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THE PEOPLE AND THE BALLOT:
A HISTORY OF AMERICAN PARTY POLITICS

COURSE GUIDE

Professor Joshua Kaplan
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

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 Joshua Kaplan has taught at the University of Notre Dame since 1987. He graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz and earned a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He teaches courses on American politics, constitutional law, and political theory, and is the Political Science Department's associate director of undergraduate studies. He has been recognized by the American Political Science Association and Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society, for outstanding teaching in political science. Notre Dame's student body presented him with the Frank O'Malley Undergraduate Teaching Award, and he is a two-time winner of Notre Dame's Kaneb Award for excellence in teaching.

Introduction

The study of political parties gets straight to the heart of American politics. The story of political parties is about how we get along with one another. Americans have always been divided by economic differences, sectional differences, ideological differences, racial differences, ethnic differences, religious differences, and differences of many other sorts. Parties reflect differences, but they also reach across differences. For better and for worse, political parties are the main way that we express and channel these differences through the political process. The history of political parties lets us see how these coalitions form, develop, and change.

Political parties grew outside the Constitution and the more formal framework of government. No one planned or even wanted them. Parties developed as a response to the dream of a unified government. While parties have taken the country to the brink of violence, and beyond, they have also been vehicles for avoiding violent conflict, and for channeling disagreements.

The purpose of this course is to provide a better understanding of how American politics works and to help make sense of election results and political trends. We need to understand parties to understand what is going on in American politics now. Furthermore, we need to understand the tendencies over time and how parties have changed, particularly since the 1970s, to understand the forces driving American politics now, and to see the direction that politics is going.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is John Aldrich's *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America.*

ames MacGregor Burns, a political scientist best known for his book on the leadership style of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *FDR: The Lion and the Fox*, calls the creation of political parties in the 1790s the "Second Constitution." The United States Constitution creates a structure of government designed to break up potential concentrations of power that might threaten the public interest. The separation of powers was included in the Constitution to prevent any one group from controlling the government. James Madison, in the *Federalist Papers*, argued that faction presented the most serious problem facing the United States. He defined factions as any group, whether a minority or majority, motivated by an interest contrary to the interests of others and to the public interest. He believed that the Constitution would make it more difficult for coalitions to form, and that even if a coalition formed around one particular issue, it would break up when confronted with a different issue. The Framers disliked the idea of political parties because they sought unity and unanimity, and they saw parties as threats to unity. They believed that people wouldn't willingly put aside their differences, so the government itself should neutralize "the mischief of faction" by breaking up concentrations of power and making it harder for coalitions to last for long.

But as soon as the government created by the Constitution was put into practice, the officials of the government discovered that they needed ways to work together. They needed ways to organize both support and opposition. Political parties filled the gap left by the Constitution. They are extra-constitutional—not unconstitutional—in the sense that they are not part of the constitutional structure of power and are not subject to the same checks and balances as the formal institutions of government. Burns argued that while the Constitution fragmented the government and broke up concentrations of power, political parties provided a way for people to work together. Parties provided a way for people to express their differences that allowed not only for opposition and obstruction, but also compromise and cooperation. Most importantly, parties allowed government to be responsible. It gave voters a way to express their support or opposition to what the government was doing. If people do not like what the government is doing, parties give them a way to promote an alternative instead. Fragmented power made compromise—and responsibility—more difficult, because leaders could not guarantee compliance and cooperation. But parties provided a way for supporters and opponents to unite among themselves, so that a choice could be made. That's why political scientists have generally liked political parties. Whereas most people consider parties to be part of the problem, most political scientists consider them to be part of the solution.

The goal of this course is to study political parties as a way of gaining a better understanding of American politics today. But we are going to begin by investigating the birth of the party system in the 1790s, and the origins of the Democratic and Republican parties in the early 1800s. The early history of the parties is surprisingly revealing with regard to the nature and character of the parties and American politics itself. Ross Perot used to say that the devil is in the details, but with this subject, much of the meaning is in the details as well. It is by learning about the early conflicts that gave rise to parties that we see the decisions made by political leaders as they put together the coalitions that cut across various sectional, economic, and class differences. These details provide vivid examples of how parties have led to more unity or more conflict depending on the skill and vision of politicians and voters. As we see examples of the complex interaction between politicians and the electorate, we can better understand why parties often seem frustratingly unresponsive to the most pressing issues, for better and for worse.

Although there were many disagreements in the United States in the 1790s, the party system as we know it developed over a particular debate in Congress regarding a treaty. In 1795, John Jay was sent to England to negotiate a treaty with England. This become known as the Jay Treaty, and opinion in Congress was divided between those who believed that the terms of the treaty were too favorable to England, and those who believed that it was the best that was possible. It may seem rather odd that this treaty, long since forgotten, should be the source of such an important development in American politics, and that parties should have outlasted the issue that originally gave rise to them. There were any number of serious divisions in American politics at this time. Settlers who came earlier often had advantages over those who came later. Those who settled in the western frontier had different interests than those in the more established areas. The North was divided against the South. Farmers had different interests than merchants and manufacturers. Those who believed in a strong central government were locked in conflict with those who believed in strong local government. Debtors were opposed to creditors. Farmers had different interests than merchants. Workers had different interests from merchants. You might have expected parties to develop around any of those important issues. The two sides in the dispute over the Jay Treaty did not coincide exactly with any of those differences.

This is one of the central puzzles of political parties in the United States. The desire for unity gets confused with the goal of unanimity. The founders' hope for unity and their fear that parties would make unanimity impossible gave way to politics based on support and opposition that only parties could provide.

It is hard to see parties nowadays as a source of cooperation and unity. The differences between the parties, the animosity between the parties, and the deliberate refusals to cooperate, make political parties a source of conflict. When we saw the signs of this in previous decades, political scientists attributed the problems to the fact that parties had become weaker. Weak parties paradoxically had led to more partisanship. They argued that stronger parties would make cooperation more likely. The problem is that now we have ample

evidence that although parties have become weaker in some ways, they have become much stronger in other ways, and they have become stronger in ways that seem to lead directly to conflict rather than compromise and cooperation. These two different ways of understanding American politics—the original vision of unity and unanimity, and the subsequent discovery that the country was strong enough to contain both support and opposition, and that responsible government required both support and opposition—and their uneasy coexistence, remain part of American politics today.

Questions

1. Why can the creation of parties in the 1790s be considered the "Second Constitution?"
2. How did the Jay Treaty affect the development of political parties?

Suggested Reading

Aldrich, John. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Other Books of Interest

Binkley, Wilfred E. *American Political Parties: Their Natural History,* 4th ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.

Burns, James MacGregor. *The Deadlock of Democracy: Four-Party Politics in America.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.

Ginsberg, Benjamin, and Martin Shefter. *Politics by Other Means: Politicians, Prosecutors, and the Press from Watergate to Whitewater*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Hoadley, John F. *Origins of American Political Parties 1798–1803*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1986.

Smith, Hedrick. *The Power Game: How Washington Works*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

We are going to proceed with a historical analysis of the origins of the Democratic and Republican parties. This course is not simply a history of American political parties, but rather a study of parties as a way to better understand American politics today. There are several reasons for proceeding historically at the beginning. First, certain characteristics of parties can only be understood with reference to the actual details of their development. Historical events, the actions of particular political leaders, and economic upheavals have made all the difference in how parties developed the way they did. Second, one of the most important things to understand about parties is that they represent ever-shifting coalitions, and although it is all too easy to be overwhelmed by the details, an examination of how those coalitions developed over time can explain a lot, and help to understand why the parties developed when they did and the way they did. Third, the development of parties helps us discover the trends and tendencies of American politics and helps us place what is going on today into a context.

However, when we look at the birth of the Democratic or Republican parties, this does not mean that the platform of the current Democratic party resembles the party of Andrew Jackson, much less Thomas Jefferson, in any way, shape, or form. We are not investigating the origin of the party to claim that if Jefferson and Jackson were alive today, they would be Democrats, any more than Abraham Lincoln would be a Republican. The history of the party does not tell us anything about the platform of the party today. In fact, both the Democratic and Republican parties changed dramatically within a few years of their formation. But we can look back to the early 1800s and trace the development of the party forward to discover how it changed into its current form. The birth of the Democratic party shows us that the party's early leaders developed innovative techniques of organization that transformed what could have been a temporary faction in Congress into an enduring political organization that developed slates of candidates and performed many of the other functions of political parties as we know them today. The circumstances of the party's early years also show us the two-step process that allowed the organization in Congress to develop into a mass-electorate party for the first time.

The Federalists had succeeded in part because they were attuned to the social organization of the time. They believed in a natural aristocracy and they established ties with social and economic elites at the state and local level. Their extinction came because they were unable to adapt to changing circumstances in the country and were unable to sustain power over time,

since there was little that united them. In particular, once the government was put into practice, and a multitude of particular issues had to be decided, there was not enough to unite and sustain the Federalists over time.

Thomas Jefferson carefully cultivated support among politicians in different states. What they had in common was devotion to the principle of limited government, but this meant very different things to different people in different parts of the country. In the South, for example, limited government increasingly came to mean that the national government would not interfere with slavery. In other parts of the country, limited government meant more local control. Thomas Jefferson called his election in 1800 as great a revolution in the principle of government as the revolution of 1776 was in the form of government.

Jefferson's party was called the Republican party. This name is confusing, though, because in terms of political development, it is the precursor to the modern Democratic party, not the Republican party, which developed several decades later in the late 1850s under very different circumstances. Historians and political scientists used to call the party the Democratic-Republican party to emphasize its connection with what became the Democratic party, but nowadays, most historians and political scientists refer to it as the Jeffersonian Republican party.

The Jeffersonian Republicans found a principle of organization that proved effective in maintaining power over time and proved so successful at organizing support that it dominated politics for the next twenty-four years. The Federalist party died out, and the period after the War of 1812 until 1824 is called the Era of Good Feelings because there was basically no opposition party. This seemed to fulfill the dream of national unity, with no minority party to detract from a united nation.

However, this period of one-party politics gives us a glimpse of what life would be like without parties. The absence of party competition did not mean the absence of disagreement. It just became harder for people to express their disagreements via the political system. The result was not harmony, but increasing suspicion that the government consisted of political insiders who controlled things for their own benefit and who ignored the interests of the people. We will see in the lecture on third parties that this lingering suspicion eventually led to the success of the first national minor party, the Anti-Mason party. It also resulted in the weakening of the office of the presidency, since the important decisions were made by Congress.

In 1824, four candidates, all from the same party, fought for the presidency, with the result that none gained a majority in the Electoral College. In fact, some historians believe that this was part of the strategy of party leaders, who encouraged different states to nominate different candidates so that the House would be in a position to select the president. In this election, Andrew Jackson, who was a Republican Senator from Tennessee, received the plurality of the electoral vote and of the popular vote, but Adams was declared the winner when Henry Clay threw his support to him. President John Quincy Adams made a principle of leaving his political rivals in their positions and offering cabinet positions to his rivals, and he offered the Vice Presidency to the men who ran against him. All turned him down except Henry Clay. This

led to the perception of a "corrupt bargain" that had decided the election and thwarted the will of the people.

We are all familiar with the phrase, Jacksonian democracy, and the conventional explanation for his election in 1828 is the influx of new voters through the extension of suffrage in the 1820s. Historians have used phrases such as "the mighty democratic uprising" to describe a surge of new voters. Although it is true that in the 1820s most states had dropped the restrictions of suffrage that restricted voting to males who owned property, the increase in the number of eligible voters was accompanied by another change that was equally important. The Constitution gives states the power to determine how their electors will be selected, and in the first few of decades of the government, most states selected their electors through their state legislatures, or what was known as the legislative caucus. However, by the 1820s, most states chose their electors through a general election. This led to an increase in both number and percentage of voters who voted for president, but it really meant that the national election was catching up to the state and local elections. Before this, in most states, far more people voted in gubernatorial and other state and local elections than in presidential elections.

This difference in the way electors were chosen had far-reaching implications for how campaigns were conducted. Before this, it was considered unseemly for presidential candidates to actively campaign and solicit votes from voters. Rather, they appealed to the state legislatures and party organizations to garner their support. Thomas Jefferson used this technique successfully in the 1800 election, while the Federalists failed to adapt. With the change in the way electors were selected, a new campaign technique was called for, requiring appeals directly to voters. One of the first politicians to understand this was New York's Martin Van Buren. Although he could not muster support for himself, he recognized the potential under the new system and saw the potential for a popular figure such as a popular general. Andrew Jackson was a kind of echo of George Washington. A popular war hero who was one of the few successful generals in the War of 1812, Jackson had an appeal that was not based on policy but rather on image. His image as a national leader above politics was further enhanced by the election of 1824. This fed the perception that a deal had been made and that the popular choice was defeated by political insiders. This was the kind of political sentiment that was growing, especially after the succession of Republican presidential candidates that seemed to leave people little choice. The one-party Era of Good Feelings had the effect of stifling divisions within the party and leaving people feeling like decisions were made by the party caucuses and not by the people. Jackson's candidacy presented the promise of a government closer to the wishes of the people. Although Jackson was a wealthy, slave-owning plantation owner, he projected the image of an outsider who represented the people. This proved to be a formula for success.

There was another factor that contributed to the success of the Jackson/Van Buren combination. Although he was from New York, Van Buren understood the significance of southern support, and the national coalition he put together was key to the party's survival. Although southerners had different economic interests and classes among themselves, there was one issue that

brought the electorate together, especially with regard to national politics, and that, of course, was the issue of slavery. It was not that everyone in the South had the same views on slavery, quite the contrary. But even those opposed to slavery did not trust other regions of the country to make decisions for the South, and what united southerners was the conviction that the issue was theirs to deal with. It was a principle that resonated with a wide variety of people. Many northerners were not particularly bothered by slavery, and were sympathetic with the idea of local autonomy regardless of or despite its implications for the existence of slavery.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What were some of the reasons behind the Federalists' success?
2. Why did Thomas Jefferson call his election in 1800 as great a revolution as that of 1776?

Suggested Reading

Aldrich, John. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Other Books of Interest

Hoadley, John F. *Origins of American Political Parties 1798–1803*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1986.

Holt, Michael F. *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Nichols, Roy F. *The Invention of the American Political Parties: A Study of Political Improvisation.* New York: The Free Press, 1967.

We can trace the beginnings of the Republican party with some precision to a series of events in the 1850s and a combination of political leadership, economic forces, ideology, and shifting coalitions. The Republican party began as a third party, but quickly replaced one of the two major parties, the Whig party. It did this by finding ways to combine a broader coalition of supporters than the other parties. The Republican party addressed the issue of slavery at a time when it could no longer be ignored, but the party was not simply an anti-slavery party. The extension of slavery was a more urgent issue than the existence of slavery, and involved a delicate and dangerous balance of sectional interests with issues that transcended sectional differences. In the late 1850s, the Republican party succeeded where the Whig party failed, by becoming a sectional party. This was achieved at considerable cost to the nation. Historians have argued that it was the rise of the Republican party as a sectional party that led to the Civil War. Some believe that a Whig party with support in both the North and South, would have been a stabilizing factor that would have made secession less likely. So we are confronted by the paradox that the sectional foundation of the Republican party contributed to its success, but also seriously undermined national unity. The developments that led to the sectionalizing of support for the Republican and Democratic party have contributed to their enduring success, but also dramatically altered party politics in the United States, even down to the present day.

It is easy to get overwhelmed by a detailed history of the political parties. The details are important, though, because while there were forces like slavery that unfolded with a logic and imperative of their own, events such as financial panics and depression, and political developments, such as the Missouri Compromise, the annexation of Texas and the subsequent war with Mexico, also contributed to political development.

In 1844, President Tyler asked Congress to approve annexation of Texas. The Missouri Compromise had been an overtly sectional conflict that had the potential to upset the sectional balance between northern and southern states in the Senate, but the debate over the annexation of Texas was partisan, rather than sectional, and coincided with the development of party competition between two mass-electorate parties.

During the late 1830s and 1840s, when the parties did not always have clear platforms, politicians looked for issues that would divide people, in order to distinguish themselves from their rivals. This is the context for President John Tyler's attention to the annexation of Texas. John Tyler, who was from

Virginia, had been William Henry Harrison's running mate in 1840, the first presidential election that the Whig party won, but when he became president after Harrison's death, a month into his presidency, the Whigs in Congress, who had gained strength in the election of 1838, planned their opposition to him and looked to Henry Clay as an alternative to John Tyler. Tyler used the issue of annexation of Texas as a way to put together his own network of support independent of the Whigs in Congress. Clay argued that annexation would lead to war with Mexico, which had not accepted Texas's claim of independence, and would upset the sectional balance by adding a slave state. Martin Van Buren saw party competition as a way to cut across sectional differences, arguing that "party attachment furnished a complete antidote to sectional prejudices by producing counteracting feelings." Van Buren envisioned an alliance of northerners and southerners, even those who disagreed on the issue of slavery, on the general—very general—principles such as states rights, limited power of the national government, strict construction of the Constitution. But the sectional conflicts eventually disrupted attempts to put together party coalitions that united northerners and southerners.

In 1854, Stephen Douglas proposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which repealed the Missouri Compromise. When admitted as a state, a territory would be admitted as a slave or free state in accordance with its constitution at the time of its admission. Stephen Douglas thought, or wanted to believe, that his bill would advance his party by uniting Northern and Southern Democrats, but it had the effect of splitting them. Southern Whigs supported the Act and called for separation from the national party. Other northerners, who were part of the Free Soil Party, urged northern Whigs to leave the party and join them in a new coalition, which led to the formation of the Republican party.

These events set in motion a series of political decisions that offered two alternatives: a sectional divide, or a partisan divide. Many issues pitted the North against the South, but parties provided ways to unite northern and southern interests around a variety of other issues. The Republican party was not strictly speaking an anti-slavery party, and parts of its coalition were less interested in slavery than immigration or economic issues. Although it succeeded where a number of other parties of the time did not, in part by addressing the issue of slavery more directly, its supporters were by no means united on the issue of slavery. Historians have pointed to the name of the party as the key to understanding the common denominator that united its coalition. Even people who cared little about slavery were upset at the prospect that one region of the country, the South, could dictate policy to another, in violation of the principles of representative government.

Nowadays it is common to criticize Abraham Lincoln for being too pragmatic, and some people today question the sincerity of his commitment to emancipation. There is certainly evidence to support this. It is not hard to find quotations or to point to actions where Lincoln was the politician first and the proponent of liberty second. But to put it this way is to misunderstand the issue, and looking at the origins of the party helps us understand it better. Lincoln was truly a masterful politician who understood that his party comprised a delicate coalition that required a light touch. Lincoln was brilliant

at finding common denominators, at formulating issues in the broadest possible ways, to find formulas that all in the coalition could support. Thus his emphasis on the preservation of the union was not necessarily a higher priority to him than liberation, but it was more effective as a unifying formula. Emphasis on abolition would have alienated much of the Republican coalition. He was able to gain assent for abolition by framing the issue in terms of the preservation of the union, rather than abolition itself.

In his book, *The Price of Union* (originally published in 1949), the historian Herbert Agar quoted a passage from *The American Commonwealth* written by James Bryce, an Englishman who wrote a book about American government in the nineteenth century, regarding American political parties. "What are their principles, their distinctive tenants, their tendencies? Which of them is for free trade, for civil service reform, for a spirited foreign policy . . . for changes in the currency, for any of the twenty other issues which one hears discussed in the country as seriously involving its welfare? That is what a European is always asking of intelligent Republicans and intelligent Democrats. He is always asking because he never gets an answer. The replies leave him in deeper perplexity. After some months, the truth begins to dawn on him. Neither party has anything definite to say on these issues; neither party has any principles, any distinctive tenants. Both have traditions. Both claim to have tendencies. Both have certain war cries, organizations, interests, enlisted in their support. But those interests are in the main the interests of getting or keeping the patronage of the government. Tenants and policies, points of political doctrine and points of political practice have all but vanished. They have not been thrown away, but have been stripped away by time and the process of events, fulfilling some policies, blotting out others. All has been lost, except office or the hope of it." Agar goes on to say that Bryce's quote, although accurate in some ways, misses the point. Lord Bryce was confused by the brief history of the Republican party, which possessed principles in 1856 and none in 1886. He thought this a sign of failure and decay; but in fact it was a sign of health. The year 1856, he concludes, had been the exception and the danger; 1886 was the reassuring norm.

Agar's point is that what many people consider a weakness of American parties is a sign of strength. What made the Republican party successful in its early years was its willingness to attack slavery head-on. This, however, led to the sectionalization of parties, as the Republican party became the party of the North and the Democrats became the party of the South. This, in turn, led to southern secession and the Civil War. This is a dramatic illustration of the potential of parties for unity or for division. But it also offers a preview of problems to come. One of the problems with a sectional party is the lack of party competition within that section. The one-party politics of the South was responsible for many problems that would haunt the nation for many decades. It is why political scientists who studied the South hoped that the eventual rise of the Republican party in the South would be a healthy development for the nation as a whole.

Questions

1. What was the paradox of the sectional foundation of the Republican party?
2. Why did political scientists hope that the rise of the Republican party in the South would be healthy for the nation?

Suggested Reading

Engs, Robert F., and Randall M. Miller, eds. *The Birth of the Grand Old Party: The Republicans' First Generation.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Other Books of Interest

Agar, Herbert. *The Price of Union.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Riverside Press, 1966.

Anbinder, Tyler. *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Holt, Michael F. *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War.* New York: Hill and Wang, 2004.

Kleppner, Paul. *The Third Electoral System 1853–1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

Mayer, George H. *The Republican Party: 1854–1964*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Rutland, Robert Allen. *The Republicans: From Lincoln to Bush*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1996.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is John F. Bibby and L. Sandy Maisel's *Two Parties—Or More? The American Party System.*

Although the United States currently has a two-party system, and although the Democratic and Republican party have proved to be remarkably durable and adaptable, and although the institutions of American politics make things harder for third parties to win elections, the United States has had a three-party system, or a multiparty system for much of its history. Furthermore, many small or minor parties have played major roles in the history of American parties. From our standpoint today, third parties, or minor parties, or independent candidacies, remain important for several reasons. Today, even people with strong party identification are looking for alternatives to the Democratic and Republican party. Millions of people are frustrated with the two major parties, and believe that neither of those parties represents them well. We are intrigued by the possibility of a protest vote, or an alternative. The history of third parties can tell us how this is worked out in the past, and give us a sense of what happens to third parties.

There is a tendency to evaluate third parties in the past by the extent to which their proposals were adopted by the major parties. For example, historians like to point out that the Anti-Mason party, which is regarded as the first national third party, lasted for nine years and is notable for the fact that it introduced the first party convention as a way of nominating presidential candidates. Or the Progressive party's success is evidenced by the use of the primary election and ballot initiative, which it was responsible for. But the story of third parties is also the story of failures, of political movements that just didn't make it. The idea that history is written by the winners applies to political parties as well as wars, but part of the significance of parties like the People's Party is that they failed.

They can tell us more than we expect about American politics today. Even today, when most people have a strong party identification, the lure of a third party or independent candidate remains as attractive as ever. For many years, historians asked why certain parties failed and others succeeded. More recently, historians and political scientists have paid more attention to patterns of support, used more careful methods to avoid sweeping generalizations, and identified more precisely where third parties found most of their support. These studies have given us a different question: We look back at American history with a sense of inevitability, but the rise and decline of third parties remind us of what might have been.

The first national third party was the Anti-Mason party. Today, we look back and wonder how in the world this particular issue could possibly provide the foundation of a major political party. Freemasonry was a fraternal social and

charitable society that began in eighteenth-century England with secret rituals and a hierarchical structure. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson were Masons, and the organization was very popular and well-established nationwide in the first part of the nineteenth century. A well-publicized crime and trial turned Masonry into a volatile political issue. A newspaper threatened to publish an exposé of Masonic rituals. Masons tried legal means to stop him, and then tried to steal the manuscript and burn the newspaper's offices. Finally, they kidnapped the writer, who was a disgruntled Mason himself, and eventually drowned him.

The perpetrators were tried, but received light sentences, and there was evidence of improper influence by local law enforcement. When the New York state legislature defeated proposals to investigate the affair, there was a perfect storm of allegations of improper influence by Masons in the newspapers, the police, the courts, and the legislature, combined with resentment at growing economic inequalities. This fed directly into the temperament of the time that was increasingly suspicious that the will of the people was being subverted by secret societies of powerful men, and the Anti-Mason party expressed a widespread discontent with the power of elites who controlled politics and subverted the will of the people.

The party promoted popular participation as the antidote to control by elites, and it caught the attention of many new voters exactly at the moment when the franchise was expanding and political parties were becoming mass electorate organizations rather than simply networks of political leaders. In the first several elections, it was the state legislatures that chose the electors who went to the Electoral College, but it was right around this time that almost all states changed to a system where electors were chosen based on the popular votes in the general election. As we saw in the lecture on the birth of the Democratic party, in 1828, Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren tapped into this development and turned the Jeffersonian Republicans into a mass electorate party, the Democratic party, but the Anti-Mason party had capitalized on this development a few years earlier, and was a perfect outlet because of its "power to the people" message.

As Michael Holt has observed, the Anti-Mason party revealed "fears and hopes about the course of American society." To their enemies, the Masons represented an affront to the rule of law, equal rights, democracy, and the idea that people should be judged on their merits, not on their privilege and powerful connections. The idea that there was a network that controlled the government behind the scenes had some basis in reality, and it fed into fears that something had gone wrong in the United States. This theme is very familiar to us today, and continues to resonate with us, so the success of the Anti-Masons, which at first seems so odd today, is not so hard to understand after all. It fed into the resentment at both political and economic inequalities.

In the 1840s, the Democrats and the Whigs struggled to maintain national coalitions, but new parties emerged as explicitly anti-slavery parties. But even they defined themselves differently. The Liberty party called for the end of slavery in federally controlled territories and an end to the interstate slave trading. The Free Soil party, as the name suggests, wanted to limit slavery to the states where it already existed and opposed the extension of slavery into

federal territories. Within a few years of its formation in 1848, it was absorbed by both the Democratic party and the new Republican party.

The period after the Civil War saw the rise of many minor parties. The Populist, or People's party achieved considerable success and sought an elusive coalition of farmers and laborers at a time when inequalities resulting from the rise of industry brought the country to a turning point. In 1896, the party faced a dilemma. The Democratic party had adopted several of the People's party's proposals, notably a call for replacing the gold standard for currency with a silver standard, and the party had to decide whether to back the Democrats, who had a better chance of winning the presidential election, or run their own candidate and maintain their own integrity. As Henry Demarest Lloyd characterized it, the free coinage of silver was "the cow-bird of the Reform movement. It waited until the next had been built by the sacrifices and labour of others, and then laid its eggs on it, pushing out the others which lie smashed on the ground." This difficult decision broke the heart of many party supporters, and the party was never the same.

The Republican party dominated presidential elections between 1860 and 1928, with the exception of the election of 1912, when a split in the party resulted in the election of a Democrat, Woodrow Wilson. The split came about because of the rise of the Progressive party, a third party with considerable support in states such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, and even California. The Progressive party was based on the conviction that regular party politics stifled the will of the people, and that government needed to represent the will of the people more directly. Primary elections, ballot initiatives and referendums, and recall elections, were reforms promoted by the Progressive party. They were designed to prevent the two main parties from ignoring or obstructing the will of the people by giving voters a more direct say in the nomination of candidates and the legislative process. Third parties are often evaluated in retrospect by the extent to which their proposals were eventually adopted, and the Progressive party was a success by that standard. Remnants of the Progressive party persisted in certain states for many decades after the party's demise. The party's goals of more direct and responsive democracy have lost none of their appeal, but the party system itself has been able to adapt and thrive even in the face of these anti-party reforms.

Questions

1. What sentiment lay at the heart of the Anti-Mason party?
2. How should the success of third parties be judged?

Suggested Reading

Bibby, John F., and L. Sandy Maisel. *Two Parties—Or More? The American Party System.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.

Other Books of Interest

Holt, Michael F. *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

Nugent, Walter T.K. *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas Populism and Nativism.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.

Tindall, George Brown, ed. *A Populist Reader: Selections from the Works of American Populist Leaders.* New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966.

Many of the campaigns that we think of as third-party campaigns in the twentieth century, such as Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose party, Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat party, George Wallace's American Independent party in 1968, and Ross Perot's Reform party in 1992 and 1996 were not really third parties at all, but independent candidacies. Many voters today often find themselves frustrated with the two main parties, and we often wonder if things wouldn't be better if there were some alternative. The candidacies of Ross Perot, for example, attracted millions of voters because people hoped for something different. Some political scientists have suggested that third parties have served to keep the two parties honest, in the sense that their popular support calls attention to issues that the two major parties have neglected. Third parties thereby contribute to the stability of the two-party system even as they provide a glimpse of alternatives to it.

The third-party candidacy of Strom Thurmond in 1948 was not intended to really start an independent third party with hopes of electoral success, but rather to send a message to the Democratic party. This followed years of tension between the Democratic party and its southern wing that began to surface in the 1930s, during the New Deal. Franklin D. Roosevelt had a special relationship with the South. Roosevelt lived in Georgia for part of the year. He owned a farm, and sought out the hot springs as treatment for his polio. He owed his nomination for the presidency in 1932 to his support in the South, but in a paradoxical situation, he needed the South to win nomination of his party more than he needed it to win the general election, because the incumbant, Herbert Hoover, was weakend so much by the Great Depression. Roosevelt did not actively support civil rights or even anti-lynching legislation because he did not want to antagonize the South, but his New Deal policies were not widely supported by southern legislators, although they benefited poor southerners, many of whom displayed his photo in their homes. Because southerners held many of the important leadership positions in Congress and were in a position to obstruct New Deal legislation, Roosevelt became increasingly frustrated by their oppostion, and relations became openly antagonistic. At one point, Roosevelt made the tactical error of going to the South to campaign in favor of Democratic candidates who ran, unsuccessfully in most cases, in opposition to the incumbents. So there was already some residual conflict, but it did not come to the surface so dramatically until the party included some civil rights planks in its platform before the 1948 presidential election. Thurmond, a Senator from South Carolina,

decided to send the party a message. He ran for president as an independent candidate on what he called the Dixiecrat ticket. Traditionally, the South had a deal with the Democratic party. In return for supporting the party's presidential candidate, the South extracted an informal agreement that the party would stay out of the South's affairs, particularly on the matter of race. Southerners believed that the party had violated that agreement by including the civil rights planks in its platform, and Thurmond ran to send a message warning the party not to take the support of the South for granted. This was the very close election between Truman and Thomas Dewey of New York, and Thurmond's candidacy presented Southern Democrats with a dilemma. Should they continue their traditional support of the Democratic party and help Truman win, or risk losing the election to send home the message to the party that it couldn't win without the South, and try to teach the party a lesson, even if it meant a Republican would become president? Thurmond won several states, but his victories were confined to the Deep South and did not extend to the peripheral Southern states. His candidacy was unsuccessful, not because he lost, since it was not his intention to actually win the election, but because the party continued to include civil rights planks in its subsequent platforms. His candidacy was nonetheless significant, though, because it was an important early step in the process that eventually resulted in southerners abandoning the Democratic party. Thurmond himself later switched to the Republican party and stayed in the Senate for many years.

The third-party candidacy of George Wallace twenty years later in 1968 was similar in many ways. Frustrated by his party's support for the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 1965, and 1966, Wallace not only wanted to send a message to the Democrats, he believed he could successfully prevent either Humphrey or Nixon from getting a majority in the Electoral College. The South is a very important factor in the geography of the Electoral College, and Wallace believed he could get in a position to determine the outcome of the election, by offering to throw his support to whichever candidate was willing to deal with him. Wallace's pattern of support was similar to Thurmond's. He had the greatest support in the Deep South, and less support in the peripheral South, where Nixon was stronger. Wallace won thirty-nine electoral votes, not enough to prevent Nixon from getting a majority in the Electoral College, averting what could have been a history-changing development.

Ross Perot succeeded in winning 19 percent of the popular vote in 1992. He promised a common-sense approach to politics that had wide appeal. Perot's candidacy is best understood as an independent candidacy rather than a real third party because his supporters were united more by his personal appeal than any consistent set of policies or beliefs. Although Perot went through the motions of a party convention, there was little to hold his supporters together when he was not running. These independent candidacies illustrate two things. The two main parties are able to sustain themselves as organizations over time far more successfully than independent candidacy. Also, they help us imagine the challenges faced by an independent candidate. What kind of support could a President Perot expect to extract from Democrats and Republicans in Congress? Despite the growth of candidate-centered campaigns, and despite popular disenchantment with

party politics, party organizations have proven to be far more durable than one might imagine because they remain useful to elected officials.

It is important to recognize that most other countries have multi-party systems, and that there are certain institutional features of American government that serve to discourage third parties. Most other countries have proportional representation in their legislatures, so that a party gets seats in the legislature in proportion to its strength in the election. If a party gets 10 percent of the votes in the general election, it gets 10 percent of the seats in the legislature. This means that parties have an incentive to stay in business even if they never have a real hope of gaining a majority. They can still win seats, and still have considerable influence, even if they remain a minority. The American single member districts, with a winner-take-all elections, mean that even if you get only one fewer vote than the winner, you have nothing to show for it. A party can do consistently well nationwide, but unless it wins districts outright it will have no representation in Congress to show for it. The winner-take-all system that most states use to allocate their votes in the Electoral College also has the effect of discouraging third-party candidates. Unless a candidate wins a state outright, they will have no electoral votes to show for their efforts, regardless of how many votes they get.

Other rules and practices put third parties at even greater disadvantage. Public financing of presidential elections normally ends up going only to the candidates from the two major parties. The rules of presidential debates are normally drawn by the two parties, and third-party candidates are seldom included. The use of direct primaries as the way of selecting congressional and even presidential candidates illustrates an interesting and characteristic paradox. Primary elections were introduced as a progressive reform that was specifically designed as an anti-party reform that would take the power to choose nominees away from the party leaders and give it to the people. Primaries have in this way served to weaken parties and have led to candidate-centered elections rather than party-centered elections. At the same time, though, the direct primary election has provided a way for the major parties to absorb critics and alternatives, and have been one of the things that have renewed parties even when political scientists believed they were going to decline.

For all these reasons, it is unlikely that a third party will provide a practical alternative to the two major parties in the near future. One lesson of history is that third parties keep the two parties honest. If the two major parties neglect public opinion or appear to be indifferent to the public interest, a third party or independent candidate becomes more attractive. Such candidates have called public attention to issues, but the parties have shown a capacity to absorb such criticism. As a Libertarian candidate in Indiana has put it recently, the third party is like a bee. "You rise up, you sting, and then you die."

Questions

1. What was the third-party strategy of George Wallace in 1968?
2. What rules and practices put third parties at great disadvantage?

Suggested Reading

Tarrance, Jr., V. Lance, and Walter De Vries, with Donna L. Mosher. *Checked and Balanced: How Ticket-Splitters Are Shaping the New Balance of Power in American Politics.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.

LECTURE FIVE

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is David S. Broder's *The Party's Over: The Failure of Politics in America.*

n order to analyze American politics today, we need to understand the concept of the party system. We are going to look at this in two ways, first by comparing the American party system to the British, and then by looking at the different stages of the American party system throughout American history, to get a sense of how what is going on now compares to how things have worked in the past. We will see that the American party system is very different from parties in most other countries, and that the American pattern since 1968 has been very different from the pattern in the past. We tend to think that things have always been the way they are now, and that the way we do things is pretty much universal, or at least obviously superior to the rest of the world, but this is another way of saying it is hard to get perspective on ourselves.

When we are talking about strong and weak party systems we are referring to the role of parties on the government. Countries where parties play a strong role in the functions of government are said to have a strong party system. Countries where parties do not control the functions of government are said to have weak party systems. In particular, we are talking about functions such as nominating candidates, conducting electoral campaigns, proposing policies, organizing the government, or proposing alternatives.

It helps to recognize that most other countries have party systems that are very different from ours. Focusing on political parties is the best way to put the current state of American politics in perspective and to see how today's party system compares to the past. This lecture also introduces the concept of strong and weak party systems, to which we will keep returning over the remainder of the course.

In a parliamentary system like Great Britain's, when people vote in a general election, they vote for a party rather than for a particular candidate. Parties have complete control over who the representatives are, and they gain seats in the legislature in proportion to their showing in the election. This is called proportional representation. If a small party gets 10 percent of the vote, it gets 10 percent of the seats in the legislature. Parliamentary systems thus are usually multi-party systems, since even a small party with no hope of gaining a majority can still exert considerable influence as part of a coalition. The majority party in the legislature chooses its leader to be prime minister. Divided government is impossible in a parliamentary system. The prime minister chooses the cabinet from prominent party leaders in the legislature, so the party is in charge of policy. Imagine how different this is from the presidential system in the United States. Not only is it quite possible to

have divided government, but even when the same party controls Congress and the presidency, cooperation is not guaranteed. The separation of powers, or rather our system of separate institutions sharing power, means that the branches of government have some incentive to compete with one another rather than cooperate.

When American presidents look at a prime minister, they must wonder what it would be like to have the cooperation of the legislature guaranteed. It would be like a dream come true to know that Congress would support whatever they propose. But think about the flip side of this. The independence of the president is a limitation of the president's power, but it is also a source of strength. Prime ministers lead their party, but they are under their control. Prime Ministers have to hold together party coalitions or risk losing the party's support. If the legislature passes a vote of no confidence, it can remove a prime minister. In the United States, if the Congress disagrees with the president, we call it normal, even if they are of the same party.

Nonetheless, the normal pattern for most of American history has been for the same party to control Congress and the presidency. It is only since 1968 that divided government has become more common in American politics. If we look at election results, we notice an interesting pattern. In a two-party system, we might expect control of government to go back and forth between the two parties every few years. But in fact, what we see is that the normal pattern in American history has been for one party to control the government for periods of about twenty-eight years. After twenty-eight years, either a new party replaces one of the major parties, or the majority and minority parties switch, or the same party retains power but with a different electoral base or coalition. These twenty-eight-year cycles are called realignments, and the elections that precipitate them are called critical elections. Political scientists have tracked these realignments and classified the cycles into different party systems.

The first party system began in 1800 with the election of Thomas Jefferson and the emergence of the new Jeffersonian Republican party. This party dominated the government until around 1824. In 1828, the second-party system begins with the election of Andrew Jackson and the emergence of a new political party, the Democratic party, which dominated the government, for the most part, until 1856. In 1860, the third-party system began with the election of Abraham Lincoln and the emergence of a new political party, the Republican party, and the demise of the Whig party. The third-party system lasted until 1896. In that year, William McKinley was elected president, and the Republican party maintained power. The fourth-party system lasted until 1932, when Franklin Roosevelt was elected president and the Democrats came to power.

According to this arithmetic of twenty-eight-year cycles, the next realignment should have happened in 1968. And there is some evidence to support the idea that this was a critical election. After a string of Democratic presidents since 1932, interrupted only by Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, there was a string of Republican presidents after 1968 for the next twenty-four years, interrupted only by Jimmy Carter's one term in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal. Another important piece of evidence to support the idea

that 1968 introduced a new realignment is the fact that the South started to vote Republican and switch to the Republican party after a century of being solidly Democratic.

But the picture is complicated by several things that do not fit the normal pattern. The most important is that the House of Representatives stayed Democratic for the whole period, and the Senate stayed Democratic for most of it. That does not fit the normal pattern for any previous period of American history. This difference, and the persistence of divided government, tells us that something has been very different in American politics since 1968. Some political scientists have called this a period of dealignment rather than realignment, since it began with a period of party decline.

If we look a little further, we can see still more deviation from the normal twenty-eight-year cycles. The election of Bill Clinton in 1992 might have indicated the end of the dealignment period and the beginning of a new Democratic realignment. But then in 1994, the House of Representatives went Republican for the first time in decades, and then George W. Bush was elected and reelected in 2000 and 2004, perhaps indicating a Republican realignment.

When we look at elections now, political scientists are not just looking at who won, but are also trying to speculate on what this means for the party system and whether they see signs of an emerging or enduring party realignment. So far, it has been hard to discern a pattern, and many observers believe that the twenty-eight-year cycles are over, at least for the time being.

Initially, many political scientists were disturbed by the persistence of divided government, and the term "gridlock" was adapted to describe the political standoffs that ocurred when Congress and the presidency were controlled by different parties. Political scientists again compared the American system with a parliamentary system, where divided government was impossible, and where disagreement between the prime minister and parliament indicated a crisis. But as Congress and the president adapt to divided government by what one political scientist has called "institutional trench warfare," and as voters grow up with divided government as normal, the United States may have entered a very different period, in which divided government is the only way that Congress and the president can effectively check one another's power.

Questions

1. Why might American presidents be envious of the relationship between British prime ministers and their legislatures?
2. What twenty-eight-year cycle has played out in American politics?

Suggested Reading

Broder, David S. *The Party's Over: The Failure of Politics in America.* New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Other Books of Interest

Smith, Hedrick*. The Power Game: How Washington Works*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Ann N. Criger, Marion R. Just, and Edward J. McCafferty's (eds.) *Rethinking the Vote: The Politics and Propects of American Election Reform.*

The institutional features of American politics themselves contribute to our weak party system. The separation of powers and staggered terms give parties less control over the basic functions of government. But from time to time legislation has been introduced that has further weakened parties. In this lecture, we are going to look at two periods of anti-party reforms: the progressive reforms of the early twentieth century, and the reforms of the 1970s, including delegate selection reforms for party conventions and campaign finance reforms. These reforms were often specifically intended to weaken parties, although some have weakened parties as unintended consequences. They are all part of why things are the way they are now. But despite the institutional features and this series of reforms, parties have proven to be resilient and durable, because they still fill many needs for both voters and elected officials.

As we saw in the lecture on third parties, the Progressive party of the early twentieth century arose as a response to a party system that was seen as out of touch with the people. Powerful party organizations, or "machines," were seen as stifling democracy. In the interest of giving the people a greater voice in government, the party proposed reforms that sought to take power away from party leaders. These progressive reforms included the primary election, as well as the referendum and ballot initiative. The primary election was intended to take the power to select candidates out of the smoke-filled rooms and give it to the people. Previously, candidates who wanted to run for public office had to appeal to party leaders. The primary election allowed anyone who gathered enough signatures to appear on the ballot of a primary election, when all the members of the party could vote for the candidate to represent the party in the general election. The ballot initiative, in a similar way, allowed the public at large to propose legislation. If supporters could gather enough signatures, the proposition was placed on the ballot at the next election, where the people could vote it up or down, bypassing the state legislature altogether. The referendum was similar. A state legislature could take a piece of proposed legislation and refer it to the voters, who could decide directly whether it should become law.

Such reforms were intended to open up and democratize the political process, but as has often been the case, they ended up substituting one form of manipulation for another. Today, primary elections often favor the candidate who raises the most money and can afford the most effective advertising blitz. Many millions of dollars are spent for and against ballot propositions, and the side that spends the most money tends to win—although not always. By emphasizing fund raising and money, these reforms

have weakened parties but have ended up giving more power to interest groups. As the mass media becomes more integral to the political process, money has also become more integral to the process. Indeed, it is accurate to say that money no longer simply influences the political process; it has become part of the process. Many political scientists believe that there is an inverse relation between parties and interest groups. This means that the alternative to political parties is not direct democracy and more power to the people, but more power to interest groups.

The other important period of anti-party reform that helped shape politics today is the period of the early 1970s. The rise of party primaries in presidential elections, and the introduction of campaign finance reforms have had profound consequences for politics today. It was not so long ago that party primaries were basically irrelevant in presidential elections. Few states held them, but instead gave the power to state party leaders. After the 1968 election, Democratic party strategists believed that this close election had been lost because the party failed to mobilize ordinary voters who considered their party out of touch with what people wanted. The party reformed the process by which delegates to the national party convention were selected. These reforms, known as the McGovern-Frasier reforms, had the effect of encouraging candidate-centered campaigns rather than party-centered campaigns, and made candidates less dependent on their party.

The other reforms that weakened political parties in the 1970s were the campaign finance reforms. Aimed in part at the abuses exposed during the Watergate scandal, the Federal Election Campaign Acts of the early 1970 limited cash contributions to one hundred dollars or less, limited the amount of money that individuals and groups can contribute, required public disclosure of contributions and expenditures, and established the Federal Election Commission to oversee campaign finance issues. The idea was to ensure fairness so that candidates or wealthy contributors could not simply "buy" an election victory. But the reforms have not diminished the role of money in election campaigns. Indeed, money has become so important that it no longer simply influences politics, but has become part of the political process itself. Fundraising has become a time-consuming but vital part of every day for candidates and elected officials.

The reforms of the 1970s had some loopholes, including what is known as "soft money." Contributions that went directly to candidates had to be reported to the FEC and the amounts were limited, but the loophole allowed money that was given indirectly. Soft money included independent expenditures and also money that was given to political parties. The soft money loophole had the unintended effect of giving political parties a new lease on life, as parties became service organizations and an important source of funding for candidates, counterbalancing the other changes that had weakened parties. In fact, a few observers argued that all campaign contributions ought to be channeled through political parties, as a way of strengthening parties in the hope that this would lead to more accountability in government. However, some of these loopholes were closed by the McCain/Feingold Act.

Anti-party reforms have had many unintended consequences. Earlier generations of political scientists believed that political parties represented the best vehicle for responsible government, but the current situation seems to transcend the strong party/weak part model. Over the past thirty years parties have become weaker in some ways, but have found new ways to assert themselves.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. In what way was the early 1970s an important period of anti-party reform?
2. What loopholes existed in 1970s' reforms?

Suggested Reading

Criger, Ann N., Marion R. Just, and Edward J. McCafferty, eds. *Rethinking the Vote: The Politics and Propects of American Election Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Bartles, Larry M. *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Green, John C., and Paul Herrnson, eds. *Responsible Partisanship? The Evolution of American Political Parties Since 1950.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002.

Malbin, Michael, ed. *Life After Reform: When the Bipartisan Campaign Form Act Meets Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003.

Mayer, Willliam G., and Andrew Busch. *The Front-Loading Problem in Presidential Nominations*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004.

Mayhew, David R. *Placing Parties in American Politics; Organization, Electoral Settings, and Government Activity in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Polsby, Nelson W. *The Consequences of Party Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is George C. Edwards III's *Why the Electoral College Is Bad for America.*

Much of the story of political parties in American politics can only be learned through history, but history does not tell the whole story. The next two lectures discuss the Electoral College, reapportionment, and redistricting in order to understand how electoral procedures affect political parties. These subjects may seem technical, but the procedures of American elections have a huge impact on the substance of American politics and dramatically affect the party system. Procedures are not neutral. Identifying their built-in biases can yield surprising insights into the dynamics of party politics.

The Electoral College provides a classic example of how procedures affect outcomes. What we learn is that there is more than one way to count votes, and that we get different outcomes when we used different counting procedures. Imagine a baseball scoreboard, and a game that looks like this. Team A scores one run in the first inning, one run in the second inning, one run in the third inning, but no runs for the rest of the game. Team B scores four runs in the first inning and no runs the rest of the game. So the top line of the scoreboard would read one, one, one, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero. The second line of the scoreboard would read four, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero. Who won the game? According to the rules of baseball, team B wins the game by the score of four to three. How do we know? Because in baseball, the team that scores the most runs wins.

Suppose we change the rules just a little, so that it is not the team that scores the most runs that wins, but the team that wins the most innings. In that case, team A would win by the score of three innings to one. This may sound far-fetched, but there are games that are scored this way. In tennis, for example, it is not the player who wins the most points who wins, or even the most games. Rather, it is the player who wins more sets. It is quite possible in tennis for a player to win more points or even more games, yet lose the match.

That is the way the Electoral College works. The winner is not the candidate who gets the most votes, but rather the candidate who wins the most Electoral Votes, and candidates win electoral votes state by state, rather than voter by voter. It is as if the state is a set in tennis, or an inning in the modified baseball example I just used, with one important difference. Not all sets or innings are worth the same number of points. States do not all have the same number of electoral votes. Rather, their number of electoral votes is roughly proportional to their population. The exact formula is simple. A state's electoral votes equal the number of senators from that state plus the number of their representatives in the House. The minimum number of electoral votes

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a state can have is three—since each state, no matter how large in population or how small, gets two Senators, and each state gets at least one Representative. Alaska, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming currently each have three electoral votes. California has the largest number of electoral votes (55), followed by Texas (34), New York (31), Florida (27), Illinois (21), Ohio (21), and Pennsylvania (21). Just as it is possible in tennis for the player who wins the most points to lose the match, we know it is possible for a candidate to win the most votes, or more votes than their opponent, yet lose the electoral vote. This happened in the election of 1824, when Andrew Jackson had a plurality of the popular vote but did not win a majority of the electoral votes. When no candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the Constitution specifies that the election will be decided by the House of Representatives under a special process. In the elections of 1876, 1888, and 2000, the candidate with the most popular votes lost the vote in the Electoral College. This is just the way the system works.

Like all procedures, and all systems of counting, the Electoral College has built-in biases. The most familiar are the big state/small state biases. That is, because small states get a minimum of three electoral votes no matter how small their populations, voters in small states may be slightly over-represented in terms of the ratio of voters to electoral votes. Big states, on the other hand, get more attention from candidates because that's where the votes are. Candidates win elections state by state, not voter by voter, so there is a tendency to campaign in the larger states. The ten most populous states—California (55), Texas (34), New York (31), Florida (27), Illinois (21), Pennsylvania (21), Ohio (20), Michigan (17), Georgia (15), and North Carolina (15)—have 256 of the 270 electoral votes needed to win a presidential election. Twelve states (plus the District of Columbia) have five electoral votes or fewer, with a combined total of only forty-nine electoral votes, fewer than California by itself.

But although important, this is not the most interesting or significant bias in the Electoral College. There are several less obvious but more significant biases. One is a bias against third parties. The Electoral College tends to put third-party candidates at a serious disadvantage. Why? Most states use a winner-take-all system when allocating electoral votes (the only exceptions are Maine and Nebraska). That is, the candidate who wins the plurality of a state's popular vote wins *all* of that state's electoral votes. A third-party candidate might do very well in the popular vote, but unless the candidate wins a state, they will not have any electoral votes to show for it.

Compare the third-party candidacies of George Wallace in 1968 and Ross Perot in 1992. Wallace won 13 percent of the popular vote and got forty-six electoral votes. Perot won 19 percent of the popular vote, but got no electoral votes. This illustrates another bias. The Electoral College system favors candidates whose support is geographically concentrated. A candidate like Perot might do well nationwide but end up with no electoral votes to show for it because he did not win any state outright, while a candidate like Wallace, whose support was geographically concentrated (in the South) might win more electoral votes with fewer popular votes because he was able to win in several states, even though he had little support in other parts of the country.

The South as a whole benefits from the bias in the Electoral College toward groups that are geographically concentrated. This is because the South (more than other regions of the country) tends to vote as a bloc. This means that the Electoral College gives the South a far greater role in presidential elections, and thereby in American politics more generally, than would be the case if the president were chosen by direct election.

The obvious alternative to the Electoral College would be direct election of the president. This would have the most far-ranging effects. It would increase the likelihood that neither of the two main candidates would receive a majority, and thus send the election into the House of Representatives (something that has very seldom happened, and a prospect that scares people). It would have the effect of encouraging third-party candidates, who would be much more likely to be in the position of "spoiler" and who could affect the outcome of the election by making a deal with one candidate or another. Although this option is the most logical alternative, it has the greatest potential for unforeseen consequences. There is one other problem with this proposal—not the proposal itself but with its chances for implementation. Because the Electoral College is part of the Constitution, a change of this sort would require a constitutional amendment. The procedure for amending the Constitution involves two steps—proposal and ratification. There are two ways to propose an amendment. Either two-thirds of the states petition Congress to hold a constitutional convention, or two-thirds of both houses of Congress vote to propose the amendment. To ratify the amendment, three-fourths of the states must vote to ratify it, either through their state legislatures or through special state ratifying conventions, if Congress specifies that method. In any case, the states play a large role in the amendment process, and passage requires a supermajority. That means that the region of the country with the most to lose by direct election would be in a position to prevent such an amendment from being ratified, or even from being proposed in the first place.

Recently, a reform proposal has been circulated that tried to circumvent this problem by state laws requiring electors to vote in accordance with the national popular vote. The Constitution allows each state to choose its electors in any manner it likes. This proposal would bypass the constitutional problem since it would not require a constitutional amendment, but it is not clear how many states would need to pass such laws in order for them to make a difference.

Although the 2000 election was plagued by several difficulties, the Electoral College is probably here to stay for the foreseeable future, partly because its problems are so technical that most people do not understand them well, and partly because the region of the country that benefits most from the Electoral College is in a position to prevent it from changing. But imagine the implications for the parties if we did go to direct election or the proportional plan. The South would have much less influence in presidential elections. Although Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia have significant populations, a candidate could make up for these even if they came in a close second in California, New York, Michigan, and Ohio. If you take away the winner-take-all system in the Electoral College, a vote would be a vote regardless of where it comes from. This would have taken away the influence that the

South had on the Democratic party in the past, and would possibly neutralize the influence that the South has on the Republican party today. The Republican party might decide that it could reach out to other voters more effectively if it changed its platform, and the two parties might look very different than they do today or than they have in the past.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How is the Electoral College biased against third-party candidates?
2. How does the South benefit from the Electoral College?

Suggested Reading

Edwards, George C., III. *Why the Electoral College Is Bad for America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Wayne, Stephen J. *The Road to the White House 2004: The Politics of Presidential Elections.* 7th ed. Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2003.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Gary Jacobson's *The Politics of Congressional Elections.*

edistricting is normally thought of as a way that state and local politics influences national politics, but nowadays it works in both directions, as national party leaders put more and more attention on redistricting as a way to influence national politics. Redistricting has become more contentious than ever as party competition gets fiercer and the stakes get higher. Redistricting can give an advantage to one party or the other, but it also poses problems that are basic to our understanding of representative government. As many districts are drawn in such a way as to make them more homogeneous, representatives become more responsive to particular wings of their party than to others. This has the paradoxical effect of giving some groups power disproportionate to their numbers.

We all know that each state gets two senators, but the number of representatives from each state depends on population. How is this number determined? The Constitution requires that the census be taken every ten years and the number of representatives adjusted accordingly. The process of allocating seats in the House to states every ten years is called reapportionment. The Constitution also specifies that there be no more than one representative per thirty thousand people, which in the eighteenth century was a lot of people for a member of Congress to represent. Today each member of Congress represents a little over five hundred thousand people. The original Senate had twenty-six members, and the first House of Representatives had sixty-four Congressmen. The number of Senators grew as new states were added, but the number of Congressmen also grew as the population grew until the number of representatives in the House reached four hundred thirty-five early in the twentieth century. Congress decided then that the number should be capped at four hundred thirty-five. This means that in the following censuses, for one state to get more representatives, another state had to get fewer; it is what economists call a zero-sum game. So every ten years, after the census is taken, an algorithm is used to determine which states grew in population relative to the others, and how representation should be apportioned among the states accordingly. The number of representatives from a state could go up, go down, or stay the same. Even if a state's population increased, the number of representatives could still go down if other states had relatively greater increases in population. This process of reapportionment has been extremely important in American politics because it determines the balance of power not only between states but also between regions of the country; the balance between the North and South is the most obvious example.

Senators are elected at-large from each state, but for representatives, each

state is divided into single-member districts, with one member of Congress elected from each district in the state. Every ten years, following the census and reapportionment, each state re-draws its congressional district boundaries. This process is called redistricting. If a state gains a representative, an additional district has to be created. If a state loses a representative, a district has to be taken away (and normally a member of Congress loses his or her seat). Even if the number of representatives stays the same, the district boundaries are redrawn to reflect shifts in population in that state. The Supreme Court has stipulated that states must draw their district boundaries with two rules: districts must be roughly equal in population and districts must be contiguous, that is, connected.

  From very early on, politicians realized that district boundaries could be drawn to give one party or the other an advantage. We are all familiar with the term "gerrymandering," The Supreme Court has consistently upheld the constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering. Today, redistricting is done either by the state legislature or by a bipartisan commission. There is a difference, however, between bipartisan and nonpartisan, and even when redistricting is done by a commission, the tradeoffs are usually done so that each party protects its incumbents, rather than in a nonpartisan way.

  There are two basic techniques used in redistricting to give one party or another an advantage. They are called splitting and packing, or cracking and packing, and they are logically connected. If you just looked at a map, you might not be able to tell which technique was used, since they are logically complementary. The idea is that you want to either take voters of one party out of a district, or concentrate voters of one party into a district. Suppose that Party A is doing the redistricting. It might do it in such a way that members of Party A and Party B are evenly distributed in each district. But that is not likely to happen. In the natural course of things, there are often more voters of one party than the other in a particular town, or neighborhood, or region, and there might be good reasons to keep those areas intact. Through packing, you would create a majority A district where the majority didn't exist before by packing A voters into one district, even if it means an oddly shaped district that is drawn to capture the As into one. Or suppose there are two districts where Party B has a majority. Party A might try to draw the district boundaries in such a way that the Bs are packed into one district, so that as a result one district has an A majority and one district has a B majority, instead of two Bs. Splitting would work in a related way. If there is an area where Party B has a majority, the district boundaries might be drawn so as to dilute Party B's numbers and spread them into one or two other districts, so they no longer have a majority. For example, in the Congressional district where I live, here in Indiana, the map was redrawn to take a lot of Republicans out of the district by removing part of one county, in order to protect the incumbent. As it happened, however, the incumbent decided not to run for reelection in 2002, and a Republican won the district. But partly because there were fewer Republicans in the district than there were before, he was defeated after his second term.

  The term for this—gerrymandering, comes from the eighteenth century when Elbridge Gerry, who later became James Madison's second vice president in 1812, drew an oddly shaped district in Massachusetts to favor his

party. You may have seen the political cartoon that was drawn at the time, when someone made a drawing of the district that snaked around the state, and made it look like a lizard and called it a Gerry-mander. This tells us that the technique is as old as American politics itself. In recent decades, however, computers have made it possible to gerrymander district boundaries with much more precision.

Gerrymandering is one reason that incumbent members of Congress tend to get reelected in such high numbers. If a district is drawn so as to give one party a majority, the candidate from that party will have a tremendous advantage in the general election. Even in the Republican Revolution of 1994, when the House changed parties after many decades of Democratic domination, 90 percent of the incumbents who ran won reelection, and in a normal election, the rates are in the upper nineties. Normally a candidate has a much better chance of victory when running for an open seat than when running against an incumbent.

As party competition gets more fierce and the stakes get higher, redistricting has also given national party organizations a reason to take a more active interest in state and local politics. The most extreme example of this occurred with Tom DeLay, the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, and the Congressman from the district in Texas, who raised funds for candidates in local elections to help the Republican party retake the Texas state legislature. When they did, the Republicans redrew the congressional district boundaries that had already been redrawn after the 2000 census. The issue went before the Supreme Court, which upheld most of the redistricting.

There is another issue involving race as a factor in redistricting. For many decades, redistricting has affected the election of racial minorities, mainly in the South, but also in cities in the North. Amendments to the Voting Rights Act in 1982 were interpreted to require states to increase the number of "majority-minority" districts. Like most things in politics, this involved mixed motives. On the one hand, there was a sincere effort to increase the voting power of minorities. On the other, these redistricting plans were often driven by partisan concerns, on the part of both parties. Since most blacks, for example, vote Democrat, the Democrats were all in favor of creating districts where black voters would have a large proportion. On the other hand, these efforts were also supported by many Republicans. Why? Remember the techniques of splitting and packing. Creating these majority-minority districts had the effects of taking black voters out of Republican districts and packing them into one. As a result, especially in the South, many congressional districts have fewer black constituents. This has made it possible for congressmen from the other districts to pay less attention to their black constituents. Several of these districts have been challenged in court, and the Supreme Court has ruled that race can be a factor but not the predominant factor when drawing district boundaries. (See *Shaw* v. *Reno*.)

This is an important factor in politics in the South. There are two models for bipartisanship. Redistricting gets the opposition out of the district. My district in Indiana is what political scientists call a heterogeneous district. What it takes to win in such a district will be different for a Democrat than for a Republican. A Republican must stress values and symbolic issues. A

Democrat must stress pocketbook issues, but also must usually be a moderate or conservative. In many other districts, the boundaries are increasingly drawn in such a way as to make the district more homogeneous. This means that the representative can safely ignore certain groups and can appeal to the ideological extremes. This has been one factor contributing to more contentiousness and less cooperation in Congress. We normally call this "partisanship," but partisanship by itself can be conducive to cooperation and compromise. Redistricting provides one part of the explanation for the escalating contentiousness in Congress today.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What two basic techniques are used in redistricting to give a party an advantage?
2. How does redistricting help to escalate contentiousness in Congress?

Suggested Reading

Jacobson, Gary. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Fenno, Richard. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. New York: Little, Brown, 1978.

**The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Gary Cox and David
McCubbins's *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House.***

ongress is the source of many complaints about partisanship. Parties play an important role in organizing Congress and the legislative process, but paradoxically, parties are the source of considerable contentiousness in Congress, but are the source of compromise and cooperation as well. Throughout this course we have looked at the history of political parties to gain a better understanding of the American party system today. In this lecture, we will look at how parties are part of the organization of Congress, but this subject also allows us to see party politics today as the product of tendencies that were set in motion thirty or forty years ago.

When we talk about the organization of Congress, this is less a matter of flow charts and offices. Rather, the organization is a response to what is called "the two Congresses" problem. That is, Congress has two roles, which tend to conflict. Congress acts as a representative body, and also as a national legislative body. These two roles apply to individual members of Congress as well. Members represent local constituencies, to whom they owe their election, but also act as legislators responsible for the interests of the nation as a whole.

Congress has developed two main systems of organization in response to this problem: the party leadership system and the committee system. These two systems of organization tend to have an inverse relationship. When party leaders are strong, the committees tend to be weaker, and vice versa. By learning more about these two systems of organization and their relations with one another, we can identify some of the distinctive features of American politics now, and better understand the ways in which political parties remain strong today.

Party leaders in Congress are among the most visible actors in American politics, normally more so than committee chairs. We are more likely to know the names of the Speaker of the House than the chair of the Ways and Means Committee or the Appropriations Committee, even though these are very powerful positions. We think of party leaders as very powerful, but in fact leaders normally lack the power to simply tell members what to do. In fact, for most of American history, party leaders in Congress have been relatively weak. There are two main exceptions. Joseph Cannon, who was Speaker of the House from 1902 to 1911, truly ruled with an iron fist. Newt Gingrich was also extremely powerful as Speaker after the 1994 election until he resigned after the 1998 election. These two powerful speakers have been the exceptions. As one political scientist has put it, party leaders are best understood

as agents of the members. Since party leaders cannot force members to do things, they must find other ways to persuade them. More importantly, party leaders help Congress manage the problem of the Two Congresses, by encouraging members to see that the achievement of their own goals depends on their willingness to cooperate and work with others. Party leaders often use the technique of logrolling, or swapping votes. A party leader might tell a member that the leader will help the member achieve their goals or line votes, but in return the member will have to agree to support someone else's bill. We often think of logrolling as corrupt, but it is actually one of the few ways to overcome the individualist tendencies in Congress. Because of candidate-centered campaigns, elected officials are sometimes likened to entrepreneurs, promoting their own interests with little regard for others. Elected officials often come to Congress feeling they owe little to other members. Party leaders are among the few people in Congress who can encourage members to work together by getting members to believe that their success is connected to the success of their party, or to the success of Congress as an institution. Traditionally, parties have provided ways for members to transcend their narrower interests and work together.

The other system of organization in Congress is the committee system. Congress quickly learned that it was inefficient to have every member work on every piece of legislation, and the committee system developed as both a division of labor, and as another way to solve the problem of the Two Congresses. The committee system helps Congress as a whole work more efficiently by providing a division of labor, but it also is beneficial to members because it puts them in a position to help their constituents. A member of Congress from Nebraska, for example, might want to serve on the Agriculture Committee to have more of a role in farm policy, and they might also want to serve on the finance committees that oversee insurance companies. Both committees would allow them to help their constituents and strengthen their chances for reelection.

The committee system provides a source of power independent of party leaders. The seniority system, which was introduced as a challenge to the power of Speaker Cannon early in the twentieth century, means that party leaders cannot simply choose and control committee chairs. Congressional reforms in the early 1970s weakened the power of committee chairs and greatly decentralized Congress. It is useful to think of two forces. There are centralizing forces in American politics, and decentralizing forces, and they tend to alternate in cycles. By the 1980s, political scientists were referring to the "post-reform Congress," as the power of party leaders increased, as if to fill the vacuum of power left by the committee system reforms. The power of the Speaker of the House in particular increased in the 1980s, so that when Newt Gingrich became Speaker in 1995, he was able to take advantage. Gingrich introduced further changes in the committee system that allowed him to bypass seniority and make sure that committee chairs were more dependent on him. At the same time, the legislative process itself was altered to the point where the standard model of "how a bill becomes law" no longer describes the process accurately. Party leaders have far more control over the legislative process than ever before.

It used to be that the virtue of party politics in Congress, paradoxically, was that it provided a way for members to work together. Party unity was important because it made compromise and cooperation possible. Today, there is a high degree of party-line voting in Congress, and compromise is getting more and more rare. Without romanticizing the past, most members and observers alike agree that Congress today is a much less collegial institution than it used to be.

Questions

1. What is the "two Congresses" problem?
2. How did the committee system develop in Congress?

Suggested Reading

Cox, Gary, and David McCubbins. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Other Books of Interest

Davidson, Roger, and Walter Oleszek. *Congress and Its Members*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005.

Oleszek, Walter J. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process.* 3rd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2004.

Sinclair, Barbara. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Procedures in the U.S. Congress*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2004.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Thomas Patterson's *Where Have All the Voters Gone: Political Involvement in the Age of Uncertainty.*

ost of us who like to consider ourselves as thoughtful, independent-minded people, say something like, "I vote for the person, not the party." We say this with a certain amount of pride, believing that this is both the civic-minded thing to do, and that this is what intelligent and thoughtful people do. Only the ignorant, we suppose, would blindly and automatically vote for a certain party's candidate. However, the reality is a little different, in two ways. First, it is a fact that most people consistently vote on the basis of their party identification. We may tell ourselves that we are weighing all the candidates and giving them a fair hearing, but in fact we end up voting according to our party identification. Furthermore, most voters not only have a party identification, but ordinarily keep it for many decades. Furthermore, most have the same party identification as their parents. Second, in general, it is the voters with a strong party identification who tend to be better informed and better educated. These facts have a number of implications. The most important thing this tells us is that voting and party identification are far more complex phenomena that we realize. This has important implications for election strategy, and also for our understanding of how political change happens over time.

A person's party identification tends to be formed early on in life, and remain stable over time. Most people have the same party identification as their parents. When party realignments occur, the evidence indicates that it is not because voters of one party start voting for the other party. That has happened, of course, but usually party realignments have occurred because of the influx or mobilization of new voters into the electorate, rather than political conversions. The realignment of 1932, for example, was primarily because of the mobilization of new voters, rather than voters switching parties.

In the 1940s and early 50s, political scientists began doing survey research on voting. They wanted to investigate the effects of campaigns on the voter decision, and they expected to find that campaigns affect voters similar to the way advertising affects consumers. In fact, the story is that some researchers wanted to try the new techniques of survey research to test the effects of advertising on consumers, but their grant application was turned down because the subject was not considered important enough. So they adapted the same proposal, substituting electoral campaigns and voting for advertising campaigns and purchasing, and this time they got the grant. What they found surprised them, because it turned out the campaigns had little or no effect of the vote decision of most people. Furthermore, it was the better educated and better informed voters who made up their minds independently of the campaign and voted mainly on the basis of their party identification.

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Those voters who were most effected by the campaigns turned out to be the least educated and the least well informed. They often had completely distorted views of the positions of the candidates, as well as the positions of the candidates in relation to their own positions on issues.

This disturbing finding raised serious questions about democratic self-government as well as the significance of party identification, and these early voting studies changed the way we think about voters and voting.

For example, most campaigns now adopt the strategy that you win elections, not by changing peoples' minds, but by mobilizing your core supporters. If roughly 40 percent of the electorate are Democrats and 40 percent are Republicans, and the middle 20 percent are independent, then this presents a campaign strategy dilemma. For each party, their main task is to mobilize their core supporters, but they also need to win some of the independent or swing voters. Imagine a line with voters who identify themselves as strong Democrats at one end and strong Republicans at the other end, with medium and weak Democrats on one end, independents in the middle, and weak and medium Republican identifiers at the other end. Normally, the strategy would be to be moderate enough to appeal to independents, without losing your core supporters. Normally, the voters at the Republican end of the line will be more conservative and the voters at the Democratic end of the line will be more liberal, with moderate voters in the middle. This gives both parties an incentive to moderate their platforms in order to appeal to the widest range of voters. Ordinarily, American parties don't like to give voters reasons to not vote for them, even at the risk of appearing bland and vague. In a way consistent with James Madison's theory of how the extended republic solves the problem of faction, parties have to moderate their positions in order to maintain a coalition that will hold together over a wide range of issues over time. This also addresses one of the paradoxical sets of demands we make on parties: we want them to stand for something, but we also want them to cooperate with one another and work together in the public interest.

However, there is one important exception or special case that makes it more complicated to generalize about party identification and its implications for political campaigns, and that is the case of the South. In the South, we do not find this pattern with the moderate voters in the middle. If fact, in the South, we find that many independent voters are the most conservative. Why? It only makes sense if we look at it historically. Southerners started voting for Republicans in presidential elections in 1964, but it was the most conservative Democrats who voted for Goldwater. In 1968, Nixon's support in the South came from the peripheral South; the most conservative voters in the deep South voted for the third-party candidacy of George Wallace, the Governor of Alabama. It wasn't until the 1980s that conservative southerners began changing their party identification in significant numbers, and even then, this was in part due to the influx of Republicans from other parts of the country into the South—the Sunbelt as it began to be known—as the Southern economy expanded. An independent voter in the South might be a conservative Democrat who voted Republican but just could not bring himself to call himself a Republican, because of the traditional association of the Republican party as the party of the Civil War, the party of Lincoln.

That has led to an altogether different dynamic for campaign strategy. Even in the South, the electorate is pretty much equally divided between the two parties, with neither party having a clear majority. However, in contrast to the situation we described above, where both parties had to appeal to moderate swing voters in order to put together a majority, in the South the Republican party has a clear advantage. It does not face the dilemma of appealing to its conservative core supporters while somehow extending its appeal to moderate swing voters. In the South, the Republican party can pick up swing, independent voters with the same appeal it makes to its conservative core supporters. The Democratic party, on the other hand, faces an uphill battle in trying to win back independent swing voters, who are often the most conservative, while trying to maintain its core supporters. Thus, starting in the 1980s, there has been an asymmetrical situation for the two parties in winning elections. This has also contributed to the increase in partisanship, both in government and in the electorate, since it has undermined the effectiveness of the strategy of winning elections by appealing to moderate swing voters.

We can distinguish two types of "independent" voters. One group can be more accurately described as weak party identifiers, voters who actually lean toward one party more than the other, but who prefer to describe themselves as independents. The other group, those who do not show a preference for one party over the other, fits the pattern revealed by the early voting studies. They still tend to be poorly informed, poorly educated, and they tend not to vote! In terms of campaign strategy, these independent voters tend to have very little in common, and so it is difficult for an independent candidate or third party to find a way to appeal to them. Third-party candidates like George Wallace and Ross Perot did better among these independent voters than among voters with a strong party identification, but this support was difficult to maintain over time, even from one election to the next.

Given the appeal of candidate-centered rather than party-centered campaigns, we may wonder if the number of independent voters has increased in recent years, but the best estimate is that the percentage has remained about the same. In fact, political scientists estimate that the percentage of independent voters. It depends on when you ask. The percentage of independent voters went up in the 1970s, but declined since then, so that the percentage of pure independents is only slightly higher than it was in 1950. However, that does not mean that party identification in the twenty-first century means the same thing it did in the 1950s. Campaigns are very different than they used to be, and are much more candidate-centered than party-centered. The interesting thing is that the rise of candidate-centered campaigns has been so compatible with voters with strong party identification. It is now time in this course to turn our attention to the transformation of the South to put this all together.

Questions

1. What was behind the political realignment of 1932?
2. Why does the Democratic party face an uphill battle in trying to win back independent swing voters in the South?

Suggested Reading

Patterson, Thomas. *Where Have All the Voters Gone: Political Involvement in the Age of Uncertainty.* New York: Vintage, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. *The American Voter.* Reprint ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press*,* 1980.

Miller, Warren, and J. Merrill Shanks. *The New American Voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Nie, Norman, Sidney Verba, and John Petrocik. *The Changing American Voter.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Niemi, Richard G., and Herbert F. Weisberg, eds. *Classics in Voting Behavior*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1993.

———, eds. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2001.

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Dewey W. Grantham's *The Life and Death of the Solid South: A Political History.*

ust about every lecture in this course has discussed the South in one way or another, from the role of the South in the formation of the Democratic and Republican parties to the role of the South in Congress. The next few lectures look at the South more directly because the South is at the heart of the party system now and is the key to its future. We are going to begin by looking at the Old South, the solid South, back when there was basically a one-party system in the South. We will look at how the solid South was formed and maintained for about one hundred years. We will then look at how the South was transformed from this one-party system into the competitive two-party system that we have in the South today.

In many ways, the role of the South has been a constant in national politics from the beginning of American government. One historian, in discussing the Jacksonian era, wrote, "From the inauguration of Washington until the Civil War the South was in the saddle of national politics." The same might be said for the period from 1932 to the present. Furthermore, the things that gave the South influence in the country's first seventy years were the same things that make it influential today as well. The same historian continues, "More than anything else, what made Southern dominance in national politics possible was a basic homogeneity in the Southern electorate. In the early nineteenth century, to be sure, the South was far from monolithic. In terms of economic interest and social classes it was scarcely more homogeneous than the North. But under the diversity of interests which characterized Southern life in most respects there ran one single compelling idea which virtually united all Southerners, and which governed their participation in national affairs. This was that the institution of slavery should not be dealt with from outside the South."

The same pattern persisted long after the end of slavery itself. Before the Civil War, it was the institution of slavery that united the South. After the Civil War, the issue was the presence of a large Black population that had and continues to have a dramatic influence on Southern politics and the role of the South in national politics. This has two aspects. The first allows a politics in the South that covers up important differences, and which prevents politics from becoming an effective outlet for expressing claims on the public. The second allows the South to present a united front vis-a-vis the rest of the country.

To understand the origins of the solid South, we need to look to the end of Reconstruction in 1877. We can give the end of Reconstruction a precise

date because of the disputed election of 1876 and how it was resolved. As part of the deal, the Democratic party, dominated by the South, conceded the presidency to the Republicans in return for the end of Reconstruction and the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. The Republican party in the South did not disappear, but it lost credibility because it was associated with Reconstruction and the occupation of the South by the northern army. The memory of this had the effect of uniting the South around the Democratic party for the next one hundred years. Whereas in the early years of the American party system, party identification was less of a factor, as the years went on, the party identification of one's parents became increasingly relevant, especially in the South, which saw itself as upholding traditions.

In 1949, a political scientist named V.O. Key published a book on Southern politics that became very influential. Key characterized the one-party system as the most important feature of southern politics. He also suggested that there was a connection between the Black Belt—those parts of the South with a population of blacks over 50 percent—and the domination of one-party politics. The connection is easy to understand. In those areas where blacks outnumbered whites, politics necessarily meant giving a minority power out of proportion to its numbers. In this case, the white minority needed to establish power over the black majority, so those areas with the largest black populations developed the most restrictive politics.

As a result of the one-party system, politicians in the South became virtuoso campaigners. They needed to find ways to get a wide variety of people to vote for them, regardless of economic, geographic, and social differences. They fine-tuned the art of personal appearances, kissing babies, developing distinctive and colorful, larger-than-life personalities and often catchy nicknames. Although we might want to think of this as purely southern and part of our past, the startling fact is that this closely resembles what we now call the candidate-centered rather than party-centered campaigns that characterize politics throughout the United States today, not only in the South. The parties' ability to gloss over internal differences is also characteristic of both parties, even outside the South. Key insisted that his book on southern politics was intended to shed light on American politics more generally.

In the one-party system in the South, a variety of means were used to control the electorate. In general, the goal was to keep voting rates low. Southern voting rates were the lowest in the country, and this was deliberate. Tools such as the poll tax were used not only in disfranchise blacks, but also to discourage voting by poor whites.

From very early on, the South has had a major role in controlling the presidency. In the first elections, this meant electing a southerner. But later, they looked to northerners who were sympathetic, if not so much to the South itself, to southern concerns. This was largely made possible by the Electoral College. Presidential candidates collect electoral votes by winning state by state. In addition, we saw that the electoral college favors candidates with concentrated regional support, or to put it another away, it favors parts of the country that vote cohesively. When the South has voted as a region, it has been able to provide about half of the electoral votes needed to win the presidency. It is not that a candidate cannot win without carrying the South, but

any candidate needs to carry some southern states in order to get elected. The more cohesive the north, west, and midwest, the fewer southern states are needed, but to the extent that a candidate is not able to sweep the rest of the country, they need to win more southern states. A candidate who does not win any southern states must win approximately 70 percent of the electoral vote in the rest of the country. Changes in the nation's demographics have only increased the importance of the South, as the population of the South has increased and the populations of the Northeast and Midwest have decreased, resulting in more electoral votes for southern states.

Questions

1. Why was the South said to be "in the saddle of national politics"?
2. What is the connection between the Black Belt and the domination of one-party politics?

Suggested Reading

Grantham, Dewey W. *The Life and Death of the Solid South*: *A Political History.* Reprint ed. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1992.

Other Books of Interest

Grantham, Dewey W. *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds.* Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2001.

Key, V.O., Jr. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

Tindall, George Brown. *The Emergence of the New South, 1913–1945.* Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1967.

Woodward, C. Vann. *Origins of the New South 1877–1913.* Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1972.

Lecture 13:
The Southern Strategy and the
Transformation of the South

The transformation of the solid one-party system in the South is one of the most significant events in all of American history and one of the most important factors that makes modern politics the way it is, but the way it happened is a mystery to most people. The first thing to understand about the transformation is to recognize what didn't happen. People in the South didn't just wake up one day and start voting for Republicans. Political scientists have two ways of explaining party realignments—conversion or mobilization. Although it is tempting to assume that people simply switched parties, in fact the realignment was the result of a combination of demographic changes, top-down party strategy, and activism at the state and local level, as well as a backlash against the civil rights movement that led to a certain amount of generational change in party identification. In addition, strains in the New Deal Democratic coalition eventually became too much for the party to sustain.

Strains in the New Deal democratic coalition appeared in the mid-1930s, as southern Democrats, who had been crucial in helping Franklin Roosevelt secure the Democratic presidential nomination, voted against New Deal programs. Roosevelt needed southern support to gain his party's nomination in 1932, but he needed it much less in order to win the general election, and although he deferred to the South on the issues of traditional importance to the region—he would not support anti-lynching legislation, for example—he grew impatient at southern obstructionism. But it was not until 1948 that southerners had somewhere else to turn. The Democratic party included a civil rights plank in its platform, and Strom Thurmond, a Democrat from South Carolina, ran for president as an independent candidate under the Dixiecrat label to send the party a message. He did not expect to win, but his goal was to remind the party that a Democrat would not be able to win without deferring to the South, and the South would not tolerate a civil rights agenda. By his vigorous advocacy of the civil rights acts of the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson understood that he was bringing to an end the traditional alliance of the South with the party.

In the 1960s, Republican party strategists saw an opportunity. Previously, the party had given up any hope of winning in the South, but starting with Barry Goldwater's candidacy in 1964, some Republicans believed their party could appeal to southern voters who had become disaffected by the Democratic party's turn to civil rights. Many Republicans believed that the moderate wing of the party was the best hope for the future. Goldwater's vision, which turned out to be prophetic, is that the party could prevail if the conservative wing took the lead, and the conversion of the South would be the key. Without overly

racist appeals, party strategists and candidates found ways to signal to south-
erners that they might find the Republican party's position more congenial.

Although southerners began defecting from the Democratic party as early as
1948 in presidential elections, it took several more decades before southern-
ers identified themselves as Republicans in large numbers. One of the factors
in this conversion was Ronald Reagan, who made it easier for southerners to
feel comfortable with the party without abandoning their traditional values.
Reagan's style of conservatism made it possible for southerners to say, "I
didn't leave the Democratic party; it left me." In the 1980s and 1990s, this
change gave Republican candidates an advantage. Neither party had a
majority; both parties needed to appeal to swing voters in order to win. We
imagine that swing voters are the moderate voters in the middle, but with the
transformation of the party system, swing voters were often the most conser-
vative Democrats who were not quite ready to call themselves Republicans.
Also, until the 1980s, Democratic elected officials were resourceful enough to
adapt, departing from the national party on policy issues when necessary. As
a result, southern voters continued to vote for Democratic Congressmen and
Senators, as well as state officials, well into the 1980s. Until that point, it was
much easier for Democrats to win swing voters. After that, it was much easier
for Republican candidates to win swing voters. The transformation of the
South was therefore best understood as a two-step process. Southerners
began voting for Republican presidential candidates as early as the 1950s,
but it took several decades for the transformation to move to Congressional,
Senate, and state elections.

Party strategy by itself would not have been enough to transform the region.
Demographic changes also contributed. Before the 1970s, the vast majority
of southern voters were native southerners. Starting in the 1970s, the
"Sunbelt" attracted large numbers of people from other parts of the country to
move South, especially to cities like Atlanta and Dallas. As a result, there
were more urban voters than ever before in the South. The voters who
moved South for employment or business opportunities were less attached to
the South as a region and less moved by the southern preoccupation with
race. They were more concerned with economic issues, such as low taxes,
that were a nice fit in the southern political climate and with the direction the
Republican party was taking. The new southerners were much less attached
to the Democratic party in general. The transformation of the South would not
have happened without these dramatic demographic changes. The rise of the
middle class in the South, urbanization, and new patterns of industrialization
in the southern economy all contributed to the transformation of the one-party
system in the Old South and the rise of genuine two-party competition.

The Republican party made little effort to appeal to black voters, but needed
to find issues other than race that would appeal to the new southerners.
Starting in the 1990s, religion provided the party with a proxy for race;
Republicans could frame more subtle appeals to the voters who cared about
race, and could even expand their base. The fact that religious issues have
become so important in national politics is the result of strategizing in
response to the Republican reliance on the South—much like the Democratic
party's reliance on the South in the previous era.

Many people who cared about the South in the middle of the twentieth century hoped that someday southern politics might resemble politics in the rest of the country. They believed that peripheral South states like Texas, Florida, and North Carolina would lead the way and that moderate Republicans might be the future of the South. As it turned out, it was the conservative wing of the party that prevailed. The hope then was that southern politics might become nationalized. That has certainly happened, but at the same time, in a development that few people could have predicted in the 1950s, national politics has gotten southernized.

Questions

1. Why did Republican party strategists see hope of winning in the South in the 1960s?

2. What factors contributed to the rise of genuine two-party competition in the South?

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The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Marjorie Randon Hershey's
Party Politics in America.

he purpose of this course has been to provide you with the tools you need to understand American political parties better, and to show you how this subject can enhance your understanding of American politics in general. We started with the early history of the origins of political parties in the United States, and moved from there to the idea of party systems in general, and then to some of the institutions and practices of American politics. The party system is always changing, and the course has been organized to emphasize the point that in order to understand American politics today, we need to get a sense of the dynamic elements of politics. American politics today has been shaped by a series of events set in motion in the 1970s—the campaign finance reforms, the rise of primary elections, and changes in Congress, as well as the transformation of the South. With this background in mind, we can make more sense of current events and get a better sense of what the future of American political parties might look like.

 In his 1949 book on southern politics, V.O. Key suggested that the areas in the South with the highest population of blacks exhibited the most characteristically southern voting behavior. In their work on recent changes in southern politics, Earl and Merle Black have pointed out that the same is true today, but today, voters flock to the Republican party rather than the Democratic party. They point out that it used to be that whoever won a simple majority of the white vote would win the election. Now, since the Republican candidates often write off the black vote and concentrate on their core supporters, a Republican candidate must win 60 percent or more of the white vote to win. As the number of black voters increases, the percentage of the white voted needed goes up, too. It used to be relatively easy for Republican candidates to win swing voters in the South, since the swing voters were often conservative Democrats, but at this point it remains to be seen whether the conservative wing of the party will continue to prevail, or whether candidates with a more moderate appeal will do better at winning swing voters.

 The transformation of the South was driven by a combination of party strategy and demographic changes, and those forces are driving the future of the American party system as well. As the demographics of the United States change, Latino voters could determine which party is more successful. To this point, Latino voters have tended to vote Democratic, but turnout rates have been relatively low for Latino voters, and their support for the Democratic party has not been as strong as that of black voters. Because the Republican party has largely written off the black vote, a Republican candidate must win a supermajority of the white vote in order to win. Cutting into the Democrat's share of

the Latino vote, even by a little, greatly reduces the burden of needing higher and higher percentages of the white vote. Religious issues could attract Latino voters to the Republican party, especially if turnout goes up. On the other hand, the issue of immigration could work to the advantage of the Democratic party. This dilemma reveals a potential tension within the Republican party, and in coming elections we will watch for signs to see which wing of the party will prevail in the future.

Looking at the role of the South in American politics helps us understand several possible scenarios for the future of both the Democratic and Republican parties in presidential elections. For the Republican party, the choice looks like this: The party can nominate a conservative candidate to try to energize its base, and hope the moderates will be more comfortable with a Republican than a Democratic candidate. Here the question is how far to the right the party can afford to go without alienating the swing voters it needs. The other option is to choose a more liberal or moderate candidate, possibly from the North or West. Here the thinking would be that the party can take its core supporters for granted, and needs to actively and purposefully reach out to moderates. The question then is whether the core supporters are truly committed to the party. Specifically, is the support of white Evangelical Protestant voters soft or firm? The party has worked hard to cultivate those voters, but they do not have a long history of support for the party.

For the Democratic party, there are also two scenarios. The party can operate under the assumption that a Democrat cannot win the presidency without winning several southern states, such as Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee, and possibly North Carolina. To win, the party needs to nominate a candidate acceptable to southerners. The other strategy would be to more or less write off the South as a lost cause, except perhaps Florida, and focus on the West. Here, the party could afford to nominate a more liberal candidate.

There is one other factor that affects the strategy of both parties: all of these strategies will be affected by the other party's choice. That is, if the Republicans nominate a more conservative candidate, the Democrats could get away with nominating a more liberal candidate. If the Democrats nominate a more liberal candidate, the Republicans could be motivated to unite behind a more moderate or liberal candidate. That is, there could be a Democratic candidate who inflames Republicans enough that they would unite behind a more moderate candidate even if they are not completely comfortable with that candidate's policies.

Another factor is the scheduling of the party primaries. As the parties shuffle their primaries, different states assume more important roles in determining the nominee. This adds an element of uncertainty, and underlines the fact that primary elections have taken the control of the nomination process away from the party national committee, weakening parties somewhat and making the process less predictable.

We often hear about the red state/blue state divide. The assertion is that Americans are deeply divided, with irreconcilable belief systems, and partisan conflict is deeply entrenched. In fact, this picture is misleading. We know that the winner-take-all system in the Electoral College means that the popular vote in a state can be fairly even, but the candidate who wins even a few

more votes wins all of that state's electoral votes, so the margin of victory is magnified. It is certainly true that Americans are closely divided in the sense that there are seldom clear majorities on either side of the issues of the day, and neither party has a clear majority. This has led some political scientists to look at the level of regions to identify majorities at the sub-national level. It has led others to conclude that deep cultural divides separate Americans.

One of the questions that preoccupies political scientists is whether the American party system is getting weaker or stronger. Starting in the 1970s, especially in the aftermath of Watergate, some observers sensed that dramatic changes were taking place. The party system was becoming weaker, and the unintended consequences of this affected every aspect of American politics. In particular, this contributed to the phenomenal growth of the power of interest groups. The term gridlock was used to describe the government's inability to get things done. But in the 1980s, there seemed to be evidence that the party system, particularly in Congress, was growing stronger. This puzzled observers, and some believe that the best way to describe things at this point is that parties in Congress are becoming stronger than ever, while parties in the electorate are becoming weaker than ever. Nowadays, there is considerable disagreement about divided government, for example. Some see it as the problem, while others see it as the solution.

This is consistent with the history of American political parties from the very beginning. Parties reflect deep divides, but also have the potential for rising above them or making them worse. At this point, it might be more accurate to say that political parties are far more divided that the people themselves. Some political scientists believe that we are seeing something like a return to the pre-Jackson type of party system, where parties in government are much stronger, but parties in the electorate are weaker.

The developments of the decades since the 1970s contribute to the bitter rivalries we see within the government and a growing rift—not between Americans themselves, but between the issues people care about and the things the government does. Although people still talk about gridlock, the problem is not that the government is not *doing* anything—the amount of legislation is not going down—but rather the *kind* of things that the government is doing. Understanding the trends and tendencies of politics helps us imagine what the future might look like, and can help us assess the politics today much more effectively. Political parties began as parties in the government, and only after several decades were they used to mobilize the electorate. Parties have provided more accountability in government, but also more manipulation of the public. Throughout American history, even as participation has increased, the government has grown larger and more remote. There has always been a tension between the promise of a more responsible party system and the reality.

Questions

1. What events set in motion in the 1970s are shaping American politics today?
2. Is the American party system getting stronger or weaker?

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LECTURE FOURTEEN

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