Outline

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Analyzing Parties: An Institutional Approach

Chapter 1: Introduction

This will be a short introduction on political parties, and the state of the academic literature on parties to this point. The chapter will lay out the three different ways in which parties have been studied in the past – (1) parties as diverse coalitions, (2) parties as good government (the "Responsible Parties Thesis," and (3) parties as electoral organizations. I will then introduce the "New Institutionalism," discuss how it has revived and altered the study of political parties over the last couple of decades, and explain why it is the basis for the construction of this textbook (as well as *why* we need an NI-based textbook on parties).

Chapter 2: Why (And What Are) Parties?

This chapter will lay out a positivist (or "New Institutionalist") approach to the study of political parties, which will cover many of the aspects detailed in John Aldrich's book, *Why Parties?* (1995). Parties will be characterized as endogenous solutions (i.e., solutions designed by political actors themselves) to various collective action problems that plague democratic decision making, i.e., sorting out electoral dynamics, achieving collective choices in legislative environments, and producing social choices for society as a whole. The second half of the chapter will provide a concrete definition of parties, so that the reader can clearly differentiate parties from factions, interest groups, etc.

Chapter 3: A Short History of the American Party System

This chapter will provide an historical overview of American political parties from the late-1700s to the current period. In doing so, the notion of different "party systems" characterizing different contextual periods in American history will be introduced. This "party systems" approach will shape the direction of the narrative. Six different party systems will be covered: *The First Party System* (1789-1820), when parties in government (Federalists and Democrat-Republicans) emerged; *The Second Party System* (1828-1860), when mass political parties (Democrats and Whigs) emerged and developed; *The Third Party System* (1860-1893), when the Republican Party dominated and patronage politics essentially ruled; *The Fourth Party System*

(1894-1932), when agrarian and industrial interests clashed amid progressive reforms; the *Fifth Party System* (1932-1964), when the Democratic Party ruled and a social-welfare state emerged and expanded; and the *Sixth Party System* (1964-present), which is characterized by increasing ideological polarization at the elite level. This last party system will essentially be the one around which the remainder of the book is framed. Various concepts like *critical elections* and *partisan realignments* will be introduced as the narrative unfolds.

Chapter 4: Parties as Organizations

Much of the chapter will focus on the contemporary (1960s) reforms, in which partisan organizations were recast in response to changing contextual and technological events. Again, historical accounts will begin the chapter, portraying party organizations as wielding a firm grip over the American political system throughout the 19th Century and into the 20th Century. In effect, party organizations promoted tight-fisted control over the entire political process; national leaders in combination with local party bosses selected candidates, controlled nominations, dictated campaigns, etc. However, with progressive era reforms (the Australian Ballot, the emergence of congressional primaries, the opening up of the presidential nominating process, etc.), the basis of organizational control liberalized substantially. Today, party organizations are very much service organizations. Yet, despite the institutional/electoral liberalization and the trend toward candidate-centered elections, parties *still* maintain a strong presence in the political process. Centralization of rules and procedures in the 1960s reorganized the party system, allowing party leaders new, *indirect* means of influence.   Specifically, contemporary party organizations control important resources – money, networks, human capital, technical expertise, etc. – which they provide to candidates in a top-down fashion. As these resources are critical to electoral success, party leaders continue to exert control over candidates, nominations, and elections.

Chapter 5: Parties in Elections

This chapter will focus on the role of parties in channeling candidate ambition. In short, candidates want to achieve electoral success, and will pursue strategies that will increase their probability of winning election. Parties provide a number of benefits in the regard. First, parties provide ideological "labels," which supply clear and cost-efficient signals to the mass electorate. In short, the party label is a low-cost heuristic; voters know where a candidate stands on a host of issues simply by virtue of running as a "Democrat" or "Republican." Moreover, the notion of the "party label" connects directly with the concept of "partisan identification" in the political behavior literature. Second, parties provide resources for the mobilization of voters, helping candidates overcome the collective action problem of generating votes (when it may not make sense for voters to show up at the polls). Third, parties provide financial assistance to candidates – in effect, overcoming the collective action problem of initiating and maintaining a campaign.

Chapter 6: Parties in Government

Here the focus will be on parties in Congress, or parties as legislative coalitions. As such, the role of parties in influencing legislative outcomes will be discussed in detail. Contemporary theories – like Aldrich and Rohde's Conditional Party Government Theory and Cox/McCubbins' Cartel Theory – will be discussed in detail. Various institutions will be covered as well, like (a) the party leadership, which structures debate and hastens the partisan policy agenda; (b) party contingents on committees (as well as party control of committee chairmanships), which use positive and negative gatekeeping powers to dictate policies considered on the floor; and (c) party caucuses, which resolve conflict and provide coordination. Finally, parties as floor voting coalitions will be analyzed, using various measures like party-voting scores, party-support scores, party-leadership scores, etc. A significant portion of the chapter will be used to examine the "decline and resurgence" of parties in Congress – tracking party-voting scores across the 20th Century, which show party becoming less and less of a factor in individual-level voting behavior from the 1930s through the early-1970s, until a rebound occurs in the mid-to-late-1970s leading to a significant increase over the last three decades.

Chapter 7: Contemporary Party Government

This chapter will focus on political events since the 1960s, which continue to affect the party system today. The chapter will begin with a view of the current partisan situation – in which each party is quite homogenous ideologically, as well as quite polarized from the other party. The remainder will analyze why we find ourselves in this ideologically polarized state. The first part of the chapter will examine demand-side forces, which helped to produce the initial move to the *Sixth Party System*, such as the Civil Rights reforms and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which led eventually to the Republican "Solid South" and the disappearance of southern conservative Democrats. These demand-side forces continue today, especially at the "intermediate" level, as party activists wield a great deal of control over primary and caucus decisions. The second part of the chapter will examine the supply-side forces, such as the congressional reforms of the 1970s, which helped to centralize power in the leadership structure. This centralization allowed parties to regain control over the membership and the legislative agenda, control which during the previous several decades had been decentralized among the various standing committees.

Chapter 8: Parties and Policymaking

This chapter will provide a cross-institutional analysis of parties – specifically, the interplay between the President and Congress in the pursuit of policy outputs. One focus of the chapter will be on "divided government" – when the president's party differs from the congressional party majority – and whether such a scenario creates more "policy gridlock" than unified-party control over the levers of government. In addition, presidential-congressional differences over policy objectives will be examined, which will involve studying various strategies that both the President and Congress can pursue to achieve their preferred policy objectives. Examples will include the President's ability to "go public" and speak directly to the American people, and the

Congress' ability to alter policies administratively through the use (and control) of the bureaucracy.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The chapter wraps up the book. Part will reassess the goals and objectives outlined in the first and second chapters. Part will also be discussion-based, that is, speculative in nature. This portion will take the form of "Political Parties and Democratic Politics," in that it will discuss the normative aspects of political parties on the American system. For example, are parties a good thing?; can they be beneficial, can they be detrimental – why and when?; does the current party system (in which the parties are ideological and polarized) impose new costs on democratic decision making?; can collective action problems be overcome without resorting to political parties?; and so on.