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Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House. by Gary W. Cox; Mathew D. McCubbins

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*The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (May, 1995), pp. 547-549

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [Southern Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2960324>

Accessed: 14/12/2011 08:45

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television for answers" rings hollow precisely because Hart recognizes how seductive the medium is. If the home and the school were thriving institutions, would television's allure be as strong? If social conditions are as Hart states, where is the catalyst for the change he seeks? The suggestion seems, like television itself, a bit too clever.

Nonetheless, their inability to offer plausible solutions to the quandary posed by media politics in a peculiar way recommends each of these works. Intractable problems cannot be solved in 11 pages; to the contrary, the political effects of television are so important, and the political uses of the medium are so fluid, that pat solutions are as unbecoming as defining the problem is meaningful. And on the latter count, each author makes an important contribution, raising provocative questions about television and democracy and drawing attention to why media politics, like each of these books, should have a prominent place on the agenda.

Matthew R. Kerbel, *Villanova University*

*Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House.* By Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994. Pp. 289. \$45.00 cloth, \$14.00 paper.)

*Legislative Leviathan*, by Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins, is a comprehensive reevaluation of the role of political parties and their leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives. The authors argue that political parties and party leaders in the post-World War II U.S. House maintain a strong guiding hand in the legislative process. Individualistic behavior among legislators and more widely spread decision making authority has not created a partyless legislative process. The book provides a lucid theory of why individualism does not result in the legislative equivalent of the Hobbesian state of nature.

Properly understood, parties are cartels of legislators, policed by their leaders. As with all cartels, there is an incentive for members to cheat when it benefits them. In the legislative context, cheating means deviating from the party position if individual electoral gains can be made by doing so. The leadership, however, especially that of the majority party, has means to keep members on the same side of the road, if not strictly in line. Thus, far from being the hopelessly weak institution that some recent studies paint it to be, the party apparatus and the leaders who guide it may be viewed as a Hobbesian Leviathan.

The authors build their empirical case by examining committee assignment and transfer data from the Eighty-sixth through the One Hundredth Congress to see what influence the leaders exert over assignments. An analysis of available committee assignment data supports the hypothesis that legislators do not always get what they want, and that what they want is usually conditioned by what they think they can get. The implication is that each party's Committee on Committees must be making some important decisions that can force members to stay within some rea-

sonable proximity of the leadership's general philosophical position. Furthermore, because loyalty to the leadership appears to enhance a legislator's chances of receiving a plum assignment, there is a natural incentive to be considerate of the leadership's desires. Also interesting is the authors' interpretation of the seniority system as a means of holding together a factionalized Democratic party. Such a system does not necessarily lead to committee autonomy, nor does it lead to skewed policies.

Much of the empirical work attacks a subgovernment model of legislating that assumes autonomous committees full of policy outliers who are unrepresentative of the full chamber. In this straw model, legislating is one big logroll with each committee respecting the autonomy of every other committee. The evidence, the authors conclude, does not support the model. The reason is that the Committee on Committees has an interest in seeing that the party good is preserved over the individual good.

The book's greatest contribution is to theory. In chapter four and chapter five, after succinctly summarizing theories of collective action, the authors build their model. They explain how the party leadership plays the role of the Hobbesian Leviathan for a party of individualists who can universally benefit, in terms of reelection, when the party coordinates its policy-making procedures and efforts.

Evidence is marshalled to show the existence of national electoral tides that affect congressional elections. Those tides, the authors assume, are based on the policy records of the party. If the reader buys this assumption, then party legislative records and reputation become a collective good for the party members. In this scenario, a good reputation keeps the party in the majority, which keeps the party leadership positions valuable. Thus, the party leadership, especially the majority party leadership, has an incentive to help prevent the underproduction of general-benefit legislation on which the party's national reputation rests.

Interesting measures of "party agenda" and support for party leadership are devised in chapter six and used in the next few chapters. A party's agenda is defined as all nonunanimous votes on which the party floor leader and whip take a unified position, and "party leadership" votes are all agenda votes on which the two party leaderships disagree. Scholars will find these measures useful, but the time-series analysis in this book produced only mildly interesting, and mostly inconclusive results.

The model of leadership agenda setting found in chapter nine ties committee decisions back to the power of the majority leadership to set the floor agenda. One of the greatest incentives for committee chairs to toe the party line is that the Speaker has a veto over legislative proposals via his scheduling prerogative. This veto is strengthened by the fact that because floor time is scarce, committees must compete for space on a crowded agenda.

Competition gives committees an incentive to release only those bills that have a realistic chance of being considered. That incentive carries back to the beginning of the deliberative process. Committee chairs will be inclined to give consideration only to those bills likely to make it past the Rules Committee—today effectively an

extension of the Speaker—and be scheduled by the Speaker. The end result of this chain is that the majority leadership is able to avoid legislation that will embarrass the party, and can ensure that legislation making it to the floor attracts wide support from party rank and file.

Corroborating evidence for this interpretation of majority party control is produced in chapter 10. We are left with a picture of a majority party leadership that does control, or at least constrains, legislative behavior without resorting to explicit personal sanctions.

As interesting and innovative as *Leviathan* is, the book contains a few annoying distractions. First, the reader may get the impression that the book is not so much a product of a cohesive line of thought as it is a collection of loosely related papers. The transition from one chapter to the next is sometimes wobbly. The ideas circle the same problem, but their orbits are not always aligned.

Second, a key premise of the *Leviathan* argument is that legislators understand that their individual electoral fates are tied to the national party reputation. Though the authors go some of the way toward convincing us that partisan electoral tides based on party reputation do exist, they ask us to take on faith that legislators perceive an important connection between national tides and their own local elections. Perhaps a little anecdotal evidence would have bolstered the argument.

A final irritant is the subgovernment model used as a foil in the book. Certainly the authors know that a narrow interpretation of subgovernment which assumes that committee members are party outliers on issues under the committee jurisdiction is not the prevalent subgovernment model. Regardless of a legislator's background, issue interests and constituency characteristics, he or she will find some way to make any committee assignment useful in terms of producing what they believe to be good legislation and helping themselves stay in office. This more realistic and more accepted interpretation of subgovernment does not require that committee members be policy outliers. The book would have been more interesting had the authors pitted their formidable modeling skills against the more flexible model of subgovernments.

Despite its shortcomings, and due in great part to its contribution to theory, *Leviathan* deserves to become standard reading in graduate seminars on Congress.

Patrick J. Fett, *University of Memphis*

*The Presidential Pulse of Congressional Elections.* By James E. Campbell. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993. Pp. 264. \$36.00.)

There is a presidential pulse to congressional elections. The pulse is weaker than it once was, but it can still be detected. That is the central argument of this well-written, tightly organized book. It is an argument supported by a plethora of survey and aggregate data. Despite the impressive array of evidence presented by the author, however, one is ultimately left wondering whether the presidential pulse