is very low. There is little reason to believe the actual observed coalitions would closely match the predictions of such a model. Our thanks to Gordon Tullock who originally suggested that we examine this situation.

References


BARRY KEATING
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TO THE EDITOR:

Barry Keating's and Keith Lee's speculations about what might take place in the House of Representatives do not provide creditable arguments for the size principle's applicability to House roll-call voting behavior. In essence they present two defenses of the size principle. For the first they rely on what they acknowledge is a "very strong assumption," so strong indeed that it is counterfactual, as a few minutes inspection of Congressional Quarterly roll-call data would have revealed to them.1 For the second they simply assume the size principle's validity and then wave away all votes with the winners in excess of what would be needed if all members of the House simultaneously turned up for a vote. I will address their first defense at some length and then their second defense briefly.

Keating and Lee question whether non-voters in the House divide themselves over an issue in the same way voters do, noting that in a test of the size principle against House roll calls I implicitly assumed they do. They counter my assumption, saying it "is clearly not the case." To prove their point, they present an argument. That is odd, since the epistemology of positive theorists requires that they settle questions of what is the case by looking at facts rather than by turning introspectively to their intuitions. For a moment, before facts clutter the page, consider their argument a priori.

Keating and Lee claim that representatives on the winning side of an issue have greater incentive to vote than those on the losing side, so great an incentive that they will all almost certainly vote. Hence, virtually all non-voters can be counted with the losers. Adding all non-voters to the losers yields a median winning coalition of 52.8 percent on several years of "contested" roll-call votes, i.e., those with majorities less than 85 percent. This size is not far from minimum winning when all representatives vote. Can Keating and Lee take this argument seriously a priori? Surely not. By their addition, nearly half the winning coalitions are outnumbered by the losers. Since the latter had the votes, why didn't they win? From a third to half of the time in any year, the losers evidently lose because they are lazy; most of the rest of the time, of course, they lose because they get overwhelmed in gross defiance of the size principle.

Now consider the messy facts, a rabble who delight in tearing apart singular explanations. Congressional Quarterly tabulations of House voting participation include four categories of non-voters: those officially paired for or against (on average 2 percent on each roll call), those who have publicly declared their positions, those who respond to Congressional Quarterly polls saying how they would have voted, and those whose positions cannot be ascertained because they do not put themselves on the record in any of these ways or by voting. Half of the nonvoters put their positions on the record. My casual survey of many roll-call votes in various recent years suggests that nonvoters who put themselves on the record sided with the winning coalitions somewhat more often than representatives who voted.

How about the remaining 5—10 percent of the membership, those who are not on the record? They are disproportionately drawn from a small number of chronic offenders, including career-long nonvoters (Edward Hebert, capping his career, was off the record 51 percent of the time in 1976). Many representatives begin to neglect congressional affairs because their life fortunes are in decline (Andrew Hinshaw was off the record 100 percent of the time in 1976, Wayne Hays 44 percent, and Allan Howe 31 percent). Some grow tired at the ends of their careers (Joseph Karth was off the record 65 percent in 1976 and Edwin Eshelman 36 percent). Some are ill (William Barrett was off the record 69 percent of the

1 House roll call data from CQ Almanac (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, various years, 1969 through 1976).
time before he died in 1976, Torbert Mac-
donald 67 percent, and Wright Patman 53
percent). In election years many forget the
House while running, often in vain, for higher
office (Sam Steiger was off the record 63
percent of 1976, Alan Steelman 59 percent,
Marvin Esch 59 percent, Donald Riegle 59
percent, Jerry Litton 53 percent, William Green
51 percent, John Conlan 51 percent, Alphonzo
Bell 49 percent, Peter Peyser 49 percent, and
William Stanton 48 percent, all while running
for the Senate). The few representatives cited
parenthetically in this paragraph (4 percent of
the membership) account for a third of all
off-the-record nonvoting in 1976. Much of the
remaining two-thirds occurs in conspicuous
chunks rather than sporadically, which strongly
suggests that negligent members are not being
selective. Consider a few unsystematically
chosen examples in 1976: but for occasional
pairings, Spark Matsunaga was off the record
for over a month and 148 consecutive votes of
the 661 House roll calls; Dale Milford was off
for 108 consecutive votes; Patsy Mink 95 and
36; John McCollister 87; Robert Giaimo 67;
James O’Hara 59; George Hansen 57; Ray
Roberts 56; Claude Pepper 50; and John Flynt
48.)

In sum, half the nonvoters are on the record
with divisions much like those of the voters,
and about half the remainder are off the record
in such wholesale fashion that their abstention
probably approaches a random distribution
among winners and losers. The remaining 3–4
percent of off-the-record nonvoting might re-
result from implausibly one-sided incentives such
as Keating and Lee suggest, but even then it
would not substantially affect the observed
distribution of winning coalitions by size to add
all 3–4 percent to the losers or the winners.
Hence, the implicit assumption that nonvoters
are like voters in House roll calls is relatively
accurate.

Turn now to the second defense. Keating’s
and Lee’s model of House voting presented in
Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2 cannot be taken
seriously. They conclude from it that observers
see large voting majorities and erroneously
conclude that the winning coalitions are too
large for Riker’s size principle. In their model, a
precisely minimum winning coalition (a consti-
tutional majority) forms and all its members
show up to vote their victory. (Again, of
course, this factual assumption is grossly vio-
lated, since a third to half of the winning
majorities of Koehler’s “contested” votes are
smaller than the constitutional majority size.)
Other members of the House show up random-
ly and then vote randomly, many of them
perhaps voting with the winners, thereby de-
ceiving atheoretical minds into thinking the
number of winners is more than minimal.
Keating and Lee are not deceived—they know
these overlarge observed coalitions “do not in
the least challenge minimum winning coalition
theory.” What would? Nothing which could
actually be observed, it seems.

Keating and Lee generally object to findings
based on a study of observed coalitions. But
note that looking at observed (i.e., recorded)
votes is far more likely to have an effect
opposite to that of Keating’s and Lee’s specula-
tions. There have been historically several times
more unrecorded teller and voice votes than
recorded votes in the House. Many of the
unrecorded votes are on more important issues
than many of the issues decided on the record.
But these unrecorded votes presumably include
disproportionately many large majorities since
closer divisions could be forced to recorded
votes by the losers. Again, the conspicuous fact
is that voting coalitions in the House only
infrequently approach the minimal winning
size. Anyone who attempts to fit a theory of
winning coalition size to the data on Congress
(and other American legislative bodies) will
therefore know why Heinz Eulau (1967, pp.
26–54) sought “logics of rationality in unani-
ous decision-making.”

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Reference: Heinz Eulau (1967). “Logics of Rationali-
ty in Unanimous Decision-Making,” in Carl J.
Friedrich (ed.), Rational Decision. New York:
Atherton Press.

On Theories of Development and Dependence

TO THE EDITOR:

In his review (APSR, 70 [March 1976]) of
Dr. Brett’s Colonialism and Underdevelopment
in East Africa, Dr. Berman writes that the book
“began as a doctoral thesis written in the
empiricist and largely uncritical ethos of the
Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the
University of London.” That sounds bad for
the Institute. However, “Cet animal est méchant: quand on l’attaque, il se défend.” I
should like to offer a couple of comments on the
matter.

There is, for one thing, an initial ambiguity.
It is not made clear whether the judgment
quoted above is Berman’s own or that of Brett.
In fact, it is not a direct quotation from Dr.