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EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
Bölcsészettudományi Kar

ALAPSZAKOS SZAKDOLGOZAT

Ideológia és pártkohézió a Demokrata Pártban: a progresszívek új hulláma

Ideology and Party Cohesion in the Democratic Party: The New Wave of Progressives

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A HKR 346. § ad 76. § (4) c) pontja értelmében:

„… A szakdolgozathoz csatolni kell egy nyilatkozatot arról, hogy a munka a hallgató saját szellemi terméke…”

SZERZŐSÉGI NYILATKOZAT

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Budapest, 2023. 04. 20.

Botos Anita s.k.

aláírás

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Introduction

Characteristics of the American political system compelled the Democratic Party to embrace a broad range of ideological positions, thus the Party is commonly referred to as a big tent. As Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez remarked in an interview, “in any other country, Joe Biden and I would not be in the same party, but in America, we are” (Freedlander). Accommodating a wide range of ideologies can be seen as a strength as it allows the party to appeal to a broader range of voters. However, developing policies that reflect the diverse perspectives of the coalition members might pose a challenge to maintaining party cohesion, as different factions have competing policy priorities and political strategies. As was the case of the four women of color from the freshman class of 2019. Ocasio-Cortez, along with Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, and Rashida Tlaib was elected on a progressive platform of environmental protection, and racial, social, and economic justice. The media attributed the moniker, the Squad to them while constructing a narrative of “insurgency” around them (Heuvel). Contrary to expectations, the Squad and other Justice Democrats, while challenging the party's traditional leadership structure and political establishment, joined the existing intraparty faction structure of the Democratic Party.

The characteristics of the American political system that lead to the creation of factions are the two-party system, the low party cohesion, the divided party control, the weak party discipline, and decentralization. The decentralized and multi-level nature of the American political system creates a divided party control and weak party discipline rendering the coordination of party messaging complex (Dominguez 1–2). On a federal level, the Democratic National Convention (DLC), the presidential nominee, the presidency, congressional leadership, and congressional caucuses all contribute to the party’s platform. Based on the multi-level nature

of American politics, the national party's platform established by these various federal actors also has to compete in the state and local elections. Additionally, the party discipline is described as weak as the party is not as hierarchical as those in the Westminster model, and the party leadership lacks the ability to penalize dissenting voices (DiSalvo, "Party Factions in Congress" 27). Based on electoral regulations the party leadership is not capable of limiting participation in the primaries or withholding the nomination from a dissenting candidate (DiSalvo, "Party Factions in Congress" 28). The aforementioned characteristics of the American political system led to the creation of intraparty factions.

This thesis aims to explore the intraparty factions to further the understanding of the ideological makeup of the Democratic Party in the 21st century. By establishing how the existing factions were formed and how they function, a framework can be created to not only interpret how ideologies compete within a big tent party but recognize when a new faction is created. A party's ideology can be examined through the intraparty factions based on DiSalvo's argument that in the American political system, factions carry out the same functions political parties do (DiSalvo, *Engines of Change* xiii). To narrow the scope of this paper, the Democratic Party's ideology is explored through the intraparty factions on a federal level along the Congressional cleavages. These cleavages are formed between the ideological congressional caucuses that members of Congress join voluntarily. The limitation of this federal approach is that it cannot predict potential ideological variations at the state and local levels of the party that stem from regional differences or organizational differences.

In the first section of the thesis, to understand the ideological composition of the Democratic Party, the current Party will be examined through the factions that shape it: the Blue Dogs, the New Democrats, and the Progressives. Democrats are colloquially called leftists or progressives; however, they are not a homogeneous block. The factions are compared and

contrasted based on the political climate in which the faction was born, the strategies and the policy positions they adopted.

In the second section of the thesis, the new wave of progressives will be examined based on the criteria established for the existing intraparty factions. Members of the so-called Squad were criticized for challenging the traditional leadership structure and political establishment, yet Justice Democrats joined the existing intraparty faction structure of the Democratic Party.

I. Factions of the Democratic Party

Factions have long had a place in the American political system, albeit not a favorable one. In *The Federalist Papers* No. 10, published in 1787, James Madison emphasizes the ability of a "wellconstructed Union" to "break and control the violence of faction" (DiSalvo, "Party Factions in Congress"). Contrary to Madison's wishes, the characteristics of the American political system rendered the existence of both parties and factions essential. Disalvo and Conger both highlight that the negative association curbed academic interest in understanding factions (DiSalvo, *Engines of Change* 4; Bloch Rubin 300). Despite this negative associations with the term faction are essential in understanding the ideological structure of a party.

In *The Federalist Papers*, Madison defined a faction as a group of citizens "who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adversed to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" (Hamilton, Madison and Jay). However, in practice party factions have been described as "fragmented, loosely coordinated, understaffed, and limited in influence" (qtd. in Medvic 589). For the purposes of this paper, the following definition of faction will be used, based on the available scholarship. A faction is a party subunit with a consistent ideology that is different from the non-

faction members of the party, seeking to collectively change the party's agenda and policy, and it has the organizational level necessary to do so (DiSalvo, "Party Factions in Congress" 31).

The scholarship is not unified on who constitutes a faction member. In the following section, the narrow and a broad definitions of factions are introduced. In a narrow view, the factions coincide with congressional ideological caucuses, therefore the members are politicians. Such understanding can be seen in Clarke's paper, in which faction members are either candidates or members of Congress. In this view, there is a clear demarcation between the politicians and party activists, media officials, and political donors, as the elected officials compete for limited resources (Clarke 455). In a contrasting, broader view, factions do not consist of only the officeholders. DiSalvo highlights the importance of outside groups in a faction's organization, such as party activists, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs, and intellectuals (DiSalvo, "Party Factions in Congress" 28; DiSalvo, "Party Factions and American Politics" 9). While in the available scholarship narrow and a broad interpretations of faction membership are used, in accordance with the previously established faction definition the broad understanding is used.

Members of Congress join factions on a voluntary basis. The ideological factions examined in the thesis give access to desirable subcommittees and offer other boons that Thomens titled "party rewards" (745). Members may also join a wide range of congressional caucuses that are based on their own or their congressional district's identity, priorities, and policy choices to magnify their individual policy impact by collective action (Clarke 457; Bloch Rubin 295). The following examples are based on Clarke's categorization and Representative Ilhan Omar's caucus memberships ("Committees and Caucuses"; Clarke 457). There are single-issue caucuses centered on one topic, such as the Pro-Choice Caucus and the Quiet Skies Caucus for constituencies with airports. Or, caucuses may be based on the legislator's identity as a

member of a "particular group of Americans," such as the Congressional Black Caucus and the Women's Caucus (Clarke 457). Member can also signal their support by joining minority or identity-based caucuses they are not personally part of, such as the LGBT Equality Caucus. To introduce the multifaceted nature of the Democratic Party, the congressional ideological caucuses will be examined as members of Congress are voluntarily joining numerous caucuses to partake in and benefit from collective action.

The power of factions and the ability to meaningfully influence policy depend on various external and internal factors. External factors include whether the Party itself holds a majority or minority position. Thomsen believes factions may extend a larger influence if the majority is slim as opposed to a stable majority (743). Additionally, in specific cases, the relative ideological position of one faction to the other can also be beneficial. Rubin highlights how centrist factions may gain this relative ideological power by controlling their own party leadership by voting with the other party (190). Internal factors include the size and cohesion of the faction. These attributes dictate how much power a faction may be able to exert (Thomsen 744). Factors such as ideology, size, and cohesion determine a faction's influence.

While the same characteristics of the political system enabled the formation of intraparty factions in both the Republican and the Democratic Parties, the factions are not divided along the same set of cleavages, creating asymmetrical intraparty systems. Terms that are commonly applied to differentiate between parties in the American political system, such as conservative, moderate, liberal and progressive are used in the scholarship to differentiate factions. These terms are found to be used not in the absolute but to describe a faction in relation to another faction. Whereas Bloch Rubin uses the term "moderate" to contrast the Blue Dogs with the rest of the Party, Medvic uses "conservative" to do the same while reserving "moderate" for the New Democrats (Bloch Rubin, chap. 6; Medvic 590). Similarly, in the self-definition of the factions

the term “progressive” appears in the name of both the Progressive’s congressional caucus and the New Democrat’s think tank, the Progressive Policy Institute established in the same period, in 1991 and 1989 respectively. The terms for the factions’ position on the ideological spectrum are used to describe the relative position of one faction to another.

The following sub-sections aim to provide the framework for understanding the ideologies within the Democratic Party by closely examining three factions. First, the political climate is described in which the faction was founded. Second, the strategies are interpreted that the faction employs in establishing membership requirements and benefits, and in the faction structure. Third, the political ideologies and policy preferences are outlined that the faction adopted to differentiate faction members from non-faction members. The factions examined in the thesis are organized around ideological cleavages in the Democratic Party. However, some scholars use different names for the same three-way divide, as an example Conger et al. adopted the names “Centrists,” “Cultural Liberals,” and “All-Purpose Liberals” (Conger et al. 1385–86). For consistency, the name of the factions are taken from the ideological congressional caucuses faction members belong to.

The first faction is the New Democrats, which when the term was coined referred to the members of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) an unofficial party organization representing a Third Way philosophy. The need for the formation of a new faction was raised by Southern Democrats facing electoral vulnerability in the 1980s when White Southern voters turned away from Democratic candidates because of the “too liberal” national party (Hale 212–13). The perception was that the party is “dominated by minority groups and white elites” as the party platform included anti-war, civil rights, environmentalist, and feminist activist groups (Arens 35; Medvic 592). Therefore, the goal of the new faction was moving the party “back into

the mainstream" which meant reaching out to white working-class voters (Medvic 592). Moving the party to the center was seen as the solution to securing the Southern seats.

The faction was built gradually, first, establishing DLC in 1985. The DLC's membership consisted of elected officials: governors and congressmembers (Hale 216). Hale claims, based on interviews conducted with original members, that moderates and liberals both joined albeit for different reasons: the moderates entered the DLC to shift the party to the center, and to have the organizational support to achieve recognition in Washington, while the liberals needed the perception of being moderate to be electable in the South (Hale 216). The DLC began expanding serving a dual purpose based on members' ideological needs.

After failing to capitalize on the presidential elections in 1988, the conservative and the moderate DLC members split, the latter capturing the DLC and adopting the name New Democrats (Medvic 590). By the early 1990s the DLC became institutionalized by establishing national and state chapters, publications such as *The New Democrat*, and a think tank called the Progressive Policy Institute. This institutionalization allowed the creation of a New Democratic agenda to offer to candidates.

According to the New Democratic message, they were not positioned on the conservative-liberal spectrum, as those were portrayed as "false choices of a now irrelevant old politics." This Third Way messaging used the terms "progressive" and "activist government," while distancing itself from the term "liberal" (Hale 223). Those critical of the agenda described it as "a political strategy masquerading as a policy" (Clarke 462). New Democrats are technocratic and market-oriented, focusing on economic growth, fiscal discipline, and free trade (DiSalvo, "Party Factions and American Politics" 5). The economy was the only policy area in which significant differences were found between New and "Traditional" Democrats. While positioning on social and foreign policy was similar, the New Democrats supported the death penalty and emphasized

equal opportunity over affirmative action (Medvic 592; DiSalvo, “The Death and Life of the New Democrats” 5). The faction’s Third Way agenda was similar to the national party’s policy positioning, with a distinct centrist economic policy.

In 1985, the DLC was established with only 41 governors and national politicians; it was able to expand to nearly 200 by 1988 (Hale 217). Following the institutionalization of the organization, it opened the membership to state and local politicians: officeholders, financial contributors, and party activists (Hale 220–21). The House and Senate New Democratic Coalitions emerged in 1997, and by 2000 it had the largest House Caucus and several Democratic presidential candidates (Medvic 591). Following the institutionalization, the New Democrats grew large and influential within the party. The institutionalized New Democrats offered their Third Way agenda to presidential candidates, most notably to Bill Clinton who, as governor of Arkansas, served as the DLC chair. This position enabled him to capitalize on the DLC network and agenda to build his presidential campaign (Hale 221). Following the 1992 election, Bill Clinton became the first New Democratic president. The DLC faced hardship in balancing the policy put out by the White House with the wishes of the Congressional presence (DiSalvo, “The Death and Life of the New Democrats” 7).

During its establishment in 1985, the DLC had little outside financing. Following the 1988 institutionalization, the New Democrats were being financed by corporations, and its budget surpassed $2 million annually as the donor list included “energy, health care, insurance, pharmaceutical, retail, and tobacco industries” (Hale 220). This acceptance of corporate financing transforms into a point of contention by the new wave of progressives, the Justice Democrats.

There were multiple other reasons why the DLC did not capture the party. Disalvo, a prominent scholar on factions envisioned the “decline and fall” of New Democrats as early as 2008 (DiSalvo, “The Death and Life of the New Democrats” 8). Total death did not occur yet, the

DLC was eventually dissolved in 2011. However, other arms of the faction remained: the think tank, the media, and the congressional caucus. While Bill Clinton called New Democrats a "different kind of Democrat" they were also seen as "Republican in disguise" (Hale 203). New Democrats were criticized for closeness with the Republican Party. Previously Al Gore's vice-presidential nominee in 2000, Joe Lieberman endorsed the Republican John McCain in the presidential election instead of DLC's own candidate, Hillary Clinton (DiSalvo, "The Death and Life of the New Democrats" 8). Additionally, the coherence of the Third Way agenda was questioned. Messaging was new; however, the New Democrats were seen as not so different from the rest of the party.

The second faction, similarly to the New Democrats, is also criticized for its ideological closeness to the Republican Party. The founding members of the Blue Dogs were similarly affected by the Southern Strategy as the perception persisted that the national party is "too far left" (Bloch Rubin 191). The Blue Dog Coalition, shortened to "The Coalition," emerged in 1995, with faction members wearing pins bearing a blue dog and the expression "Blue Dog Conservative Democrats" (Bloch Rubin 200). During the Coalition's first press conference, the term is explained to be a variation of the Southern expression, a "Yellow Dog Democrat." These were the members of the Democratic Party who "sooner voted for a yellow dog than a Republican" (Bloch Rubin 201). Additionally, the Blue Dog Political Action Committee (PAC) website claims "blue" alludes to how the centrists felt suffocated or "choked blue" by the "extremes" of both political parties ("About the Blue Dog PAC"). Therefore, the symbolism of the "blue dog" combines the possibility of bipartisan cooperation and the aversion to liberals of the party.

The influence of Blue Dogs stemmed from their relative ideological position. With a slim Republican majority, moderates close to the floor median could become what Rubin named

"pivotal members" in key votes (188). These dissenting members at the floor median are able to hold authority over the party leadership by defecting and voting with the other party. On the ideological spectrum, Blue Dog Democrats are closer to the moderate Republicans.

To achieve this pressuring potential faction cohesion is needed. The faction underwent bureaucratization: a strict whip system was put in place, and the faction decided on policy with a two-thirds supermajority (Clarke 454). The elected faction leadership may discipline or expel members who do not vote with the faction. The faction members adhere to strict rules on faction discipline and confidentiality in exchange for faction benefits (Bloch Rubin 219). These party rewards extend to securing committee assignments, providing campaign assistance, fundraising opportunities, and training to staff and the potential Blue Dog candidates, the so-called "Blue Pups" (Bloch Rubin 210). Faction leadership reciprocated faction cohesion through party rewards.

There is limited information on the policy positions of the Blue Dogs that stem from the combination of two faction characteristics. There is strict confidentiality on faction matters and there are fewer positions as a two-thirds supermajority of the faction is required to adopt a policy position. There are key policy areas mentioned in the preamble of the Blue Dog bylaws: fiscal discipline and national security ("Mission Statement"). Thomsen characterizes these positions to be in favor of tax cuts, and military and defense spending (Thomsen 742). The Congressional Caucus' website additionally lists "good government reforms," economic growth, and "strengthening rural America" as agreed-upon policy areas ("Endorsed Legislation"). Blue Dogs adopt policies that stem from fiscal discipline or national security.

Being ideologically close to the moderate Republicans, the possibility of bipartisan cooperation is seen as the strength of the faction. As previously described, New Democrats were also criticized for being close to the Republicans, and the same can be said for the Blue Dogs.

Blue Dogs voted with the Republican Party in the case of 11% of the votes (Lucas and Deutchman 67). Incidentally, this closeness to the center induced the progressive organizations' hostility. Members of the faction are described as "out-of-touch Democratic incumbents" by progressives ("About the Justice Democrats").

The Blue Dog group membership peaked at 54 in 2008; however, their numbers have fallen to 15 by 2022 (Mutnick and Ferris). Almost half of the remaining Blue Dogs supported a rebranding with a new name: The Common Sense Coalition, signaling a break with the white Southern roots. As the new name was rejected in a secret ballot, the coalition split, and only eight members remained for the beginning of the 2023 cycle. (Mutnick and Ferris). This drastic fall in membership reduced the Blue Dogs' bargaining position which was based on faction leadership commanding a considerable number of votes to swing votes.

The third faction, the Progressive Democrats, has the least exact and descriptive name. The members adopted the name Progressive for the congressional caucus in 1991 a year after the establishment of the New Democrats' think tank also bearing "progressive" in its name. The Progressives developed an institutionalized and organized structure much later than the two previously examined factions. Hale credited the DLC's ability to institutionalize and create the New Democratic faction to the lack of comparable liberal intraparty organization (Hale 221). Only following 2011 did the then caucus co-chairs, Keith Ellison and Raúl Grijalva begin unifying the congressional caucus and reaching out to progressive grass-root organizations and activists (Thomsen 748–49). Both previously examined factions defined themselves as diametrically opposed to the liberals of the party, yet the Progressives were late to organize.

The progressives are faced with the same situation as the previously examined faction: the white middle-class voters favored the Republican Party; however, they adopted an alternative approach to counter the problem. Instead of bringing the party closer to the center to appease the

voters, the faction embraces leftist solutions, such as the "big government" solutions to address everyday worries including covering potential medical costs, and financing retirement or education (Arens 39). Moreover, this approach places greater emphasis on the voter's class and class-based-solidarity rather than the voter's race, as people of color also had the same working-class concerns as the white voters (Arens 40).

The Progressives are not ideologically coherent, Hale describes the liberals of the 1980s not as a coherent faction but as a collection of single-issue groups and groups representing women, ethnic and sexual minorities (231). DiSalvo also criticizes the lack of ideological coherence, describing the faction as "united by what they are against," namely "George W. Bush, the Republican Party, and New Democrats" (DiSalvo, "The Death and Life of the New Democrats" 15). Hale described the lack of unity stemming from the fact that the Progressive faction covers a range of policy areas brought by single-issue groups: "antiwar, welfare rights, environmental, consumer, gun control, antinuclear, nuclear freeze, abortion rights" (Hale 231). Furthermore, Arens describes the progressives as "left-labor"; however, members of the faction regularly explain to voters how their leftist ideologies are distinctive such as the Social Democrat Elizabeth Warren and the Democratic Socialist Bernie Sanders signaling that today's progressives are no more coherent (39). The lack of ideological coherence can be examined in the Progressive faction.

The reorganization of the faction was necessary as the power balance shifted toward the Progressives based on the caucus's sheer size and their voting power based on the numbers. The Progressive Caucus holds a record number of members, 102 at the beginning of the 2023 cycle ("Caucus Members"). The new progressives find fault in the New Democratic and Blue Dog strategies of catering to the center; instead, they believe, the party should move to the left.

As described above, the Blue Dog and the New Democrats were the centrist and Third Way antipode of the Progressive faction of the party. On the political spectrum, these factions occupy the positions to the right of the Progressives. The 2016 election was an important turning point for the faction. The election of Donald Trump mobilized progressive amateur and professional activists. Senior staffers of the outgoing Obama administration, including the deputy chief of staff, presidential speechwriters, and advisors, created Crooked Media (Gold). This progressive media network seeks to raise the political engagement of the Democratic Party (Rutenberg 1). Similarly, staffers of the 2016 Sanders presidential campaign created the organizations Brand New Congress and subsequently the Justice Democrats to recruit and train new progressive candidates for Democratic primaries (Cochrane).

In the previous subsections, the existing faction structure of the Democratic Party was examined. Based on this research, the factions adopt various strategies to accomplish their objectives. First, the New Democrats attempted to take the party platform over through outside policy formulation in its think tank and by enabling its members to achieve federal recognition through its institutions. Second, the Blue Dogs attempted bipartisan maneuvering in Congress close to the floor median to ensure the passage of a favorable legislation by supporting either Party to a majority, the strategy was enabled by their relative position compared to the other two factions and required a strict faction discipline and bureaucratic faction structure. Third, the Progressives adopted a strategy of contacting existing progressive organizations and activists in order to build a leftist, more class-based alternative to Republican policies.

II. The New Wave of Progressives

The members of “the Squad” became the new faces of the progressives backed by the Justice Democrats. The Squad was a name given to an informal group of four women of color

from the freshman class of 2019 (Cruz Lera 1). It is thought to be originating from the caption of a photo showing the four newly elected congresspeople posted to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram account. While the group's name is incidental, its members are not. These four women were the only four out of the almost sixty candidates endorsed by the Justice Democrats to win seats in the House of Representatives in 2018 ("About the Justice Democrats"). While the Squad joined the three reelected incumbents in the House who were already backed by the PAC: Raul Grijalva, Ro Khanna, and Pramila Jayapal, in the media narrative only the "defying Squad" was contrasted with the establishment (Cruz Lera 19). This approach overemphasizes the role of the individual legislator, discounting the organizational background behind the recruitment and campaigning by the Justice Democrats.

Justice Democrats is a federal PAC established by the former staffers of the 2016 Sanders presidential campaign. It is an ideological successor to Brand New Congress, an organization created by the same staff that was unsuccessful in their attempt to recruit 400 new candidates for both the Democratic and the Republican Party (*The Justice Democrats' Insight* 0:48). Based on that insight Justice Democrats only focus on the Democratic Party.

Scholarly research into Justice Democrats is limited, therefore the group is assessed based on the research done on the existing factions. The Justice Democrats share similar practices with the established factions. The New Democrats also developed the policy outside the party and adopted the candidate-centric approach. The Justice Democrats aim to shift the party towards the left on the ideological spectrum, similarly to the Blue Dogs who attempted to do so toward the center. In addition, even with only eleven representatives the Justice Democrats constitute a larger voting bloc than the seven Blue Dogs that remained after the Coalition's schism. While the data is too limited to overly generalize on the success of Justice Democrats, all nine Justice Democratic incumbents returned to Congress in 2023 accompanied by 2 freshmen.

The unique aspect of the Justice Democrats' strategy is targeting Democratic incumbents in primaries. Instead of focusing on broadening the number of progressives in Congress, by either winning over Republican seats or securing swinging districts, the Justice Democrats run candidates in safe Democratic primaries. In an interview, the executive director, Alexandra Rojas, describes that the goal is not electing more Democrats but to elect "better ones" (*Build the Bloc* 11:02). The strategy itself is not new, the Tea Party also gained power and shaped Republican incumbent behavior through the threat of being "primaried" (DiSalvo, "Party Factions and American Politics" 10).

The strategy was highly publicized for disturbing the status quo by "challenging the establishment." When Justice Democrats first recruited and trained candidates in 2018, Ayanna Pressley and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez both unseated 10-term incumbent congressmen in the primaries. Ocasio-Cortez ran in the New York 14th district against Joe Crowley, the Chair of the House Democratic Caucus. Crowley was described as the 4th ranking Democrat with a potential bid for the House speakership (Freedlander). Similarly, in the Massachusetts 7th district, Pressley challenged Michael Capuano, who was a long-serving progressive accepting corporate money (Seelye). These early victories provided media coverage to the Justice Democrats. The party's response was swift to dissuade further challenges to the custom of not running against incumbents. Starting in 2019, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) withheld financial contributions from campaigns of primary challengers, and those employing consultants and political groups working in such prior campaigns, essentially blacklisting them. The decision would only be reversed in 2021 after the Justice Democrats called for a boycott of the DCCC (Russonello).

The recruitment and candidate selection process is crucial to the strategy of Justice Democrats. Every election cycle, the Justice Democrats solicit recommendations from

community members to identify potential congressional candidates ("Nominate"). Prior to the 2018 midterm, according to the executive director Alexandria Rojas, the group received over 15,000 nominations, and processed around 8,000 to find the 60 candidates who were eventually endorsed in the primaries (*The Justice Democrats' Insight* 13:36). This strategy incorporates a blend of "office-seeking" and "policy-demanding" behaviors (Conger et al. 1380). These strategies ensure that candidates are electable, and represent the preferred ideological and policy of racial, social, and economic justice. Anecdotally, the Justice Democrats' most involved experimental case was Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Justice Democrats facilitated the recruitment from reaching out to her based on the previously described nomination system to running the electoral campaign, holding a "boot camp" after the electoral victory, and providing members to the representative's congressional staff (*Before Alexandria Was Known* 2:50). In other candidate cases, the involvement of Justice Democrats has not been described to such a degree.

Based on the submission form for the 2024 cycle and the congressional website of the Justice Democrat Representatives ("Nominate"), they focus on candidates from working-class, non-traditional political backgrounds, people of color, women with leadership experience, and the candidate is a "fighter for justice." As a result of the PAC seeking out candidates who have experience as community organizers and have a strong commitment to social justice, all eleven Justice Democrats serving in Congress are people of color (*Justice Democrats Unveils* 12:59). Additionally, Justice Democrats are known for refusing corporate PAC campaign contributions and require the candidate to follow suit (*Justice Democrats Unveils* 07:05). The Justice Democrats prioritize the selection of candidates with certain desired characteristics.

While the Justice Democratic candidates emerged in a media narrative of insurgency in 2018, they have integrated into existing institutions. By the 118th Congress the three top leadership positions in the progressive caucus are held by Justice Democrats and five others are

also part of it ("Caucus Members"). The chair is Pramila Jayapal, one of the incumbents who received support at the time of the establishment of the Justice Democrats. Previously serving as the co-chair of the Caucus, Raúl Grijalva is currently a chair emeritus, he was also a long-time incumbent before the Justice Democrats formed. The number two position of the deputy chair is held by Ilhan Omar, similarly to vice-chair Rashida Tlaib, both elected in the 2018 midterm election and becoming a member of the Squad from 2019 onward. Another vice-chair is Jamal Bowman, a member of Congress from 2021. From the freshman class of 2023, Summer Lee is one of the special orders hour conveners, while Greg Casar, another first-term member is the whip. Ro Khanna, another incumbent recruited while already a member of Congress, is serving as deputy whip. Out of eleven Justice Democrats eight further the progressive agenda by taking an active, leadership role in the Progressive caucus.

Justice Democrats are evaluated based on the definition of the faction provided earlier in this paper. The Justice Democrats is a subunit of the Democratic Party. The organization chooses to be a part of the party instead of being a third-party challenger and frequently runs candidates in Democratic primaries. They also have a consistent progressive and leftist ideology based on racial, social, and economic justice that serve as the basis of their platform. This ideology is also used to recruit candidates that are able to further the cause. The Justice Democrats seek to collectively change the party's agenda and policy. Their mission confirms exactly this: in their own words they are "working to transform the Democratic Party" ("About the Justice Democrats"). However, the Justice Democrats do not fulfill two aspects of the definition. The group lacks the organizational level necessary to effectively change the party. While the number of their elected members is higher than that of another established faction, the Blue Dogs, this is not enough to effectively utilize to shift votes. They are not distinctly different from the non-faction members of the party as it has been shown that Justice Democrats regularly fill leadership

positions in the Progressive Caucus, instead of creating a separate caucus. For these reasons based on the definition of a faction, the Justice Democrats are not a separate faction, instead, the members are seemingly integrated into the Progressive faction. This is one major difference between the New Democrats or Blue Dogs and the Justice Democrats. The latter did not outright create separate factions: rather they opted to shape the existing intraparty structure by joining and shaping the Progressives from the inside.

Conclusion

The formation of the intraparty faction structure of the Democratic Party was enabled by characteristics of the American political system: the two-party system, divided party control, low cohesion, and decentralization of political parties. Examining the three factions that divide the party along Congressional cleavages served to better understand the ideological makeup of the Democratic Party and the fluctuation of power within. These factions enacted various strategies to influence the party platform while embracing different organizational styles and taking often competing policy positions.

First, the New Democrats sought to address their election insecurity with Southern white voters caused by the Republican Southern Strategy by adopting fiscally responsible economic policies and carrying out a rebranding strategy known as the Third Way. To accomplish this, the faction structure was characterized by institutionalization. Following the early success to shape the Party platform through the election of a New Democratic president Bill Clinton, the faction failed to dominate; however, their membership remains substantial.

Second, the Blue Dogs, similarly perceived that the national party was “too liberals,” and even suffocating. The faction leveraged its pivotal position at the center to pressure the party leadership; lest the Blue Dogs achieve their centrist and conservative policy goals with the

bipartisan support of the Republicans. In recent years Blue Dog membership steadily declined, following a split in the Coalition over an unsuccessful bid to rename the coalition, their r numbers dropped to single digits in the 118th Congress.

Third, the Progressives were shown to be encompassing a wide array of interest groups and ideologies. The faction leadership was comparatively slow in organizing its structure to effectively utilize its size, as compared to the other two factions. As of now, the Progressives are leading the party with record numbers of members, as well as constituting the largest faction by size. A combination of the Progressives restructuring efforts to reach out to grass-root activist groups, and the resentment toward the 2016 election resulted in, new progressive organizations being formed by experienced campaign staff.

One such organization is the Justice Democrats, who emerged in the election of the Squad, with four progressive congresswomen of color elected in the 2018 midterms. Their strategy of recruitment and training new candidates to run against incumbents showed a blended approach to electability and furthering PAC ideological and policy goals. These candidates are people of color and share specific characteristics, they are working class or have a community organizer background and a strong commitment to progressive ideals. The Justice Democrats were ostracized by the party leadership for running candidates in primaries, contrary to party tradition, even against incumbent Democrats. Despite initial predictions, based on the Squad challenging the Democratic Party's traditional leadership and political establishment, the Justice Democrats did not form a separate faction within the Democratic Party, instead integrated into the party's existing intraparty faction structure by attaining leadership position amongst the Progressives.

Further research may examine potential ideological variations between the chambers of the Congress, or at the state and local levels of the party potentially revealing new insights into

the ideological composition of the Democratic Party that stem from regional differences or organizational differences. In a diverging approach, a comparative analysis of the intraparty structure of the two parties may be conducted to further the understanding of faction strategies.

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