

No Money, No Party: The Role of Political Parties in Electoral Campaigns

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In: *Wealth and Power: Philosophical Perspectives* (in press)

Abstract

This chapter aims to offer a fresh perspective on campaign finance by looking at political parties as key organisations of electoral campaigns. The chapter defends three claims: (1) that parties are ideally suited to organise campaigns in accordance with the democratic principle of collective self-rule, because they realise campaigns' epistemic, justificatory and motivational functions; (2) that campaign finance regulations affect parties' capacity to fulfil these functions, as well as their mutual relations and internal structure; and as a consequence (3) that we should consider their proper functioning at least as a pro tanto reason in favour of public funding, specifically in the form of a voucher system. After the introduction, the chapter illustrates the normative conception of political parties and then shows in the third section how they are ideally suited to organise electoral campaigns. The fourth section introduces the debate around campaign finance regulations, while the fifth clarifies why normative theorists working on parties and campaign finance should talk to each other and outlines a potential benefit of the voucher system for intra-party democracy. The conclusion wraps up.

Keywords

political parties, campaigns, elections, political finance, vouchers

Introduction

Money works its way through all aspects of the democratic process and may be thought to represent its “biggest threat” (Dworkin 1996), but nowhere is its role as noticeable as in political campaigns, often seen as *the* democratic moment par excellence. Through elections, citizens put candidates in office and authorise their exercise of political power. Through political campaigns, candidates

¹ I would like to thank all participants to the Wealth and Power workshop, as well as to a 2020 ECPR GC Panel, for their helpful comments. Special thanks go to the three anonymous referees, the editors of this collection and Carlo Burelli. This research was funded by a European Grant H2020-MSCA-IF-2018, project number 836571, and by Goethe University's ConTrust Initiative.

(compete to) put themselves on the ballot. There are different democratic values at stake in a political campaign (Lipsitz 2004), and more importantly there are various political actors involved (namely, individuals, parties, corporations, unions, and nonprofit organisations) and multiple ways in which money influences electoral results (Christiano 2012).

While concerns about corruption, political equality, and fair competition have generally pervaded the debate about campaign finance regulations, this chapter focuses on the neglected role of political parties. Empirically, a political party is a form of association that contests elections (Sartori [1976] 2005). Normatively, a party must also have other core features: accepting pluralism and the legitimacy of other parties as competitors (Urbinati 2019) as well as providing a policy platform that systematises values and interests in a coherent and generalisable way (White and Ypi 2016).

In this chapter, I advance three claims: (1) that parties are ideally suited to organise political campaigns in accordance with the democratic principle of collective self-rule, because they realise campaigns' epistemic, justificatory and motivational functions; (2) that campaign finance regulations affect parties' capacity to fulfil these functions and their internal structure; and as a consequence (3) that we should consider their proper functioning at least as a *pro tanto* reason in favour of public funding, specifically in the form of a voucher system. If political parties are vital to our democracies, as I argue, overlooking them has problematic consequences for campaign finance. Conversely, since campaign finance regulations affect parties' functioning, normative party scholars should start worrying about campaign finance.

The chapter is organised as follows. The next section introduces the normative debate on political parties, while the third one zooms into parties' capacity to fulfil campaigns' three functions, illustrating how they are ideally suited to organise elections in a democratic way.

The fourth section covers campaign finance, emphasising the little attention normative theorists have paid to political parties compared to other concerns. The scholarly debate on this issue is extensive, ranging from comparative politics to legal and constitutional theory, to economics and political theory (Dawood 2015). Its complexity makes it impossible to give an exhaustive account of all the various positions, and I only offer admittedly simplistic silhouettes of the main arguments in favour of public funding.

The fifth section explains why political parties matter for a normative account of campaign finance and vice versa: different financing schemes enhance or hinder parties' capacities to fulfil the three campaign functions and affect their internal structure. Parties' proper functioning qualifies then as another *pro tanto* reason in favour of public funding. While this may seem underwhelming as 69.2 percent of countries already provide direct public funding to political parties, either regularly or for campaigns or both,ⁱ looking at the effect of state subsidies on parties' internal structure helps us see how a specific type of public funding, namely the voucher system, seems particularly beneficial for intraparty democracy.

Political Parties

While political science has always looked at parties in representative mass democracy as non-replaceable (Sartori [1976] 2005, 24), political philosophy famously neglected them (Schattschneider 1942, 16; van Biezen and Saward 2008). Such disregard has come to an end (Muirhead and Rosenblum 2020); in the last fifteen years, partisanship has received wide recognition as a rightful topic of normative analysis. Important contributions have bolstered a sense of its intrinsic value (White and Ypi 2016; cf. Efthymiou 2018) and its compatibility with public reason (Muirhead and Rosenblum 2006; Bonotti 2017) and deliberation (Rosenblum 2008; White and Ypi 2011; 2016; Wolkenstein 2016; cf. Muirhead 2010).

Despite its internal differences, this burgeoning literature aims to vindicate the value of political parties in representative and mass democracies by adding normative content to political scientists' minimal definition. Empirically, a political party is "any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office" (Sartori [1976] 2005, 57). An organisation's political goals, its electioneering style, and its internal structure have no import: so long as it contests elections by placing candidates for office, that organisation is a party.

Normatively, though, this is not enough. This definition cannot discriminate between proper parties and factions, and such a distinction is needed for parties to be normatively valuable. Factions, Jonathan White and Lea Ypi (2016) argue, are rightly seen as dangerous and disruptive of the political system because they pursue mere aggregations of certain sectoral interests in society, and accordingly they tend to disrupt the democratic game. Parties, in contrast, offer "principled visions of what society should look like for the benefit of all" (51). They provide partisan but not partial conceptions of the

common good and aspire to harness political power to govern in the name and for the benefit of the people.

According to the normative literature, parties must have two core features: (1) they offer a (partisan) view of the common good rather than pursuing sectoral interests (White and Ypi 2016); (2) since they accept the partiality of their own view, they also accept pluralism and take other parties as legitimate competitors (White and Ypi 2016; Urbinati 2019; Herman and Muirhead 2020). Hence, a normatively defensible concept of partisanship must place “at the core of the idea of party the pursuit of political visions irreducible to the self-centred aims of sectoral groups or to personal interests” (White and Ypi 2016, 13); such political visions include generalisable aims and principles (5) articulated on the basis of reasons all citizens can accept (60; see also Bonotti 2017, 108). Since parties recognise the contestability of their claims and the legitimacy of other contestants, they also abide by a fundamental democratic ethos, being committed to regulated rivalry and peaceful rotation in office (Muirhead and Rosenblum 2020).ⁱⁱ

So understood, not only are parties not a threat to democratic institutions, they are also a valuable contribution to realising the democratic principle of collective self-rule. Parties act as “agents of popular sovereignty” (Wolkenstein 2019) by connecting citizens to government in two ways. First, parties on the ground bring likeminded individuals together and enable them to shape public affairs by connecting their values and views to legislation (Wolkenstein 2020, 27). As such they are “channels of expression” (Sartori [1976] 2005, 24) that play an essential role in making representative government democratic (Schattschneider [1942] 2004). Second, parties in office offer political justifications for policy proposals that are supposed to be publicly accessible to all citizens in virtue of their being anchored to a conception of the common good that takes the interests of all into account (Bonotti 2017). Their claims are always contestable, but all citizens can acknowledge that partisans are not merely advancing their sectoral interests but are rather engaged in a process of public reason giving (White and Ypi 2011). In this respect, the content of democratic decision-making is justified to citizens even though they do not take direct part in elaborating and selecting proposals (Biale and Ottonelli 2019, 508).

If normatively valuable parties differ from factions in the way described, we can see that it is not simply the case that they are those organisations contesting elections; rather, they *ought* to do so. That parties do organise political competition in the context of mass democracy is hardly a

controversial statement. What is not as uncontroversial is that they also ought to do so according to a normative theory of what parties should be. To see why this is the case, we need first to understand electoral campaigns and their purpose. The next section identifies their three functions and shows how parties are particularly suited to fulfil them.

Parties and Electoral Campaigns

Campaigns are run by a candidate or party before their prospective voters and cover the ensemble of activities and practices, such as rallies, door-to-door and social media outreach, political advertising, and public debates, that aim at supporting that candidate's bid for office. Accordingly, campaigns are mainly composed of a "string of speech acts" with a communicative intent (Beerbohm 2016, 383; see also Lipsitz 2004, 170–71; Thompson 2019) and generally cover the period, more or less formally specified, preceding an election (Thompson 2004).ⁱⁱⁱ Hence, they contribute to "the most fundamental institution of representative democracy": the electoral process (Kateb 1981, 357). Elections serve at least two purposes: (1) they provide the means for "selecting representatives from among a slate of candidates" (Thompson 2002, 23); and (2) they give citizens the opportunity to hold officeholders accountable (Bovens 2007; Mansbridge 2014). By preparing citizens for elections, campaigns enable them to exercise their political agency and impress their views and values on the lawmaking process, according to the democratic principle of collective self-rule.

Importantly, campaigns are a highly contextual issue, as they are affected not only by various socioeconomic circumstances, but also by a country's political institutions. Electoral incentives differ from one system to another depending on the electoral law (proportional representation versus first-past-the-post), the way constituencies are organised (single-member versus multimember districts), and the number of parties contesting elections (two parties or more) (Thompson 2019, 229), as well as the broader democratic setup (parliamentarianism versus presidentialism), and constitutional essentials (Dawood 2015, 330). That said, as a preparatory stage before elections, it seems reasonable to require that all campaigns fulfil at least three functions, regardless of the different context in which they take place.^{iv}

First, campaigns have an *epistemic* function: they must inform citizens of available options. As Eric Beerbohm (2016) convincingly argues, the practice of electioneering is relational and epistemically loaded and consists of two kinds of transactions: "The first is testimonial. Candidates

vouch for p —whether p is a political conviction they claim to hold or a bill they intend to co-sponsor. You *vouch for p* that what you say is true. The second is promissory. You vouch p by assuring that you will *make p true*, registering your authentic practical commitment” (390–91).

Campaigns are “information environments” (Lipsitz 2004, 163) which complement elections: they are meant to provide citizens with the necessary knowledge to make their choice at the voting booth. Even though the way campaigns are run may seem to disprove campaigns’ epistemic function, evidence shows that campaigns significantly increase citizens’ political knowledge, especially for those who begin with the least information (Coleman and Manna 2000; Freedman, Franz, and Goldstein 2004; Jacobson 2015). In fact, voters’ right to be correctly informed is an important concern in the campaign finance discussion (Beitz 1989, 212–13; Thompson 2002, 109ff.).

How do parties discharge this epistemic function? They structure the debate surrounding elections and reduce informational complexity by developing comprehensive and coherent programmes that select and articulate various demands and interests around a principled vision of society (Beitz 1989, 184ff; Christiano 1996, 222–23; White and Ypi 2010). By marshalling competing concerns that pervade political debates, and by clarifying the stakes and implications for citizens, parties help them process information to make autonomous decisions.

This function is particularly important in the context of the moral division of labour characterising modern democracies (Christiano 1996; 2012). Citizens do not have the time and resources to competently assess disparate issues, ranging from climate change to pension schemes, from transportation to geopolitics, from health care to education. Nevertheless, the democratic principle of collective self-rule expects them to take a leading role in the decision-making process, at least with respect to society’s fundamental aims (Christiano 2012). All of this requires knowledge and competence. Parties supply them by acting as coordination agencies: their internal division of labour allows them to turn to trusted experts in these fields and to personnel specialising in illustrating the problems and stakes to the public (Christiano 1996, 223).

Information is not enough, as the point of campaigns is ultimately to persuade voters to support a candidate’s bid for office. Campaigns’ second function is thus *justificatory*. From the candidate’s point of view, electioneering serves to advertise and defend her political views, policy proposals and character. The currency of electoral campaigns is reasons: by appealing to reasons that

voters may share, challengers aim to convince them of the soundness of their programme and incumbents aim to do likewise and to give an account of what they did in office. These reasons may be unsatisfactory, but they are essential in a campaign effort. Voters cannot be bought; they can only be persuaded (cf. Brennan 2011).

Like all justificatory endeavours (White and Ypi 2016, 62–65), campaigns are comparative and adversarial. In principle, this trait should contribute to satisfying their epistemic function, since letting candidates confront each other in debates allows citizens to gain relevant information about their programmes (Manin 2017). It is because each candidate has an interest in getting more votes that she will expose her competitors' programme to harsh scrutiny, and it is because challengers need to beat the incumbent that they will unload on voters all the information they have about her conduct in office. For this reason, negative campaigning has been defended as an abrasive but nevertheless effective way to increase citizens' knowledge of political matters close to elections (Sides, Lipsitz, and Grossmann 2010; Mattes and Redlawsk 2015).

Parties fulfil satisfactorily this *justificatory* function because they provide justifications for their programmes that are *addressed to* and *accessible by* all citizens (White and Ypi 2011; Bonotti 2017).^v Furthermore, because partisans are meant to realise their own values and programmes (Muirhead 2014, 69), they have “an inherent tendency to articulate their claims and programs in adversarial terms calling for the public to constantly compare, assess, and redefine the arguments on which their political proposals are grounded” (Biale and Ottonelli 2019, 505). This ambition compels parties to be “bilingual” (Muirhead and Rosenblum 2006): they operate as a two-way channel of communication and expression (Sartori [1976] 2005) by gathering claims and demands from citizens and by organising these claims on a principled platform meant to affect political decisions. By contesting their competitors, parties foster public discussion and improve the rationality of the entire process. This is particularly important to the democratic ideal of collective self-rule because citizens need to recognise collective decisions as justifiable according to their own lights (Lafont 2019), and parties help them understand when, why, and how this is the case.

Campaigns' third function is *motivational*. Many things go on in people's lives that they must pay attention to, and politics does not always come first. The purpose of campaigns is to mobilise citizens and get them to vote, thereby enabling them to exercise their political agency. While campaigns point to include citizens in the active electorate, parties tend to keep citizens engaged even

beyond the electoral moment. They do so not by inviting peaceful deliberation in the public sphere; rather, they call on people to share *their* views and offer reasons in defence of the values *they* endorse. In so doing, parties give citizens membership in a political community that has shared values and ideals and a history of achievements and struggles, all of which determine their political identity and a related sense of purpose that prompts them to exercise their agency effectively at and beyond elections (White and Ypi 2011; 2016; Ypi 2016; Biale and Ottonelli 2019). In other words, parties boost citizens' motivation and enable them to exercise the active role that democratic institutions require of them.

To see why parties are ideally suited to fulfil these functions, let us compare them with campaigns run by individuals, as it was the case in the earlier stages of parliamentarism (Manin 1997). Without parties, both Tom Christiano (1996, 222–23) and Robert Goodin (2008, 209–11) observe, politics would be a lot more personalistic. As Goodin's (2008) thought experiment of a "No-Party Democracy" illustrates, people would run for office as individuals "completely in their own right", and accordingly, "they would commend themselves to voters, first and foremost, on the basis of their own personal characteristics" (209). A focus on personality would also make coalition building with other elected officials personal and ad hoc, thereby favouring clientelism. According to Goodin, identity politics and patronage politics would be even more on the rise if individual candidates dominated because presumably having only individual candidates running for office would increase the importance of demographically shared characteristics and sectoral interests, thereby making principled politics more difficult to pursue (Goodin 2008, 210).

Even if individual candidates did manage to offer political values as structuring commitments for selecting and articulating societal demands, they would end up complicating the issue space. The tendency to fragmentation and multiplication of cleavages would prevent individual candidates from fulfilling both the epistemic and the justificatory dimensions of campaigns. Epistemically, there would be "a lot of extra noise in the electoral process" (Christiano 1996, 222) and the political landscape would be too complex for citizens given their limited cognitive resources. It would also be more difficult for citizens to keep track of all available justifications and to hold elected officials accountable for what they promised during their campaign. Motivationally, in the absence of associative practices of the like of political parties, citizens would not share a sense of belonging to the same political project. By contrast, as we have seen, parties provide a powerful shortcut for

structuring citizens' relation with the political world; namely, they enable citizens to choose society's fundamental aims and hold parties accountable for their enacted programmes.

Political parties seem then to play a crucial role in fulfilling the three campaign functions, which in turn help citizens select and hold accountable officeholders, thereby realising the ideal of collective self-rule. It is important to point out, however, that these three functions are not always achievable at the same time in the same way. Rather, they may be in tension and the need for trade-offs between them may arise.

To mention the starkest conflict: the motivational function of campaigns may lead to behaviours that undermine the justificatory and epistemic function. The potentially self-enforcing relation between informing citizens and giving them reasons has led scholars to consider the electoral process not only as part of a deliberative system, but as deliberative in itself (Christiano 1996, 244; Lipsitz 2004). This seems unwarranted. The point of deliberative interactions, and the aim that participants in such interactions ought to have, is either to achieve agreement (Gutmann and Thompson 1998) or, in its epistemic reading, to correctly identify justice and the common good (Martí 2006; Estlund and Landemore 2018). However, candidates' goals while electioneering are neither to reach agreement with their opponent or the public nor to speak truth to the public for truth's sake. Campaigning involves adversarial and strategic interactions in which various candidates compete for citizens' votes (Thompson 2013; 2019; Bagg and Tranvik 2019). While this will hopefully lead to a more knowledgeable and reasonable public, a highly polarised context may well prompt candidates seeking to win elections to lie about their opponents' views, and it may lead to forms of pandering and manipulation. If this electioneering style is adopted by important competitors, it may end up poisoning the entire electoral debate, to the disadvantage of the voters that campaigns are meant to inform.

One may think that partisanship, as consistent with deliberation and public reason (White and Ypi 2016; Muirhead and Rosenblum 2006; Bonotti 2011; 2017; cf. Muirhead 2010), is at odds with campaigns' nondeliberative environment. This is not the case, though. While deliberation is not necessarily excluded from partisanship and may well develop among fellow partisans who share the same worldviews and commitments (Wolkenstein 2016; 2020), a partisan conception of agency does not require citizens to examine political issues in an *impartial* and *detached* way all the time, as deliberative accounts do (Biale 2018). The entire point of partisanship is that partisans are free to be

partial towards their own viewpoints, so long as they recognise the legitimacy, but not the equal value, of others' (Biale 2018, 137). Naturally, this still means that partisans should avoid factionalism, in the sense of a staunch defence of purely sectoral interests in an ideological, biased, and even fact-insensitive manner, as this would be incompatible with their acceptance of pluralism. Yet this requirement does not translate into an obligation to assume an impartial perspective on political issues. Independents who listen to partisans' debates may assess the facts impartially, but partisans who present their views typically do not.

When they conform to their normative expectations thus, parties seem to satisfy the three functions of campaigns in that they are particularly well positioned to inform citizens, offer them reasons in support of their programmes, and mobilise them. Fulfilling these functions, however, requires money. The time in which each citizen could simply stand up in the agora and offer to run for an elected office by declaring his willingness to do so is long gone if it was ever there at all. In contemporary mass democracies, no candidate can hope to inform, persuade, and motivate her prospective voters without having the necessary financial resources to reach them. These resources pay for advertising, printing flyers, buying airtime on national radio and TV broadcasts,^{vi} and of course organising events (to raise more money). While throwing money at campaigns does not *guarantee* electoral success (Amorós and Puy 2010), not only is a minimal financial endowment necessary, but it seems also to affect a candidate's chances of winning (Alexander 2005).

Access to the electoral process would be completely unfair for individual candidates. Only people who are already wealthy and well connected would stand a chance at presenting themselves as viable candidates, while all other politically engaged citizens would be prevented from contesting elections. By contrast, parties offer a structure for political competition that does not simply reflect and reproduce citizens' economic inequalities in the political sphere. Rather, they pool resources from different sources, like membership dues, private donations and public funds (van Biezen and Kopecký 2017), and use them to support their candidates' bid for office. Candidates' selection procedure may vary according to a country's inter- and intra-party system (Bagg and Bhatia 2021), but it remains true that a party not only organises but also finances its candidate's campaign. And yet normative theorists working on parties do not interact with normative theorists working on campaign finance. To remedy this lack of communication, the next section outlines the scholarly debate over campaign finance, while the fifth explains what party and campaign scholars can learn from each other.

Campaign Finance

While often making the headlines of many democratic countries' political debate, campaign finance has rarely been thoroughly scrutinised by democratic theorists. Most scholars who examine it have the US case in mind: they tend to overlook other countries' funding schemes and focus on the US Supreme Court's rulings. As a result, the normative literature on campaign finance have completely overlooked the role of parties, as in the US these are less structured and best understood as "loose alliances" rather than proper organisations (Katz and Kolodny 1994, 24). This is unsurprising, as campaign finance is at the same time a very sensitive issue in American public discourse and highly contextual, connected as it is to the broader set of circumstances in which electoral campaigns take place.

Campaign finance situates itself in a middle-ground position between the institutions of the electoral system and campaign ethics, which governs political actors' electioneering conduct. For this reason, offering a normative account of campaign finance that is justifiable across various electoral systems is difficult. And yet the problem of how private money skews the democratic process sadly characterises various democracies around the globe (Cagé 2020). This chapter adopts a comparative approach by referring to Western European countries while at the same time following the normative blueprint laid out by US scholars.^{vii}

According to Dennis Thompson (2002, 105), regulations of campaign finance involve three related questions: (1) *the object of regulation* (contributions, expenditures, or both); (2) *the subject whose contribution* is regulated (wealthy individuals, parties, unions, interest groups); (3) *the objective of regulation* (fighting inequity, corruption, lack of competitiveness, etc.). Before moving on to the third question, which constitutes the normative core of the debate about campaign finance, a few terminological clarifications are needed.

The use of private money in campaigns can be divided into two broad categories: contributions (the money that individuals and legal entities donate to candidates) and expenditures (the money candidates spend on their campaign). Although clearly connected, the giving and the spending of money have been traditionally kept separate in the US public debate (Issacharoff and Karlan 1999). The US Supreme Court, for instance, claimed that the two are analytically distinct when it declared that limits on expenditures, but not on contributions, are unconstitutional (*Buckley v. Valeo*). According to the court's reasoning, both limits on contributions and limits on expenditures constitute

infringements on the First Amendment rights of free speech and association. However, while limits on contributions are justified because they prevent corruption or its appearance, limits on expenditures lack such a strong justification and are therefore unacceptable (Sunstein 1994; Dawood 2015, 333). Clearly, this position is not universally shared, as European countries such as France, the UK, and Italy feature limits on candidates' spending and states such as Spain, the UK, and Italy also limit political parties' expenditures.^{viii} To give an example of how consequential expenditure limits can be, compare the US, on the one hand, where no limits apply, and France and the UK, on the other, where they do. The average candidate for the US House of Representatives spent about \$1.7 million in 2018 (Sides et al. 2019, 85), whereas in France and the UK the average parliamentary candidate contented herself with spending around 18,000 euros in 2012 and 4,000 euros in 2015, respectively (Cagé 2020, 22). Even accounting for population differences, the spending difference is significant.

This chapter focuses on contributions, which can further be divided into direct and indirect ones. Direct contributions, or *hard money*, are campaign-related funds given directly to a candidate or party. Indirect contributions, or *soft money*, are all funds that are not directly given to a candidate's campaign. They include both funds given to political parties for nonpartisan goals, such as encouraging people to vote, and funds given to third parties for influencing public opinion (Sides et al. 2019). Among third parties we count interest groups, faith-based organisations, charities, and, in the US context, political action committees (PACs) and "independent expenditure committees" (known as Super PACs).^{ix} The lack of restrictions on third-party spending is an increasingly serious problem, as other spending limits can be eluded by rerouting money through other channels (Issacharoff and Karlan 1999). In *Citizens United v. FEC*, the US Supreme Court, for instance, maintained the limit on third parties' direct contributions but lifted the one on indirect ones, allowing third parties' use of soft money and allowing corporations and unions to engage in independent spending on electioneering communications (Dawood 2015, 333). Yet the issue also concerns many other democratic countries, as third parties are rarely banned from spending on campaign activities (only 13.3 percent of states ban them) and 42.8 percent of countries have no limitation on third-party spending at all, including Germany, France, and Italy.^x

The distinction between hard and soft money helps elucidate what Tom Christiano (2012) has in mind when he distinguishes between two relevant ways money affects political campaigns: "gatekeeping" and "influence on public opinion" (244ff.).^{xi}

Money acts as a gatekeeper when paying individuals or legal entities can set the agenda by funding their preferred candidates. This is the case of direct contributions (hard money). By financing certain candidates, wealthy individuals and interest groups obtain protection of their interests at the decision-making level (Gilens 2012; Bartels 2016). Gatekeeping money can also indirectly distort the deliberative process insofar as politicians' talking points shape the public discourse in a way that makes the viewpoints of the affluent more visible.

In contrast, money influences public opinion when paying individuals or legal entities can broadcast their opinions to the public more extensively. This is what happens with indirect contributions and related expenditures, which sway public opinion in one way or another. In Christiano's (2012) words, "If a certain sector of the society has a much greater influence on the process of opinion creation, modification, and dissemination than any other sector, the likelihood is that that sector will determine the conceptions of justice and its importance, the common good, and individual interests that are available for discussion and adoption in the society" (247). Naturally the two phenomena are intertwined: just as donations to candidates can end up influencing the public sphere through candidates' speeches, so can indirect expenditures affect candidates' electoral chances by swaying public opinion.

Since contributions affect elections in intertwined ways, a thorough normative account of campaign finance ought to consider both money as gatekeeper and money as influence. However, as Ryan Pevnick (2016a) observes, all three most important rationales that have been invoked to regulate campaign finance may either threaten citizens' right to free speech if they require a strict cap on both gatekeeping and influence money, or result ineffective if they only apply to money as gatekeeping.^{xii} Rather than justifying a system of ceilings, then, it may be helpful to focus on a system of floors, i.e., public funding. Firstly, hard money acting as gatekeeper is what is primarily at stake when political parties are involved and what public financing ensures. Secondly, all three main rationales for campaign finance regulations support public funding, the justification of which seems to take precedence over the justification of restrictions (Thompson 2002, 113).^{xiii} Finally, the case of European countries, most of which enjoy generous public provisions, show that when state subsidies are predominant, "other sources of income tend to be relatively insignificant" (van Biezen and Kopecký 2017, 88).

The first and virtually undisputed concern is the threat of corruption. At the basic level corruption involves public power used to realise private gains (Thompson 2005) and so-called quid pro quo corruption happens when donors use hard money with the aim of getting specific favours in return (Sunstein 1994). Quid pro quo corruption, or its appearance, plays a central role in US Supreme Court's decisions (Dawood 2015, 334) as it is considered the only valid reason to limit wealthy donors' right of free speech by imposing limits on their contributions (Pevnick 2016a, 1185). Interestingly though, such a limit on natural persons' direct contributions, while present in countries such as Canada, France, and Belgium (the limit applies also to legal persons in Italy and Ireland), is missing in other European democracies such as Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands as well as Scandinavian countries.^{xiv}

Naturally, the crux of this argument depends on the conception of corruption one endorses depending on one's theory of democracy, equality and representation (Dawood 2015, 335). For example, public office can be abused to obtain political rather than private gains, such as the opportunity to remain in office longer. For this reason, Dennis Thompson (1995) draws a distinction between individual corruption, concerning personal gains, and institutional corruption, which takes place when the institutional setting provides the wrong incentives to players, thereby damaging the integrity of the democratic process (see also Warren 2004). The problem then becomes distinguishing between legitimate responsiveness to citizens' interests and wrongful dependence on a subset of wealthy donors. To this end, Lawrence Lessing (2011), following Zephyr Teachout (2009), proposes to look at what he calls "dependence corruption". When candidates need a certain amount of financial support from their donors to be considered viable, it is difficult to see how they can be relied upon to govern in ways that are not disproportionately favourable to the donors to whom they owe their election. Clearly donations are likely to buy big donors easier access to, and involvement in certain issues with, elected officials (Sides et al. 2019, 119). Instead of depending "on the people alone", hence, Congress becomes dependent on wealthy contributors.

Avoiding corruption is not the only admissible goal in campaign finance reform. Unlike the US Supreme Court, the German constitutional court has regularly struck down political finance laws when they violated explicit constitutional guarantees of (relatively) equal political-influence opportunities for citizens (Scarrow 2018, 104). The German constitutional court's preoccupation is with a different goal: protecting citizens' political equality. Dominant in campaign finance discussions in political theory (Dawood 2015), the principle of political equality requires that citizens

enjoy equal opportunity to exercise their political influence (Beitz 1989; Sunstein 1994; Christiano 1996; Rawls 2005; Dworkin 1996; 2002; Cohen 2001). Advocates of this kind of proposal view equal voting rights as an insufficient institutional realisation of political equality and look for ways that instantiate a richer ideal of equality by equalising not only citizens' impact on collective decisions through voting, but also their broader influence over political affairs (Brighouse 1996).^{xv} As Ronald Dworkin (1996) succinctly puts it, "Each citizen must have a fair and reasonably equal opportunity not only to hear the views of others as these are published or broadcast, but to command attention for his own views" (19–24).

The last rationale mentioned by Pevnick (2016a; 2019) justifies campaign finance regulations based on the principle of fair competition. At first, this third goal may seem indistinguishable from the previous one. After all, as Joshua Cohen (2001) emphasises, egalitarians hold that "in a democracy, citizens are also agents, participants, speakers, who may aim to reshape both the terms of political debate and its results, *by running for office* or seeking to influence the views of candidates, the outcomes of elections, and the interelection conduct of politics" (72, my italics). Nonetheless, equality-based arguments concern lay citizens' opportunity for political influence *in their role as participants* in the public deliberation around viable candidates. By contrast, competition-based arguments look at the opportunities citizens have *to become viable candidates*, if they so intend, by running for office and aim at levelling the playing field (Beitz 1989, 200; Pevnick 2016a).^{xvi}

As said, all these three rationales justify a system of floors aimed at limiting the import of private money in politics by ensuring public support for candidates and parties. Interestingly however, they may support significantly different schemes of public subsidies, because their goals (reducing corruption, enhancing political equality and ensuring free competition) do not overlap completely (Pevnick 2016a; pace Lessig 2015). Any such system works for corruption scholars, as long as it is effective at limiting officeholders' undue dependence on private donors (Pevnick 2016a, 1187). This can be realised successfully without also equalising citizens' political influence, which is instead required by egalitarians (Beitz 1989; Christiano 1996; Cohen 2001; Dworkin 2002; Thompson 2002). Similarly, the type of public funding that advocates of fair competition favour is one that gives all *competitors* equal resources to have a fair chance of winning elections, rather than giving all *citizens* equal opportunities to determine the results (Brighouse 1995).

The voucher system acts as a litmus test. This system, proposed by Richard Hansen (1996) and supported also by other scholars (Ackerman and Ayres 2002; Cagé 2020), allows citizens to finance their preferred candidate by employing state-funded vouchers that are equally distributed. If all direct contributions to campaigns were given exclusively through these vouchers, citizens would enjoy equal opportunity to select candidates for elections, thereby equalising gatekeeping money. This system is different from the ways most European democracies implement some form of public funding, since European parties often must pass a certain threshold of support, quantified in terms of antecedent votes or seats in parliament, to qualify for public resources (Cagé 2020).^{xvii} Accordingly, parties are proportionally reimbursed for their expenses based on the level of support they receive at prior elections. This not only favours the status quo, but also prevents citizens from making distinctions between the party they want to subsidize and the one they intend to vote. However, vouchers may end up disproportionately benefiting candidates who already enjoy wide public support at new contestants' expense. As such, they are strongly favoured by egalitarians, possibly favoured but not required by corruption scholars, and clearly opposed by advocates of fair competition. In fact, levelling the playing field would require distributing public funds in an equal way across candidates, regardless of the share of votes and seats allocated in previous elections (Christiano 1996).^{xviii}

Despite their differences, there is one further feature that these theoretical approaches share. They conceive of campaign finance regulations as an institutional setting of incentives and disincentives for *individual* political actors. Approaches based on corruption and fair competition look at candidates and how they can enjoy equal chances to win without the support of a handful of wealthy donors, whereas equality-based views concentrate on lay citizens' opportunities to be part of the election process, either as selectors of candidates, through their use of gatekeeping money, or as participants in the public deliberation around that process, through influence money. As a result, all three perspectives fail to properly consider the role of political parties.

Parties and Campaign Finance

While political scientists have extensively written about party finance, normative theorists have largely ignored it. On the one hand, those coming from party studies have rather focused on parties' internal structure, asking whether this structure ought to be democratic and/or deliberative (Wolkenstein 2016; 2018; 2020; Invernizzi-Accetti and Wolkenstein 2017; Biale and Ottonelli 2019; Bagg and Bhatia 2021). On the other, theorists who have sought to provide a normative account of

campaign finance have only acknowledged parties as responsible for structuring political competition without pondering the implications of their role (Beitz 1989, 180–87; Christiano 1996, 222, 244–48; Thompson 2002, 67).

Yet, as we have seen in the third section, parties are essential to organise electoral campaigns because they can satisfy their epistemic, justificatory and motivational functions. If certain finance schemes either enhance or curtail parties' functioning, there are at least pro tanto party-based reasons in favour or against them. Conversely, the way money is raised and distributed among parties affects not only the party system and its level of polarization (La Raja and Schaffner 2015), but also parties' capacity to discharge their three functions, as well as their internal structure. Now, as already mentioned, this topic is highly contextual, hence prescriptions for a campaign finance system must be sensitive to each country's specific institutional (particularly electoral) and socio-political conditions. This task cannot be achieved here. However, a few general observations may still be advanced concerning parties' functioning and internal structure.^{xix}

Firstly, think of the tension that may arise between the justificatory and epistemic function, on one side, and the motivational function, on the other. Parties that do not raise membership dues and are left with little or no public subsidies, like Democrats and Republicans in the US,^{xx} are entirely dependent on voluntary private donations and presumably under a much higher pressure to excel at their motivational function. If they can do so by getting wealthy donors' support while lying or pandering to the rest of the electorate, as in the case of oligarchic agenda capture (Winters and Page 2009), the third function will be fulfilled at the expense of parties' capacity to inform and give reasons to all citizens. Furthermore, parties policies and goals as entirely determined by party leaders interested in being re-elected as officeholders may end up being less coherent and structured around rank-and-file partisans' principled commitments (Kirchheimer 1966; c.f. Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018). By comparison, public funding provisions seem to strain big parties less because they ensure minimal financial support for their electoral activities, though it has other drawbacks as next paragraph shows. Similar observations may be true of each function taken individually.

Secondly, consider the debate about intraparty democracy (henceforth IPD). Empirical party scholars have long debated its desirability and feasibility (Carty 2013), while its definition is "essentially contestable" (Katz and Cross 2013, 3). This discussion is too vast to receive proper treatment here, but IPD is an interesting case because of the growing attention it has recently received

from political theorists (most notably, Wolkenstein 2020). Here I will consider as internally democratic a party whose most important decisions concerning party platform and candidate and elite selection are taken through an egalitarian procedure including all party members.

In principle, parties need not be internally democratic to fulfil campaign functions, as polity-level democracy may only require free choice among parties rather than active participation within them (Schumpeter [1942] 2008; Sartori 1962). So-called cadre parties do not even need widespread membership (Duverger 1955). However, as we have seen, parties' oligarchic capture may prevent them from satisfactorily fulfilling all three campaign functions, thereby curtailing the contribution they offer to the realisation of collective self-rule through the electoral process.

Contemporary party models, such as the catchall party (Kirchheimer 1966), the electoral-professional party (Panebianco 1988), and the cartel party (Katz and Mair 1995; 2009) follow Michels's infamous iron law of oligarchy, according to which any large-scale organisation, no matter how democratic its inspiration, must be bureaucratically structured and hence must become oligarchic (Michels 1962 [1911]). In this respect some forms of IPD appear to have a counterproductive effect, because by including lay citizens (especially the larger electorate) in the decision making by aggregating their preferences, they end up concentrating more power in party elites' hands at the expenses of rank-and-file local members with evident plebiscitarian effects (Katz and Mair 2009, 759; Carty 2013, 17–19). This is particularly problematic when parties benefit from state subsidies because reliance on public funds makes them less dependent on citizens' support and more incline to inter-party collusion (Katz and Mair 1995; Hopkin 2004). Critics of IPD also raise two further objections. First, there seems to be a trade-off between IPD and polity-level democracy insofar as party members may not share the larger electorate's views and responsiveness to the former may conflict with responsiveness to the latter (Katz and Cross 2013, 172).^{xxi} Second, IPD may threaten a party's electoral viability by forcing party elites to take more ideological positions that are further away from the median voter (Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018).

Against this view, Fabio Wolkenstein (2016; 2018; 2020) and others (Invernizzi-Accetti and Wolkenstein 2017; Ebeling and Wolkenstein 2018; Biale and Ottonelli 2019) propose a deliberative, rather than simply aggregative, model of IPD. Such a model envisions a stronger role for party members at local branches (but not for simple sympathizers), giving them the opportunity to deliberate and participate in the process determining their party's policy programme, its electoral

strategies and candidates, as well as its executive members. This is the only way, Wolkenstein claims, in which citizens can exercise their political agency between elections and see themselves as causally contributing to political decisions, whose content can be traced back to their own views and values (Wolkenstein 2019). Needless to say, this view of citizens as actively engaged in party politics better realises their equal political agency and is more in line with the democratic ideal of collective self-rule compared to the minimalist model of citizens as selectors of party leaders' policy proposals (Schumpeter [1942] 2008). Furthermore, Invernizzi-Accetti and Wolkenstein (2017) point out, by referencing various empirical sources, that there are no real reasons to think that sociological differences between party members and the broader electorate also entail different political views and that it is debatable that elite-driven procedures are better than democratic ones at tracking the general electorate's preferences (105-106).

While some have reasonably countered that the need for IPD will partially depend on the rigidity of the party system and that it may also take nondeliberative forms and still be effective at balancing out the risk of oligarchic agenda capture (Bagg and Bhatia 2021), I am interested in highlighting the role that appropriate financing schemes can play to countervail IPD's flaws. As we have seen, public funding coupled with IPD tends to exacerbate IPD's possibly collusive effects.

To prevent this, one could adopt state subsidies in the form of a voucher system along the following lines. All citizens receive equal vouchers that they can use to fund the party of their choosing. Resulting resources are then divided in two. Part of them serves to run everyday activities and important events, such as party conferences and primaries. Another part is further equally divided among all party members, who can use these second vouchers to finance both internal candidates at party primaries and local branch delegates sent to the party conference. In such a way, it would be possible to further counteract the inherent tendency of party organisations to steer towards oligarchy, because party members would enjoy further control over candidate and executive selection by deciding whom they want to finance and whom to vote.

This is just a sketch and balancing all reasons for and against specific versions of IPD as well as specific funding schemes require a broader and deeper analysis than the one this chapter can afford. However, even this sketch illustrates how campaign finance affects parties in their campaign functions, relations and internal structure and how thinking about the former may help us counteract possible drawbacks of the latter.

Conclusion

This chapter has defended three related claims. The first one is that political parties are ideally suited to organise electoral campaigns because of a functional convergence between parties and campaigns: the former can fulfil the latter's epistemic, justificatory, and motivational functions. Parties simplify the political landscape by offering comprehensive and consistent programmes that select and articulate societal demands in light of a principled commitment to a partisan conception of justice and the common good. They justify these programmes by engaging in a reason-giving process that addresses all citizens and mobilises them to go to the polls. While this enables parties to contribute to the realisation of collective self-rule, their contribution is significantly affected by campaign finance regulations.

The second claim that I have defended is thus that campaign finance regulations affect parties' capacity to fulfil campaign functions, as well as their mutual relations and internal structure. Scholars seeking to offer a normative account of campaign finance should thus take parties into account. Anticorruption scholars aim to protect the integrity of the democratic process, political-equality scholars aim to equalise citizens' opportunities for political influence, and fair-competition scholars aim to level the playing field. Even though their proposals work in different ways, they all share one aspect: public funding is meant to ultimately go to political parties. This is true of political-equality advocates as well, insofar as in their preferred system citizens are meant to allocate vouchers to the party of their choosing (Cagé 2020).

The third claim of this chapter is that parties' proper functioning counts as a further pro tanto reason in favour of public funding. However, as we have seen, risks of cartelization, particularly acute with some forms of IPD, can be counterbalanced only with a modified version of the voucher system that I have sketched in the last section. Reasons of space prevent me from developing this argument further, but I hope what I have illustrated is sufficient to prove that normative theorists working on political parties and those working on campaign finance would highly benefit from mutual interactions.

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ⁱ Only 15 percent of countries provide public funding to all registered parties, though; most countries require parties to pass a threshold of support to be eligible for public funding. See <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/548>.

ⁱⁱ This is not to say that partisanship and civic commitment are never in tension (Ypi 2016, 602). However, partisans' acceptance of pluralism firmly places them within democratic boundaries, scholars of the topic hold.

ⁱⁱⁱ While there is no natural distinction between regular and electoral politics (Pevnick 2016b), the fact that a distinction is somehow arbitrary does not entail that we should not draw it (Thompson 2002). Furthermore, campaigns are not strictly speaking necessary for elections to be democratic, as Abizadeh (2005) mentions the case of Bahá'í elections that take place without candidates campaigning (though the Baha'í community is religious and not political). Nevertheless, in the context of representative democracies characterised by universal suffrage, elections are usually preceded by campaigns.

^{iv} I take these functions from Biale and Ottonelli (2019), who apply them to parties directly.

^v Naturally, the electoral context will play an important role in parties' capacity and willingness to do that, as parties that are expected to form coalitions in order to govern, as in proportional representation systems, will more likely represent and appeal to narrower segments of the citizenry.

^{vi} Though access to media is subsidized by the state in most Western countries, with the notable exception of the US: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/552>.

^{vii} Unfortunately, campaign finance being such a contextual issue, this chapter cannot credibly address all democratic countries that would feature in a lengthier analysis, such as democracies in Latin America, India and Eastern Europe.

^{viii} According to the International IDEA database, 31.7 percent of countries impose limits on parties' expenditures and 46 percent on candidates' expenditures. The United States is included among the countries that limit candidates' expenditures, but importantly its limits only concern candidates for presidential elections who have received public funding. See <https://www.idea.int/political-finance-tool-new>. Since spending limits reduce fundraising pressure for contestants, they can also be seen as a tool to reduce big donors' influence (Scarow 2018, 107ff).

^{ix} PACs and Super PACs are organisations that pool campaign contributions from members and use these funds in political campaigns. PACs are meant to use funds for single-issue advertising—that is, advertising that is not explicitly meant to support or challenge political candidates. Super PACs are allowed to spend money to explicitly support or challenge candidates, so long as they do not privately coordinate with a candidate's campaign (Dawood 2015, 339).

^x Notable exceptions are Spain, Portugal, Canada and the UK: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/284599>.

^{xi} I leave aside the other two ways in which money influences politics because they are not directly related to the purpose of this chapter (Christiano 2012, 242-244, 250).

^{xii} The dilemma is particularly stark for egalitarians, Pevnick claims (2016b).

^{xiii} To floors and ceilings one can add a third dimension: one that shifts attention from the type and amount of money spent on campaigns to the transparency of contributions and expenditures (Ackerman and Ayres 2002). For instance, most states (56.1 percent) prohibit political parties from accepting anonymous contributions, while European countries often ban anonymous donations to candidates as well (<https://www.idea.int/political-finance-tool-new>). Transparency is also required in the US, as third-party spending must be reported to the public (International IDEA Handbook 2014, 260). Clearly, this strategy is largely independent from the other two, and, even though a comprehensive outlook at campaign finance would need to take the issue of transparency and oversight into account, I can leave it aside for the purpose of this chapter.

^{xiv} <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/546>.

^{xv} For the distinction between impact and influence, see Dworkin (1987).

^{xvi} Importantly, both Beitz (1989, 200-201) and Pevnick (2019) deny that fair competition has intrinsic moral value.

^{xvii} <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/question-view/550>. Since public funding is distributed proportionally, it appears to be incompatible with fair competition. Nonetheless, public subsidies have often been shown to help new contestants, even in systems that favour incumbents (Scarrow 2006; van Biezen and Rashkova 2014).

^{xviii} This is how so-called clean-election reforms work in the US: candidates publicly funded must renounce any private fundraising; in return they get *equal* funds and matching funds if they need to compete with a privately funded candidate who has more financial resources (Pevnick 2016a, 1189).

^{xix} I leave aside campaign finance effects on party system because there is little space and a draft paper by Matteo Bonotti and Zim Nwokora already tackles this issue.

^{xx} In 1971 the Federal Election Campaign Act provided public funding in the form of matching funds for presidential campaigns. Other clean-elections reforms at state level work similarly (see note xx). However, since public funds come with a spending limit, almost no major-party presidential candidate in the last primaries and general elections accepted them (Sides et al. 2019, 110).

^{xxi} A slightly different but related problem is that some instantiations of IPD are detrimental to an inclusive and representative selection of candidates (Hazan and Rahat 2010).

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