OXFORD STUDIES IN POSTWAR AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Steven Teles, Series Editor

Series Board Members:

Paul Frymer
Jennifer Hochschild
Desmond King
Taeku Lee
Sanford Levinson
Shep Melnick
Paul Pierson
Adam Sheingate
Reva Siegel
John Skrentny
Thomas Sugrue

The Delegated Welfare State: Medicare, Markets, and the Governance of Social Policy
Kimberly J. Morgan and Andrea Louise Campbell

and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party
Geoffrey Kabaservice

igines of Change: Party Factions in American Politics, 1868–2010
Daniel DiSalvo

Engines of Change

Party Factions in American Politics, 1868–2010

DANIEL DISALVO

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CHAPTER 1

Four Questions About American Party Factions

In order to properly take the measure of factions in American politics, we must address four questions: What is a faction? What do factions do? Who are the factions in America? What are the causes of factions? With answers to these questions in hand, we can better distinguish factions from other groupings within the parties and analyze the strategies, behavior, and effects of factions. This book offers an historical treatment of the roles factions have played in shaping party ideologies, presidential nominations, the distribution of power in Congress, presidential governance, and the development of the American state. The results, I hope, shed some light on many of the central puzzles that have occupied students of American political parties and national institutions.

What Are Factions?

One goal of this study is to define and identify factions more rigorously, in order to allow for comparison and generalization. The job of conceptual clarification is especially important in this instance because the term *faction* has so many connotations that lead the analyst astray. Well-defined concepts, consistently used, are the foundations of political science.[1] Without them every researcher would, like Sisyphus, have to begin each inquiry anew. Political science needs such general categories to highlight important items in different times and places. Only in this way can the analyst avoid getting lost in the trees before finding the forest. Alexis de Tocqueville aptly characterized the tradeoff inherent in conceptual development as follows:

> General ideas do not attest to the strength of human intelligence, but rather to its insufficiency, because there are no beings in nature exactly alike: no identical facts, no rules indiscriminately applicable in the same

> manner to several objects at once. General ideas are admirable in that they permit the human mind to bring rapid judgments to a great number of objects at one time; but on the other hand, they never provide it with anything but incomplete notions, and they make it lose in exactness what they give it in extent.[2]

herefore, the approach to factions taken here starts from historical particulars nd builds to provisional generalizations, following Max Weber's dictum that the final and definitive concept cannot stand at the beginning of an investigaion, but must come at the end."[3] Even if there is some dissent from the concepualization of faction advanced here, we will at least have an explicit definition rom which to take our bearings and a definite set of cases to investigate and tudy. Those constitute significant advances.

The existing literature on American intraparty factions at the national level is mall and largely unsystematic. Historians, on whom this work draws widely, egularly refer to factions in their narrative accounts of different periods. But hey use the term colloquially. Most work by political scientists treats state rather han the national parties.[4] Unlike many analysts of European parties who take an nterest in competition *within* parties, students of American parties have been nore interested in competition *between* parties.[5] John Gerring has even written hat "factionalism does *not* appear to be a salient characteristic of the American party system."[6] Therefore, we know much less than we should about factional ctivity over the course of American political development.

If factions are vital, why have scholars largely overlooked them? First, many nalysts focus on studying institutions with clear and distinct rules, norms, and processes of organizations. This has led to neglect of the more diffuse networks hat comprise factions—where the rules, norms, and processes are harder to distinguish. Second, many scholars have been wedded to a definition of parties that puts elected officials at the center of their conception of parties. Until recently, there was a tendency to dismiss actors outside the formal party structures as not really part of the parties at all. Third, factions have not received extensive treatment because of the negative qualities associated with them. According to David Hume, "factions subvert government, render laws impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities among men of the same nation."[7] The *Federalist* famously called for institutions with teeth in them to "break and control the violence of faction."[8] Factions are often said to wreak havoc in states where parties have not yet developed or to be destructive forces where stable parties exist.[9] The view that they inspire fear and loathing and are things to be avoided or overcome has endured.[10]

In spite of the conceptual baggage, *faction* is the best term to indicate the phenomenon of interest here. Other analysts have employed different words to designate party subunits, such as "cliques," "blocs," "movements," "wings," "currents," or "tendencies." But all of these terms slightly miss the target. Clique and bloc suggest small tightly bound groups that are short-lived. Movement, wing, current, and tendency, imply broad, highly diffuse entities of uncertain temporal duration.[11] As we shall see, factions can also be distinguished from the galaxy of caucuses, coalitions, pressure groups, clubs, and alliances that may exist inside American parties.

The conception of faction employed here holds any negative connotations in abeyance. Factions exist inside established parties, where, whether motivated by ideology or interest, their dangerous character is tempered. As we shall see, they can even produce some positive results. A faction, as defined here, is a party subunit that has (1) the ideological consistency, (2) the organizational capacity, and (3) the temporal durability to (4) undertake significant actions to shift a party's agenda priorities and reputation along the Left-Right spectrum. Factions exist when some party members share a common identity, are conscious of differences that separate them from other party members, and cooperate on a range of issues. Factions acquire names, create organizations, and articulate positions that are different from the mainstream of their party.[12] The battle between factions and the larger party might be characterized as the struggle for the "soul" of the party.

American party factions vary in type and character on each of the four elements that define them. Some factions are motivated more by their purposes. For these factions, the ideological aspect is front and center. Other factions lack such ideological consistency but are better organized. For them, the material resources secured by factional organization are the sustaining element. While there can be significant variation in the mode of factional organization, factions blur the lines between pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs, and social movements. They are agents of political linkage. Focus on the formal party institutions or interest groups overlooks partisan networks that draw on resources from a variety of auxiliary associations. Factional analysis reveals the cross-pollination of formal partisan organizations and informal networks, as adherents frequently serve in both interest groups and official party capacities. Consequently, factions are not ephemera that exist for an election cycle but rather are entities that endure for a while.

Factions exist inside larger parties. A party is best described in a two-fold sense: as a team and as an institution. Analyzing parties at any one time requires keeping both parts in mind. As Anthony Downs has written, a party is a "team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election."[13] John Aldrich writes: "Political parties can be seen as coalitions of elites to capture and use political office. . . . [Yet] a political party is . . . [also] an institutionalized coalition, one that has adopted rules, norms, and procedures."[14] The players on these teams include officeholders, staffers, titular leaders, party

officials, pollsters, consultants, and volunteers. Parties seek electoral authorization to run governing institutions. Those involved in elections will present programs in their effort to win office. Once elected, legislators draw on allies to fulfill promises made on the stump. Not only do all these activities require teamwork, they also require institutions. Parties have consequently crafted organizations with rules and regulations, such as nominating conventions, national and state party committees, and congressional caucuses.

Yet, the strength of the party institution, its center of gravity, and rules of operation are sufficiently plastic to have changed substantially over time. James A. Schlesinger has written that, for American parties, "the formal structure is obviously not the real organization."[15] In addition to the formal apparatus, then, the institutional component also consists of a larger informal network that varies in character according to the historical period. This network is usually comprised of individuals drawn from interest groups, labor unions, private associations, the press corps, and think tanks. These outside groups have not always been considered part of the party. They should be. While there is often a great deal of overlap, it is nonetheless the case that at certain points the energy of the party is found more within the informal network than within the formal institutions of the party. This is why John Aldrich, a leading scholar of political parties, oscillates between treating the party as run by and for politicians and something driven by broader "coalitions."

Since parties are not simply aggregations of voter preferences or demographic groups, they are occasionally driven by "parties within parties" or factions. Defining parties simply as teams downplays the idea that they have their own policy preferences. Parties, in that view, make promises on the campaign trail and then once in office seek to enact whatever policies increase their chances of winning future elections. But more is really at stake in electoral victory than winning itself because factions can inject parties with policy preferences independent of electoral considerations. It is these ideas that often go on to have the biggest effects on American political development.

Ultimately, factions are players on the party team; although, when they emerge, they are not part of the starting line-up. Their aim is to become the starting line-up, or at least to call the plays. In the most critical cases, they seek to spark a clubhouse revolt, fire the coach, and take over the franchise. As one group of scholars recently put it, "The various factions that make up a political party are active in politics precisely because they have intense preferences on certain issues, and it is a notable feature of a strong party that party factions are well-positioned to defend their preferences."[16] Therefore, when a sufficient number of party elites form a faction, their goal is to change (or prevent the change) of the values, norms, ideas, expectations, and rules of the political game. In this sense, factions seek to pour new wine into old bottles.

What Do Factions Do?

At key moments in American history, factions try to move their party along the Left-Right political spectrum—toward or away from the political center. For some, this means pulling their party further to the left, for others to the right. The aim is to change the party's reputation. How factions impel this movement depends on the type of faction, the resources at its disposal, and where it exerts itself in the political system. As we shall see, factions operate in different institutional venues to accomplish this goal. Rather than being institutions that are reactive to exogenous forces—which is the usual implication of American parties—parties driven by factions are powerful agents of change that can redraw the lines of political contestation.

Consequently, intraparty conflict generated by factions has major implications for interparty competition because factional activity has consequences for the opportunities, incentives, and constraints of the other party. The changes effected by factions cause the opposing party to react. How the American two-party system operates thus depends on the existence and power of factions, which complicates the classic center-seeking model of two-party competition. The temperature of party competition cannot, therefore, be taken by only looking at what happens between the two parties. One must also account for what happens within them.

Attention to factions challenges the classic model of two-party competition. In that model, the two parties compete in elections to capture the median voter. As center-seeking entities, the parties tend to resemble each other. The competition between them supposedly produces moderate policies because politicians are responsive to median preferences.[17] However, the center-seeking view of parties rests on the assumption that the electorate is well informed about candidates and public policy. The last half century of political science research suggests that that assumption is highly questionable.[18] Larry Bartels has written, "The political ignorance of the American voter is one of the best documented features of contemporary politics."[19] Therefore, even if "voters are not fools" and function as the "rational god of vengeance and reward," as V.O. Key colorfully put it, the fact that they aren't paying much attention relaxes the two party-system's center-seeking incentives.[20] "Whatever elections may be doing," Bartels concludes a recent study, "they are *not* forcing elected officials to cater to the policy preferences of the 'median voter.'"[21] Consequently, a number of political scientists have found that the Democratic and Republican parties regularly nominate candidates to the left or right of the ideological center.[22]

Given the public's limited political knowledge, factions retain a good deal of room to maneuver in order to shape their party's brand and convert their views into public policy, even if factions' views are well to the left or right of centrist

voters.[23] Parties thus walk a tight rope. Factions often determine how they balance the electoral cost of moving farther from the center with the boost in enthusiasm they get from appealing to their principal supporters. The calculation for factions and parties is whether the costs for moving too far to the right or left will be offset by soliciting greater resources from core constituencies.[24] Even when factions seek to move their party closer to the political center—doing the same thing as the center-seeking parties—the cause of the shift is not responsiveness to voters but factions.

Therefore, factions complicate the Downsian picture in ways that are not fully captured by other analysts because of how factions condition the behavior of partisan actors with their unique sets of norms, rules, and customs. Factions shape behavior, in part, due to their members' desire for recognition: the acknowledgement of their status and worth. That demand in turn requires us to treat ideas as sources of why different factions behave as they do. Shared ideas are essential for the collective action that facilitates or impedes parties seeking or fleeing the political center.

In sum, factions exploit voters' attention deficit disorder in order to move their party closer to their preferences. The purpose of examining 140 years of party history in the following pages is to show that the parties have been vehicles through which factions attempt to shape the party's overall reputation and change government policies in ways they desire. In the broadest terms, then, the claim that factions drive parties is also a claim about how American democracy functions.

However, exploiting public ignorance to push policies in line with a faction's preferences is not always an option. Indeed, such initiatives are only likely to be adopted in circumstances where the public does not have strong preferences or their preferences are contradictory. When the public has widely held and clear positions, party leaders are more likely to adopt policies close to those positions. Yet, even in those instances, factions may try to exploit the obscure features of policy design. For example, the public can have a meaningful debate and express a preference for whether the government should provide health care for all citizens or whether it should expand immigration. However, once a decision has been made at this level, *how* the government tries to do these things quickly becomes so detailed that the public is no longer able to participate effectively. The technical complexity of real policy extends far beyond the average citizen's political knowledge.[25] In such instances, policy initiatives can be framed such that the broad thrust appeals to median voters, while factions that pay closer attention can shape specific parts of the policy. Put differently, the median voter on any given policy is different from the median voter in the general electorate. Factions are attentive to playing off those differences and try to position the party accordingly.

Related to the Left-Right internal dynamics of the parties, factions have also been the vehicles for insurgent challenges to the establishment. Since the Civil War, American politics has been divided by efforts to harmonize a strong national state with traditional notions of individualism and democracy.[26] The result has been persistent conflicts over the extent and desirability of concentrated power and centralized authority. One could argue that the central question dividing the parties for much of the last 150 years has been the proper size and role of the state in the economy and society. Some factions have attacked power in big business, centralized government, and the cultural and professional elite. Others have sought to defend traditional conceptions of individual freedom and self-reliance against the rise of the corporation and the state. And still other factions have sought to empower the modern state against what they viewed as a romantic Jeffersonianism.[27]

How have factions tried to move the parties along the Left-Right political spectrum and recalibrate the balance between the establishment and the people? Factions seek to make their mark on the party and the polity by pressing their case in the areas where parties' programs, reputations, and images are forged. National institutions are implicated in factional conflict because they are the sites where politicians try to embed certain ideas and images in the public mind. Presidential politics and the Congress are the two central arenas where factions try to secure symbolic and substantive outcomes that will define the party's reputation. It is policymakers' public actions that create the "causal chains" that define the party and that can be used against legislators in future campaigns.[28] Some factions direct most or all of their efforts to redefine the party into presidential politics, others work primarily in Congress, while still others operate in both areas.

There are five roles factions have played in American politics, which are the subjects of the chapters that follow. First, they have been conveyor belts of ideas. They inject new ideas into the party and refashion old ones to fit their preferences. By linking politicians to outside groups, such as think tanks, factions help shape a party's public philosophy. The parties may stand for a few broad things, but factions are the devils in the details. The effort to modify or defend the programmatic character of the party means that factions must develop an alternative public philosophy or ideology.[29] A faction will espouse a different ideological recipe, challenging the dominant view or potential rivals within the party. Chapter 3 details the ideological views of each of the factions included in this study.

Second, factions are key actors in the quadrennial drama of presidential nominations. Chapter 4 documents how they have sought to block rival candidates, promote their own, and catalyze changes in candidate selection procedures. During the nomination struggle, factions provide affiliated candidates

with organizational resources, including campaign operatives, financial contributors, media outlets, and policy analysts. At times, candidates' connections (or opposition) to existing factions help distinguish them among the attentive publics from which are drawn delegates to the national conventions and voters in primary elections. Positioning vis-à-vis factions can help a candidate find the lane he or she intends to run in.

Third, factions shift the distribution of power in Congress, even sometimes going so far as to change the institution's rules. Sometimes factions centralize power; other times they decentralize it. Most often this happens informally under the existing procedural rules, which a faction is positioned to take advantage of. Occasionally, however, factions resort to the formal alteration of procedure to defeat their rivals and advance their agenda. In either scenario, factions are instrumental in determining the power of the party leadership, committees, subcommittees, and outside groups in the legislative process. They thus powerfully shape the sort of public policies that make it onto the congressional agenda and are enacted into law. This is the subject of Chapter 6.

Fourth, factions shape presidents' governing strategies. Although presidents and some members of Congress run for office under the same party label, that doesn't mean that they see eye to eye. Electoral debts to or distance from a faction are a central part of the political landscape presidents confront. Factions affiliated with a president can help him promote his agenda in the media, on Capitol Hill, and at the grassroots level. Yet they can also become a burr in the president's side, especially if the faction deems him insufficiently committed to its cause. In contrast, factions opposed to a president from their party can mobilize opposition to him and frustrate his goals. They can use parliamentary procedure and media exposure to raise the costs of action, forcing a president to spend valuable political capital. Attuned to these realities, a central presidential task is the management of factions. Chapter 7 analyzes how factions are often key pieces in a president's political puzzle.

Fifth, factions have shaped the development of the American state. They have been at the center of disputes over its size, shape, and character. Those disputes and their consequences are the subject of Chapter 8. Despite constitutional barriers to the creation of a large national state, America has done it. This process of state building is one in which new governing institutions are created, existing institutions are expanded or strengthened, or the relationship between government and society is altered. Some factions have sought to recalibrate the distribution of power between the political parties and the bureaucracy. Others have sought to keep power lodged in institutions such as the political parties, the federal courts, and congressional committees. The trajectory of state building since the Civil War, therefore, has been as much the result of factional struggles within the major parties as the result of conflict between the two parties.

On the basis of their activity, factions can be roughly divided into two types: those that seek preservation and those that seek change. Change factions, typically driven by ideology, often begin outside of government and work their way in. These factions have three strategic options: attempt to take over the party, decide to cooperate with it, or splinter into a third party. Status quo factions are usually insiders that tend to differentiate themselves on pragmatic or strategic grounds. These factions are forced to choose among four tactics: act as a veto power, cooperate, align with the opposition party, or take public stands to raise the costs of action. As a general rule, status quo factions tend toward the congressional strategy. Change factions are inclined to try to redefine the party from the top down, beginning with the presidency. Whether factions are promoters of change or defenders of the status quo, when they battle over agenda priorities, they are contesting the meaning of party membership.[30] They are either defenders of the old faith or harbingers of a new creed.

Who Are the American Factions?

According to the definition above, there have been at least twelve national intraparty factions from end of the Civil War to the present. The study begins in 1868 because that is when the two-party system dominated by Republicans and Democrats fully took hold. Since no "dataset" on American factions exists, something approximating one had to be created. To identify these factions, I created a checklist of faction properties (Appendix) and then used it like a colander to sift through American political history. By checking off the different qualities on the list, a party subunit eventually met the criteria of ideological distinctiveness, temporal durability, and organizational capacity that define a faction. Thus, what remained in the colander, so to speak, were the factions included in the study (Table 1.1). Some groupings within the parties that have been colloquially referred to as factions—such as the Gold Bug Democrats or the Henry Wallace Progressives—were excluded from the study because they did not meet certain thresholds and are better described as other kinds of entities that can exist within parties, such as cliques, blocs, movements, wings, currents, or tendencies. My method brought the qualities that factions share across time into focus, while being attentive to historical differences. When possible, I retained the names faction members used or were called by others at the time. Only when there were a number of competing names or the faction did not explicitly adopt one did I intervene to select or modify the label for the sake of clarity.

The list of twelve factions that emerged from my historical canvass indicates that factions have been a fairly constant phenomenon in American politics.

Table 1.1 **List of Intraparty Factions***

1.	Stalwart Republicans (1868–1888)
2.	Liberal/Mugwump Republicans (1868–1888)
3.	Half-Breed Republicans (1872–1888)
4.	Old Guard—Conservative Republicans (1896–1916)
5.	Progressives Republicans (1904–1928)
6.	Populist Democrats (1896–1924)
7.	Southern Democrats (1938–1976)
8.	Liberal Republicans (1938–1968)
9.	Liberal-Labor Democrats (1958–1976)
10.	New Politics Democrats (1966–1980)
11.	New Right Republicans (1964–1996)
12.	New Democrats (1986–2007)

*The years when these factions are said to "end" are obviously not hard and fast. Rather, they are approximations, meant to indicate when the faction lost much of its power.

At least one faction has been present within one of the two major parties between 1870–1920 and 1936–2005. Only during the 1920s was there an absence of coherent factions within either party. The factions are also reasonably evenly distributed within the parties—seven in the Republican Party and five in the Democratic Party. Generally speaking, as Samuel Lubell once contended, factions were more likely to emerge within a period's dominant party.[31] The GOP was the dominant party of the Gilded Age (with three factions to none for the Democrats) and Democrats the dominant party after the New Deal (with three factions to one for the Republicans). Yet, the list also shows that factions—and some of the most consequential among them—can and do emerge from within the minority party.

The change factions that worked almost exclusively in presidential politics are the Liberal Republicans (later called Mugwumps) of the Gilded Age, Populist Democrats of the Progressive Era, and the New Democrats of the late twentieth century. Consistent with the behavior of change factions, the latter three all sought to take over their respective parties, while the Liberals employed a splinter strategy to move the GOP closer to their preferences.

- Liberal Republicans—at various times also called "Independents," "Reformers," and "Mugwumps"—sought to make the GOP stand for free markets, efficient government, and rule by a well-bred Northeastern Protestant elite. They emerged

in the late 1860s to oppose the Grant Administration and the continuation of the military occupation of the South. In 1872, they broke party ranks to nominate Horace Greeley for president. Four years later, they backed Rutherford B. Hayes, the eventual GOP nominee. In 1884, they endorsed and voted for Democrat Grover Cleveland. They played a balance of power politics to recast the GOP. The reason for this was largely a function of size and geography. Compared to other factions, the Liberal faction was small and geographically concentrated. Unable to take over the party without a larger social and electoral base, they sought to use their numbers in swing states to force Republican presidential aspirants to pay them heed.[32]

- Led by the towering figure of William Jennings Bryan, Populist Democrats filled the Democratic Party's programmatic void in the first two decades of the twentieth century. As Elizabeth Sanders has written, "the post-1896 Democratic party was an overwhelmingly agrarian vehicle that carried the legacy of populism." Hailing from the agricultural Midwest and the South and voicing a distinct response to industrialization, they wrested the party from the hands of Northern hard-money men and Southern states-rights conservatives. Populists sought to increase the power of the federal government to check corporate excesses and readjust sectional imbalances. Their means to this end was to expand "the statutory state," rather than grant administrative agencies discretionary powers. Populists repeatedly forced conservative Democrats to assent to their solutions in areas such as railroad regulation, banking, and antitrust. They made their agenda the party agenda by securing the presidential nomination for Bryan three times and making themselves indispensable to the passage of President Wilson's New Freedom.[33]
- After Walter Mondale's presidential defeat in 1984, New Democrats emerged within the Democratic Party. Initially, they were largely from the suburban South and West rather than the urban Northeast or Midwest. It was the Democratic Party's failure to win presidential elections that sparked the faction's formation. Between 1968 and 1984 Democrats lost four of five presidential elections—two by huge margins. Carter's lonely victory in 1976 was viewed as the result of exceptional circumstances created by Watergate. New Democrats argued that only a move to the political center could revive the party's prospects, which had been badly damaged by the takeover of the party by left-wing activists and interest groups. As one of the faction's founders, Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) put it: "The perception is that the party has moved away from mainstream America." They held that only a novel and "centrist" policy agenda could recapture the White House and set the party on a solid foundation for the future. Bill Clinton ran successfully as a New Democrat but failed to govern consistently on their agenda. New Democrats failed to take over the Democratic Party.[34]

The "Old Guard" Republicans and the Southern Democrats are America's two twentieth-century status quo factions. Both operated primarily in congressional politics. Both informally shifted the balance of power within the legislature. And both succeeded by oscillating between cooperating and blocking their rivals.

- The "Old Guard" held sway within the Republican Party at the dawn of the twentieth century. Led by Nelson Aldrich (R-RI) and the other members of the "Senate Four"—William Allison (R-IA), Orville Platt (R-CT), and John Spooner (R-WI)—the faction was comprised primarily of legislators from the Northeast and their allies in big business. According to one description, "The average Old Guard leader . . . was an urban, upper-middle-class, college educated, native-born, Protestant who came from economically and socially well-established Anglo-Saxon stock. He was either a businessman, a newspaperman, or a politician, who at fifty-four was a lifelong Republican with many years of political experience."[35] They effectively vetoed Theodore Roosevelt's progressive policies, especially during his last two years in office. By aligning themselves with President William H. Taft, they aimed to encourage economic development and use their power in Congress to block inflationary policy measures. Old Guard conservatives firmly committed the GOP to the protective tariff and internal improvements.[36]
- The New Deal awakened the Calhounite fear of a powerful federal government bent on transforming Dixie, which turned Southern support into opposition. In 1938, Southern Democrats began to cooperate with conservative congressional Republicans. Their intention was to use their dominant position inside the Democratic congressional majority to defend "states rights" and the "southern way of life."[37] In practice, this meant protecting segregation, preventing labor union penetration, and promoting state-aided economic growth in the region. They employed all three status quo faction strategies: vetoing measures with which they disagreed, forging an alliance with Republicans, and cooperating with Northern Democrats to achieve their goals. Democratic presidents from Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson would be forced to adjust their policies, strategies, and rhetoric to deal with the Southern faction.[38]

There is only one status quo faction that operated in both presidential and congressional politics: the Stalwart Republicans.

- Stalwarts Republicans defended state-aided economic development, the imperatives of party organization and regularity, and concern for the fate of African-Americans in the South. They were machine politicians, strongest in the industrial states and the South, who coalesced in the 1870s to defend the patronage system that developed during Reconstruction. They sought to control Republican presidential nominations from 1868 to 1888, direct presidents' patronage policies, and exercise power in Congress by developing a more disciplined party network.[39]

There are four change factions that took their case into both arenas of the nation's national electoral politics: Progressive Republicans, Liberal-Labor Democrats, New Politics Democrats, and New Right Republicans. With varying degrees of success, all of them aimed to take over their respective party.

- Progressive Republicans emerged from the Midwest and West to challenge Old Guard dominance in the early twentieth century. The most powerful strain of Progressivism on the national stage was not the Northeastern, urban, and nationalistic one, but rather the rural and egalitarian Midwestern "fear of bigness, of concentration and control." Most of the major figures in the Progressive faction arrived in Congress in 1906. Almost all of them hailed from agricultural states. Most were lawyers who attended public universities in their home states. Many had won their seats by running against their states' regular Republican organization. These Progressives sought to bring more policy areas under the thumb of administrative experts. Hostile to the "state of courts and parties" they aimed to weaken state parties and the corrupt legislatures they dominated. Applying their expertise, administrators would circumscribe the issues that required politicians' attention. Their policy aims were to reduce tariffs, provide more extensive railroad regulation, and break up the trusts.[40]
- Liberal-Labor Democrats reached their apogee during the late 1950s and early 1960s. A predominant element in this faction was labor movement elites, especially the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and the United Auto Workers (UAW), union lobbyists, and the Committee on Political Education's (COPE) political operatives. They combined with the leadership of powerful liberal associations to form a truly effective national intraparty faction. Often called the "liberal lobby," some of the most prominent organizations in this formation were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Labor and the liberal associations wove together an interlocking directorate of affiliated members of Congress (and their staffs), especially members of the Democratic Study Group in the House and a bloc of roughly twenty Senators. The faction's party takeover strategy emerged in the development of a thorough policy agenda in Congress that presidents Kennedy and Johnson would later adopt.[41]

- In the late 1960s, New Politics Democrats brought a host of new ideas, issues, lifestyles, and tastes to national attention. They arose out of the middle-class suburbs, were formed on university campuses, and cut their teeth in opposition to the Vietnam War. New Politics Democrats were highly skeptical about American beneficence in foreign affairs. On the domestic front, this faction was deeply concerned about the behavior of politicians, minority rights, environmentalism, and consumer protection. Most spectacularly, they redesigned the Democratic Party's presidential selection procedures to ensure the nomination for one of their own: George McGovern in 1972. Yet, it was by securing seats in Congress, posts on important committee and subcommittee staffs, and heading up "public interest" groups that New Politics Democrats became a durable force in Washington in the 1970s. They worked through a variety of associations, strategically placed bureaucrats and the federal courts to promote, coordinate, and rationalize their agenda.[42]
- In the late 1950s, the New Right faction began to coalesce within the Republican Party. Over the next twenty-five years it took over the GOP. Despite being the minority party of the era, it became an ideological faction distinct from the older conservatism. It found an electoral base in the suburban South and Southwest, which was the backbone of the putsch that nominated Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964. After suffering through the Great Society and bridling under the reign of presidents Nixon and Ford, the New Right faction rededicated itself to a longer-term ideological realignment. In the early 1970s, it created a web of think tanks, publications, donors, and organizations in Congress willing to back the cause. These associational efforts paid off handsomely. In 1980, the New Right celebrated the election of one of its own—Ronald Reagan—to the presidency. Over the next decade, Newt Gingrich consolidated the party's transformation in Congress.[43]

Finally, some factions are "mixed cases." Such factions do not fully seek to transform their party but do not believe that the status quo is defensible. Modern Republicans and Half-Breed Republicans fall into this category. Both operated mostly in presidential politics. Both believed that the party status quo was not intellectually justifiable or electorally viable. But neither sought to fully takeover the Republican Party. Therefore, they sought the paradoxical combination of electoral success without a party overhaul.

- Modern Republicans emerged from the expansive growth of corporate managerial jobs in the 1940s and 1950s. They retained close ties with the manufacturing and business communities of the industrial cities. Derisively called "organization men" because they were suburban, college-educated, and economically secure, Modern Republicans shared an understanding of what it took to manage vast bureaucracies. Members of this faction brought these skills to Republican presidential nomination contests, which they dominated throughout the 1940s and 1950s. To win the presidency, they were willing to accommodate the New Deal by accepting greater state involvement in the economy, the expansion of federal power over the states, and the legitimacy of labor unions. They had only marginal success in the Senate and almost none in the House of Representatives.[44]
- In the faction-ridden Republican Party of the Gilded Age, Half-Breeds picked-and-chose among the existing policy options in an effort to build a party that stood for moderation, pragmatism, and effective government. Like their Stalwart rivals, they were also machine politicians, largely from the Northeast and West, but they sought to manage differences within the party and orient it toward the future. To do this, they became key players in the presidential nomination contests of 1880, 1884, and 1888. They also provided some of the votes in Congress to maintain the system of patronage and party regularity.[45]

There is not a hard and fast rule on which type of factions will emerge and what strategies they will adopt. Much depends on their social and electoral bases, organizational resources, ideological commitments, and their party's status as majority or minority.

Although judging success is complex, it might be said that four of the seven change factions had a degree of success in transforming their respective party. Populist Democrats, Liberal-Labor Democrats, New Politics Democrats, and New Right Republicans all managed to significantly alter the character of their party, while Liberal/Mugwump Republicans, Progressive Republicans, Modern Republicans, and New Democrats failed to do so. The most successful status quo faction at preserving their party's character was the Old Guard Republicans. Southern Democrats also held sway for over thirty years and prevented the emergence of the Democratic Party as a more liberal party. The Stalwarts seem to have been the least successful status quo faction in controlling the direction and composition of their party's leadership. The success or failure of these factions can be better gauged by looking at their institutional effects over the course of American political development.

What Causes Factions?

There are five overlapping sources of party factions in American politics. One is the strategic electoral incentives created by the two-party system. Separation of powers, federalism, the Electoral College, and first-past-the-post congressional

elections help sustain a two-party system, comprised of two large, diffuse, and porous parties. Only a few modern democracies maintain two-party systems and none of them are as large and diverse as the parties in the United States. Hence, there is ample room for factions to grow and maneuver inside such large parties.

The two-party system provides incentives for factional formation in order to drive the parties toward or away from the political center. Factions have relatively precise ideas about what they would like to see government do that are often to the right or left of the average American. Therefore, some factions seek to pull their party away from the center in order to create the political space to enact their preferences. But when parties pull too far to the extremes of the political spectrum, endangering the chances of electoral victory, other factions emerge to induce the party to seek the political center.

The process occurs because in the American two-party system, when one party gains a majority its coalition necessarily expands, bringing in new groups and interests, creating factions to contest what the party stands for. In contrast, even though parties that find themselves in the minority tend to close ranks, select a strident leadership, and squeeze what resources they can out of their base of support, party competition drives them to factionalize. As the party becomes uncompetitive, a faction is likely to appear in order to try and move the party back into the majority. But the ability to find cracks in the other party's coalition necessarily rubs up against the preferences of the core of the party. Those in the party that seek to make it more competitive will thus run into the old guard, which often resists changes that threaten its power. These party reformers will have a powerful incentive to form a faction to advance their goals and provide them mutual protection. The minority party thus becomes a battle between the larger party seeking to retain its position and a reform-oriented faction seeking to change the party and recapture a national majority.

Intraparty politics drives factions to try to take advantage of two other electoral strategies (Table 1.2). One is to capture a "target" constituency. Such constituencies are groups that are politically disengaged, loosely affiliated with the opposition party, or whose political loyalties have yet to be settled. Factions make concerted efforts to appeal to such constituencies and work doggedly to pass policies that adherents believe will resonate with them. Securing the support of such constituencies can also help the party compensate for potential losses among swing voters in the center. The other is to play to the party's base: that set of voters, organized interests, activists, and intellectuals that are deeply attached to a party's core ideas and interests. The strategy that tempts factional tacticians is to play to the base, hoping to turn out more committed voters than their opponents.

Table 1.2 **Factions Strategic Motivations**

Faction	*Center*	*Base*	*Target Constituency*
Liberal Republicans/Mugwumps	XX		XX
Stalwart Republicans		XX	
Half-Breed Republicans	XX		
Old Guard Republicans		XX	
Progressive Republicans			XX
Populist Democrats		XX	
Southern Democrats		XX	
Modern Republicans	XX		
Liberal-Labor Democrats		XX	XX
New Politics Democrats		XX	XX
New Right Republicans		XX	
New Democrats	XX		

Savvy politicians chose to form, or associate themselves, with factions because they are instruments of differentiation among party elites. They provide a number of powerful cues for the politically active and informed. Factional affiliation can help politicians attract media attention, campaign funds, and a cadre of activists. By affiliating themselves with a faction, politicians can also garner a degree of political cover, which can assist them in their eternal quest to claim credit and avoid blame. Factions thus help structure the party's debate over strategy.[46]

The second cause of factions is ideology. It has long been held that America's big-tent parties were more pragmatic than ideological. Yet, it is for this very reason that factions became the carriers of different ideological currents within the parties. Groups of political actors believe that a factional network will help them promote their conception of the public good. Moreover, factions cannot be understood without examination of their members' objectives. Such an examination sheds light on why factions form because it is nearly impossible to separate ideas and interests into observable causes because ideology is constitutive of interest and vice versa. As E.E. Schattschneider once quipped, "It is futile to try to determine whether men are stimulated politically by interests or by ideas, for people have ideas about interests."[47] Therefore, it is nearly impossible to say which has priority on the faction's agenda or causal precedence in its emergence. Yet, ideational purposes clarify important aspects of factional formation and behavior.

The third source of factions is the geography of American economic development. As Richard Bensel has pointed out regarding the Gilded Age Republican Party, "the influence of uneven regional development . . . tended to fragment the national party into competing factions."[48] Different sections of the United States produced different goods and services, which in turn affected the sorts of demands different regions placed on the federal government. The Northeast and Great Lakes regions were the financial and industrial centers of the nation. The South until the mid-twentieth century remained overwhelmingly agricultural. The Middle West and the Rockies produced major agricultural and mining interests. These differences in productive capacity often translated into stark differences in political outlook.

The final cause of factions is major events, such as wars or economic crises. As David Mayhew has shown, foreign wars can reconfigure domestic politics.[49] For instance, the integration of the armed services in the wake of World War II was an important factor in the consolidation of the Southern Democratic faction. New Politics Democrats cut their teeth in opposition to the Vietnam War. On the home front, major economic crises can drive factional formation. The depression of the early 1890s helped elevate William Jennings Bryan as the leader of the budding Populist faction within the Democratic Party. The Great Depression gave birth to a powerful labor movement that formed one of the bases of the Liberal-Labor faction.

Ultimately, the American political system renders its political parties ill equipped to act quickly and decisively, which provides incentives for factional formation, because factions are more agile and adaptable. Politicians can then tie "causal stories" to their particular factional affiliations and use this symbolic capital in future campaigns. Therefore, barring a major regime change, political operators will find reasons to form factions in the future. Because American parties lack strong disciplined organizations, factional networks forged in the breach perform many of the traditional functions associated with parties. American institutions are to factions what air is to fire, an element without which it instantly expires. Factions are thus sown in the nature of our republic.

Conclusion

The American regime, with its peculiar combination of separation of powers and federalism, gives life to factions but also shapes the conditions for their success or failure at achieving their objectives. Factions must either succeed in changing the public debate and winning elections, or they must change governing institutions from within to commandeer their party. A faction's beliefs about the likelihood of success, and its ability to make long-term political investments, shape its decisions. Yet, factions assess their strength in fluid and evolving conditions. As Nelson Polsby has remarked, "factions . . . arise, not out of the natural bedrock of people, but out of their capacity to calculate their advantage over a protracted period, and their ability to see their best interests in the light of the complexity of the political world in which they exist."[50] The party's status as a majority or minority and the governing institutions (if any) it controls affect the faction's strategic decisions. Therefore, the incentives and ideational factors underpinning the strategic and tactical decisions factions make—and the larger party's response—are at the center of my analysis.

Attention to factions revises our understanding of what American political parties are and how they work. American parties are not simply the diffuse, disorganized blobs with little or no relevance that many have suggested. Nor are they disciplined monolithic blocs that consistently take coordinated and rational action to seek out the median voter and set the congressional agenda. Rather, it is factions that often undertake synchronized action to redefine the party, forcing the more dispersed and amorphous elements to respond. These responses can come from the president, shaping his governing tactics, or from other party members in Congress, changing power dynamics in the legislature. Insofar as factions are the units that infuse American parties with energy and purpose, they are closest to Burke's original definition of political parties as "a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principal in which they are all agreed."[51] Ultimately, by trying to command the party in which they reside, factions seek the authority to put their stamp on the nation.