

Party discipline and parliamentary government



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[PARTY_DISCIPLINE_AND_PARLIAMENTARY_GOVERNMENT.pdf \(19.70Mb\)](#)

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Subjects (LCSH):

[Party discipline -- Europe](#)
[Political parties -- Europe](#)
[Legislative bodies -- Europe](#)

Issue Date:

1999

Metadata

[Show full item record](#)

Publisher:

The Ohio State University Press

Series/Report no.:

Parliaments and legislatures series

Description:

(print) ix, 304 p. : ill. ; 24 cm

Contents:

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Type:

Book

ISBN:

0814207960 (print)

0814250009 (print)

Other Identifiers:
OCLC #39464847 (print)
LCCN 98011722 (print)

URI:
<http://hdl.handle.net/1811/30228>

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[Ohio State University Press Publications](#)

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Party discipline in parliamentary systems, in comparison, tends to be high as it is often strictly controlled and enforced by the party leadership. Whereas parliaments in presidential systems are primarily legislative assemblies, with a special emphasis on the power of the purse, parliaments in parliamentary systems are mostly centers of decision-making that can remove the executive from power if they succeed in mobilizing the necessary majority in parliament. The mutual independence of government and parliament renders the fulfillment of such a function by any party in presidential systems superfluous. Instead, parties here serve to supply presidential candidates with support during their race for office ("electoral machines"). 2002. 'Parliaments, Parties, and MPs: A Comparative Perspective on Backbench Dissent, Party Discipline, and Intra-party Politics', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Rochester. Kam, Christopher and Indridason, Indridi. 2005. 'The Timing of Cabinet Reshuffles in Five Westminster Parliamentary Systems', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 30: 327-63. 'On the Primacy of Party in Government: Why Legislative Parties Can Survive Party Decline in the Electorate', in Dalton, Russell J. and Wattenberg, Martin P. (eds.), *Parties without Partisans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 238-57. Tocqueville, Alexis. Consequently, this book examines party discipline and parliamentary politics in four Westminster parliamentary democracies: Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The focus is on a single political act, the decision by an MP either to toe the party line or to break ranks and dissent. 3. Of course, MPs not only make this decision repeatedly. the contrast between single-party and coalition government should not be overdrawn. At the end of the day, parliamentary government, whatever its precise form, requires a high degree of party unity. 6. A division is said to be whipped when the party has given its MPs express instructions on how to vote.