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Why Parties? A Second Look by John H. Aldrich. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2011. 400 pp. Paper, \$22.00.

Two questions have been central to the study of political parties: what brings them together and how do they change. John Aldrich provided an insightful interpretation of the first question in his 1995 *Why Parties?* In this update, he gives significant attention to the latter question. The analysis is an effort to reconcile the emergence of candidate-centered campaigns with party polarization within the rational choice framework (p. 219). How do the sum of individual activities yield collectives so opposed to each other, and what is the nature of party in such a situation?

As he summarizes, several matters had undercut the role of parties by the 1960s. They had lost control over nominations with the use of primaries. Civil service reduced the personnel party leaders could call on. Government social programs had replaced the particularized benefits urban machines had provided and diminished voter loyalty to specific politicians. The secret office block had increased the ability of voters to split their ticket. The percentage of the electorate identifying with parties was declining. Party organizations were struggling. While these conditions limited parties, they also provided significant opportunities for candidates. The technology of communication was changing, and new tools—consultants, polling, and direct mail—provided candidates with more autonomy to present themselves, and not the party, to voters (pp. 281–285). Incumbents now had the means to acquire some influence over their electoral fortunes, and the result was the much-analyzed increased incumbency effect that was first noticed in the 1966 House elections.

Given this candidate autonomy, how do we explain the party polarization that has emerged in recent decades? The emphasis on candidate independence would not seem to suggest that candidates would move further apart. The spatial model of Downs suggests that candidates in an electorate less attached to parties would converge in the middle. Aldrich suggests that two matters are crucial: activists and “sorting.” His argument is that a central change missed in most analyses has been the emergence of ideological activists within each party who have pushed the electorate that influences candidate nominations out from the middle (pp. 187–194). Conservative activists are more conservative than the rest of the party and push the median Republican that a candidate must respond to toward a more-conservative stance. Liberal activists push the median Democratic voter toward a more-liberal stance. These changes have altered the electorate that affects candidates. Candidates have followed the activists and diverged in their positions.

As this process has occurred, a steady process of sorting has occurred. Candidates are sorting themselves out, with the more-conservative seeking election as Republicans and liberals seeking election as Democrats. Voters have observed elites and altered their party identification or changed their

views to fit the positions that their party candidates are adopting. The combination of candidate autonomy, activists, and sorting by candidates and voters has produced the current polarization. In this interpretation, the party is essentially a service provider. It is not dead, but altered in form.

This book provides a compelling integration of a considerable volume of literature, all within the framework of rational choice analysis. The emphasis is on individual calculations within a changing political context. While persuasive, it also reflects the difficulties of the rational choice framework in dealing with the collective of a party. A party is a joining of people who have some commonality of concerns to try to affect who holds office and what views hold sway as policies are adopted. As persuasive as this narrative is, the emphasis on individual calculations leaves us with little sense of the development of the fundamental divide between liberals and conservatives about government. The role of parties as actors seeking to lead and respond to this division, actors to change the dynamic of politics and policy, seems to slip out of the story. This analysis succeeds in providing a plausible integration of the existing literature on parties. But it also reflects the extent to which much of the political science literature does not provide much role for party organizations (and not just individual sorting) that have played a role in creating the current partisan polarization.

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Paying Attention to Foreign Affairs: How Public Opinion Affects Presidential Decision Making by Thomas Knecht. *University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 263 pp. \$64.95.*

“Paying attention” is the theme of this nice addition to the research on presidential responsiveness to public opinion and the impact of public opinion on foreign policymaking in the United States. The consensus in these literatures is that public opinion matters—that there is good reason to study public opinion and polling—but whether to call its effect “conditional” or “strong” is open to debate, as is whether this effect can be called “democratic.” Thomas Knecht comes out largely in the “conditional” camp, which the book expands upon and to which it offers original insights. His concluding chapter affirms his position regarding the role that public opinion should play in American democracy: it is only when it is paying attention—which it can and does do—that public opinion takes on qualities that merit attention in the policymaking process.

The book’s main contributions are its elaboration of already-established theorizing and empirical findings that policymaking is more responsive to public opinion when issues are salient—when it is more difficult for leaders to ignore the public, and the issues potentially may be important in the next