



Party and Society

By Cedric de Leon

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Political parties are central to democratic life, yet there is no standard definition to describe them or the role they occupy. "Voter-centered" theoretical approaches suggest that parties are the mere recipients of voter interests and loyalties.

"Party-centered" approaches, by contrast, envision parties that polarize, democratize, or dominate society. In addition to offering isolated and competing notions of democratic politics, such approaches are also silent on the role of the state and are unable to account for organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the African National Congress, which exhibit characteristics of parties, states, and social movements simultaneously.

In this timely book, Cedric de Leon examines the ways in which social scientists and other observers have imagined the relationship between parties and society. He introduces and critiques the full range of approaches, using enlivening comparative examples from across the globe. Cutting through a vast body of research, de Leon offers a succinct and lively analysis that outlines the key thinking in the field, placing it in historical and contemporary context. The resulting book will appeal to students of sociology, political science, social psychology, and related fields.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This creative, well-organized, and well-written book is going to make important contributions to not only the analysis of parties but to the social sciences in general. *Party & Society* blends in-depth coverage of the field, criticism, and original argumentation. Students and experts fortunate enough to read this book will get a fuller sense of party politics than they ever had before."

Cihan Tuđal, University of California, Berkeley

"Party & Society is a map and a brief. It offers a much-needed guide to the plethora of classical and contemporary perspectives on political parties in both sociology and political science. But it also adds up to an important argument: if sociologically minded students of parties wish to present a robust alternative to 'voter-centered approaches' in accounting for the observable complexities of political life, they would do well to take seriously the idea that parties are by turns cause and consequence of states and societies. This book should be required reading for all political sociologists."

Anthony S. Chen, Northwestern University

About the Author

Cedric de Leon is Associate Professor of sociology at Providence College.

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