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Many scholars and commentators on the American regime recognize that without the parties, democracy over an extended republic would be impossible. It is no surprise then that scholarship dating as far back as the 1970s should concern itself with an apparent decline in party strength and cohesion. Recent scholarship, however, has asserted that the party is very much alive and functioning in American politics. Why the discrepancy? Sydney Milkis offers a compelling solution to the puzzle.¹ The very nature of the party has changed from patronage-based to program-based, confusing loyalties and watering down alliances that existed in the original form of the party. Thus the party is strong in the sense that it represents a brand² and that it promises to implement a policy or program. The party is weak in the sense that its apparatus ill-defined. One does not even know to whom leadership is assigned.³ An alternative approach to considering party strength or weakness is offered by organizational theory, which understands the party as a firm or business. This perspective seems to assume that the party apparatus is strong. One way to test if organizational theory can adequately explain the political party is to look at the interaction of the party with social movements. In a 2010 article, “Interactions Between Social Movements and US Political Parties,” Mildred Schwartz addresses the relationship between social movements and political parties through the lens of organizational theory, and proposes that parties and movements will use strategies of buffering or distancing when one wishes to maintain its independence from the other.⁴

³ This is not to suggest that party leadership requires one identifiable spokesman. But whoever the leaders and spokespersons are, it is reasonable to say that they should be inside the party, a part of the establishment. This does not always seem to be the case. For example, after former RNC chairman Michael Steele insulted Rush Limbaugh, he was forced to publicly apologize and recognize Limbaugh as an important leader in the Republican Party.
In the present paper, an investigation of Schwartz’s categories of buffering: disruption, discrediting, and purging, raises questions about the adequacy of this approach. It is striking that Schwartz’s analysis of party and social movement interaction is plausible for the presidential nomination process in 1912, but does not seem so for the 2012 nomination process. In particular, the modern party no longer seems to have the option of the buffering tactic. This raises questions about the character and importance of apparatus in our contemporary parties, and calls into question the analogy of parties to firms and the usefulness of organizational theory in this regard. This result seems rather to support Milkis’s theory of party.

METHOD: SCHWARTZ’S CATEGORIES AND THE COMPARISON BETWEEN 1912 AND 2012

Schwartz is concerned that interactions between social movements and US political parties are only studied on a case-by-case basis and suggests the use of organizational theory as a solution. She suggests a rigorous study of the interactions between social movements and political parties by looking at the strategies firms and corporations use to deal with insurgents. Interactions take place on a continuum. At one end, we see strategies of coordination or bridging, such as alliances and mergers. At the other extreme, corporations will attempt hostile strategies or buffering, including disruption, discrediting, and purging. Political parties are assumed to exist as firms, and Schwartz hypothesizes that they will use the same or similar tactics. Social movements are characterized by the fact that their unity or identity is not accomplished through structure or apparatus, but through a shared ideology.

In what follows I employ a comparison between the interaction between the Progressive movement and the Republican Party in 1912 and the interaction in 2012 between the Tea Party movement and the Republican Party. I will try in both cases to use Schwartz’s categories of

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5 Schwartz, 588
buffering: disruption, discrediting, and purging. I will focus on the presidential nomination race of 1912 between Roosevelt and Taft as representative of the story of broader interaction between progressives and the Republican Party. Because the primaries have thus far been inconclusive in determining the Republican presidential nominee for 2012, I will include in my discussion of the Tea Party movement examples from the 2010 mid-term election and the debt ceiling crisis.

A great many similarities justify this comparison. In 1912, the progressives sought to move the Republican Party further to the left, today the Tea Party seeks to move it further to the right. The 1912 presidential nomination race included a moderate candidate, Taft, and two other candidates representing the more extreme progressive demands for reform, Roosevelt and LaFollette. No one knew who would be selected as the Republican nominee before the convention. Similarly, today Governor Romney represents the moderate and party favorite, though party support is luke-warm, while Gingrich, Santorum, and Paul represent more extreme Tea Party demands for reform. It is unclear, at this point in the middle of March, who will win the nomination. Unlike the civil rights movement, the Christian right movement, or the anti-war movement, progressive and Tea Party social movements are characterized by a relative lack of programmatic goals and their disparate and inchoate dissatisfaction with the status quo of government. Both identify ills: the progressives saw unfathomable poverty and cities full of poor immigrants and gang violence, tea partiers see an ever-deepening national debt and a weak economy. In both cases, America is seen to have lost her way.

**DISRUPTING THE PARTY: PROGRESSIVES**

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In terms of social movements, Schwartz defines disruption as, “disruption of normal political party activities” for the purpose of “seizing the attention of the media and potential supporters.” Normal political activities, or politics-as-usual, would include press addresses, public speeches, nominating conventions, voting in Congress, or voting in an election etc. Familiar strategies of disruption in the United States include humorous antics, protesting, sit-ins, shocking displays, and, occasionally, even violence. But social movements can also disrupt politics as usual by striving to somehow change the rules by which the political game is played. In the 1912 nomination process, politics-as-usual meant the party machine determined who could run for office and who ultimately ended up in office. Both of these rules meant that candidates were beholden to the party machine. The progressive movement sought to displace party-controlled delegates with the primary voting system, which had the effect of changing the style of campaign from that of patronage-party to candidate-centered, where potential candidates would actively seek the nomination from the people. This had the effect of making the candidate beholden to the people rather than to the party, an anticipated benefit for the progressives but it also had the effect of exponentially increasing the cost of the campaign.

Direct primaries. 1896 saw the election of William McKinley for the President of the United States by the hands of the first national political boss, Mark Hanna of Ohio. In the fight to ensure

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7 Schwartz, 597
8 See the 1968 Democratic nominating convention where the Yippee movement nominated a pig, Pegasus the Immortal, as a presidential nominee for the Democratic ticket.
9 For instance, draft-card burning and flag burning.
11 For an alternative explanation, that the direct primary had a statistically significant effect on party loyalty but was not transformational to American Politics, see Ansolabehere, Stephan; Hirano, Shigeo; Snyder, James Jr. M. What did the Direct Primary Do to Loyalty in Congress? (March 2004). Even though parties are weak as I discuss them unity voting in Congress is up even now more so than before. So the party is both weak and strong. I will address this later in the paper.
McKinley’s victory over William Jennings Bryan, Hanna bankrolled an army of election workers to pad the polls, in one instance adding almost 20,000 extra votes. This was just one incident of many that people in the United States identified with the corrupted process of indirect democracy, which would require as a remedy direct democracy, through the direct primary.

Before Roosevelt’s campaign, only six states used the direct primary to select delegates: North Dakota, California, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska. President Taft controlled the party machinery and would have easily secured the nomination if President Roosevelt had not disrupted the campaign by challenging Taft to a popular race. Taft predictably refused, saying that changing the rules of the game during the race was ludicrous. But the political posturing had its salutary effects. Taft’s statement smacked of an elitism that was becoming increasingly unacceptable to people in the United States. By the end of the race six states had changed their nomination rules: Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, and South Dakota. Roosevelt managed to win nine out the twelve states and garnered 278 delegates—far more than Taft. Unfortunately for Roosevelt, most states using the primary in 1912 only did so as a ‘preference,’ which meant that even though Roosevelt may have won more delegates by popular vote, party bosses could still interfere and contest delegates.

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14 Party bosses had no qualms about displaying the obvious relationship of the machine to potential candidates and loyal supporters of the machine. In some cases, such as New York, party bosses employed from the ranks of poverty-stricken immigrants, thugs to intimidate and buy votes on voting day. See Cook.
15 It was also known that Hanna was a millionaire and had taken contributions from JP Morgan, a former classmate of his. Although money and politics always go together, the sentiment at that time judged this to be the cause of such flagrant abuses of the party machinery.
17 Mowry, 201
18 Some scholars, such as Alan Ware in his book, *American Direct Primary: Party Institutionalization and Transformation in the North*, reject that the primary system was imposed upon party regulars by extra-party reformers. The fact that direct primaries was a part of the progressive platform and the fact that progressive reformers explicitly pointed to direct primaries as a means of correcting a corrupt party system I take to be evidence
Candidate-centered campaigns. The 1912 nomination race sparked the first candidate-centered campaign in history.\textsuperscript{19} Shattering precedent, Roosevelt took to the stump, demanding that the people and not the political bosses be the judges of leadership. Taft had to consider the alarming possibility that his nomination was not guaranteed and so he was forced to engage in a full-scale quest for his party’s nomination.\textsuperscript{20} The progressives of William Jennings Bryan’s era had not succeeded so well as to force McKinley to the stump.

Concluding remarks. The progressive movement succeeded in disrupting politics-as-usual by using the direct primary and forcing the first candidate-centered campaign in U.S. history. One of the results of the direct primary and candidate-centered campaigns was that campaigns became costly and opened up candidates to financial influences other than the party.\textsuperscript{21} Campaigns became extravagant expenditures. Even LaFollette viewed the direct primary and candidate-centered campaigns with a less favorable eye once he saw the effects of ‘purer democracy’ at work in the race of 1912. At first, the party apparatus controlled these ever-increasing necessities for the campaign. But this control over financial resources was later broken by expanding technology and more extra-party sources of funding.\textsuperscript{22}

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\textsuperscript{20} Candidate McKinley used a “front-porch” campaign in which speeches are given from home to visitors. In this strategy, money matters more than popular appeal. William Jennings Bryan gave over 600 speeches in this campaign and traveled across the country but Mark Hanna spent the time raising funds for McKinley’s campaign and ultimately won the race because Hanna raised for more money than Bryan. Harpine, William. From the Front Porch to the Front Page: McKinley and Bryan in the 1896 Presidential Campaign. Texas A&M University Press, 2005.


\textsuperscript{22} Aldrich, 285
DISRUPTING THE PARTY: THE TEA PARTY

The Tea Party movement has also proposed changing the rules by which the political game is played. In an attempt to make the constitution resemble its original form, Tea Party members would abolish the 17th amendment, which mandated the popular election of United States Senators, in the interest of elevating the role of the state legislature in governing. In contradistinction to the progressive movement’s push to adopt the 17th amendment, the Tea Party movement does not have public support for its repeal, but the movement has found other avenues of disruption in both protests and in town hall-style meetings.

Protests. Protests have generally been associated with national social agendas demanding some kind of action from the national government. Those asking the government to do less, especially in the economy, have not generally used the strategy of protesting to disrupt the political status quo. Despite the discomfort and lack of experience of this form of political action, the movement sought to get media attention by holding a tax day protest. On April 15, 2009, Tea Party sponsored protests attracted around 250,000 people across the country. These Tax Day protests attracted the attention of the media and the Republican Party, forcing the issues of the deficit and the bailouts into the national debate. Major news outlets, both conservative and liberal, covered the Tea Party protests at a far higher frequency than protests of similar size. When the

scheduler for RNC Chairman Michael Steele called Eric Odom, a tax-day organizer, asking if Michael Steele could speak at the protest in Chicago, he was turned down.

**Town hall meetings:** An innovative strategy of disruption the Tea Party movement implemented is to protest town hall style meetings with confrontational commotions. While Congress debated the health care reform law, House Democrats went back to their home districts that summer to convince the people to support what has been termed, ObamaCare. Summer recess has often been quiet for members of Congress, but the Tea Party movement turned these town hall meetings it into a spectacle. The conservative non-profit organization Freedomworks, along with conservative talk show host Glen Beck, posted an “August Action Kit” providing instructions on how Tea Party members and sympathizers could disrupt town hall meetings. The website showed upcoming locations of town hall meetings along with talking points and speaking advice to attendees.\(^{27}\) The strategy was widely successful. Close to 1500 people showed up to one meeting in Tampa, Florida to speak with Democratic State Rep. Betty Reed and U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor. The event quickly turned vitriolic. Castor was not even able to finish her opening remarks amidst the shouting of, “tyranny, tyranny, tyranny!”\(^{28}\) This was characteristic of many town hall meetings held throughout the summer of 2009. The strategy worked. Media attention increased. Gallop Polls from that summer indicate that more than two thirds of Americans closely followed media clips of town hall meetings and that 34% said the protests made them more sympathetic to


the position of repealing healthcare reform. Both disruptive strategies of protesting and town hall meetings have had the effect of generating media coverage for the Tea Party movement.

**Strategies of Discrediting the Party**

Intimately tied to the strategy of disruption is the strategy of discrediting. Schwartz identifies strategies of discrediting as when, “movements aim their denunciations against one party.”

These denunciations fall into two categories: accusations of hypocrisy and accusations of constitutional blasphemy.

**Accusations of Hypocrisy 1912.** During the Republican nomination race of 1912, progressives aimed accusations of being too conservative at the Republican Party. Although Taft had supported most of the progressive measures, such as trust-busting, both Roosevelt and Lafollette defined themselves as more progressive alternatives to Taft. It was argued that Taft, along with his advisor Elihu Root, were in the pockets of the party establishment unable to implement crucial progressive reforms, the most radical of which was the judicial recall. When President Taft vetoed the enabling act, creating the states of Arizona and New Mexico, he did so in the name of separation of powers, claiming that a constitutional amendment that called for the

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30 Schwartz, 598

31 Also in this category were publications such as Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, describing the horrors of the meatpacking industry. Much of what the progressive movement did, of course, was outside of the presidential nomination race.

32 In fact, through his vigorous trust-busting, Taft had incurred the wrath of many industrial leaders who all had very deep pockets. They threw their support to Roosevelt. Mowry, 278.

33 Mowry, chapter 10
recall of unpopular judges would reduce direct democracy to anarchy. Roosevelt took this as proof that Taft had vetoed the basic principles of popular government.

Accusations of Hypocrisy 2012. Accusations that the Republican Party had lost its way exploded onto the public scene following President Bush’s actions to bail out the banks in 2008. Because he supported bank bailouts, Bush was accused of betraying the ideal of the Republican Party—still listed on its platform—of smaller government interference in the lives of the people. Interfering in the economy by propping up banks seemed like something out of the progressive platform. Immediately after the accusation, Republican politicians began distancing themselves from the Bush administration and accusations of inauthenticity, Republican In Name Only (RINO) abounded. This accusation might be taken to symbolize the nomination race of 2012. The websites of both Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum court the Tea Party movement by defining themselves as the conservative alternative to moderate Mitt Romney. Tea party supporters by and large support Gingrich and Santorum over Romney.

Accusations of Constitutional Blasphemy 1912. Milkis describes the 1912 campaign as “an event of extraordinary intellectual ferment,” with Roosevelt and Taft both taking to the stump making forceful constitutional arguments. Such arguments came to define the race of 1912. In speeches

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34 Mowry, 171.
37 http://www.newt.org/home/
38 http://www.ricksantorum.com/index.php
40 Milkis. TR and Progressive Party, 79
and written contributions to muckraker magazines such as the *Outlook*, Roosevelt advocated a constitution animated by the faithful and incorruptible rule of the people.

In his Charter for Democracy Speech, Roosevelt framed constitutionalism in terms of the liberty of the people to rule themselves by direct democracy, “to nullify the effort to remedy injustice, it is proof positive either that the constitution needs immediate amendment or else that it is being wrongfully and improperly construed.” Taft’s presidency and the entrenched Republican Machine valued, according to Roosevelt, procedure over liberty, money over the common welfare: “We stand for the rights of property, but we stand even more for the rights of man. We will protect the rights of the wealthy man, but we maintain that he holds his wealth subject to the general right of the community to regulate its business use as the public welfare requires.” Roosevelt did not frame the progressive agenda as anti-constitutional; he defined constitutionalism as liberty of the people to rule purely in their own name.

Roosevelt also made direct constitutional appeals in his contributions to *Outlook*. One feature of the progressive era was the rise in investigative journalism; those who made it their business to expose the dirty underbelly of the political machine created relatively inexpensive magazines with wide circulations. The popular appeal of such magazines was obviously a major concern for President Taft, who attempted to raise the price of popular magazines with a new tax.

*Accusations of Constitutional Blasphemy 2012.* One of the defining features of the Tea Party movement is its obsession with recovering a lost interpretation of the Constitution. A vivid example of this was seen on the first day of the new session of Congress in 2010, after the nation

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42 Mowry, 230
sent Tea Party affiliated freshmen to the House of Representatives. Their first order of action was to read from the Constitution. One scholar has argued that Tea Party constitutionalism resembles that of Taft and Elihu Root as the alternative Roosevelt’s progressive interpretation. Stability in a democratic government requires limitations on the will of the sovereign people. The Tea Party, therefore, supports the repeal of the treasured 17th amendment as a means of restricting a popular will that, in the logic of Tea Party constitutionalism, asks too much of an already too expansive national government.

Contemporary popular journalism is more electronic than print. Political talking points and posturing from candidates are far more the norm than are constitutional arguments. Arguments such as Roosevelt’s eloquent defense of progressive constitutionalism found in Charter for Democracy speech are unlikely to appear on popular television shows. Other media outlets include talk radio and the internet, where social movements can organize in a manner of seconds, and disseminate all the constitutional arguments they want. Even though the internet provides a cheap and open forum of ideas—webistes, blogs, and podcasts are especially conducing to deeper constitutional arguments—readership is highly selective and reaches only a sliver of the population, hardly conducive to convincing a mass of the population that your version of the Constitution is the right one. The wider audience still tunes into the major networks for most of their news, and those sources, along with the majority of newspapers, have been consolidated into a handful of corporations. It is difficult to determine whether the Tea

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44 Originally, my hypothesis had been that the number of media outlets in 2012 far surpasses that of 1912. However, the number of media outlets that reach a sizable number of the population is concentrated in the hands of a few larger corporations; this would seem to make the atmosphere of 1912 more conducive to discrediting than 2012. An interesting possibility stemming from this is that progressive reforms such as direct primaries that led to candidate-centered campaigns did weaken the party. The threat to this new kind of party, however, is, not so much social movements, as it is moneyed interests, including corporations. For information on media consolidation see: Smith, Laura K. “Consolidation and News Content: How Broadcast Ownership Policy Impacts Local Television
Party argument for an alternative reading of the Constitution resonates and influences the Republican Party. As of March, all four remaining candidates include in their debates and speeches some reference to limited government and the sanctity of law and procedure. This could be due to a number of alternative factors.

**Party Buffering from Movements**

*Disrupting the Progressives.* The challenges from Roosevelt and the progressives, the fact that Roosevelt won the popular vote and spent more than any other presidential candidate up to that time, forced a campaign that Taft had not anticipated. Fortunately for Taft, the patronage system could be tapped in the South. William McKinley, at the head of Taft forces, scrutinized the Southern states for Roosevelt sympathizers, and then summarily dismissed them. Postmasters were threatened with their positions if they did not bring Taft supporters to the nominating convention.

Furthermore, the Taft machine set out to hold state conventions before Roosevelt could organize his campaign. Even though Roosevelt had spent more than any other candidate, and had won popular support, few newspapers supported him and his staff and nominating body were new organizations, resulting in confused and therefore ineffective authority. This was another advantage the Taft forces could use to disrupt the momentum of Roosevelt’s campaign. By organizing state conventions early, Roosevelt’s forces could not organize in time to win delegates in the South.

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45 Mowry, 225

46 Mowry, 225
Disrupting the Tea Party. The strategy of acquiring Southern delegates by holding state conventions early in the season sounds like the recent strategy of front-loading, which is essentially is the trend, especially since 2008, of states moving their primaries and caucuses closer to the beginning of the delegate selection process. Where once the delegate selection season started up rather slowly, it now takes place very rapidly. But this is a state decision, motivated in part to what has been referred to as New Hampshire envy. One of the effects is that candidates who are not as well prepared have less time to raise funds for an effective campaign. Whereas in 1912 it was Taft who tried to shut out his rives, now the states initiate nomination rules, and the motivation of state law-makers is not one of thwarting a candidate who embodies a social movement, but of gaining more attention from the candidates and from the media. Although the party does not initiate this rule change, it can take advantage of it by utilizing the experience and material resources of seasoned politicians against less-experienced and less well-funded candidates. If the Republican Party felt the urgency to disrupt a Tea Party advantage in the primaries, it could conceivably take advantage of the nomination rules that encourage front-loading.

Discrediting the progressives. Parties can discredit movements by ridicule or by calling them unpatriotic. To discredit Roosevelt and the progressives to a wide audience, the Republican Party could rely on political cartoons from conservative-leaning newspapers to portray Roosevelt as ludicrous and dangerous. Roosevelt’s crusade for direct democracy and his precedent-shattering

48 I have yet to come across satisfactory evidence that the Republican Party has used front-loading to its advantage. Given the poll numbers of Mitt Romney as the candidate to win against Obama over the other Gingrich, Santorum, and Paul, the Republican Party, with its luke-warm embrace of Romney and the roller-coaster of the 2012 nomination race, does not seem to feel any great urgency to prop up one candidate over another.
campaign alarmed newspapers sympathetic to Taft. Cartoonists from *Harper’s Weekly* and *Puck* published cartoons depicting Roosevelt as ludicrous and as a militant demagogue who would force his way into the White House and never leave.\(^49\)

In a cartoon entitled “Floor-Manager Taft,”\(^50\) cartoonist Edward Windsor Kemble, drew Roosevelt clutching the “old lady” of the Grand Old Party, attempting to win her affections by dancing a scandalous new dance craze with her called the Grizzly Bear. The dance was generally associated with the black community. Kemble capitalized on racist attitudes and darkened Roosevelt’s face. As the floor manager of “respectable” club, Taft is pulling at Roosevelt’s coattails and the bust of Lincoln is looking on in disapproval. In “Having a Bully Time,”\(^51\) Kemble dresses Roosevelt in drag and the famous ‘rough rider’ boots, portraying him as a radical supporter of militant suffragettes. He is walking the streets, shattering windows of American government and economy.

Political cartoons from *Harper’s Weekly* also cast Roosevelt as a militant and dangerous demagogue who would win the nomination by any means necessary. In “I Believe in Giving Every Man a Square Deal,” Roosevelt is drawn as a mugger, ready to steal the Republican nomination from an unsuspecting Taft by accosting Taft with the square deal brick he is holding in his hand.\(^52\) Other cartoons show Roosevelt dressed in Kingly attire, addressing his new “subjects,”\(^53\) or as an American Napoleon.

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\(^49\) Paine, Albert Bigelow. *Thomas Nast: His Period and His Pictures.*
Discrediting the Tea Party. Major media outlets, along with popular political satire talk shows such as the Colbert Report and the Daily Show accomplish the same ends as Harper’s Weekly, though it is difficult to determine if the Republican Party is in any way involved. Labeling the media as either more or less conservative is not an indicator of party involvement.

A more direct example of the party discrediting the movement came in the aftermath of the 2010 mid-term elections and the ensuing drama over the debt ceiling. In the 2010 midterm elections, the Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives, picking up 63 seats. The Tea Party movement was an active force in the midterm elections, and when Congress convened in January, more than 50 House members had joined the Tea Party caucus. Their purpose was to reduce the nation’s debt with drastic cuts in government spending. Then, on January 6, 2011, Secretary of the Treasury William Geithner sent a letter to Senate majority leader Harry Reid warning that if Congress did not vote to raise the debt limit, the United States economy would suffer severe negative consequences. As negotiations moved forward, the Tea Party-backed freshmen who had vowed to reduce government spending, obstructed negotiations from moving forward. House Speaker Boehner attempted to broker a deal to get the debt ceiling raised, while at the same time reflecting the intense sentiments of Tea Party followers who were expecting the Tea Party freshmen to hold ranks. Before the August 2 deadline, Gallup Poll numbers showed that 56% of Americans believed an economic crisis would ensue if a compromise was not reached, and 66% of adults favored such a compromise. Fearing electoral disaster from government inaction, Republican members of the Senate and some from the House

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56 July 18, 2011 “Americans, Including Republicans, Want Debt Compromise But Americans also worry that such a plan might not include major spending cuts.” By Frank Newport. http://www.gallup.com/poll/148562/Americans-Including-Republicans-Debt-Compromise.aspx
took the opportunity to blame the Tea Party faction for a potential government shutdown.\textsuperscript{57} The campaign worked. After the 2010 midterm elections, 30\% of Americans had supported the Tea Party. By August 4, two days after the debt ceiling deadline, only 25\% supported the movement, with opposition to the Tea Party from self-described liberals rising to 48\%, significantly greater than the 30\% of conservatives calling themselves strong supporters.\textsuperscript{58} This may be a reason why the Tea Party movement is not as vocal in the presidential nomination race as was otherwise expected. Both Gingrich and Santorum court the Tea Party movement to some extent, but to a much lesser degree than Roosevelt espoused the agenda of the progressive movement.

\textit{Concluding remarks.} The Republican Party of 1912 was able to cast Roosevelt as unpatriotic and dangerous through political cartoons that reached a wide readership. It is difficult to determine the net effect of this strategy of discrediting on Roosevelt’s overall image in the population; Roosevelt still won the popular vote among Republicans. Discrediting the Tea Party movement for the 2012 presidential nomination required less action on the part of Republican Party leaders. Sensitive to public opinion, Republican leaders only had to wait as the Tea Party freshmen demanded the American people to ‘suck it up’ and allow the economy to fall in the short term in order to get the American fiscal house in order for the long term. This was widely unpopular and Republican leadership only had to blame the Tea Party faction and not the Republican Party in general for the gridlock. Support for the Republican Party, especially for members in Congress,

remained low but steady; support of the Tea Party diminished and passionate opposition intensified.

**THE ULTIMATE STRATEGY OF BUFFERING: PURGING INSURGENT MEMBERS FROM THE PARTY**

By the time the Republican Nomination Convention convened in Chicago in the summer of 1912, a broad gulf had formed in the party between those who understood themselves as *conservative* progressives and those who, following Roosevelt and La Follette, demanded more extreme and immediate progressive reform. The overwhelming results of the primaries put Roosevelt well ahead of Taft for the nomination. But 254 of those delegates were contested, and it fell to the body of the Republican National Committee, under the control of Taft supporters, to decide the issue. The Committee awarded 19 contested delegates to Roosevelt and 235 to Taft. Even Elihu Root—perhaps Taft’s greatest supporter—felt uncomfortable with the result.⁵⁹

*The Chicago Convention.* After seating more delegates who supported Taft in the nominating convention, the Republican Machine selected Elihu Root as the candidate to preside over the convention. Roosevelt supporters nominated Governor McGovern of Wisconsin for the chairmanship. After a breakout of pandemonium, members of the convention voted to place Root as the chairman by a margin of 558 to 502.⁶⁰ With Root as chairman, Taft’s nomination was assured, and the conservative identity of the party was solidified in Root’s keynote speech, in which he alienated the losing progressive faction by refusing to extend any kind of olive branch of conciliation. Where keynote convention speeches were generally drafted to placate party

⁵⁹ Mowry, 239
⁶⁰ Mowry, chapter 9
factions and heal the wounds of the nomination contest, Root’s was intentionally antagonistic to the progressive faction. Despite the progressives’ successful tactics of disruption and Roosevelt’s overwhelming popularity, Taft was nominated for the Republican ticket and Root’s keynote speech effectively purged the extreme progressive faction from the party.  

Attempts at purging in 2012. The Republican Party has not decided its presidential candidate by the nominating convention in a long time. Whether the candidate will be the Tea Party preferred Gingrich or Santorum, or whether the Republican Party will keep its more moderate candidate in Romney, will be decided by something other than the party leaders. Perhaps due to the very nature of popular elections, candidates striving today to win the Republican label are not speaking as forcefully to the American public about forcing the government to do less as the Roosevelt forcefully argued that the government to do more. The Tea Party movement lost its popular appeal after the debt ceiling crisis, and a majority of Republicans, even Tea Party supporters, are more concerned with ridding the White House of Obama than with sticking to principle and losing the election. In 1912, the Democrats took advantage of the Republican split and won the White House; Elihu Root responded, “we may have lost the election but we saved the party.” Even if the Tea Party movement had the kind of support that the progressive movement did in 1912, it is difficult to imagine the Republican Party of 2012 responding with the same kind of principled stand as did Elihu Root.

Concluding remarks. Parties and movements have similar opportunities to discredit in 2012 as they did in 1912. Changes in the media, prices and accessibility, do not seem to significantly hinder either party or movement from engaging in strategies of discrediting. Some strategies of

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disruption of 2012 are similar to those of 1912: both progressives and tea partiers engaged in protests. However, it does not seem likely that disrupting electoral nomination rules is an option for the Tea Party movement as it was for the progressives. No one, at least, has actively tried in the 2012 race. The key differences, however, lie in the inability of the Republican Party to control the nominating process in 2012 and their inability to purge unwanted members from the party. If Santorum or Gingrich won enough popular support and enough delegates from the primaries to gain a majority, it hardly seems plausible that any party apparatus or leadership could nominate Romney in his place.

CONCLUSION

Social movements seem to have the net advantage over parties today, if they have popular support. The inability of parties to purge undesired candidates from their ranks lends evidence to the party-decline thesis.

However, parties remain a dominant force in American politics. Gingrich, Santorum, Paul, and Romney are all seeking the Republican nomination. Running as third party is recognized as disastrous to one’s cause. But the party is more than merely a recognizable brand name by which voters can more easily make a decision on Election Day.\textsuperscript{62} In Congress and elsewhere in our system parties also still remain a unifying force.\textsuperscript{63}

Some of what has changed our parties has also changed the presidency. Candidate-centered campaigns and direct primaries liberated the presidential nominee from the party

\textsuperscript{62} Aldrich, 47.
\textsuperscript{63} Party unity voting studies have consistently shown that voting along party lines has increased in the past several decades and continues to remain steady. (Ethridge, Emily. “2011 Vote Studies: Party Unity. CQ Weekly (January 16, 2012): 111-16. \url{http://library.cqweekly/weeklyreport112-000004011282}). Both Aldrich and Milkis recognize the apparent revitalization of the party, especially during the Nixon administration. Traditional patronage-based parties served as a counterweight to presidential power.
machine and thus, liberated him from the stifling control of the party elites. With this liberation came a more empowered presidency whose incumbent could implement programs consistent with the changing political culture which demanded economic security from its government. The new programmatic party system serves the purpose of passing legislation; it is the handmaiden of public policy, rather than a mediator between people and government. 64

But perhaps it is too facile to say that the advantage of these changes has simply redounded to the strength of social movements. Progressive reforms linking the government directly to the people also have the effect of linking the government directly to other competing interests. The interests of individual voters as well as the interests of large and well-organized interest groups are no longer mediated by a party system. Unmediated, direct democracy means direct influence for all those concerned, not just the poor and hungry. Progressive reforms weakened the need for patronage-based parties by making candidates less reliant on the party for their nomination, but progressive reforms have also caused the candidates to be in greater need of resources in order to run a successful campaign. Parties can still provide the experience and some of the financial resources to assist candidates in their campaigns, but even this residual role as the vendor of campaign services may be further undermined as a result of the decision in Citizens United. SUPERPACs may have the effect of further aligning interest directly to government.

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64 President and Parties