

Kirkland, J. H., & Harden, J. J. *Indecision in American Legislatures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018. Xvii, 196 pp. (\$70.00 Cloth).

In *Indecision in American Legislatures*, Harden & Kirkland seek to uncover the complex relationships surrounding legislator indecisiveness. Relying on existing literature to derive new theoretical models of legislator indecisiveness, Harden & Kirkland draw on state-level data to assemble a dataset and utilize out-of-sample predictions to explore the accuracy of their theoretical models created using in-sample models. The result of this theoretical rigor not only leaves the reader with an in-depth understanding of the complexity of legislator indecision, but also with an understanding of the weaknesses of Harden & Kirkland's theoretical models.

Exploring the weaknesses of theoretical models using words and existing literature is one thing, but taking theoretical models created in one dataset and then testing the models using an entirely new dataset is quite another. Harden and Kirkland go well beyond traditional social science quantitative techniques to validate their theoretical models created using state legislatures from 2011 and 2012 with out-of-sample predictions from other datasets. These new out-of-sample datasets include an entirely new legislature (The United States House of Representatives) and in new state legislator data from 2013 and 2014. This is a bold new technique in the social sciences (but not the natural sciences) because the risk of invalidating theoretical models is high in social science models.

Indecision in American Legislatures begins with an overview of the basic question: What causes a legislator to support one side of a bill, and then take the opposite position? This chapter introduces what Harden & Kirkland consider to be the two most important principals which have direct access to punishing legislators for their behavior: constituents and party leaders.

Harden & Kirkland use the term *cross-pressuring* to refer to the conflict created by party leaders preferring one outcome for a bill and constituents preferring the opposite outcome, and use the term *waffling* to note when legislators change their position on a bill, whether this position change is related to uncertainty or strategic behavior. Harden & Kirkland also note that there is a distinction between cross-pressuring and vote switching. Waffling is related to cross-pressuring while vote switching is related to strategic behaviors which polarize legislative agendas.

One of the strengths of Harden & Kirkland's work is on display in chapter 2 where they simulate theory using relatively simple models which examine the relationship between low district salience and high party salience, and high district salience and low party salience on the probability of indecision on a vote and district ideology for both extreme and moderate party leaders. Sound confusing? One look at Harden & Kirkland's simulation result graphs and the strength of their work becomes clear; graphs, charts, tables, and plots can assist in understanding complex relationships not easily understood using words. This strength is something Harden & Kirkland display in spades in this book.

Chapter 3 examines the risks associated with flip-flopping on a bill. For example, one

significant risk is the appearance that legislators will say or do anything to win elections. Additionally, chapter 3 examines the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 by using co-sponsorship patterns and final roll call voting in lower state legislative chambers. Counterintuitively, Harden & Kirkland find that the introduction of nongermane legislation amendments is not strongly associated with waffling behaviors of cross-pressured legislators. Building on chapter 3, chapter 4 examines state-level patterns in waffling. Harden & Kirkland find that competition between Republicans and Democrats provide the structure for waffling; the closer a chamber comes to being equally split, the higher the rate of legislator waffling.

Chapter 5 examines out-of-sample testing on datasets using models generated on a different dataset. Herein lies one of the major strengths of Harden & Kirkland's work. Out-of-sample testing supports most of their predictions within 1% of observed waffle rates but Harden & Kirkland also examine cases where their models are not predictive. In chapter 6, Harden & Kirkland create a placebo test which examines vote switching in California. They find that cross-pressured legislators who do not have the time to examine their initial decision on a bill, yet decide to change their position, are doing so because of electoral and career factors; sometimes abandoning the winning side of a roll call vote once the outcome is assured without their vote.

Chapter 7 examines the consequences of legislator indecision, finding that there are no electoral consequences to waffling on roll call votes, a finding that Harden & Kirkland attribute to a lack of political awareness in the public. Interestingly, while there are no direct electoral consequences, Harden & Kirkland find indirect consequences via decreases in campaign money for legislators who waffle compared to legislators who do not waffle. Chapter 8 wraps up the book with an overview of findings and offers some prescriptive measures to address the issue of waffling. For example, Harden & Kirkland note that the legislative gridlock in America might be lessened if Americans come to love the flip-flopping legislator. Towards this end, legislators should consider explaining the legislative process and the pressures they face at final roll call votes.

To the extent that there are weaknesses (and there are few to be sure), they are associated with simple models. For example, in chapter 1, a simulation of the relationship between extreme party leaders and moderate party leaders displayed in two images in figures 2.2 and two images in figure 2.3 closely mirror each other. I am unsure of the simulation mechanism causing the mirroring, but in my experience, human behavior rarely mirrors itself this closely. This critique extends to regression models that are missing potentially relevant control variables including, for example, legislator race, years in office, and gender.

The major strengths of this book include a wide range of empirical analytical techniques, out-of-sample model testing, succinct and approachable chapter conclusions and transitions, and an amazingly broad range of tables, charts, and graphs associated with indecision in American legislatures. With such a wide variety of information, there is quite literally something for everyone interested in legislator indecision, no matter what level of information is desired. For researchers interested in the implications of indecision in American legislatures, Harden &

Kirkland's book is an amazing resource, one that has changed my perspective on legislator indecision and is certain to influence my future research into legislator behavior.

Joe F. West

University of North Carolina at Pembroke