11

Parties as Problem Solvers

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Some twenty-five years ago I wrote an article entitled "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics."[1] In that article (henceforth referenced as DOCR), I updated the classic arguments for party responsibility in light of which the politics of the 1970s looked seriously deficient. A subsequent article with a similar theme appeared in a 1984 collection edited by Michael Nelson, with a revised version in a second edition four years later, and a final revision in 1990.[2] In brief, these essays noted that in the 1970s party cohesion had dropped to a level not seen since before the Civil War. As a result, national politics had degenerated into a free-for-all of unprincipled bargaining in which participants blithely sacrificed general interests in their pursuit of particularistic constituency interests. The unified Democratic government of President Jimmy Carter that failed to deal with national problems such as runaway inflation and successive energy crises exemplified the sorry state of national politics. Moreover, not only had policy failure become more likely, but because voting for members of Congress increasingly reflected the particularistic activities and personal records of incumbents, members had little fear of being held accountable for their contribution to the failures of national politics. In that light, I sympathetically resurrected the arguments of early to midcentury political scientists who advocated more responsible parties.[3] Although not all problems were

amenable to government solution, unified political parties led by strong presidents were more likely to act decisively to meet the challenges facing the country, and when they took their collective performance records to the electorate for ratification or rejection, the voters at least had a good idea of whom to reward or blame.

Looking back at these essays, the 1980s clearly was the decade of party responsibility for me. But, as noted in an epilogue to the final (1990) revision of the essay in the Nelson volume, the prevalence of divided government in the late twentieth century had raised doubts in my mind about the arguments articulated a decade earlier.[4] These doubts cumulated into a change of position explicated at length in *Divided Government* and later writings.[5] In brief, as the parties became more distinct and cohesive during the 1980s, voters seemed to show little appreciation for the changes. Rather than entrust control of government to one unified party, Americans were increasingly voting to split control of government—at the state as well as the national level. And whether that was their actual goal or not—a matter of continuing debate—polls showed that majorities were happy enough with the situation, whatever political scientists thought of the supposed programmatic inefficiency and electoral irresponsibility of divided government. By the early 1990s, I had come to appreciate the electorate's point of view.

Moving from one side of an argument to the other in a decade suggests that the protagonist either was wrong earlier or (worse!) wrong later. But there is another less uncomplimentary possibility—namely, that the shift in stance did not reflect blatant error in the earlier argument so much as changes in one or more unrecognized but important empirical premises, which vitiate the larger argument. I think that at least to some degree such is the case here. To quote from the 1990 epilogue, "I am now less optimistic than when I first wrote this essay that a stronger role for the parties *as presently constituted* would bring about better government" (emphasis in original).[6] For by 1990 I had come to believe that in important respects the parties we were observing in the contemporary era were different in composition and behavior from the ones described in the political science literature we had studied in graduate school. Parties organized to solve the governance problems of one era do not necessarily operate in the same way as parties organized to solve the problems of later eras.[7]

This chapter considers the capacity of the contemporary party system to solve societal problems and meet contemporary challenges. I do so by revisiting DOCR and reconsidering it against the realities of contemporary politics. I begin by briefly contrasting American politics in the 1970s and the 2000s.

Politics Then and Now

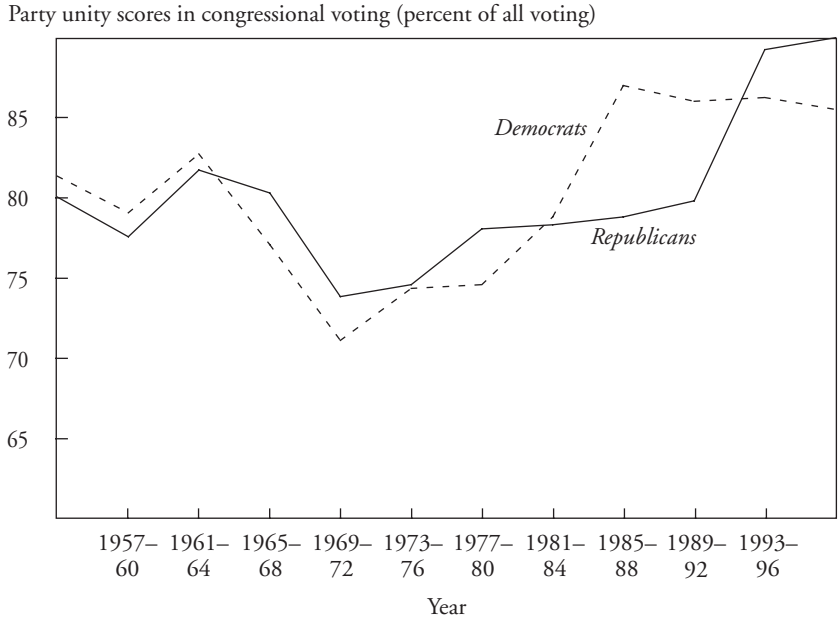
DOCR reflected the politics of the 1970s, a decade that began with divided government (then still regarded as something of an anomaly), proceeded through the resignations of a vice president and president followed by the brief administration of an unelected president, then saw the restoration of the "normal order"—unified Democratic government—in 1976, only to see it collapse at the end of the decade in the landslide rejection of a presidency mortally wounded by international humiliation, stagflation, and energy crises. Contemporary critics placed much of the responsibility for the "failed" Carter presidency at the feet of Carter himself—his obsession with detail, his inability to delegate, his political tin ear, and so forth—but I felt then that the critics were giving insufficient attention to larger developments and more general circumstances that would have posed serious obstacles for presidents who possessed much stronger executive and political skills than Carter.[8]

Political Conditions in the 1970s

Not only did Jimmy Carter's 1976 victory restore the presidency to the Democrats, but large Democratic majorities also controlled both the House and Senate.[9] It seemed that the great era of government activism that had been derailed by the war in Vietnam would resume. Such was not to be. After four years of political frustration Carter was soundly defeated, the Republicans captured the Senate with a remarkable gain of twelve seats, and the Democrats lost thirty-three seats in the House. What happened?

Basically, the country faced a series of new problems, and the Democratic Party failed to deal with them in a manner satisfactory to electoral majorities in the nation as a whole and in many states and districts. Gas lines in particular, and the energy crisis in general, were something new in modern American experience, as were double-digit inflation and interest rates near 20 percent. Middle-class tax revolts were a startling development that frightened Democrats and energized Republicans, and a succession of foreign policy setbacks led many to fear that the United States was ill prepared to deal with new challenges around the world. In the face of such developments Democratic majorities in Congress failed to deliver. Indeed, they seemed fixated on old, ineffective solutions like public works spending and trade restrictions. The honeymoon between Carter and congressional Democrats ended fairly quickly, and the partnership was under strain for most of Carter's administration. Members worked to protect their constituencies from the negative effects of the new developments and worried much less about the fate of

Figure 11-1. *The Decline and Resurgence of Party in Government: Party Unity, 1954–98*



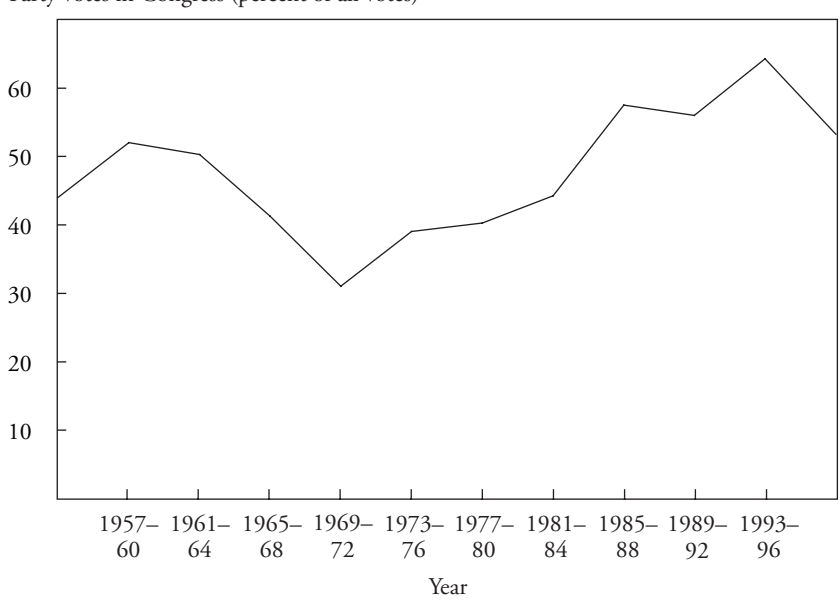
Source: Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, eds., *Vital Statistics on American Politics 2005–2006* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005), table 5.8.

Carter or the party as a whole. As figure 11-1 shows, this was a period of low party cohesion, and although cross-party majorities were not as common as in the late 1960s, figure 11-2 shows that they still were common.

The generation of congressional scholars who contributed to the literature of the 1950s and 1960s had defended the decentralized Congresses of the period against the centralizing impulses of presidential scholars and policy wonks. True, Congress did not move fast or efficiently, nor did it defer to presidential leadership, but most scholars would have characterized this as pragmatic incrementalism rather than the "deadlock of democracy."[10] Congress reflected and was responsive to the heterogeneity of interests in the country. No doubt most of the community of established congressional scholars sympathized with Julius Turner's critique of the 1950 American Political Science Association (APSA) report.[11]

To a younger generation of scholars, however, the failings of the decentralized Congresses and disorganized parties were cause for concern. Serious problems faced the country, presidents were held responsible for solving these

Figure 11-2. *The Decline and Resurgence of Party in Government: Party Votes, 1953–98*



Source: Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, eds., *Vital Statistics on American Politics 2005–2006* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005), table 5.7.

problems, but incumbent members of Congress seemingly could win reelection by abandoning their presidents and parties in favor of protecting parochial constituency interests. By emphasizing their individual records, members of Congress had adapted to an era of candidate-centered politics. Historically speaking, they had far less to gain or lose from the effects of presidential coattails, nor need they be very concerned about midterm swings against their president's party.[12] Collective responsibility traditionally provided by the political parties was at low ebb. *Pluribus* was running rampant, leaving *unum* in the electoral dust.

Political Conditions Now

In retrospect, the trends decried in DOCR had already bottomed out by the Carter presidency. The cross-party majorities that passed President Reagan's budget and tax cuts may have obscured the fact, but party unity and party differences already were on the rise and continued rising in succeeding years (Figures 11-1 and 11-2). In a related development, the electoral advantages

Table 11-1. *APSA Report after Forty Years*

Fate of proposal	*Democrats*	*Republicans*	*System*
Full implementation	13	6	5
Partial implementation	7	5	5
De facto movement	8	9	5
No change	3	10	3
Negative movement	2	3	2

Source: Grossly adapted from Denise Baer and David Bositis, *Politics and Linkage in a Democratic Society* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993), appendix.

accruing to incumbency already were beginning to recede as national influences in voting reasserted themselves.[13] And a new breed of congressional leaders emerged to focus the efforts of their parties in support of or opposition to presidential proposals. In 1993 President Clinton's initial budget passed without a single Republican vote in the House or Senate, and unified Republican opposition contributed greatly to the demise of the administration's signature health care plan.

And then came 1994, when the Republicans finally had success in an undertaking they had sporadically attempted for a generation—nationalizing the congressional elections. In the 1994 elections, personal opposition to gun control or various other liberal policies no longer sufficed to save Democrats in conservative districts whose party label overwhelmed their personal positions. The new Republican majorities in Congress seized the initiative from President Clinton to the extent that he was asked at a press conference whether he was "still relevant." When congressional Republicans overreached, Clinton reasserted his relevance, beating back Republican attempts to cut entitlement programs and saddling them with the blame for the government shutdowns of 1995–96.

At the time, the Republican attempt to govern as a responsible party struck many political scientists as unprecedented in the modern era, but, as Baer and Bositis pointed out, politics had been moving in that direction for several decades. Indeed, a great deal of what the 1950 APSA report called for already had come to pass (table 11-1).[14] Now, a decade later, it is apparent that the Congress elected in 1994 was only the leading edge of a new period in national politics. Party unity and presidential support among Republicans hit fifty-year highs during the first term of President George W. Bush, and in 2002 the president pulled off the rare feat of leading his party to seat gains in a midterm election. After his reelection in 2004, President Bush spoke in

terms clearly reminiscent of those used by responsible party theorists. On the basis of a 51 percent popular majority, he claimed a mandate to make his tax cuts permanent and transform Social Security. Moreover, early in 2005 when the president was asked why no one in his administration had been held accountable for mistakes and miscalculations about Iraq, he replied in words that should have warmed the hearts of responsible party theorists: "We had an accountability moment, and that's called the 2004 election. And the American people listened to different assessments made about what was taking place in Iraq, and they looked at the two candidates, and chose me, for which I'm grateful."[15] No president in living memory had articulated such clear statements of collective party responsibility legitimized by electoral victory.

In sum, the collective responsibility DOCR found wanting in the 1970s seems clearly present in the 2000s. Why, then, am I troubled by the operation of something I fervently wished for in the 1970s?

The Problems with Today's Responsible Parties

In 2002 a Republican administration ostensibly committed to free enterprise endorsed tariffs to protect the U.S. steel industry, a policy condemned by economists across the ideological spectrum. Also in 2002 Congress passed and President Bush signed an agricultural subsidy bill that the left-leaning *New York Times* decried as an "orgy of pandering to special interest groups," the centrist *USA Today* called "a congressional atrocity," and the right-leaning *Economist* characterized as "monstrous."[16] In 2003 Congress passed and the president signed a special interest–riddled prescription drug plan that was the largest entitlement program adopted since Medicare itself in 1965, a fiscal commitment that immediately put the larger Medicare program on a steep slide toward bankruptcy. In 2004 congressional Republicans proposed and President Bush supported a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, a divisive proposal that had no chance of passing. After his reelection, President Bush declared his highest priority was to avert a crisis in a Social Security system he insisted was bankrupt, by establishing a system of personal accounts, while disinterested observers generally pronounced the situation far from crisis and in need of relatively moderate reform—especially compared to Medicare.[17] In 2005 the Republican Congress passed and President Bush signed a pork-filled transportation bill that contained 6,371 congressional earmarks, forty times as many as contained in a bill vetoed by an earlier Republican president in 1987. Meanwhile, at the time of this writing Americans continue to die in a war of choice launched on the basis of ambiguous

intelligence that appears to have been systematically interpreted to support a previously adopted position.

The preceding are only some of the more noteworthy lowlights of public policies adopted or proposed under the responsible party government of 2000–05. All things considered, if someone wished to argue that politics in the 1970s was better than today, I would find it hard to rebut them. Why? Are today's problems and challenges so much more difficult than those of the 1970s that the decentralized, irresponsible parties of that time would have done an even poorer job of meeting them than the more responsible parties of today? Or are today's responsible parties operating in a manner that was not anticipated by those of us who wished for more responsible parties? In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on the latter possibility.

What Didn't DOCR Anticipate?

With the benefit of hindsight, one potentially negative effect of political competition by cohesive, differentiated parties is to raise the stakes of politics.[18] Certainly, majority control of institutions always is valuable; committee chairs, agenda control, staff budgets, and numerous other benefits go to the majority. But if majority control of the House or Senate means relatively little for policymaking because moderate Republicans and Democrats hold the balance of power, which party formally holds control means less than when policy is decided within each party caucus.[19] Similarly, the knowledge that the president's program either will be rubber-stamped by a supportive congressional majority or killed by an opposition majority makes unified control of all three institutions that much more valuable. The fact that the parties have been so closely matched in the past decade makes the competition that much more intense.

With the political stakes ratcheted upward, politics naturally becomes more conflictual. The benefits of winning and the costs of losing both increase. Informal norms and even formal rules come under pressure as the legislative majority strives to eliminate obstacles to its agenda.[20] Meanwhile, the minority is first ignored, then abused. House Democrats under Jim Wright marginalized House Republicans in the 1980s, and the Republicans have enthusiastically returned the favor since taking control in 1994.[21] Meanwhile Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist threatens the minority Democrats with the "nuclear option"—a rules change that effectively eliminates the filibuster on presidential appointments. In sum, the increasing disparity

between majority and minority status further raises the electoral stakes and makes politics more conflictual.

In retrospect, it is probable that the development of more responsible parties was a factor—certainly not the only one—that contributed to the rise of the permanent campaign.[22] With majority status that much more valuable, and minority status that much more intolerable, the parties are less able to afford a hiatus between elections in which governing takes precedence over electioneering. All else now is subordinated to party positioning for the next election. Free trade principles? Forget about them if Pennsylvania and Ohio steel workers are needed to win the next election. Budget deficits? Ignore them if a budget-busting prescription drug plan is needed to keep the opposition from scoring points with senior citizens. Politics always has affected policies, of course, but today the linkage is closer and stronger than ever before.[23]

A second problem with cohesive parties that offer voters a clear choice is that voters may not like clear choices. The APSA report asserted that responsible parties would offer voters "a proper range of choice."[24] But what is "proper"? Voters may not want a clear choice between repeal of *Roe v. Wade* and unregulated abortion, between private Social Security accounts and ignoring inevitable problems, between launching wars of choice and ignoring developing threats. Despite much popular commentary to the contrary, the issue positions of the electorate as a whole are not polarized; voters today remain, as always, generally moderate, or, at least, ambivalent.[25] But candidates and their parties are polarized, and the consequence is candidate evaluations and votes that are highly polarized, which is what we have seen in recent elections.

Even if voters *were* polarized on issues and wished the parties to offer clear choices, they would still be dissatisfied if there were more than one issue and the opinion divisions across issues were not the same. For example, contemporary Republicans are basically an alliance between economic and social conservatives, and Democrats an alliance between economic and social liberals. So, in which party does someone who is an economic conservative and a social liberal belong? An economic liberal and a social conservative? Such people might well prefer moderate positions on both dimensions to issue packages consisting of one position they like a great deal and another they dislike a great deal.

The bottom line is that the majoritarianism that accompanies responsible parties may be ill suited for a heterogeneous society.[26] With only one dimension of conflict a victory by one party can reasonably be interpreted to mean

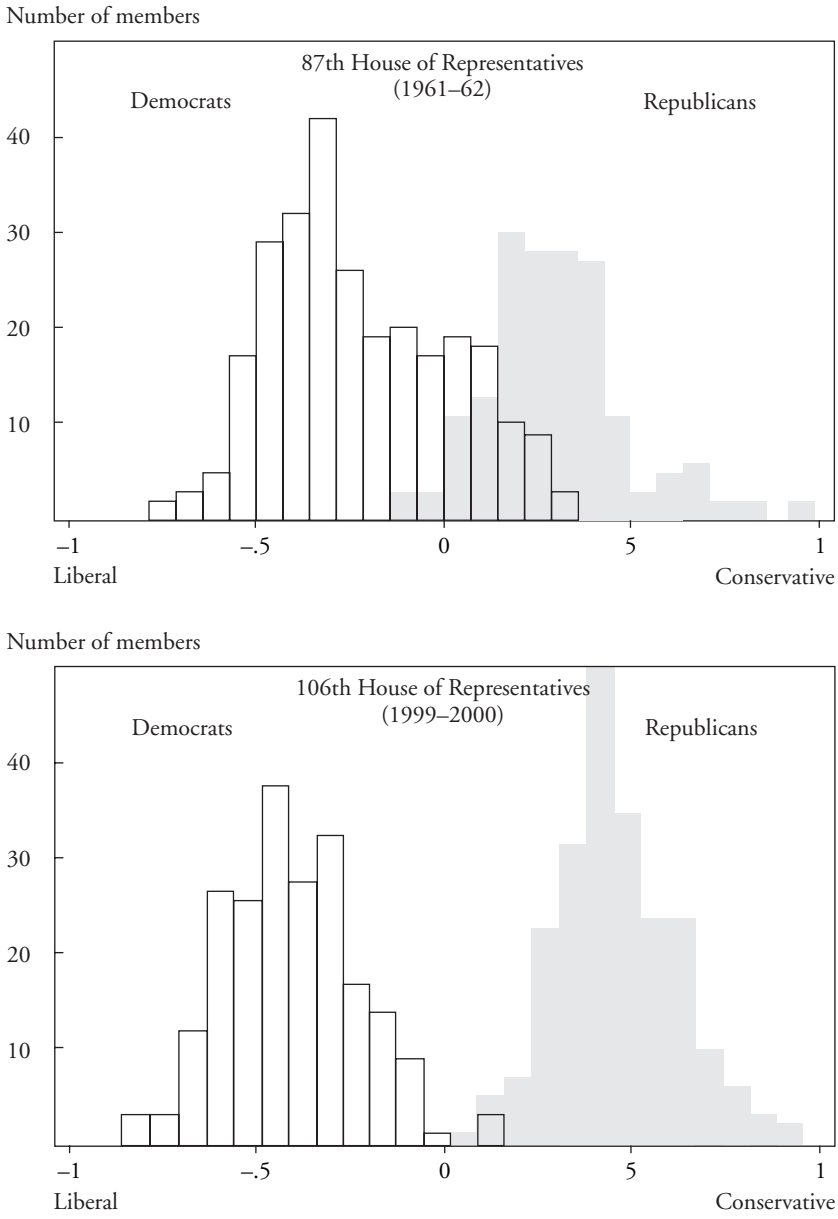
that a majority prefers its program to that of the other party. But with more than one dimension a victory by one party by no means guarantees majority support for its program(s). Indeed, as Anthony Downs noted a half century ago, given variations in voter intensity on different issues, a party can win by constructing a coalition of minorities—taking the minority position on each issue.[27]

American politics probably appeared to have a simpler and clearer structure at the time the APSA report was written. Race was not on the agenda.[28] Social and cultural issues were largely dormant in the midcentury decades, their importance diminished by the end of immigration in the 1920s, the Great Depression, and World War II. A bipartisan consensus surrounded foreign and defense policy.[29] Under such conditions it is understandable that a midcentury political scientist could have felt that all the country needed was two parties that advocated alternative economic programs.[30] For example, in 1962 political historian James McGregor Burns wrote, "It is curious that majoritarian politics has won such a reputation for radicalism in this country. Actually it is moderate politics; it looks radical only in relation to the snail-like progress of Madisonian politics. The Jeffersonian strategy is essentially moderate because it is essentially competitive; in a homogeneous society it must appeal to the moderate, middle-class independent voters who hold the balance of power."[31]

To most contemporary observers the United States looks rather less homogeneous than it apparently did to observers of Burns's era. Compared to 1950, our present situation is more complex with a more elaborate political issue space and less of a tendency to appeal to the moderate voter, as we discuss below.

Burns's contention that majoritarian politics is moderate politics is quite interesting in light of the contemporary discussion of the polarization of American politics. Although the electorate is not polarized, there is no question that the political class—the variegated collection of candidates, activists, interest group spokespersons, and infotainment media—is polarized. And, where we can measure it well, there is little doubt that the political class has become increasingly polarized over the past several decades.[32] Figure 11-3 illustrates the oft-noted fact that moderates have disappeared from Congress: the area of overlap where conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans meet has shrunk to almost nothing, and it has done so at the same time as the parties were becoming more responsible—indeed, figures like these often are cited as indicators of party responsibility.

Figure 11-3. *Polarization of Congress since the 1960s*



Source: Keith Poole, http://voteview.com/dwnomin.htm.

Why would polarization accompany party responsibility? Logically it need not. Indeed, the APSA report asserted that "[n]eeded clarification of party policy in itself will not cause the parties to differ more fundamentally or more sharply than they have in the past."[33] But as I have argued elsewhere, today's parties are not the same as the parties described in midcentury textbooks.[34] The old distinctions between "amateurs" and "professionals" or "purists" and "professionals" no longer have the same conceptual value because the amateurs have won, or perhaps more accurately, the professionals now are purists. At the time the responsible party theorists wrote, parties nominated candidates on the basis of their service to the party and their connections to party leaders, or, in more competitive areas, their electability. Aside from times when a party was bitterly divided, issue positions were seldom a litmus test of a candidate's suitability.[35] Material motivations—control of offices, patronage—were dominant, but civil service, public sector unionization, conflict of interest laws, social welfare programs, and other developments have lessened the personal material rewards that once motivated many of those active in politics. Today, ideological motivations are relatively more important than previously. Candidates must have the right set of issue stances to attract support, and many of the potential supporters would prefer to lose with a pure ideological candidate than to win with a mushy moderate. Some candidates themselves no doubt feel the same.

These developments have contributed to a basic shift in party electoral strategy in the contemporary United States. At midcentury, the conventional wisdom expressed by Burns was in accord with political science theory—that two-party competition induces parties to move toward the center to capture the median voter.[36] But in the last decade of the century we saw a shift to what now seems to be the prevailing strategy of concentrating on the party base—doing whatever is necessary to maximize loyalty and turnout by core party constituencies. Thus, the aforementioned forcing of a Senate vote on gay marriage was an entirely symbolic gesture toward the evangelical Christian base of the Republican Party. It had nothing to do with governing; it was a costly signal that the Bush administration was on their side.

Seemingly, today's parties no longer strive to maximize their vote, only to satisfice—to get more votes than the other party.[37] At one time a maximal victory was desirable because it would add credibility to the victors' claim that the voters had given them a mandate. But as the previously quoted remarks of President Bush indicate, at least some of today's politicians consider any victory, narrow or not, a mandate.[38]

Parties composed of issue activists and ideologues behave differently from the parties that occupied the political science literature of the mid-twentieth century. At midcentury, each party appealed to a different swath of the American public, Democrats primarily to blue-collar workers and Republicans to middle-class professionals and managers. Because such large social groupings were far from homogeneous internally, the party platform had to tolerate internal heterogeneity to maintain itself and compete across a reasonably broad portion of the country. As Turner put it, "[Y]ou cannot give Hubert Humphrey [liberal Democratic Senator from Minnesota] a banjo and expect him to carry Kansas. Only a Democrat who rejects part of the Fair Deal can carry Kansas, and only a Republican who moderates the Republican platform can carry Massachusetts."[39]

Although both parties continue to have support in broad social groupings like blue-collar workers and white-collar professionals, their bases now consist of much more specifically defined groups. Democrats rely on public-sector unions, environmentalists, prochoice and other liberal cause groups. Republicans rely on evangelicals, small business organizations, prolife and other conservative cause groups. Rather than compromise on a single major issue such as economics, a process that midcentury political scientists correctly saw as inherently moderating, parties can now compromise across issues by adding up constituency groups' most preferred positions on a series of independent issues. Why should conservative mean prolife, low taxes, procapital punishment, and preemptive war, and liberal mean just the opposite? What is the underlying principle that ties such disparate issues together? The underlying principle is political, not logical or moral. Collections of positions like these happen to be the preferred positions of groups that now constitute important parts of the party bases.

At one time political scientists saw strong political parties as a means of controlling interest groups.[40] Parties and groups were viewed as competing ways of organizing political life. If parties were weak, groups would fill the vacuum; if parties were strong, they would harness group efforts in support of more general party goals. Two decades ago, I was persuaded by this argument, but time has proved it suspect. Modern parties and their associated groups now overlap so closely that it is often hard to make the distinction between a party activist and an issue activist. As noted above, the difference between party professionals and purists does not look nearly so wide as it once did.

Although more speculative, I believe that unbiased information and policy effectiveness are additional casualties of the preceding developments. The

APSA report asserts, "As a means of achieving responsibility, the clarification of party policy also tends to keep public debate on a more realistic level, restraining the inclination of party spokesmen to make unsubstantiated statements and charges."[41] Recent experience shows just the opposite. Policies are proposed and opposed relatively more on the basis of ideology and the demands of the base, and relatively less on the basis of their likelihood of solving problems. Disinformation and outright lies become common as dissenting voices in each party leave or are silenced. The most disturbing example comes out of congressional passage of the 2003 Medicare prescription drug add-on bill. Political superiors threatened to fire Medicare's chief actuary if he informed Congress that the add-on would be 25–50 percent more costly than the administration publicly claimed. The administration apparently was willing to lie to members of its own party to assure passage of a bill whose basis was mostly political.[42] More recently, President Bush introduced his campaign to add personal accounts to Social Security by claiming that Social Security was bankrupt and that personal accounts were a means of restoring the system to fiscal solvency. Although many experts see merit in the idea of personal savings accounts, most agreed that implementing them would increase Social Security's fiscal deficits in the coming decades. Even greater agreement surrounded rejection of the claim that Social Security was bankrupt. Although politically difficult, straightforward programmatic changes in the retirement age, the tax base, or the method of indexing future benefits would make Social Security solvent for as long as actuaries can reasonably predict.[43]

Moreover, because parties today focus on their ability to mobilize the already committed, the importance of performance for voting declines in importance relative to ideology and political identity. It was telling that in 2004 John Kerry frequently was criticized for not having a plan to end the war in Iraq that was appreciably different from President Bush's. This seems like a new requirement. In 1952 did Dwight Eisenhower have a specific plan to end the war in Korea that differed from President Truman's? "I will go to Korea" is not exactly a plan. In 1968 did Richard Nixon have a specific plan to end the war in Vietnam that differed from President Johnson's? A "secret plan" to end the war is not exactly a precise blueprint that voters could compare to the Johnson policy. Some decades ago voters apparently felt that an unpopular war was sufficient reason to punish an incumbent, regardless of whether the challenger offered a persuasive "exit strategy."

A final consideration relates to the preceding ones. Because today's parties are composed relatively more of issue activists than of broad demographic

groupings, they are not as deeply rooted in the mass of the population as was the case for much of our history. The United States pioneered the mass party, but, as Steven Schier has argued, in recent decades the parties have practiced a kind of exclusive politics.[44] The mass-mobilization campaigns that historically characterized American elections gave way to the high-tech media campaigns of the late twentieth century. Voter mobilization by the political parties correspondingly fell.[45] Late-century campaigns increasingly relied on television commercials, and there is some evidence that such ads demobilize the electorate.[46] In a kind of "back to the future" development, the two most recent presidential elections have seen renewed party effort to get out the vote, with a significant impact, at least in 2004. But modern computing capabilities and rich databases enable the parties to practice a kind of targeted mobilization based on specific issues that was more difficult to do in earlier periods. It is not clear that such activities make the parties more like those of yesteryear, or whether they only reinforce the trends I have previously discussed. One-third of the voting age population continues to eschew a party identification, a figure that has not appreciably changed in three decades.[47]

Discussion

In sum, the parties today are far closer to the responsible party model than those of the 1970s, a development that some of us wished for some decades ago, but it would be difficult to argue that today's party system is more effective at solving problems than the disorganized decentralized party system that it replaced. Rather than seek power on the basis of coherent programs, the parties at times throw fundamental principles to the wind when electoral considerations dictate, just as the decentralized parties of the mid-twentieth century did. At other times they hold fast to divisive positions that have only symbolic importance—President Bush reiterated his support for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage in his 2005 State of the Union address—for fear of alienating ideologically committed base elements. On issues like Social Security and the war in Iraq, facts are distorted and subordinated to ideology. Mandates for major policy changes are claimed on the basis of narrow electoral victories.

To be sure, I have painted with a broad brush, and my interpretations of recent political history may prove as partial and inaccurate as some of those advanced in DOCR. In particular, I am sensitive to the possibility that unified Democratic government under present conditions might be significantly different from the unified Republican government we have experienced—

Nils Gilman argues that the features of responsible parties discussed above are really Republican features.[48] But even if true, this implies that an earlier generation of political scientists failed to appreciate that Republican and Democratic responsible party government would be significantly different, let alone identify the empirical bases for such differences. What this reconsideration has demonstrated to me is the difficulty of making broad recommendations to improve American politics, even when seemingly solid research and argument underlie many of the component parts, which is the reason I will venture no such recommendations here. It is possible that this paper is as much a product of its temporal context as DOCR was. As Aldrich argues, the political parties periodically reinvent themselves better to deal with the problems they face. That, in fact, is my hope—that the next reinvention of the parties results in organizations that are better than the current models at dealing with the problems our society faces.

Notes

1. *Daedalus,* 109 (1980): 25–45. The article was written for a special issue bearing the title *The End of Consensus?* A number of the articles contained therein discussed the breakdown of consensus in various policy spheres. In light of the contemporary concern with the polarization of American politics, it may be that the fraying of a supposed earlier consensus is a perennial theme.

2. Morris Fiorina, "The Presidency and the Contemporary Electoral System," in *The Presidency and the Political System*, edited by Michael Nelson (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1984), pp. 204–26. A revision titled "The Presidency and Congress: An Electoral Connection?" appeared in Nelson's second edition (1988), pp. 411–34; and a revision with the same title appeared in Nelson's third edition (1990), pp. 443–69.

3. The *locus classicus* is the midcentury report of the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political Science Association (APSA), "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," *American Political Science Review,* vol. 44, supplement (1950). For a comprehensive account of the views of responsible party theorists see Austin Ranney, *The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government* (University of Illinois Press, 1962).

4. Indeed, I felt somewhat ambivalent when I learned recently that DOCR still is being reprinted in a widely used law school case book. See Daniel Lowenstein and Richard Hasen, *Election Law*: *Cases and Materials* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2004), pp. 443–59.

5. Morris Fiorina, *Divided Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 126–30 (2d ed. [1996], pp. 173–77).

6. Fiorina, "Presidency and Congress," pp. 465–66.

7. John Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

8. For scholarly treatments of the Carter presidency see Erwin Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and the Politics of the Public Good* (Louisiana State University Press,

1988); Charles O. Jones, *The Trusteeship Presidency: Jimmy Carter and the United States Congress* (University of Virginia Press, 1988).

9. Carter took office with the Democrats holding 276 of 435 House seats and 59 of 100 Senate seats.

10. James McGregor Burns, *The Deadlock of Democracy* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

11. Julius Turner, "Responsible Parties: A Dissent from the Floor," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 45 (1951): 143–52.

12. Late twentieth-century seat swings were much smaller than in earlier eras. Midterm seat swings sometimes exceeded 90 House seats in the nineteenth century, and even in the New Deal period, the Democrats lost between 55 and 71 seats in three midterms. For a survey of the developments that led to the increased independence of presidential and congressional voting, see the articles in David Brady, John Cogan, and Morris Fiorina, eds. *Continuity and Change in House Elections* (Stanford University Press, 2000).

13. David Brady, Robert D'Onofrio and Morris Fiorina, "The Nationalization of Electoral Forces Revisited," in *Continuity and Change in House Elections*, pp. 130–48.

14. Denise Baer and David Bositis, *Politics and Linkage in a Democratic Society* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993), appendix.

15. Quoted in Jim VandeHei and Michael Fletcher, "Bush Says Election Ratified Iraq Policy," *Washington Post*, January 16, 2005, p. A1. On electoral mandates generally see Patricia Conley, *Presidential Mandates* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

16. "Pushing the Limit," *New York Times*, May 19, 2002, p. 14; "While Farmers Milk Public for Billions More," *USA Today*, May 15, 2002, p. 12A; "Bush the Anti-Globaliser," *Economist*, May 11, 2002, p. 14.

17. David Nather and Rebecca Adams, "The Real Crisis Waits Its Turn," *CQ Weekly*, February 21, 2005, pp. 446–51.

18. The APSA report, noted in note 3 above, does recognize the potentially positive effect of higher stakes—increasing popular interest and participation in politics. See, for example, p. 65.

19. At the start of the 109th Congress, Speaker Hastert declared that he would bring no proposal to the floor of the House that did not have a majority in the Republican conference.

20. "Roll call votes on the House floor, which are supposed to take 15 minutes, are frequently stretched to one, two or three hours. Rules forbidding any amendments to bills on the floor have proliferated, stifling dissent and quashing legitimate debate. Omnibus bills, sometimes thousands of pages long, are brought to the floor with no notice, let alone the 72 hours the rules require. Conference committees exclude minority members and cut deals in private, sometimes even adding major provisions after the conference has closed." Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann, "If You Give a Congressman a Cookie," *nytimes.com,* January 19, 2006.

21. For an overview see Donald R. Wolfensberger, "Pols Apart," *Wilson Quarterly,* vol. 28 (Autumn 2004): 49–59.

22. Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann, eds., *The Permanent Campaign and Its Future* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute and Brookings, 2000).

23. While I was writing this chapter, Karl Rove, President Bush's chief political lieutenant, was appointed deputy chief of staff, a high-level policy post in which he coordinates the work of the Domestic Policy Council, the National Economic Council, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council. According to long-time Washington watchers like Paul Light, "It codifies the fact that policy is politics, and politics is policy." Quoted in Mark Sandalow, "Bush Gives Policy Post to Shrewd Kingmaker," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 9, 2005, p. A18.

24. APSA, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 1.

25. Morris Fiorina, Samuel Abrams, and Jeremy Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (New York: Longman, 2004).

26. Americans may prefer Madisonian supermajoritatianism. Mark Mellman reports a recent poll in which by a two-to-one margin respondents preferred that Supreme Court justices "should have to get the support of at least 60 of the 100 senators" rather than 51. Mark Mellman, "Why Not Require 60 Votes?" *Hill*, March 16, 2005.

27. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Wiley, 1957). Technically speaking, such a platform is not in equilibrium, but with more than one issue dimension equilibria rarely exist. Parties still have to take positions—out of equilibrium or not.

28. As Baer and Bositis point out, the APSA report was largely silent on race.

29. To be sure, there was the McCarthy episode, but note that McCarthy was censured by a Senate controlled by his own party.

30. Writing about a completely different subject Mayhew also observes that major midcentury political scientists saw American politics largely as a conflict between the economic haves and have-nots. David Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments* (Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 153–56.

31. Burns*, Deadlock of Democracy*, p. 336.

32. Less often noted is that contemporary elite polarization levels resemble those of the late nineteenth century, when politics in the United States also bore some resemblance to responsible party government. See Hahrie Han and David Brady , "A Delayed Return to Historical Norms: Congressional Party Polarization after the Second World War," *British Journal of Political Science* (in press).

33. APSA, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 20.

34. Morris Fiorina, "Parties, Participation, and Representation in America: Old Theories Face New Realities," in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline,* edited by Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 511–41.

35. Such exceptions would include the fight over silver coinage among late nineteenth-century Democrats and the Regular versus Progressive split among Republicans in the early twentieth century.

36. Duncan Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections* (Cambridge University Press, 1958); Downs, *An Economic Theory*.

37. Gerber offers an interesting explanation: under some conditions a strategy that maximizes probability of election may produce no gain (indeed, even a loss) of votes. Alan Gerber, "Does Campaign Spending Work?" *American Behavioral Scientist,* vol. 47 (2004): 541–74.

38. Notably, after *losing* the popular vote in 2000, the Republican administration governed as if it had won a mandate.

39. Turner, "Responsible Parties: A Dissent from the Floor," p. 151.

40. As the APSA report comments, "[A] program-conscious party develops greater resistance against the inroads of pressure groups" (APSA, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 19).

41. APSA, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 22.

42. Amy Goldstein, "Foster: White House Had Role in Withholding Medicare Data," *Washington Post*, March 19, 2004, p. A2.

43. See the special issue on social security in the online journal *The Economists Voice* (www.bepress.com/ev/vol2/iss1/).

44. Steven Schier, *By Invitation Only* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

45. Steven Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 162–69.

46. Steven Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going Negative* (New York: Free Press, 1995); and Ted Brader, *Campaigning for Hearts and Minds* (University of Chicago Press, 2006). For other, more skeptical views, see the multiauthor exchange on negative advertising in the *American Political Science Review,* vol. 93 (1999): 851–909.

47. I am unpersuaded by research that purports to show that party in the electorate has resurged to 1950s levels. Morris Fiorina, "Parties and Partisanship: A 40-Year Retrospective," *Political Behavior,* vol. 24 (2002): 93–115.

48. Nils Gilman, "What the Rise of the Republicans as America's First Ideological Party Means for the Democrats," *Forum,* vol. 2 (2004).