, Adam Kradel, Jacob Neiheisel, Michael Pisapia, David Schwartz, and Howard Schweber read and commented on several of the chapters and were helpful in thinking through my arguments. Their friendship has made my time in Madison a better one.

The School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya provided the intellectual and personal support for turning the project into a book. Alex Mintz was enthusiastic about the project and gave me advice, time, and support to pursue its publication. Maoz Rosenthal was helpful in thinking through several of the models and read and commented on several of the chapters. My research assistants – Jason Berman, Shira Pindyck, and Brian Shaposnick – helped with collecting and coding additional data. Guy Freedman helped with organizing the data and creating the figures.

Several of the chapters in this book were presented in conferences and workshops where I received invaluable critique and suggestions to improve the work: the UW Political Behavior Research Group, the UW American Politics Workshop, the Faculty Seminar at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the IDC, and on numerous panels at the annual meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association and the American Political Science Association. At these latter meetings, I was fortunate to be part of the intellectual family of presidential experts – the Presidency and Executive Politics section of the American Political Science Association. In particular, I thank the following colleagues whose comments contributed to the project (sometimes without even knowing they had that effect): Julia Azari, George Edwards, Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha, Karen Hoffman, Nancy Kassop, Jeffrey Peake, Richard Powell, Brandon Rottinghaus, and Justin Vaughn. Special thanks to Jeffrey Cohen who made me stay on message and avoid missteps.

This project would not have been possible without the rich data that others have collected and made publicly available or were generous to share with me. The staff at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut was extremely helpful in making the survey-data available – offering to release important datasets that were not yet ready for publication. The American Presidency Project at the University of

Acknowledgments

xi

California, Santa Barbara, altered the field of the American presidency by making the data on the public papers of the presidents available for download and search. Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones generously provided me quarterly data of the Policy Agendas Project. Their systematic categorization of policy changed my approach to studying the political system. John Petrocik and Bill Benoit shared with me their dictionary of search-terms and offered advice on the research design.

At Cambridge University Press, I thank Robert Dreesen for finding interest in this project and working with me toward its acceptance and publication. The anonymous reviewers were extremely helpful in clarifying the arguments throughout the book and improved the empirical evidence by asking me to extend the scope and scale of the data and models to analyze them.

Every single person made this project a better one. I am responsible for the errors that still remain.

Finally, I owe the greatest debts to my family, who supported and encouraged me to pursue my interests. My parents, Ben Zion and Shulamit Cavari, taught me the value of a life of inquiry. My father's personal commitment to research encouraged me to follow in his steps, whatever I decide to study (even if it is not Biology). My mother – on our morning rides to school, listening to the news and discussing them within their historical context – installed in me the urge to study politics. Until today, my parents are my strongest critics. Arguments that can pass them will fly anywhere.

I dedicate this book to Inbal Unger Cavari. Inbal never seconded our decision to move to Madison away from our families and friends and then back to Israel to renew our lives here. Her love and encouragement made my work easier. Her critique and advice made my work better. Our four children – all born while I was working on this project – Jonathan, Itamar, Naomi and Avital made it all worthwhile. Now they can finally cheer, “Daddy finished his book!”