Party, Process, AND Political Change IN Congress

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORY OF CONGRESS

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in our estimation of committee rolls is the distance between the median Democrat on the committee and the interval between the committee median and floor median, D^l_a.

Because the number of bills considered by a committee can differ widely, we expected, and found, our regression estimates to suffer from heteroskedasticity. We corrected for this using the Huber-White sandwich estimator of variance. Further diagnostics of our regression suggested no other problems for our estimation.

The results from our MLCS estimation of $ROLL^l_a$ is reported at the bottom of Table 5.4. As the cartel agenda model predicts, the estimated coefficient $\hat{\beta}$ is statistically indistinguishable from zero for the majority party ($p = .43$, two-tailed test), while the coefficient is positive and highly significant for the minority party ($p < .001$, two-tailed test). These results clearly support the cartel agenda model and refute the floor agenda model.

DISCUSSION: CONDITIONAL VERSUS UNCONDITIONAL PARTY GOVERNMENT

Our research shows that the majority party is very rarely rolled on (1) votes to report a bill from committee (0.07 percent of the time in our sample), (2) votes to report a bill from a conference committee (0.04 percent of the time in our sample), and (3) final passage votes on bills (about 3 percent of the time in our sample). We also find no systematic relationship between (1) the distance between the majority party median and the House median and (2) the party's roll rate on final passage votes. Similarly, we found no systematic relationship between (1) the distance between the majority-party median on a committee and the interval between committee and floor medians and (2) the party's roll rate on committee reports.

These results support the cartel agenda model and the simple view of negative agenda control it proposes. As our analysis spans more than a century of congressional history, this in turns suggest that the majority party's negative agenda power has been a constant feature of congressional organization during that time. In terms of the notion of conditional party government (see, for example, Rohde 1991 and Aldrich and Rohde 1997a, 1998), *the majority party's negative agenda control is not conditional*: in other words, it does not vary with the party's heterogeneity.

To verify this point, we regressed the majority party $ROLL\_RATE_a$ for each Congress from the 73rd through the 99th on the party's heterogeneity (measured by the standard deviation for majority party members from the party mean on the first dimension of D-NOMINATE scores).[10] We found

that heterogeneity had no effect on the majority party's roll rates ($\hat{\beta} = -.041$; SE = 0.117; $p < .73$, two-tailed test; $R^2 = .005$; constant term = .033; $N = 27$).

The majority party's consistent ability to keep things off the legislative agenda, at least under single-party control of both chambers of Congress, means that any social agent wishing to enact new legislation must deal with the majority party. This fact is very useful in raising campaign finance (see, for example, Cox and Magar 1999). Indeed, the dollar value of secure agenda control provides one reason to expect procedural powers to be stably cartelized.

DISCUSSION: DISRUPTING THE MAJORITY'S AGENDA CONTROL

Because the majority party's roll rate is not actually zero, as the complete-information model presented previously would have it, what explains majority rolls? Three important actors might compete with the House majority in setting the House agenda: the Senate; the president; and an alternative majority coalition in the House, such as the Conservative Coalition. We found that divided government, comprising either a division of partisan control between the House and the Senate or between the House and the president had no systematic effect on party roll rates.[11] We found, however, that the activity of the Conservative Coalition did have a significant effect on roll rates, and it is to a report of these activities that we now turn.

It is conventional wisdom that the Conservative Coalition (an alliance of conservative Republicans with conservative Southern Democrats) was extremely influential in the House from its first appearance in 1937 through the mid-1970s. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear that this coalition, rather than the Democratic party, really ruled the roost during this period. Our results pose a direct challenge to this view.

First, consider all the committees chaired by conservative Southern Democrats during this period. Suppose that one of these chairs decided to push a bill through his committee with Republican and Southern Democratic votes, in the teeth of Northern Democratic opposition—in other words, to activate the Conservative Coalition at the committee stage. Had any chair done so, one should have found Republicans and Southern Democrats on the committee signing the majority report of the committee, with Northern Democrats filing a dissenting report. Assuming that the North held a majority of the Democratic seats on the committee, as it did on most committees most of the time during this period, such an episode would nec-

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these scores. Once again, our simple and overall partisan structuring scores for the Senate show far more variation than the Aldrich and Rohde difference in party median scores and also, to a lesser extent, than their composite measure (see Chapter 2).

12. Poole and Rosenthal NOMINATE scores can nevertheless be used to great effect in measuring ideological orientations at the individual level in particular Congresses and assessing this factor as an explanation of outcomes in regression models vis-à-vis other factors such as length of service, committee positions, region, and even party label. However, results from models that also include party label must be interpreted with care, given the overlap between party and ideology, the ways in which roll call votes confound party and preference effects, and the differences that exist between explaining individual votes and behavior and collective impacts and behavior. For an intelligent use of NOMINATE scores to assess the factors involved in votes to reform the rules, see Schickler 2001.

13. Although we have not reported the simple bipartisan win score in Table 4.3, the percentage of bipartisan wins is equal to the percentage of bipartisan votes in both our simple and adjusted scores. This is true because whether one is measuring wins only on bipartisan votes or across all votes, there are by definition no cross-partisan wins on bipartisan votes. Hence the simple bipartisan win score is always 100 percent. Similarly, when measuring bipartisan wins across all votes, the adjusted win score is equal to the percentage of bipartisan votes. The situation with respect to partisan wins is different. In measuring wins only on party votes (our simple score), the partisan win score is the absolute percentage of the time the majority party wins on party votes, and this number subtracted from 100 percent is necessarily the cross-partisan win score on party votes. In measuring partisan wins across all votes (our adjusted score), the total is set by the proportion of party votes. There can be no greater percentage of party wins than party votes. The percentage of adjusted partisan wins is thus the absolute number multiplied by the party vote, and the percentage of cross-partisan votes is equal to the difference between the party vote and the adjusted percentage of partisan wins.

14. The partisan win scores for the remaining three periods were 67.7, 70.8, and 67.4 percent, respectively. The cross-partisan win scores for these periods were thus 32.3, 29.2, and 32.6 percent, as contrasted with the score for the period of the Party Senate which, given a win score of 77.2 percent, was 22.8 percent. The party rule scores for these remaining three periods were 34.4, 30.0, and 32.2 percent.

15. The adjusted or overall win scores for the four periods were as follows: 50.5, 40.1, 40.6, and 33.6 percent for adjusted wins; 17.8, 17.2, 17.2, and 13.3 percent for adjusted cross-partisan wins; and 31.7, 42.7, 42.2, and 53.3 for adjusted bipartisan wins. The adjusted party rule scores were 37.0, 21.6, 17.4, and 16.1 percent.

16. See also Binder (1999), which concerns the explanation of gridlock, and Schickler (2000), which concerns the explanation of rule changes.

17. For a discussion of the impacts of not taking margin into account, see Dodd and Oppenheimer (1997).

18. Aldrich and Rohde (2001) attempt to encompass the electoral process comprehensively in a theory of conditional party government. See also Cooper, Brady, and Hurley (1977); Cooper and Brady (1981); Rohde (1991); and Dodd and Oppenheimer (1997). On the impact of executive factors relative to electoral factors, see Brady, Cooper, and Hurley (1979) and Hurley and Wilson (1989).

19. On changes in roll call behavior, see Nokken (2000) and Stratmann (2000). On the leverage of party leaders, see Cox (2000, 2001); see also Bawn (1998) and Sinclair (1998a). On the treatment of roll call data to test for party effects, see Jenkins (1999, 2000); see also Snyder and Groseclose (2000); Burden and Clausen (1999); and Hager and Talbert (2000). On the use of simulation to test for party effects, see Lawrence, Maltzman, and Smith (1999) and Wilson (1998).

20. For suggestive insights along these lines, see Hall (1996: 1–48) and Weaver (2000: 23–54).

21. It should be noted that Aldrich and Rohde (2000a) have retreated somewhat on the question of whether party moves the median.

Chapter 5

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1. In this volume, both Aldrich, Berger, and Rohde (Chapter 2) and Cooper and Young (Chapter 4) argue that party control and centralization of authority are in fact a function of two things: homogeneity within party and the heterogeneity, or distance, between majority and minority parties.

2. On the agenda-setting role of committees, see Cox (1999); on the Rules Committee as "traffic cop," see Oleszek (1989: 120); on the Speaker's scheduling powers, see Oleszek (1989: 138), Hinckley (1988: 174), and Sinclair (1994: 45). Some evidence that the majority's seeming institutional powers translate into real advantages comes in the literature that shows that majority party status brings with it (1) greater campaign contributions (Cox and Magar 1999) and (2) greater levels of pork for a member's district (Murphy 1974; Levitt and Snyder 1995).

3. With these assumptions about members' preferences, the model is slightly more general than the standard unidimensional spatial model—in-