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978-1-107-08540-4 - Party in the Street: The Antiwar Movement and the Democratic Party after 9/11

Michael T. Heaney and Fabio Rojas

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Introduction

January 27, 2007, was an unseasonably warm Saturday in Washington, D.C. With the sun shining and afternoon temperatures reaching 57 degrees Fahrenheit, the weather conditions were perfect for an antiwar march in the nation's capital. The political conditions seemed perfect, too. Only a few months earlier, on November 7, 2006, the Democratic Party had won a decisive victory in the congressional midterm elections. Democrats gained thirty-one seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and six seats in the U.S. Senate, allowing them to control both the House (by a 233–202 margin) and the Senate (by a 51–49 margin) for the first time since 1994 (CNN 2006; Zelney and Zernike 2006). Media accounts of the election widely attributed the outcome to voters' dissatisfaction with President George W. Bush and the Iraq War (see, for example, Dewan 2006).

Leaders in the antiwar movement sought to seize the political opportunity created by the Democrats' return to power. Given the belief that Democrats owed their victory to antiwar sentiment, movement activists hoped to press Democratic leaders into bringing the Iraq War to a quick end. To support this goal, upward of one hundred thousand people gathered at the National Mall for a rally organized by United for Peace and Justice, the nation's largest and broadest antiwar coalition during the presidency of George W. Bush. The rally focused on the slogan "The voters want peace. Tell the new Congress: ACT NOW TO END THE WAR!" (United for Peace and Justice 2007d, emphasis in original). The speakers included elected officials from the Democratic Party, such as U.S. Representatives Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Maxine Waters (D-CA), and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA); movement leaders, such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Medea Benjamin; and celebrities, such as Jane Fonda and Danny Glover, all of whom echoed the view that the 2006 elections were a mandate for peace. As U.S. Representative Lynn Woolsey exclaimed in her remarks, "We have an antidote to this insanity... It is what *you* sent *us* to do last November.

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It's called H.R. 508 ... the Bring [the] Troops Home and Iraq Sovereignty Restoration Act" (Woolsey 2007b, emphasis in original).

Organizers followed up on the rally with a Capitol Hill lobby day. Approximately one thousand grassroots activists participated. After receiving a day of basic lobbying training on Sunday, activists swarmed into House and Senate office buildings on Monday, January 29, ready to press their representatives to support a laundry list of pending resolutions and to join the congressional Out of Iraq Caucus. Teams of citizen lobbyists were organized by state and armed with detailed records of representatives' support (or lack thereof) for pending antiwar legislation. The day was a model of the "inside-outside" strategy, in which activists attempt to keep one foot inside political institutions and one foot outside them (Selfa 2008, pp. 160–2). By intentionally combining contentious politics with institutional politics, this strategy aims to leverage the power of movements for policy influence. At the same time, it places movements in a nebulous position that has the potential to undermine their cause as much as, or more than, it helps it (Tarrow 2012).

While many movement leaders and activists emphasized the role of Congress as a whole in ending the Iraq War, others specified a role for the Democratic Party, in particular. For example, Lynn Woolsey gave an interview to MSNBC shortly after Saturday's rally, in which she claimed, "We're hoping to build on the November 7th election when the public spoke loudly [and] told Democrats, 'we want *you* to be the majority because you will change that policy in Iraq and bring our troops home'" (Woolsey 2007a, emphasis in original). From Woolsey's point of view, a victory for the Democratic Party and the cause of peace were one and the same. As a sponsor of antiwar resolutions and a cochair of the Out of Iraq Caucus, Woolsey was one of a handful of Democratic members of Congress who had been working hand in hand with grassroots leaders in the antiwar movement and sympathetic Democrats in Congress in an effort to end the Iraq War. For Woolsey and her allies, the elections, rally, and lobby day were the culmination of many years of hard work.

The alliance between the Democratic Party and the antiwar movement in 2006–2007 underscores the potential for synergy between social movements and political parties. In this case, leaders of a social movement identified an issue, framed it for political discourse, and helped to mobilize supporters from the rank and file of a political party. Leaders of a political party adopted the movement's issue and frames. They promised to address the issue if elected. Mobilization by the movement's supporters boosted the party's success in the election. After the election, party leaders worked together with movement activists to implement the movement's agenda.

To the disappointment of many activists, the alliance between the Democratic Party and the antiwar movement proved to be short lived. The antiwar movement became a mass movement from 2001 to 2006, as Democratic Party loyalty and anti-Bush sentiment provided fuel for the movement. However, the 2006 elections and their immediate aftermath were the high point for

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party-movement synergy. At exactly the time when antiwar voices were most well poised to exert pressure on Congress, movement leaders stopped sponsoring lobby days. The size of antiwar protests declined. From 2007 to 2009, the largest antiwar rallies shrank from hundreds of thousands of people to thousands, and then to only hundreds. Congress considered antiwar legislation, but mostly failed to pass it. In 2008, the Democrats nominated an antiwar presidential candidate in U.S. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL). But once Obama became president, his policies on war and national security resembled those of his Republican predecessor, President George W. Bush. By 2009, synergy between the Democratic Party and the antiwar movement appeared to have largely evaporated. Thus, there was a decline in antiwar movement activity in three domains – individual, organizational, and legislative. This was not a case of evaporating protest that was compensated by activity at other levels, but an across-the-board reduction in movement activity.

The decline of the antiwar movement in the United States after the January 2007 lobby day poses a puzzle for the study of social movements and political parties. The movement's Democratic allies were on the rise in Congress. The prospects for an antiwar president in 2008 were strong. If ever there was a time when the antiwar movement could have exerted influence over decision makers, this was it. Political scientists, such as Ken Kollman (1998) and Kenneth Goldstein (1999), argue that policy makers tend to be responsive to *outside lobbying* undertaken by social movements when they believe that it is a clear signal of the preferences of their constituents. If elected leaders were inclined to be sympathetic to antiwar appeals, then antiwar activists might have been able to encourage progress on issues such as prohibiting the construction of permanent military bases in Iraq or stopping plans for an escalation of troops. But, rather than intensify its efforts, the movement reduced them. These observations lead us to question the nature of the antiwar-Democratic alliance. What explains the emergence of the alliance and what accounts for its erosion?

Previous scholarship on the dynamics of social movements offers a variety of explanations for the rise and fall of movements. For example, Anthony Downs (1972) points to the importance of issue-attention cycles among the public. Albert Hirschman (1982) emphasizes temporal change in subjective assessments of benefits and costs of activism, which can lead to both engagement and burnout among activists. David Meyer (1990) stresses the opening and closing of political opportunities available to movements. Dennis Chong (1991) highlights the mass psychology of movements, particularly how policy successes can have a demobilizing function for movements (see also Bernstein 2005; Jenkins and Eckert 1986; McAdam 1982; Meyer 2008; Rupp and Taylor 1990; Tarrow 1993). Yet none of these explanations accounts for why the rise to power of a movement's political allies – which presumably opened political opportunities for the movement and raised its chances for

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success – would lead to a decline in the movement before those allies effected the changes that they had promised.

Our explanation centers on the shifting partisan alignments favoring the Democratic Party. We observe demobilization not in response to a *policy* victory, but in response to a *party* victory. The rising power of the Democratic Party may have convinced many antiwar activists that the war issue would be dealt with satisfactorily, even if they did not keep applying grassroots pressure through an organized social movement (in contrast to what many scholars predict; see, for example, Ganz 2009; McAdam 1982; Skocpol, Liazos, and Ganz 2006). According to this view, after 2006, it was no longer “necessary” to have an antiwar movement in the streets because the Democratic Party *was* the antiwar movement. Starting in 2007, a Democratically controlled Congress could use the power of the purse to defund the Iraq War and force President Bush slowly to withdraw U.S. forces (Stein 2007). If a Democratic Congress was unable to force an end to the war, then, as *Washington Post* columnist David Broder (2007) prophesied, a Democratic president elected in 2008 would.

The explanation that many antiwar activists deferred to the Democratic Party after 2006 requires that we understand why many antiwar activists seemed to trust the Democratic Party. After all, the movement started to decline in the midst of President Bush’s escalation of the Iraq War through “the surge” (Bush 2007), when we might have expected protest to grow instead. The decline corresponded with votes by Democrats in Congress to approve a succession of war supplemental appropriation requests made by President Bush. The decline started *before* the Democrats made good on promises to enact legislation to revise the civil liberties provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, to condemn the doctrine of preemption, or to stop the surge. So, why did many antiwar activists stop fighting before they achieved their goal? How come they did not, instead, intensify their collaboration with their Democratic allies? If antiwar advocates wanted to end war, why did so few of them actively pressure President Obama to do so once he was in office? Why did the movement not grow during the surge in Afghanistan in 2009?

In this book, we aspire to unravel this puzzle by making sense of the relationship between the antiwar movement and the Democratic Party in the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (hereafter 9/11). To do so, we inquire into the *dual identifications* that many political actors had with the Democratic Party and the antiwar movement. We argue that when the Democrats were out of office and the Republicans were in power, these intersecting identities promoted synergy between the party and the movement. Indeed, the rise of the antiwar movement as a mass movement can be traced to dissatisfaction among many Democratic partisans with the presidency of George W. Bush. Anti-Republican partisanship helped to fuel the growth of the antiwar movement and explains why its mobilization appears to have depended more on changes in partisan control than on substantive adjustments in foreign policies.

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More generally, we argue that social movement mobilization is driven to a significant degree by the dynamic interrelationship between social movements and political parties. We posit that the direct identification of political actors (such as grassroots activists, nonprofit organizations, and members of Congress) with political parties and social movements is a critical (though, not the only) factor that drives both mobilization success and failure. Drawing on theories of *intersectionality* (Collins 2000; Combahee River Collective 1995; Crenshaw 1989; Hancock 2007; Strolovitch 2007), we claim that *partisan identification* tends to be stronger and longer-lasting than *movement identification*, which enhances the advantaged status of parties. Thus, *identity shifts* – transitions in how political actors answer the question “Who am I?” – tend to favor parties over movements when identities conflict. In explaining these dynamics, our research adds to the understanding of identity shifts and how they affect the mobilization of social movements.

Partisan identities tend to develop over longer periods and reach a broader segment of the population than do movement identities (Rosenblum 2008). Partisan identities are consistently reinforced by periodic elections in a way that movement identities are not, a tendency that often makes partisans an advantaged subgroup within movements and movement activists a disadvantaged subgroup within parties. Thus, as the Democrats regained control of government, actors’ party identifications tended to trump their movement identifications. Rather than staying focused on their position on a single issue – such as their opposition to war – many partisans gave greater attention to other callings from the Democratic Party. As a result, many Democratic activists and war opponents withdrew from the antiwar movement as they felt less threatened by the Bush administration and shifted their attention to other party priorities, such as health care. Once the fuel of partisanship was in short supply, it was difficult for the antiwar movement to sustain itself on a mass level.

The decline of the antiwar movement was not the result of a centralized decision by movement leaders to stop fighting against the war. Rather, it was the product of a multitude of individual decisions made by activists, members of Congress, financial backers, and others as they redirected their energies to other purposes. The collective result was that the antiwar movement found itself unable to attain critical mass at exactly the time when its efforts might have been applied to the greatest political effect. While the Democratic Party was able to leverage antiwar sentiments effectively in promoting its own electoral success, the antiwar movement itself ultimately suffered organizationally from its ties to the Democratic Party.

The case of the antiwar movement and the Democratic Party after 9/11 suggests that the relationship between political parties and the mobilization of social movements is linked to the identities of individual political actors. The distinctive theoretical contribution of our book is to explain more generally how the interplay of partisan and movement identities can provide an account

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for the dynamics of social movement mobilization.¹ Other scholarship on party-movement interaction, such as the work of Mildred Schwartz (2006; 2010) and Daniel Schlozman (2015), examines how parties and movements as a whole affect one another at the macrolevel but neglects the part played by individuals and organizations within social movements and parties. This book demonstrates how the microlevel behaviors of individual and organizational actors matter for macrolevel patterns of party and movement dynamics.

We argue that the consequences of intersecting movement-party identities can be observed not only in the case of the antiwar movement, but also in movements as diverse as the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, both of which exhibited fluctuating overlap between movement supporters and party supporters. For example, after the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States, the threat perceived by conservative activists upon Obama's election quickly translated into Tea Party protests in 2009 and 2010 (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). However, Tea Party rallies dissipated once the Republican Party regained control of the U.S. House of Representatives after the 2010 congressional elections (Shear 2012). Instead, the Tea Party switched its emphasis from outsider tactics (such as protests) to insider tactics (such as lobbying). While Tea Party-Republican ties are somewhat different from antiwar-Democratic ties, the similarities are strong enough to suggest that a more general phenomenon is at work. We suggest that the consequences of party-movement overlap may be amplified when American politics is highly polarized along party lines (Abramowitz 2010; Hacker and Pierson 2005; Hetherington 2009; Maskett 2011; Sinclair 2006).

To be clear, this book's primary focus is not on explaining the emergence of an antiwar movement after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and in the run-up to the Iraq War in March 2003. We think that the explanation for the movement's rise is relatively straightforward. The United States has a long tradition of antiwar activism that extends from the Revolutionary War through all military conflicts in the nation's history (Mann 2010). Antiwar protests after 9/11 were organized by many of the same individuals and organizations that had been active in peace struggles from the Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s through the confrontations with Iraq in the 1990s (Woehrle, Coy, and Maney 2008). People opposed war for a mix of reasons, such as concerns about the potential geopolitical implications of U.S. military intervention, general opposition to the policies of the Bush administration, and religiously motivated pacifism. By generating turnout from people with a range of motivations, these

¹ We are not claiming that party and movement identities are the only kinds of identities that matter for social movement mobilization. Rather, we maintain that multiple identities matter in the mobilization process. Our analysis focuses on partisan and movement identities because their interaction has important consequences for the mobilization process in a wide variety of political contexts.

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protests were able to reach an unprecedented scale – including the largest internationally coordinated protest in all of human history on February 15, 2003 – largely due to the new information environment created by the Internet (Gillan, Pickerill, and Webster 2008). The movement drew on widespread disenchantment with the Bush administration, much of which began with the disputed 2000 presidential election (Craig, Martinez, Gainous, and Kane 2006). Given this underlying movement capacity, the emergence of an antiwar movement after 9/11 seems to have been quite likely.

Moreover, our focus is not on why the antiwar movement failed to prevent – or to end – the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We think that the answer to this question is similarly evident: Barriers to policy success for the antiwar movement may have been insurmountable from the start.² In general, antiwar movements tend to be less successful in achieving their policy goals than other social movements because they challenge the security interests of state actors and, thus, receive relatively little facilitation from the state (Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995; Marullo and Meyer 2004; Yeo 2011). As a result, antiwar movements rarely prevent nations from going to war. Under the right conditions, movements have the potential to influence public opinion and weaken institutional support for war significantly (Marullo and Meyer 2004). However, the challenges for antiwar activists were especially difficult after 9/11. The war in Afghanistan began almost immediately after 9/11, with little more than token opposition on the streets at that time. The Bush administration had made definitive war plans for Iraq by July 2002 (Holsti 2011), before the antiwar movement had begun in earnest. Once the wars began, the Bush administration had demonstrated a willingness to pay immense domestic political costs to continue the wars (Kriner 2010). In contrast, the antiwar movement had few financial resources and ran on a shoestring budget (Cortright 2004). Under these conditions, the chances that the antiwar movement would have a major influence on war policy in the 2000s appear to have been small from the outset.

Rather than focusing on the policy success or failure of a movement, this book tells the story of the interaction between political parties and social movements in a social space that we call the *party in the street*. Our goal is to illuminate how different types of political actors interface with one another to generate macropolitical outcomes. Thus, we conduct our empirical investigation at multiple levels of analysis to examine the behavior of individual activists, legislators, organizations, coalitions, the Democratic Party, and

² In focusing on policy success, we are not denying that the antiwar movement was successful along other dimensions. For example, the movement helped to raise the political consciousness of millions of people who participated in demonstrations and other movement activities. These individuals were educated in the movement's goals and values through their participation (Munson 2008). Their training will likely prove useful to future social movements that will draw upon their experiences (Taylor 1989).

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the antiwar movement as a whole. In doing so, we treat the organized U.S. domestic opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as a single movement, rather than different movements against two separate wars.

Chapter 1 begins this story by developing the concept of the party in the street and situating it in the academic literature on political parties and social movements. Among those who study American politics, there is often a division of labor by those who study parties and movements, with political scientists paying greater attention to parties and sociologists paying closer attention to movements (McAdam and Kloos 2014). However, we explain that parties and movements, in fact, are overlapping fields that ought to be understood explicitly in relation to one another. The resulting concept of the party in the street provides a framework for analyzing the interaction of parties and movements. Next, we consider the historical coevolution of political parties and social movements in the United States. We trace the paths of parties and movements from their origins in the nation's founding to the current period of political polarization. Finally, we consider the specific case of the antiwar movement after 9/11. We discuss the context for this investigation by considering the historical evolution of peace activism in the United States, starting with opposition to the Revolutionary War and ending with the antiwar movement after 9/11. The movement after 9/11, in many ways, evolved from the peace movements that preceded it, especially the movement to end the war in Vietnam. We are careful to compare the movement after 9/11 to the Vietnam antiwar movement, which was the most significant and consequential antiwar movement in American history. Among the important differences between the two, we note that the movement after 9/11 operated in a highly partisan environment, while the polarization during the Vietnam War era was not as partisan in nature.

We elaborate upon the key empirical puzzle of the book in Chapter 2 by mapping the relationships among parties, foreign policies, and the movement. We consider the aphorism that "politics stops at the water's edge" to ask whether the politics and policies surrounding U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were influenced by partisanship. In examining war policy positions taken by candidates in the 2004 and 2008 elections, we find that Democratic politicians articulated more fervent antiwar positions than did politicians within the Republican Party, even though there were varying positions among politicians in both parties. Exit poll data reveal that politicians in the Democratic Party benefited during electoral contests from the support of antiwar constituencies. However, when we look at the evolution of actual war policies from the Bush to the Obama administrations, we find more continuity than change. The Obama administration shifted emphasis from Iraq to Afghanistan, but these shifts were still only a slight redirection of the trajectory set forth by the Bush administration. Given Obama's continuation of many of Bush's policies, we would have expected the antiwar movement to react with steady or increased levels of protests. Yet, antiwar protests declined during

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Obama's presidency, even in the presence of policies that continued war. We argue that, in order to explain this pattern, a new perspective is needed on the relationship between parties and movements.

Chapter 3 aims to resolve the puzzle identified in Chapter 2 by offering a new theoretical perspective on the mechanisms through which fields of political parties and social movements interact. In contrast to most of the previous scholarship on this topic, which treats parties and movements as a whole as the units of analysis, we stress the *multiple identities* of individual actors in mediating this interaction. Political actors embrace multiple identities during their participation in politics. When these identities overlap, they have the potential both to amplify party-movement cooperation (when they reinforce one another) and to undercut party-movement cooperation (when they conflict with one another). Thus, the interplay of multiple identities helps to provide an explanation for the dynamics of the party in the street. Drawing upon scholarship in the *intersectionality* tradition, we hypothesize that partisan identities often trump movement identities during periods of conflict, a tendency that may lead to important *identity shifts* among mobilized actors. A consequence of identity shifts is that political parties are often in a stronger position than movements after the conflict. Thus, our partisan identification theory offers an important explanation for why Democratic electoral success ultimately spelled doom for the antiwar movement.

Chapter 4 investigates the sources of decline in participation by activists in the antiwar movement and the Democratic Party. Drawing upon original field surveys that we collected at antiwar events held between 2004 and 2010, as well as surveys that we conducted of participants at the 2010 United States Social Forum and delegates to the 2008 Democratic National Convention (DNC), we explore the tension between partisan and movement identities. Using these data, we test three sets of hypotheses related to the ideas that partisanship motivates antiwar mobilization, partisan and movement identities trade off against one another, and partisanship shapes activists' worldviews. The findings show that antiwar activists with identities linked to the Democratic Party tended to depart from the antiwar movement earlier than did activists without Democratic identities. Further, the results of the Democratic delegate survey reveal that although Democratic Party members generally held an antiwar point of view, their mobilization for the antiwar cause usually assumed a lower priority than mobilization on many other issues, such as health care. Together, these results suggest that identification with the Democratic Party drew activists away from the antiwar movement once the party attained electoral success. Partisan identities were more likely to trump movement identities than vice versa, when these identities were in conflict. We reach these conclusions after controlling for alternative explanations for individuals' behavior, such as the possibility that differences in ideology may account for activists' opposition to war under all circumstances, as opposed to under specific conditions.

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Chapter 5 adopts an organizational lens with which to interpret the dynamics of the party in the street that we document in Chapter 4. Like individuals, organizations have identities that are connected to a greater or lesser extent to political parties. We argue that these organizational identities matter for how and when organizations exerted leadership within the antiwar movement. We find that organizations with Democratic identifications gained more central positions within the network of antiwar organizations as the Democratic Party rose to power, but then tended to lose those positions once Obama became president. These shifting networks affected the operation of leading national coalitions, which were broader and more institutionally focused during the Democratic Party's rise and narrower and more radical during the Obama administration. Finally, organizations with identities that intersected explicitly with the party and the movement tended to shift toward their partisan roots during periods of unified Democratic government. In addition to supporting our argument in this chapter with statistical and archival evidence, we discuss case studies of three organizations that illustrate the contours of our account: United for Peace and Justice, MoveOn, and Black Is Back.

Chapter 6 looks at the movement to oppose war within Congress. Members of Congress such as Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), James McGovern (D-MA), John Murtha (D-PA), Barbara Lee (D-CA), and Maxine Waters (D-CA) worked closely with antiwar lobbyists in an attempt to advance antiwar agendas, especially through the Out of Iraq Caucus and the Out of Afghanistan Caucus. They were largely unsuccessful in doing so. Drawing upon data on the cosponsorship of antiwar legislation, we show how their efforts rose and fell with the fortunes of the Democratic Party. Once Barack Obama became president, the antiwar movement within Congress almost vanished. There was some resurgence of antiwar sentiment during the third year of Obama's first term (2011), but most of this opposition focused on Republicans' concerns with the administration's limited military intervention in Libya, rather than on the larger military commitments in Afghanistan. Within Congress, as well, partisan identities were more likely to trump movement identities than vice versa.

In Chapter 7, we consider the relevance of our argument to movements beyond the antiwar movement, such as the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street. Our goal is not to produce a comprehensive analysis of these movements, but to examine the ways in which our hypothesized mechanisms might plausibly operate within another context. We argue that the greater the overlap is between the party and the movement, the greater the correspondence is between the movement's mobilization and the electoral cycle, as well as the greater likelihood that movement actors turn to institutionally based political tactics. The Tea Party developed a close relationship with the Republican Party such that it quickly evolved to be an organized faction within the party, rather than a movement outside it. In contrast, the core participants of Occupy Wall Street deliberately eschewed collaboration with their closest major party ally – the Democratic Party – in favor of a militant nonpartisanship. We find that the