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"Whatever Happened to Party Government?:  
Controversies in American Political Science"  
Mark Wickham-Jones  
University of Michigan Press, 2018

## Preface

I first came across the American Political Science Association's (APSA's) Committee on Political Parties and its 1950 report, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, as an undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh in the mid-1980s. Along with work from Samuel Beer, Leon Epstein, and Austin Ranney, it served as our introduction to "Party Government" as part of a course on contemporary British political parties. I do not recall quite what we made as students of British politics in the 1980s of either the report or Ranney's detailed exegetical analysis of texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our preoccupation was with the fragmentation of British parties and the rise of Thatcherism: I do remember a sustained discussion of both Beer and Epstein within that context. Needless to say, the course was taught by an American exile in Scotland, Henry Drucker. Equally unsurprisingly, Drucker does not seem to have ever written anything about party government in the United Kingdom or elsewhere (see the analysis in chapter 7 for the relevance of this point).

The ideas contained within the APSA report remained with me as an important statement about political parties. In the early 2000s, I wanted to write about the impact that the British experience had had on the notion of party government. However, when I began working on the available material, it became apparent that there was relatively little discussion of the circumstances in which the APSA report came to be drafted. At this point, I widened my interest to think in terms of a more general account of the debate. A first visit to archives in 2007 and a trip to the Truman Presidential Library in 2008 appeared rather frustrating in terms of the relative paucity of available material. Subsequently, however, it became clear that a plethora of archival sources were available, sometimes located rather obscurely at a

range of collections across the United States, many relating to senior political scientists of the 1940s and the 1950s.

In 2014, I picked up much material from Merle Fainsod's archives at Harvard University. I am most grateful to his daughter, Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, for access. In 2015, I spent time at George Washington University working through the uncataloged and somewhat chaotic boxes of APSA's papers, which proved fruitful. In turn, these pointed toward material at Yale from the George H. E. Smith papers. I would like to acknowledge the patient help of archivists at all three institutions. Further archives yielded more information. Accordingly, I am very grateful to the staff at libraries at Baruch (Luther H. Gulick), Champaign-Urbana (Clarence Berdahl), Chicago (Charles E. Merriam), Harvard (Samuel H. Beer and V. O. Key Jr.), Kennedy Presidential Library (V. O. Key Jr.), Library of Congress (Robert Taft), Michigan (James K. Pollock), Minnesota (Hubert Humphrey and Max Kampelman), Princeton (Harwood Childs), Virginia (Paul T. David), Wayne State (CIO-PAC), Wesleyan (E. E. Schattschneider), and Yale (Harold D. Lasswell). Later on in the project, it became clear that there was much relevant material at the Truman Presidential Library in Independence about the reception of the APSA report that I had missed back in 2008. Thanks to staff there and to Jon Taylor (most certainly Trumanresearcher@gmail.com) for research assistance. Oral histories came from the Nunn Center at the University of Kentucky (and from the APSA papers in Washington): thank you. For permissions, I am grateful to staff at all these institutions. My thanks to Professor Michael W. Reisman for permission to quote from the Harold Lasswell papers at Yale.

Further material came from Ellen, Donald, and James Schattschneider in the form of three boxes of uncataloged papers from their grandfather, E. E. Schattschneider, including significant documents which, cited elsewhere, I had been unable to locate in any archives. They have made a big contribution to my analysis. My thanks to them, and especially to Ellen, for their assistance. I am most grateful to Professor Larry Gross who kindly directed me to Bertram M. Gross's autobiography as well as providing me with fragments of an unpublished memoir. My thanks for permission to quote from all these documents. Betsy Super and Connie Sinclair passed on some archival material from APSA's D.C. office. Robert Morstein Marx helped me with his father's calendar from the 1940s. Thank you.

In negotiating the complexities of Civil Service Commission files, I was helped by Landon Storrs, not only through her outstanding book, *The Second Red Scare*, but also in directing me to papers (in particular, the misfiling of Bertram Gross's records). Staff at National Archives II were obliging in

following this material up. Jennifer Delton helped me track down material from the Hubert Humphrey and Max Kampelman collections. Ben Fordham gave me advice on the Taft papers. I have also benefited from discussing the ideas in this book with my colleagues at Bristol over the years, especially Magnus Feldmann, Hugh Pemberton, Fiona Ross, and Andrew Wyatt. Generously, Richard Little and Thomas Osborne read and commented on a complete draft. I gave a version of chapter 8 at the APSA meeting in 2016: thanks to participants there, especially Hans Noel. I delivered a draft of chapter 9 to a GW4 session at Bristol in 2016 and to the Political Studies Association American Politics Group in 2017: thanks to participants. Dominic Byatt, James Cronin, Leon D. Epstein, and Jeffrey Isaac gave me good advice. Kenneth Janda at Northwestern University and David Mayhew at Yale University, the referees of the University of Michigan Press, offered detailed feedback and excellent guidance. They were exceptionally astute at spotting mistakes: thank you so much. I have also benefited from the professionalism and support of the staff at the University of Michigan Press from the first submission of a manuscript through to publication of the final text. I am extremely grateful for such assistance. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the varied and extensive support I have had in this project. The analysis and the argument presented thereafter is, of course, my own.

Rosa, Madeleine, and Harry have been puzzling for some time as to what I have been doing: here, in part, is an answer.

My title is, of course, a reference to Leon Epstein's 1979 presidential address at the APSA meeting. Much of my text is taken up with a discussion about what party government was, what the nature of the model underpinning it was, and what its relationship to British politics was. But, when I came to finalize the text, it became clear to me that central to the book is a discussion of what happened to party government: What happened when the Committee on Political Parties finalized its report? What happened when the report was circulated to politicians and the press? What happened to it in the Truman White House? And what happened when it was sent out as a supplement to the *American Political Science Review* so reaching pretty much every political scientist in the United States? Above all, there was also the oft-neglected question of whatever happened to party government after the committee had published its report. It became manifest, the more I examined the issue, that the answer was anything but straightforward.

Mark Wickham-Jones

Bristol, United Kingdom, August 2017

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## Abbreviations

ADA	Americans for Democratic Action
APSA	American Political Science Association
APSR	<i>American Political Science Review</i>
CEA	Council of Economic Advisers
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CPP	Committee on Political Parties
DNC	Democratic National Committee
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GOP	Grand Old Party (Republicans)
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
JOP	<i>Journal of Politics</i>
NRPB	National Resources Planning Board
PAC	Political Action Committee
PIF	Personnel Investigation Files
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PPF	President's Personal Files
PSQ	<i>Political Science Quarterly</i>
RNC	Republican National Committee
UAW	United Automotive Workers
WPQ	<i>Western Political Quarterly</i>

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## A Note on the Text and Sources

### Text

E. E. Schattschneider was known to friends and colleagues as Schatt or Schatts. V. O. Key Jr. was known as V. O. and rarely by his first name Valdimer. In the text, I refer to them, for the most part, as Schattschneider and Key without reference to their initials or first names.

### Sources

The Committee on Political Parties' report, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, is available from the Hathi Trust digital library at: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015082032817;view=1up;seq=5>.

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## Prologue

By any standards, the 2016 contest to succeed Barack Obama as president of the United States, in which Donald Trump eventually triumphed over Hillary Clinton, was an extraordinary one. The campaign was, of course, extremely personalized, characterized by bitter and sweeping rhetorical arguments between the two candidates about each other's temperament and suitability for office. The primaries had been equally unusual. Back in May 2016, Trump became the presumptive nominee for the Republicans when, following the Indiana primary, his last two rivals, Ted Cruz and John Kasich dropped out of the race. Consternation, especially among Republican elites, greeted his success. Trump was an archetypal outsider: he had not been elected to any office in the party before, had been inconsistent in his support for it, and had no noteworthy political experience. He was largely known because of his public persona—in effect his brand—and for his status as a reality television star through his work on the show *The Apprentice*. Given his frequently bellicose approach, he approached the primaries and caucuses in anything but an orthodox manner.

The contest for the Democratic nomination was almost as unconventional as that for the Republicans. To be sure, Hillary Clinton, the former senator for New York who had been secretary of state between 2008 and 2012, had established herself as a traditional candidate and the effective frontrunner. But, Bernie Sanders, her main challenger, elected to the Senate from Vermont as an independent, had only recently joined the party. Self-styled as a democratic socialist, he took a strong line on several policy issues, one that appeared to be well outside the mainstream of Democratic politics.

When Donald Trump took the Republican nomination, Nate Cohn commented in the *New York Times*, "I did not expect that the party would cede its biggest prize to an outsider who had so many dissenting policy views

and who faced so many questions about his fitness for the presidency.”<sup>1</sup> Matt Viser quoted a Republican activist from Mitt Romney’s campaign (the party’s 2012 candidate): “It’s a poor reflection on the electoral process and how these parties pick nominees.”<sup>2</sup> The *Washington Post* noted that he was the least popular candidate selected by either of the main parties in recent years.<sup>3</sup> For the *New York Times*, he had a “toxic image.”<sup>4</sup> Voters did not regard Hillary Clinton much more highly. It was hardly a strong endorsement of the process.

Republican Party elites regarded Donald Trump as an interloper. But, with a wide range of candidates in the field, they did not have an agreed alternative to focus upon.<sup>5</sup> In the *Atlantic*, Jonathan Rauch described him as “a candidate who is not, in any meaningful sense, a Republican.”<sup>6</sup> In and out of the Republicans, he had registered with the Democrats at one point. Donating to her campaign, he had been supportive of Hillary Clinton’s 2008 bid for that party’s nomination.<sup>7</sup> Jill Lepore characterized him as “a man without a party.”<sup>8</sup>

Many leading Republicans were concerned by several features of Trump’s candidacy. They disliked his aggressive and harsh language, his tone, as well as his uncompromising style. He was brutal in dismissing his opponents in crude and disparagingly abusive terms. Many perceived such an approach to be overtly bullying. His rallies projected an atmosphere of violence that violated the norms of political in-fighting.<sup>9</sup> The result was a campaign at times characterized by its “striking ugliness.”<sup>10</sup> He appeared to have little grasp of policy detail. One Republican member of the House of Representatives reluctantly endorsed him as “a guy with no knowledge of what’s going on.”<sup>11</sup> Republican elites questioned aspects of his character and his disposition. Ryan Lizza reported, “Republicans must overcome doubts about his temperament, his ideology, his reckless statements, his questionable respect for the Constitution, and his potential to repel a generation or more of young and nonwhite votes.”<sup>12</sup> Quoting a Republican complaint about “crass and inappropriate” language, another commentator noted that Trump’s nomination promised “six months of nastiness” in “a mudslinging general election.”<sup>13</sup> It marked a new low in American electoral politics.

In terms of policy, some conservatives within Republican ranks felt that the party had effectively been hijacked.<sup>14</sup> They doubted Trump’s position on their traditional values such as liberty, morality, and the restraint of government. Many of his policies appeared to bear little relation to stock Republican positions. He suggested that he accepted aspects of federal programs such as Medicare and Social Security while seeming to break with the Grand

Old Party (GOP) on foreign policy. He took a strong antifree trade line and made strident criticisms of NATO. In the past, he had adopted liberal positions on such matters as abortion rights, taxation, and the minimum wage. Paul Ryan, Republican Speaker in the House of Representatives, was forthright: "I think conservatives want to know, does he share our values and our principles?"<sup>15</sup>

They were also concerned by the apparent pragmatism of some of his arguments. Dramatic swings in his policy proposals did little to allay their fears. A *New York Times* leader called them "muddled and changeable."<sup>16</sup> The *Wall Street Journal* talked of "precipitous flip flops."<sup>17</sup> Matt Viser reported of "stream of consciousness policy declarations."<sup>18</sup> He appeared to have no firm attachments. Another issue concerned the realism of some policy proposals. He was "promising policy outcomes that are nigh unto impossible."<sup>19</sup> On one occasion, Paul Krugman accused him of "peddling another fantasy."<sup>20</sup>

The Trump team rejected many of the orthodox conventional features of political campaigning. Relying on ad hoc arrangements, he developed little by way of a ground organization at the local level and he spent small sums on television advertising.<sup>21</sup> He invested little in detailed opinion polling. Instead, Trump made strong use of social media, most notably through a strident and somewhat erratic deployment of Twitter. His team of senior advisers had surprisingly little experience of such campaigns when compared to what might be expected (and Hillary Clinton's organizational setup).<sup>22</sup> By the end of August 2016, he had had three separate campaign managers. In June, Trump brought in Paul Manafort to replace his original manager, Corey Lewandowski. In turn, in mid-August, Stephen Bannon and Kellyanne Conway took over from Manafort. Particularly important within the Trump inner circle were members of his family. One reason why Trump may have rejected extensive television adverts was the extent of coverage that he received for free from a media hungry to cover his campaign and to detail his latest outrageous statement.<sup>23</sup> One account reckoned he had had triple the exposure given to the three closest Republican rivals put together.<sup>24</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Trump's success in securing the Republican nomination alarmed many leading figures within the party. The *Boston Sunday Globe* described his successes a "hostile takeover," another paper suggested that it was one that had "seemed unimaginable."<sup>25</sup> It amounted to a Republican "political identity crisis."<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, party elites were slow to endorse him. While Reince Priebus, the chair of the Republican National Committee was broadly supportive, others were much less so. Citing issues of temperament and consistency, Jeb Bush, whom Trump had defeated for the nomination, made it clear that he would not vote for him.<sup>27</sup> Others followed suit

in spurning the new candidate, including both living former presidents from the party, George H. W. Bush (1988–1992) and George W. Bush (2000–2008). Mitt Romney had already launched a scathing attack earlier in the year. The press reported that Romney might mount a third-party challenge, though the speculation came to nothing.<sup>28</sup>

One commentator talked of a “chasm” at the top of the party.<sup>29</sup> Putting off backing Trump, Paul Ryan prevaricated, saying, “I’m just not ready to do that at this point. I’m just not there.”<sup>30</sup> In early June, he went on to offer some limited support, an endorsement that was subsequently qualified during the campaign.<sup>31</sup> Many Republicans came to advocate Trump reluctantly: some subsequently withdrew their support as the campaign progressed, especially in October 2016, after misogynistic comments by Trump received widespread coverage. Some commentators concluded that the Republican Party only had itself to blame for the turn taken by events. In recent years, it had encouraged a negative attitude toward the political system and toward government. In a sense, Trump was its creation: in effect, a Frankenstein monster.<sup>32</sup>

Happy to bypass the party establishment and emphasizing the unconventional aspects of his campaign, Trump was unconcerned. Many voters had, after all, responded positively to his populism. He maintained the strident tone and abusive rhetoric that had dismayed others. He had in effect successfully bypassed the gatekeeping role of party elites.<sup>33</sup> Republicans were also worried about the electoral prospects of such a candidate, coming from outside the political mainstream. Few had given him any chance when he had announced his candidacy back in June 2015. Many feared that he would go down to a crashing defeat. When he became the presumptive nominee, Trump was 13 percent behind Hillary Clinton in one opinion poll (by 54 to 41).<sup>34</sup> As the campaign progressed, Trump became, if anything, more bombastic and antagonistic. He signaled few policy issues, often only briefly and starkly, focusing for the most part on other matters. Most notably, he dismissed his opponent as “crooked” and as a serious security risk who was evading justice. He highlighted Bill Clinton’s alleged infidelities and claimed repeatedly that the electoral system was in some manner “rigged.”<sup>35</sup> Boggled down by the question of either candidate’s fitness for office, little time in the three presidential debates was given over to policy discussion. So, while the election offered a choice, it was not one that was fully developed in terms of different programmatic positions.<sup>36</sup>

One reason for Donald Trump’s success concerned his main rival for the Republican nomination, Ted Cruz. In some ways, Cruz was just as

much of an unorthodox candidate, albeit one more firmly rooted within the Republican Party. Elected to the U.S. Senate from Texas in 2012, Cruz offered an evangelical and doctrinaire brand of conservatism.<sup>37</sup> His strident behavior in the Senate, against the advice of some of his colleagues, had been responsible, in part, for the federal government shutdown in 2013.<sup>38</sup> The episode demonstrated that he “had little use for the traditional political norms of the Capitol,” including those of party discipline.<sup>39</sup> To some Republicans, the ultraideological Cruz was even less appealing than Trump: as one commentator put it, he was “even more polarizing . . . [and] unapologetically rightist.”<sup>40</sup> Nate Cohn reported that Cruz “was strongly opposed by party elites.”<sup>41</sup> Matt Flegenheimer reported that key figures in Republicans had decided to “live with the risk of a Trump nomination rather than elevate a figure they loathe.”<sup>42</sup> Demonstrating “a manifest indifference to repairing them,” Cruz enjoyed poisonous relationships with some of his party colleagues in the Senate. In “deriding the party’s leadership,” Rauch argued that he had “built his brand by tearing down his party’s.”<sup>43</sup> Refusing to accept party discipline, the Texas senator exhibited “maximal political individualism.”<sup>44</sup>

In many respects, the contest for the Democratic Party’s nomination was just as unusual as Bernie Sanders, a self-professed socialist, organized a grassroots campaign that ran Hillary Clinton very close. Like Trump, his campaign was characterized as an “insurgency,” offering new and distinct commitments.<sup>45</sup> He offered strong criticisms of Clinton’s Wall Street connections, her support for the Iraq War, and her equivocation over the minimum wage. For the historian Rick Perlstein, Clinton was very much a conservative and establishment candidate being challenged by Sanders as an outsider proposing a distinctly different direction.<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Rauch rephrased his mantra about Trump, arguing that Sanders was “not, in any meaningful sense, a Democrat.”<sup>47</sup> He had only affiliated with the Democrats on the same day that he had filed for the New Hampshire primary. In a similar manner to the question marks about Trump, Rauch felt that Sanders did not care “that his plans for governing were delusional.”<sup>48</sup>

Manifestly, the 2016 campaign generated profound questions about the nature of political parties and the party system in the United States. How did the parties select their candidates? What role did party leaderships, including leading figures in Congress, play in the process? How important were policy platforms in the procedure? Writing in the *New York Times*, Emma Roller argued that “[t]he Trump campaign has almost single-handedly blown up key pieces of conventional wisdom in American politics.”<sup>49</sup>

In a rather bleak analysis, the commentator Andrew Sullivan called the United States "a breeding ground for tyranny." He concluded, of the Republicans, that it was "not the moment to remind them that they partly brought this on themselves."<sup>50</sup> In the *Boston Globe*, Matt Viser concluded that "[b]oth of America's parties are divided to historic degrees."<sup>51</sup>

In a long and thoughtful piece in the *Atlantic*, Jonathan Rauch linked the insurgent candidacies of Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and Bernie Sanders to a precipitous decline in parties as mediating institutions in the political process: "The political parties no longer have either intelligible boundaries or enforceable norms, and, as a result, renegade behavior pays."<sup>52</sup> Party leaders had been sidelined: the term itself had become an "anachronism." Rauch's conclusion was despairing. The democratic system needed organized parties for several reasons including structuring the governing process, translating disparate views into policy, and helping experienced candidates to stand for office. Clearly, they were struggling to carry out such roles. Jonathan Bernstein noted that many Americans "don't really accept the parties as legitimate," a problematic conclusion given their centrality to the democratic process.<sup>53</sup>

Of course, such concerns about political parties were by no means new. Having noted the widespread hostility toward parties, Bernstein went on to cite Schattschneider's 1942 judgment that opened his volume *Party Government*: "Modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties."<sup>54</sup> One month before its convention in Cleveland, Eric O'Keefe and David Rivkin called for the Republican Party to release delegates and try to reimpose itself on the nominations process. Again quoting Schattschneider, they indicated such a strategy would restore "the parties' proper place in our democratic system."<sup>55</sup> Examining the transformations undergone by American political parties, in the *New Yorker*, Jill Lepore quoted V. O. Key, another key political scientist from the 1940s and the 1950s (and something of a rival of Schattschneider) on the central contribution that they made to democracy in the United States.<sup>56</sup>

Certainly, in the late 1940s and the early 1950s, considerable debate took place among American political scientists about the nature of political parties and their involvement in democratic politics. In particular, in 1950, the Committee on Political Parties of APSA, chaired by Schattschneider, issued a report entitled *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*. Among the issues identified in the document, the committee drew attention to several that resonated strongly with concerns articulated during the long 2016 presidential campaign. These included the relative weakness of existing party leaderships, the failure of parties to develop clear

and consistent programs, the relative lack of resources enjoyed by parties (including a stable level of staffing), and the failure of party cohorts to operate in a cohesive and disciplined fashion in Congress. To be sure, there were topics that the Committee on Political Parties appeared to have read in a rather naïve fashion, such as its suggestion that financial constraints be lifted. Moreover, critics of the 1950 report have claimed in recent years, as I discuss in the conclusion to this book, that the committee was responsible for legitimating a more polarized and ideological politics. Analyzing the difficulties of the party system in the *New Yorker*, Ryan Lizza commented that “the basic headline [of the committee’s report] was one that seems amusing today.”<sup>57</sup> At the very least, however, such discussion demonstrated the continued relevance of such matters within the context of twenty-first century American politics. In this book, I detail the debate about parties that took place in the 1940s and the early 1950s and I offer an analysis of APSA’s package of reform proposals for the party system.

Back in 1950, at the end of their report, the committee outlined some possible dangers that might arise from inaction. One was that, in the absence of capable and effective parties, presidents would be handed “excessive responsibility.”<sup>58</sup> The presidency might be overextended and its holders might seek to bypass party structures altogether. There was a risk that such a situation would favor “a president who exploits skillfully the arts of demagoguery, who uses the whole country as his political backyard, and who does not mind turning into the embodiment of personal government.”<sup>59</sup> One commentator at the time noted the threat, not only of the “greater centralization of government in one man [but] . . . the actual breakdown of democratic government should the situation become acute.”<sup>60</sup> The APSA report concluded that it could “very well ring in the wrong ending.”<sup>61</sup> In the context of 2016, it was an intriguing observation.