



Pergamon

Electoral Studies 18 (1999) 597–598

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**Electoral  
Studies**

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## Many publications, but still no evidence\*

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In 1990, Budge and Hofferbert (B&H) claimed that they had found solid evidence that party platforms cause U.S. budgetary priorities, and thus concluded that mandate theory applies in the United States as strongly as it does elsewhere. The implications of this stunning conclusion would mean that virtually every observer of the American party system in this century has been wrong.

King and Laver (1993) reanalyzed B&H's data and demonstrated in two ways that there exists no evidence for a causal relationship. First, accepting their entire statistical model, and correcting only an algebraic error (a mistake in how they computed their standard errors), we showed that their hypothesized relationship holds up in fewer than half the tests they reported. Second, we showed that their statistical model includes a slightly hidden but politically implausible assumption that a new party achieves every budgetary desire immediately upon taking office. We then specified a model without this unrealistic assumption and we found that the assumption was not supported, and that all evidence in the data for platforms causing government budgets evaporated. In their published response to our article, B&H withdrew their key claim and said they were now (in 1993) merely interested in an association and not causation. That is how it was left in 1993—a perfectly amicable resolution as far as we were concerned—since we have no objection to the claim that there is a non-causal or chance association between any two variables. Of course, we see little reason to be interested in non-causal associations in this area any more than in the chance correlation that exists between the winner of the baseball World Series and the party winning the U.S. presidency. Since party mandate theory only makes sense

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\*We thank the editors for the opportunity to respond and the U.S. National Science Foundation for grant SBR-9729884 to King.

as a causal theory, the conventional wisdom about America's porous, non-mandate party system stands.

We also appreciate Helmut Thome's (1999) interesting comment on this discussion. Thome argues that B&H's assumptions should be relaxed even further than we did. We agree with his suggestion that relaxing assumptions may be a fruitful direction for statistical modeling to proceed—both in the case of studying mandate theory and indeed in almost any other statistical model. Of course, we will not know very much more than this until he or someone else actually implements his ideas.