The scholarly literature on third parties and independent campaigns has become considerably more abundant over the last two decades than in the years preceding Ross Perot’s remarkable 1992 presidential bid. Works of high quality are among those new topical offerings; but many of them have been monographs focused upon particular parties, movements, or leaders. Challenges to Duopoly provides in one manageable volume a reasonably comprehensive glimpse at third-party and independent movements, past and present. It also features for the reader a point of view: third parties matter. They always have, and they continue to matter, despite the crippling disabilities imposed upon them.

Over the last 100 years, America’s party system, for which formerly there were plausible claims that it was “natural” or organic, has been transformed into duopoly, an engineered and enforced two-party system. Theodore Lowi describes it as “brain-dead,” a system which “would collapse in an instant if the tubes were pulled and the IV’s...cut.” Opinion research reveals a remarkable loss of popular support for the party system in its contemporary form. The conventional wisdom that the system of two major parties rationalizes voter decision-making and facilitates the consensus-building needed for effective democratic government has been undermined of late by toxic rhetoric, the clear evidence of zero-sum thinking, and the reality of partisan gridlock in policy-making bodies. It would be a reasonable conclusion that little is left of the building need for effective democratic government has been undermined of late by toxic rhetoric, the clear evidence of zero-sum thinking, and the reality of partisan gridlock in policy-making bodies. It would be a reasonable conclusion that little is left of the third-party and independent candidates combined. Meeting in Copenhagen in 1990, the United States, Canada, and thirty-three European nations committed themselves to a comprehensive set of democratic goals. Contemporary policies in the United States evidently clash with two of the benchmarks in the Copenhagen document. These are the obligations to “respect the rights of citizens to seek political or public office…without discrimination” and “...of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties…and provide them with legal guarantees to enable them to compete on the basis of equal treatment.”

Ways Third Parties Matter
The world tuned in to history-making events in the 2008 presidential campaign: election of the first African-American president, 18 million cracks left in the glass ceiling by the woman he presidential debates so forbiddingly high that a minor-party nominee or independent candidate almost never gets invited to take part. Federal policy on public funding of presidential campaigns distinctly favors major parties and their nominees. The same is true in Connecticut and some of the other states which have instituted public funding of their statewide and legislative elections. Other factors compound the problems faced by duopoly’s challengers and underscore that indeed “them that has, gets.” The partisan gerrymander is designed to stymie even two-party competition. The winner takes all practice employed by forty-eight states typically locks out even popular third-party or independent presidential candidates from any share of electoral votes. And there is the perennial problem of media neglect. In 2008, the leading national newspapers devoted a hundred times more news stories, opinion pieces, letters and photos to the Obama and McCain campaigns than to those of the four leading minor-party and independent candidates combined. Meeting in Copenhagen in 1990, the United States, Canada, and thirty-three European nations committed themselves to a comprehensive set of democratic goals. Contemporary policies in the United States evidently clash with two of the benchmarks in the Copenhagen document. These are the obligations to “respect the rights of citizens to seek political or public office…without discrimination” and “...of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties…and provide them with legal guarantees to enable them to compete on the basis of equal treatment.”

From Headquarters .........................................................1, 2, 3
From The Field .................................................................4
Scholarly Precincts .........................................................5, 6, 7, 8

Chair: Paul Herrnson, University of Maryland
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Holly Brasher, University of Alabama at Birmingham
VOX POP Editor: John Green, The University of Akron
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(Continued on page 2)
defeated for the Democratic nomination and the first Republican woman ever nominated for the vice-presidency. Beyond media or public gaze in 2008, the Green Party nominated Cynthia McKinney and Rosa Clemente, two African-American women, for the nation’s two highest offices. If there is a lesson this illustrates, it is this: whatever one’s definition of there is, one minor party or another almost always gets there long before either major party arrives.

Years preceding the Civil War, Frederick Douglass and other African-American men joined whites in leading the Liberty Party. More than a half century before women’s suffrage became national law, women took their seats as full voting delegates at the convention which gave birth to the Prohibition Party. Selected by the Socialist Party in 1980, David McReynolds thus became the first openly-gay presidential nominee ever.

It was a third party that first nominated a woman for the presidency (Equal Rights, 1872), selected a woman who cast an electoral vote (Bull Moose, Washington state, 1912), and selected a woman who received an electoral vote (Libertarian vice-presidential nominee, 1972).

Lenora Fulani, the 1988 New Alliance Party presidential nominee, was the nation’s first woman and first African-American whose name appeared on the ballot of every constituency with electoral votes to cast. Third parties were first to nominate an African American for the vice-presidency (Communist, 1932), an African-American woman for the vice-presidency (Progressive, 1952), an African American for the presidency (Socialist Workers, 1964), and an African-American woman for the presidency (Communist, 1968).

Third parties also have been on the front lines of policy innovation and democratic reform. The Anti-Masonic Party was the first to hold a national convention and to draft and present a party platform. That party tendered the remarkable notion that transparency is an important value in democratic politics. The Liberty and Free Soil parties staked out positions sharply at odds with the defenders of slavery; likewise, the Republicans, who began as a third party before arriving in the ranks of the majors. Neither major party endorsed women’s suffrage until 1916, a scant four years before the Nineteenth Amendment entered the Constitution. Long before that, a half-dozen parties had embraced and worked toward that goal.

Federal merit-based civil service, the direct election of U.S. Senators, initiative and referendum, the income tax, universal health care, wages and hours legislation, anti-child labor policy, public works for jobs and infrastructure development, Social Security, sustainability and green economy—all these and others appeared as planks in third-party platforms before either major party took up their cause. It was from the third-party periphery that the houmous costs and dangers of an emerging Cold War were raised, term limits pushed, and economic globalization challenged.

Minor-party representatives rarely sit in decision-making bodies in numbers large enough to put their own imprimatur on policy enactments. Interest group lobbies often have been the most powerful agents in pushing a proposal toward the mainstream. Recognizing the popularity of some of the ideas third parties advance, a major party (or both) may appropriate a proposal, incorporating it into its own policy program. Sometimes, when decades intervene between proposal and enactment, no more may be confirmed than that a minor party played a role in positioning the matter on the public agenda.

The strictures of duopoly now weaken third parties’ influence as policy innovators, but these parties continue to matter for their potential to challenge electorally the two major parties. Some evidence today supports the longstanding precept that if oxygen is found for a substantial challenger to draw first breath, that would be either to the left or the right of where both major parties position themselves. Vermont Progressives thrive today as the most successful contemporary non-national third party in America. Nominated for Colorado governor by the Constitution Party in 2010, Tom Tancredo ran a strong second to the victorious Democrat. And there is the Tea Party, a new movement positioned neither entirely in nor completely outside the GOP.
FROM HEADQUARTERS
Letter from the President
February 2011

Dear Colleagues,

As I write, the new Congress has been in session for about six weeks, and President Obama, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, and the Democratic-controlled Senate are posturing in anticipation of a showdown over the federal budget. Republican aspirants to the presidency are raising money and jockeying for position in the 2012 GOP primaries, and President Obama is looking to chart a course to a second term. Similar budget showdowns and preparations for elections are playing out throughout the states, particularly those where significant shifts in power have occurred. Internationally, there also have been important developments, including some that have taken place outside the realm of mainstream democratic politics, such as President Hosni Mubarak’s resignation in the face of widespread unrest in Egypt. Combined, these events remind us of the benefits of living in a democracy.

Current events also serve to highlight the importance of what we study and teach. They demonstrate the importance of campaigns and elections, the abilities of political parties to absorb new political movements, such as the Tea Party, and the impact of parties and interest groups on elections and policymaking. They also show what happens in political systems where democratic institutions are either lacking or not functioning well.

We have been very busy at POP Headquarters. Committees have been appointed and are working to select our new leadership and the winners of our various awards. Quin Monson and Kelly Patterson of Brigham Young University are organizing panels from the nearly 200 outstanding paper proposals submitted for this year’s American Political Science Association meeting. Marjorie Randon Hershey of Indiana University has taken on the responsibility of collecting current syllabi on political parties, interest groups, and related courses for posting on our website. Please send your latest syllabi to her at hershey@indiana.edu.

This spring POP will be undertaking a self-study to learn more about how our organization can better serve its members. Headed by John Green of the University of Akron, Robin Kolodny of Temple University, and Kelly Patterson, the project features a broad-ranging satisfaction survey of current section members as well as lapsed members. We want to learn your opinions about the activities, services, and opportunities POP offers and about new directions you think POP ought to pursue. More information about the survey will arrive via email fairly soon. Your participation is important. I hope you will take the few minutes required to complete the survey.

With Best wishes,

Paul Herrnson
University of Maryland
pherrnson@capc.umd.edu

Syllabus Collections Maintained by APSA’s Organized Sections

Syllabus collections are extremely useful to new faculty and grad students who are developing courses in a particular field. The APSA is asking each of the Organized Sections to create and post a collection of syllabi in the section’s subfield. So please send us your syllabi for courses on political parties, comparative parties, parties and elections, organized interests, and closely related topics! Feel free to include supporting materials such as reading lists, descriptions of paper topics and other assignments, and other resources.

Please send your syllabi to:
Margie Hershey at: hershey@indiana.edu

SCHOLARLY PRECINCTS
Nomination for Awards
Organized Section on Political Organizations and Parties

Leon D. Epstein Outstanding Book Award
This award “honors a book published in the last two calendar years that makes an outstanding contribution to research and scholarship on political organizations and parties.”

Chair:  Byron Shafer
Department of Political Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI 53706
bshafer@polisci.wisc.edu

Jack L. Walker, Jr. Outstanding Article Award
This award “honors an article published in the last two calendar years that makes an outstanding contribution to research and scholarship on political organizations and parties.”

Chair:  Duane Swank
Department of Political Science
Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI 53201
duane.swank@marquette.edu

Emerging Scholar Award
This honor is awarded to a scholar who has received his or her Ph.D. within the last five years and whose career to date demonstrates unusual promise.

Chair:  Beth Leech
Department of Political Science
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
leech@polisci.rutgers.edu

POP Best Paper Award
This award honors the best paper presented on a POP panel at the preceding APSA annual meeting.

Chair:  Dara Strolovitch
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University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455
dzs@umn.edu

BOOK SCAN


Breuer, Anita. 2010. ‘Obstacles to Citizen Participation by Direct Democracy in Latin America: A Comparative Regional Analysis of Legal Frameworks and Evidence from Costa Rican Case.’ Democratization, 18(1), 100-134.


Conradt, David P. 2010. ‘The Shrinking Elephants: The 2009 Election and the
Cochrane, Christopher. 2010. ‘Left/right Ideology and Canadian Politics.’
Curini, Luigi. 2010. ‘Experts’ Political Preferences and Their Impact on
Coram, Alex. 2010. ‘The Red Queen and the Dynamics of Resource Spending in
Cusack, Thomas, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. 2010. ‘Co-evolution of
Decker, Frank and Jared Sonnicksen. 2010. ‘Coalitions and Camps in the German
Deegan-Krause, Kevin and Zsolt Enyedi. 2010. ‘Agency and the Structure of Party
De Zeeuw, Jeroen. 2010. ‘“Sons of War”: Parties and Party Systems in Post-war
Dickson, Eric S. and Kenneth Scheve. 2010. ‘Social Identity, Electoral
Engstrom, Erik J. and William Ewell. 2010. ‘The Impact of Unified Party
Engstrom, Erik J. and Georg Vanberg. 2010. ‘Assessing the Allocation of Pork:
Erdmann, Gero. 2010. ‘Political Party Assistance and Political Party Research:
Erikson, Robert S., Costas Panagopoulos and Christopher Wlezien. 2010. ‘The
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Rehm, Philipp and Timothy Reilly. 2010. ‘United We Stand: Constituency Homogeneity and Comparative Party Polarization.’ Electoral Studies, 29(1), 40-53.


Sandri, Giulia and Teun Pauwels. 2010. ‘Party Membership Role and Party Cartelization in Belgium and Italy: Two Faces of the Same Medal?’ Politics & Policy, 38(6), 1237-1266.


Weidenbaum, Murray. 2010. ‘Measuring the Influence of Think Tanks.’ *Society, 47*(2), 134-137.

FROM THE FIELD

Papers of Interest

2010 American Political Science Association
Annual Meeting
September 2-5, 2010

‘A Typology of Interest Group Competition and Legislative Success in the U.S. House of Representatives.’ Holly Brasher, University of Alabama, Birmingham.


‘Advocates and Interest Representation in Policy Debates.’ Marie Hojnacki, Penn State University; Kathleen Marchetti, Penn State University; Frank R. Baumgartner, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill; Jeffrey M. Berry, Tufts University; David C. Kimball, University of Missouri - St. Louis; and Beth L. Leech, Rutgers University.

‘Economics, Politics, and the Macromobilization of Interest Groups in the U.S.’ Holly Brasher, University of Alabama, Birmingham.