

PREFACE

We all have biases in what we see, like, and think. Readers deserve to know some of mine. I admit to Democratic inclinations. I have usually—but not always—voted for Democratic candidates. I also am biased toward legislatures as instruments of democratic government and as objects of study. My doctoral dissertation dealt with the Indiana General Assembly. I felt then and now that legislatures have closer links to citizens than elected executives—for example, governors or presidents. Legislatures are physical and visible. One can visit their chambers and talk to the legislators. In contrast, political parties (which I study now) are intangible and invisible. They are leprechauns in a political forest.

In the spring of 1965, my bias toward legislatures made me receptive to a phone call from the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank. AEI invited me to contribute to its planned book on the U.S. Congress, to meet in Washington on the project in the summer, and to submit my work by early fall for publication in 1966. Involved at the time in other work, I initially declined but promptly accepted after learning that AEI would pay me \$2,000, about one-quarter of my assistant professor salary then at Northwestern University.

AEI undertook its book project in reaction to the results of the 1964 presidential election. Democratic president Lyndon Johnson had won

61 percent of the popular vote and 90 percent of the electoral vote over Republican Barry Goldwater. Becoming president after John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Johnson was elected president in 1964 and was expected to run again in 1968. Anticipating rule by a liberal Democratic administration for two more presidential terms, AEI foresaw an onslaught of undesirable policies and looked to Congress as a shield. Adopting a defensive posture, the conservative think tank assembled an ideologically diverse group of scholars to write about the virtues of a strong Congress.

The ten other scholars who accepted AEI's generous invitation and gathered in Washington that summer of 1965 were established authors in American politics.¹ I had not written anything noteworthy in that field, but earlier that year I had published the first book on computer applications in political research.² Accordingly, AEI asked me to write on improving Congress through computer use. My piece appeared in AEI's book *Congress: The First Branch of Government*, published in 1966.³ The Washington think tank quickly flooded the nation's newspapers with press releases about Congress as the people's bulwark against executive rule. Each contributor received sixteen-by-twenty-inch montages made from scores of newspaper clippings from Maine to California.

Numerous clippings featured my contribution, "Information Systems for Congress." In the fall of 1967, the Association for Computing Machinery invited me to give a plenary address at its semiannual conference in Anaheim, California.⁴ Soon afterward, AEI asked me to coauthor a book on Congress's use of program budgeting, a method for tracking project revenues and expenses that was well suited to computers.⁵ AEI even contributed modestly to my new NSF-funded cross-national study of political parties.

In November 1968, Republican Richard Nixon defeated Democrat Hubert Humphrey by 0.7 percent of the popular vote in the presidential election. Suddenly the American Enterprise Institute lost interest in Congress and in me. With Republicans now in charge of the presidency, AEI no longer viewed Congress as a bulwark against undesirable governmental policies. And so I learned, in a personal way, how party politics trumps political philosophy. I had naively thought that AEI wanted

to empower Congress—"the First Branch of Government"—as a matter of principle. However important that was to the conservative think tank, it was less important than regaining control of "the Second Branch"—the presidency.

I wrote this book believing that both of our major parties should value maintaining the democratic foundation of our two-party system above winning any election. Unlike my other academic studies of cross-national political parties and comparative party politics, *The Republican Evolution: From Governing Party to Antigovernment Party, 1860–2020*, has a political purpose. It aims not to trash the party but to help restore the GOP to its former grandeur. By documenting the party's original principles and how they have changed over time, I hope to remind Republicans of their party's history of promoting national unity while governing for the public good. Today, the party operates in reverse, opposing national government while sowing sectionalism by pursuing the Democrats' old "states' rights" philosophy.

Codifying Republican principles in 2,722 planks identified in all forty-one party platforms since 1856, I describe the Republican Party's experience over three different historical eras. The party's illustrious nationalism era lasted from 1860 to 1924, during which Republicans emphasized order over anarchy. In their neoliberalism era, from 1928 to 1960, Republicans downplayed government, favoring the individual over the state. In 1964, the party entered an era of ethnocentrism, demeaning national government and favoring white Christians over others. During this era, Republicans have acted increasingly as a political tribe catering to their dwindling tribal base.

The Grand Old Party once governed the nation effectively and compassionately under presidents Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Dwight Eisenhower. The party today moves in a different direction, sparked by presidential nominee Barry Goldwater and led by presidents Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump. It opposes government policies that would reduce income inequalities, lessen social inequalities, advance health care, improve the environment, and combat climate change, ostensibly because such policies might infringe on personal freedom. Whereas in 1953, Eisenhower told Congress that Social Security was "an

essential part of our economic and social life,” Goldwater in 1960 wrote that its 6 percent tax “compels millions of individuals to postpone until later years the enjoyment of wealth they might otherwise enjoy today.”

As a citizen, I admit a bias to Democratic policies. As a political scientist, I care more about maintaining the vigorous two-party system that has sustained our American version of democracy for over two hundred years. Current Republican leaders are quick to abandon responsible party politics for short-term electoral gains. My book analyzes Republicans acting as a political party, an electoral team, a political tribe, and a personality cult. Republicans today behave less like a principled political party whose electoral team accepts the outcome of democratic voting than like a political tribe or personality cult claiming transcendent superiority to rule.

Parties can change. For a century after the Civil War, the Democratic Party’s southern wing stained their national party with racism. Then in 1948, Democrats had a political epiphany; they awakened to their sordid silence on civil rights. The 1948 Democratic National Convention adopted the party’s first civil rights plank, causing southern delegations to walk out of the convention. The Democrats gained far more in stature than they temporarily lost in electoral support. Perhaps my historical account of how their party reversed its principles will encourage some Republican activists to engineer a comparable Republican epiphany, become the party’s new heroes, and make the Grand Old Party grand again.

THE REPUBLICAN EVOLUTION

