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## Boekbespreking van: Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996

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## Book Reviews

John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998. ISBN 0521592623, USD 64.95.

As a student of party ideology, one is almost forced to deal, at least in passing, with the (in)famous 'end-of-ideology' thesis. This is even more the case for the few brave scholars that dare to study the ideologies of the large political parties in the United States, the cradle of the thesis. John Gerring faces the challenge head-on, starting his first chapter by refuting the thesis. Supported by earlier critiques as well as more recent work on the importance of ideology within American party politics, he claims that, although the Democrats and Republicans may use the same broad symbols, they attach fundamentally different meanings to them. This leads him to the conclusion that "just because American ideologies were often hidden from view did not make them any less real (not, at least, for party elites)" (p. 8).

Gerring has set himself a daunting task with this book: to present "a historical synthesis of American party ideology from the birth of party politics to the present day" (p. 6). To keep things manageable, he focuses primarily on "presidential election rhetoric – speeches, party platforms, and other campaign tracts disseminated by party leaders during presidential campaigns" (p. 6). Having stated the limitations of this approach – i.e., focusing only on the *public ideology* underlying the *domestic policies* of the *presidential parties* – the author sets out to substantiate his claim that "the major American parties have articulated views that were (and are) coherent, differentiated, and stable" (p. 6). Summarizing the main findings of the study, the author argues that although the 'Whig-Republican party' went through two 'ideological epochs' ('Nationalism' and 'Neoliberalism') in the last two decades, it has always championed the persisting themes of social order, economic growth and patriotism (see Table 1 on p. 16). Similarly, the Democratic party went through three ideological epochs ('Jeffersonianism', 'Populism', and 'Universalism'), yet with the persisting theme of equality (Table 2 on p. 17). These five different epochs are described in more detail in chapters three to seven.

Before describing these epochs in more detail, Gerring devotes a chapter to rethinking the role of ideology in American party life. He addresses eight

structural features [that according to other scholars, CM] appear to prohibit, or at least inhibit, the development of ideology within the American parties: (1) diversity of

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opinion with the parties, (2) interest-based (rather than value-based) political behaviour, (3) diffuse party membership, (4) the centrist dynamic of two-party politics, (5) the absence of responsible party government, (6) the prevalence of patronage within the parties, (7) the absence of a viable socialist party, and (8) the consensual nature of American political culture (p. 23).

On the basis of findings of more recent American research as well as comparisons with research on West European parties, the author rejects or qualifies the claimed influence. Instead, he argues that "the American parties are more ideological than is usually conceived, and parties abroad, in many cases, are *less so*" (p. 23).

The following two chapters constitute part two of the book, which deals with the two ideological epochs of the 'Whig-Republican party'. Arguing that the Republican party was the ideological successor to the Whig party, Gerring defines the period 1828-1924 as the party's 'National Epoch', characterized by an ideology based upon mercantilism, statism, social order, Yankee Protestantism, and nationalism (i.e., 'Americanism'). During this period the Whig-Republicans defined themselves as "the party of labor" (p. 58), supporting the development of industry, though without championing the working *class* or attacking business (so typical of socialism). Moreover, "(n)ational wealth, not redistribution, was the sine qua non of state intervention in the economy" (p. 74). As a truly conservative party, it was on a "mission of maintenance" (pp. 94-5), preserving rather than seeking liberty. Yet, in sharp contrast with the position of modern Republicans, "(i)t was *too little* government that was to be feared, not too much" (p. 97). In line with its Protestantism, the National Republicans saw the individual as inherently sinful, and preached self- and state-imposed repression, as freedom and liberty were considered to refer to the community rather than the individual. Its 'Americanism', finally, was a "defensive sort of nationalism" (p. 114), centred around the protection of 'true American values' and of American interests abroad.

In the next chapter the 'Neoliberal Epoch (1928-1992)' is described in detail. Gerring argues that the differences between 'radicals' like Goldwater and Reagan and 'moderates' like Hoover and Eisenhower "are better viewed as matters of emphasis rather than of principle" (p. 125). This backs up his claim

that Republican presidential campaigns from 1928 to 1992 reveal a consistent ideology – an ideology that differed in important respects from the party's previous (National) incarnation. Neoliberalism valorized small business (rather than labor), equal opportunity (rather than the social harmony of different classes), and individual freedom (rather than social order). It demonized government, political elites in general, and communism (which, in its myriad guises, constituted the new threat from the left) (p. 126).

This chapter sketches a familiar picture of the Grand Old Party, as the defender of individualism, religion (Christianity), the middle class, and the American way of life.

The third part of the study includes the three chapters describing the ideological epochs of the Democratic party. Arguing that the period 1828-1892 showed 'remarkable



continuities', the author rejects dividing it into different periods and argues that "the unlikely combination of racism, antistatism, and civic republicanism" constituted the 'Jeffersonian Epoch' (p. 162). Resembling modern Republicans rather than contemporary Democrats, "(n)ineteenth-century Democrats were radical preservationists" (p. 163). However, their dislike of the state was not accompanied by a liking of the market (or of religion). In the words of the author, "(t)he animating purpose behind the party's national ideology was the prevention of tyranny, rather than the achievement of anything in particular" (p. 177).

The Populist Epoch (1896-1948) was characterized by "the ideal of majority rule and (in) the populist narrative in which the people fought for their rights against an economic and political elite" (p. 189). Despite the fact that certain Democratic presidential candidates in this period did not fit the populist ideology, Gerring sees 'compelling reasons' to argue that this period does in fact constitute one ideological epoch. Most notably, the 'conservatives' (e.g., Parker, Cox and Davis) were far less important within the party and successful in elections than the 'populists' (most notably Bryan, Wilson and Roosevelt). The 'Populist Epoch' not only introduced a new ideology, but also brought a new style of politics, laying the foundations of modern-day well-organized, candidate-centred, interactive campaigns.

The change to the 'Universalist Epoch (1952-1992)' was clearly the least radical in the history of the two parties. Instead of displaying complete turnarounds, so typical of earlier shifts of epochs, this time the Democratic party kept most of its ideology (i.e., support for both the state and the market, while aiming at greater equality and social welfare). The main change was that the Universalist Democrats no longer focused on equal opportunity for all Americans, but rather became the voice of American minorities (ethnic, racial, sexual and issue-based). Inclusion became the name, multiculturalism the game. Moreover, the party changed its rhetoric from resentment to reconciliation. In other words, "(a)genda and rhetoric shifted from majority rule to minority rights" (p. 244).

The conclusion addresses the question: what drives ideological change? Rejecting the constituent-centred theories of party conflict in America – i.e., the classical, social-class, ethnocultural and realignment theories, Gerring argues that "(p)arty constituencies should be thought of as a *constraint*, not a deciding factor, in the creation and re-creation of party ideology" (p. 271). Party leaders have always been the deciding factor. Unfortunately, their behaviour, the author claims, cannot be explained by one general theory. Different combinations of different factors explain different ideological changes.

The book ends with an epilogue with a short discussion of the 1996 presidential campaigns. Here the author argues that Dole's campaign was a continuation of the Neoliberal Republican Epoch and Clinton's of the Universalist Democratic Epoch. The appendix, finally, discusses the methodological issues of the study in a concise manner. Most interesting for students of political parties in general, and party ideology in particular, is the discussion of the how and why of studying party ideologies.

Though somewhat overstating the importance of the quantitative part of his analysis, it provides a useful discussion of the problems involved in studying party ideology, as well as offering some (admittedly imperfect) solutions.

There is no doubt that Gerring has successfully mastered the daunting task he set himself. As a study of American politics, and as a (comparative) study of party ideology, it provides a welcome and original contribution. As is rightfully claimed in the cover text, "this book challenges traditional notions of American party politics and political culture." Most notably, it convincingly shows the importance of ideology in American party politics of the past, present, and future. Moreover, it refutes some of the popular myths of American party ideology. For example, Gerring convincingly argues that Whigs and Republicans had actually rather similar position on slavery (pp. 110-1); the New Deal was neither the beginning of a new ideological era of the Democrats (pp. 227-30), nor the reason for the Republicans' shift to an anti-big government position (pp. 140-1); William Jennings Bryan has been "a major creative force in the fashioning of twentieth-century Democratic ideology" (p. 224).

The one serious point of critique I could bring forward, is directed not so much at the book as a study of American politics but rather as a study of party ideology in the classical sense. This is most visible when Gerring claims that "the place of social issues within the contemporary Republican party is easily exaggerated" (p. 150). At first rather surprising, the statement makes more sense after Gerring's clarification that "social issues have never constituted more than a small fraction of the party's general election rhetoric" (pp. 150-1). Because of his exclusive focus on the "party in campaign" (p. 22), Gerring describes party *propaganda* rather than party *ideology*. In some cases, the author also seems to admit this (e.g., p. 201).

This said, one can only praise this formidable study. Although this book might not become *the* definitive study of American party ideology, it will definitely become *one of the* (few) seminal studies on the topic.

Cas Mudde

Geoffrey Garrett, *Partisan Politics in the Global Economy*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998. ISBN 0-521-44690-2. USD 17.95.

In this important book, Geoffrey Garrett enters the scholarly debate about the impact of international economic integration on domestic politics. The current state of the debate is characterized by the polarization of viewpoints into two camps. One group of scholars argues that internationalization has very little impact on domestic political processes, while a second group emphasizes the constraints of increased trade and capital mobility on national autonomy, especially social democratic social and economic policies. Garrett forcefully argues a case for the former viewpoint, challenging the gloomy predictions of Fritz Scharpf, Paulette Kurzer, Jonathan Moses and other