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into the strategic competition between the centre-left and the radical left.

For those interested in contemporary party politics, the book raises important questions about the coherence of European party families and how best to measure their electoral and organisational strength. To this end, Chiocchetti provides an index of RLP strength (a composite of factors that includes electoral, parliamentary, governmental, membership, financial strength). Those studying the radical left will also find it interesting that this book takes an overtly national, rather than a party-level approach. This allows the author to pay attention to the wider interaction between larger RLPs and a plethora of extra-parliamentary radical left organisations, factions and micro-parties that operate alongside them. Here, the author shows that scholars have generally overlooked the development of such groups which is problematic when they have the potential to shape the development of the radical left.

Several other contributions stand out from this book. Chiocchetti's attempt to separate out the historical development and electoral success of the radical left into discrete stages will help scholars to structure future studies. His book also presents a wealth of data that researchers will find useful. This includes quantitative data on the extent of fragmentation in the radical left across Europe. This enables the author to account for the variation in the number of RLPs that contest parliamentary elections in different countries and to explore how fragmentation within the RLP family changed over time. New data on the electoral sociology of RLPs in Germany, France and Italy also make a welcome contribution to the literature on these cases and

complements the author's pioneering efforts to establish an online database on the Western European Radical Left.

Chiocchetti also provides some interesting arguments about the impact of changes within capitalism, national political systems and European integration on the development of RLPs. Scholars will find use in his points about the obstacles that such factors pose to RLP electoral success and political influence. More concretely, he finds that RLPs have had limited success in opposing austerity and challenging neo-liberal policies when they have participated in government or cooperated with the centre-left. It is argued that, given this balance sheet, it is not easy to understand the continued popularity of government participation among RLP leaders. He also questions the possibility of enacting anti-neo-liberal policies while operating within the framework of EU institutions.

Those seeking to develop more fine-grained comparative theoretical frameworks will also find that this book presents a number of useful ideas. For example, it raises questions as to why many RLPs have only managed to win small proportions of those voters that are dissatisfied with neo-liberal policies. In doing so, the book adds considerable evidence to support findings in earlier studies that RLPs missed opportunities because of their internal limitations. It explains how RLPs were plagued by infighting at the onset of the Great Recession and helps us to make sense of these internal divisions. It shows how such divisions have revolved around the dilemmas posed by finding a way to oppose neo-liberal policies, the potential for unity with the centre-left and whether an anti-neo-liberal or explicitly anti-capitalist politics is preferable.

David M Willumsen, *The Acceptance of Party Unity in Parliamentary Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017; xvii + 174 pp.: ISBN 9 780 198 805 434, £ 60.00 (hbk)

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The book, which is based on the author's dissertation written at the European University Institute (EUI), revisits the question of why members of parliament (MPs) in parliamentary democracies almost always toe the party line in legislative voting. The main theoretical claim is that MPs rationally accept party unity on the basis of their long-term self-interest: they acknowledge that being part of a united party provides them with long-term benefits that outweigh the costs of voting against their personal preferences on some votes. Willumsen outlines this strategy, which he labels "pragmatic fidelity" theoretically in Chapters 1 and

2 and distinguishes it from alternative explanation based on rational short-term self-interest as well as long-term norm-driven socialization. To test his claim empirically, the author uses a thus-far largely ignored data source: the evaluation of party unity by legislators themselves in surveys. More specifically, Willumsen analyzes a cross-national survey of MPs from Nordic countries in the late 1990s (Chapter 3), a time series of Swedish MP surveys from 1985 to 2010 (Chapter 4), and a cross-national survey from the Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland) in the mid-1990s (Chapter 5).

Acknowledging the difficulty of measuring long-term cost-benefit calculations of MPs, the author follows an indirect research strategy, which is tied to the Popperian logic of falsification: he seeks support for his claim by systematically excluding rival explanations. Given the consistently high levels of unity in roll call voting, his dependent variables refer to MPs' attitudes toward party unity (Is it judged as too high or too low? How should an MP behave if torn between his/her personal opinion and the party line?), which displays more variation to be explained.

Willumsen comprehensively discusses three rival explanations of party unity: (1) preference homogeneity within the party (i.e. the absence of incentives to deviate due to an efficient selection and/or self-selection of MPs into ideologically cohesive groups), (2) positive and negative sanctions by party leaders that address MPs' short-term electoral incentives and career goals, and (3) long-term socialization. Regression analyses and some qualitative analysis of open survey answers show that none of the explanations can systematically account for observed differences in MPs' attitudes toward party unity nor, by the author's implication, the high levels of voting unity. In a last crucial step, the author argues that the failure of rival explanations along with the observed high levels of voting unity implies that the latter can be attributed to "pragmatic fidelity."

There is much to like about the book. Its focus on explaining high levels of unity rather than small divergence from it provides a valuable corrective for a literature that has focused mostly on explaining rare dissent and thus runs the danger of taking the much more prevalent (but still puzzling!) pattern of unity for granted. Second, it is one of the first studies of parliamentary democracies to empirically assess Keith Krehbiel's famous challenge that party unity could simply be the result of homogenous preferences without any analytically distinct party effect (see, e.g., Krehbiel, 1993). Willumsen provides systematic evidence that parties consist of members with roughly similar policy preferences (due to efficient selection and self-selection processes), but a sizable share of MPs still have policy incentives to deviate from the party line because they are positioned closer to another party or the median member of parliament. Thus, preference homogeneity is not sufficient for explaining near-perfect voting unity. His argument that the missing piece is to be found in MPs' rational long-term interests rather than short-term incentives is novel and plausible. Third, the case selection for the empirical analysis allows a broad test of this claim because it comprises parties with widely varying strength (organizationally strong, stable, and ideologically cohesive parties in the Nordic countries compared to loose and ideologically heterogeneous parliamentary clubs in the Visegrád countries in the 1990s) following the logic of a most different cases design.

The main issue one can take with the book is the indirect research design. While the theoretical claim that party unity rests to a considerable degree on "pragmatic fidelity" is

plausible, it is debatable to what extent this claim is actually substantiated by the empirical analysis. At the least, readers must be willing to accept two rather controversial assumptions: First, the list of rival explanations must be complete and validly measured; otherwise the lack of evidence in favor of these explanations does not allow the conclusion that the only explanation left is the one advanced by the author. Second, MPs' attitudes toward party unity must be shaped by the same factors as voting behavior, that is, variables that do not affect attitudes may not affect behavior, either.

Willumsen argues, based on research from social psychology, that attitudes reflect both personality-specific factors and MPs' experience with the costs and benefits of the object in question, in this case party unity (pp. 12–16). Thus, he claims that the failure of short-term incentives to explain differences in MP attitudes on party unity imply that the same incentives do not affect behavior, either. Otherwise positive or negative experiences with party unity regarding short-term incentives should be reflected in an MP's attitudes toward it. This assumption is quite strong because it ignores the possibility that MPs rationalize their behavior (which is reflected in general attitudes toward party unity) with arguments that differ from the actual causes. For example, an MP can support the notion that party unity in general is as a good thing even though she would prefer to diverge from the party line on a specific issue and only votes the party line due to selective incentives in this vote. Given the rather strong assumptions required, the nexus between attitudes and behavior and its consequences for the validity of the empirical claims could have been discussed in more detail.

This criticism notwithstanding, David Willumsen's book makes an important contribution to the literature on party unity because it establishes MP surveys as a valuable data source, demonstrates the amount of preference homogeneity within European parties, and challenges existing explanations of legislative voting that are based on either short-term self-interest or long-term, norm-based behavior. Willumsen's claim that legislative behavior rests on MPs' *rational long-term* interests in preserving party unity should become the focus of more empirical attention in future research.

Reference

Krehbiel K (1993) Where's the party?. *British Journal of Political Science* 23(2): 235–266.