Congressional Oversight and Electoral Accountability[*]

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Abstract

Legislative oversight allows Congress to investigate potential wrongdoing by executive branch actors. We present a model in which an incumbent exercises oversight and chooses to take corrective action against the executive before going up for reelection. We show that partisan types who prefer to take corrective action regardless of the probability of wrongdoing will always conduct oversight, but sincere types who only want to correct legitimate wrongdoing will exercise restraint to avoid appearing too partisan and losing reelection. The model also shows that oversight is increasing in the probability that the incumbent is partisan and the probability that the challenger is sincere. Lastly, we present two case studies, the Elián González custody case and the attack on the Benghazi embassy, to illustrate our theory.

Oversight is one of many tools that Congress utilizes as a check on the executive branch. Congressional committees often hold hearings, subpoena key witnesses, and request information pertaining to government officials and federal agencies working for the president. As such, these checks are often exploited for partisan purposes. Presidential administrations, in particular those that face divided governments, often experience heavy scrutiny by the legislative branch and sometimes lose public approval as a result of high-profile scandals (e.g., Watergate or Iran-Contra).

However, when witnessing such investigations by Congress, voters do not know whether the intent of Congress is "sincere" or "partisan." On the one hand, members of Congress like Representative Elijah Cummings (D-MD), the chair of the House Oversight Committee during the first half of the 116th Congress, emphasized the need for "fact-based investigations and investigations that hopefully will lead to better government" (DePuyt, 2018). On the other hand, members of Congress have occasionally been somewhat transparent about using oversight specifically to embarrass the opposite party and hurt their nominees for office. In a FOX News interview, Representative Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) remarked that the Benghazi select committee that House Republicans put together had caused Hillary Clinton's poll numbers to drop. McCarthy claimed that Clinton was "untrustable" and "no one would have have known any of that had happened had we not fought and made that happen" (Moe and Dann, 2015). McCarthy's colleague Richard Hanna (R-NY) further confirmed that the hearings were a partisan effort to hurt the Democratic party's likely presidential nominee, saying "a big part of this investigation [...] was designed to go after people and an individual, Hillary Clinton" (Merica, 2015).

We propose a model of oversight during divided government that focuses on electoral considerations as a key driver of variation in oversight activity. Our focus on these electoral considerations—namely whether oversight activity will be perceived by voters as partisan —contrasts with extant explanations for variation in congressional oversight that focus

primarily on strategic resource allocation (Scher, 1963; Aberbach, 1990; McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984) or interbranch struggles over policy implementation (McGrath, 2013; MacDonald and McGrath, 2016). We consider a two-period accountability model of congressional oversight, which suggests that members of Congress hold back on conducting investigations because oversight may be construed as partisan posturing. The key tradeoff is that while members of Congress may have genuine desires to unearth details about executive wrongdoing, doing so may present the wrong impression to voters about their level of partisanship and their willingness to choose the right policy.

In our formal model, the incumbent has the power to conduct oversight of the executive.[1] Conducting oversight allows the incumbent to uncover potential agency wrongdoing with some positive probability. Specifically, the incumbent receives a signal of the state of the world, through congressional hearings and activities like subpoenas or lawsuits, and chooses whether or not to take corrective action (i.e., appropriation riders, impeachment, etc.) against the executive.

To represent the voter's uncertainty, we assume that there are two types of incumbents—a "partisan" type and a "sincere" type—and that the type is unknown to voters. The partisan type views oversight hearings as opportunities to embarrass the opposition and therefore wants to conduct oversight, but she does not wish to act on the information carried out by an investigation. This is partially because the partisan type is motivated to achieve a particular outcome through corrective action, regardless of whether that action is warranted by information gained from oversight. The sincere type, on the other hand, seeks to conduct oversight judiciously and only wants to hold hearings when they have reason to believe that actual wrongdoing will be uncovered. As we will demonstrate formally below, voters prefer to be represented by the sincere type.

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[1]Substantively, one can conceive this actor as the leadership of the majority party in Congress (e.g., Speaker Nancy Pelosi in the 116th Congress) or the chair of the relevant oversight committee. These actors are given considerable discretion over decisions about whether and when to exercise oversight.

Our main result is that incumbents who are sincere about exercising oversight will choose not to exercise oversight out of concern of appearing too partisan to the voters and losing reelection. While the sincere incumbents would reap greater utility from conducting oversight and achieving the right policy, their incentive to get reelected and retain power overrides their policy concerns. On the other hand, partisan members of Congress are willing to risk losing reelection in order to conduct oversight and take corrective action against the executive.

We present another equilibrium in which this separation between types is relaxed somewhat in order to derive comparative statics—in this equilibrium, the sincere types exercise oversight with some positive probability. We show that oversight is decreasing in the probability that the incumbent is sincere and increasing in the probability that the challenger is sincere. These predictions suggest that there is reluctance to exercise oversight particularly when members of Congress have an easier path to reelection. It is when they are at an electoral disadvantage that there is a larger incentive to doggedly pursue investigations and hold hearings.

In the context of our semi-separating equilibrium, we also provide some comparative statics on voter welfare—i.e., the probability that politicians take actions that are consistent with the state of the world. We find the relationship between voter welfare and the incumbent's/challenger's electoral standing is non-monotonic, and welfare is increasing in the effectiveness of oversight. Interestingly, when the incumbent is at an advantage with respect to the challenger, the effectiveness of oversight performs both a sanctioning and selection role. Greater informativeness of oversight induces both types to choose the correct action more often, and it also leads to a smaller reelection probability conditional on oversight, weeding out more of the partisan type in equilibrium. When the challenger is at an advantage with respect to the incumbent, however, effectiveness of oversight only has a sanctioning effect.

Finally, we examine two cases to illustrate the logic of our equilibria, and in the Appendix, we pursue four extensions of our model. We look first at the reluctance among members of

Congress to exercise oversight in the custody case of Elián González. In addition, we take a look at the Republicans' oversight of Hillary Clinton and the Obama Administration in the aftermath of the attack on the embassy in Benghazi. In the Appendix, we extend the model to vary the ex ante likelihood of wrongdoing, permit the voter to replace the executive, allow for the minority party to endorse/exercise oversight as well, and relax the assumption that the voter always observes incumbent oversight decisions.

Contributions to Literature

Political scientists and other scholars of democratic systems of government have long been interested in the concept of legislative oversight of the executive branch. Early work in the American context decried Congress' perceived failure to live up to the lofty oversight expectations established in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (Scher, 1963; Lowi, 1969; Ogul, 1976). To some observers, the pattern of infrequent congressional oversight indicated an abdication of legislative prerogative (Dodd and Schott, 1979; Lowi, 1969; Ogul, 1976), which paved the way for executive aggrandizement and the weakening of separation of powers.

Pushing back on these concerns, a new branch of scholarship asserted that Congress had developed a variety of mechanisms through which to compel bureaucratic compliance without the need to consistently hold oversight hearings (Weingast and Moran, 1983; Weingast, 1984; McCubbins, Noll and Weingast, 1987, 1989; McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984). Infrequent oversight, this literature argued, was not a sign of abdication, but simply a reflection of the fact that Congress was content to influence bureaucratic behavior by other means. We contribute to this literature by highlighting an alternative explanation—that members of Congress do not exercise oversight because they fear the electoral consequences of appearing too partisan.

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Recent work on oversight acknowledges the importance of ex-ante mechanisms of congressional influence over the bureaucracy but remains interested in explaining intertemporal variations in ex-post oversight. Empirical work shows the frequency of oversight hearings increasing in the 1970s and remaining high (relative to the levels observed in the 1960s) through the 2000s (Aberbach, 1990; MacDonald and McGrath, 2016; McGrath, 2013).[2] Whereas the macro-level trend in oversight is increasing over time, the data is characterized by considerable year-to-year variation throughout. Our work here investigates the political and electoral drivers of this variation by providing comparative statics and theoretical predictions on oversight.

There are a number of different theoretical approaches to explaining variation in congressional oversight activity. One prominent approach is based on an assumption that Congress uses oversight as a means of bringing bureaucratic policymaking in line with congressional preferences (Cameron and Rosendorff, 1993; McGrath, 2013; MacDonald and McGrath, 2016; Potter and Lowande, 2020). From this policy-focused perspective, variation in oversight activity is a function of the ideological distance between relevant congressional actors and agency heads, the capacity of different congressional committees to engage in oversight, and switches from divided to unified government.[3] Some research has looked at a more discreet form of communication between legislators and the bureaucracy where legislators can contact agencies on behalf of constituents (Ritchie, 2018). Through this medium, legislators have an impact on bureaucratic decision-making (Ritchie and You, 2019); as such, this form of communication may be interpreted as a policy instrument in the context of our model.

Others have suggested that institutional position and interbranch dynamics are important components to understanding oversight. For example, Bawn (1997) shows that members of

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[2]MacDonald and McGrath (2016) use data from the Policy Agendas Project (Baumgartner and Jones, 2013) that goes through 2010.

[3]However, as Potter (2019) demonstrates, executive agencies are often able to increase the costs of oversight for an ideologically hostile Congress.

Congress who sit on committees with jurisdiction over a particular agency's policy area may prefer ex post oversight over the agency's policy decisions, while members who are not on the committee prefer stricter statutory controls. Models of delegation between a principal and agent are also applicable here (Gilligan and Krehbiel, 1987; Krehbiel, 1992); they have been applied to the context of Congress and the bureaucracy (Bawn, 1998; Epstein and O'Halloran, 1999; Lowande, 2018).

A third theoretical approach, with which this paper is most closely aligned, explicitly considers the political and electoral side of congressional oversight decisions. Scholars have shown that some members value oversight hearings primarily as opportunities to make well-publicized political statements aimed at important constituent groups (Park, forthcoming). Congressional investigations of the president or other executive branch officials, particularly ones launched within the House, are often calculated attempts by the majority party to tarnish the reputation of a president from the opposite party (Kriner and Schickler, 2016b,a; Lee, 2009, 2013; Lowande and Peck, 2016). As competition for partisan control of government has intensified over the last forty years, the incentives to conduct politically-oriented oversight have strengthened as well (Lee, 2016). Our model contributes to this approach by making specific predictions about how the incumbent's electoral standing and the challenger's electoral standing affect oversight. While electorally-minded legislators may "intervene effectively in the bureaucracy on matters where they can claim credit for intervention," (Mayhew, 1974, pg. 125) we posit that the electoral considerations behind oversight decisions are more nuanced. Specifically, our model assumes that constituents update their evaluations of incumbents by observing their decisions about oversight—and that incumbents make these decisions with this electoral dynamic in mind.

This model builds on the traditional accountability framework that has been employed in various past models (Barro, 1973; Besley, 2006; Ferejohn, 1986; Gailmard and Patty, 2019). The main difference between this model and others is that the incumbent has a

choice to collect information, and this action by the incumbent is observed by the voter (and has implications for the voters' beliefs). While it is common in models to see incumbents receiving information about some state of the world in the form of a signal (Canes-Wrone, Herron and Shotts, 2001; Maskin and Tirole, 2004), these models do not allow the incumbent to opt out of taking the signal. Moreover, Prendergast (1993) makes information-gathering endogenous, but the types are not defined in this model to express inclinations towards how information is used, unlike in the present model.

Our model also differs from others that look at incentives to gather information, in that we theorize the decision to collect information as a signal of the incumbent's type (Gordon and Huber, 2002; Patty and Turner, forthcoming). Furthermore, the first result in our model is perhaps most analogous to Levy (2004), which shows that it is optimal for the incumbent not to choose the right action, such that there is an "anti-herding" effect. In an extension of the model, Levy also considers the agent's choice to consult an advisor and gather more information. However, the substantive difference is that the anti-pandering exhibited in Levy's model is a function of the ability or competence of the agent whereas in the present case, it is a function of how willing the agent is to utilize the information gathered from oversight. This difference also separates our model from Fox and Van Weelden (2009), which is also a theory of oversight.

Model

Our game has three players: the voter (V), the incumbent (I), and a challenger (C). In each of the two periods of the game, I chooses to engage in oversight of the federal agency $(x = 1)$ or not to conduct oversight $(x = 0)$. Primarily, we conceive of this as a decision over whether or not to hold an oversight hearing in which agency officials are called to testify before the committee of jurisdiction, but oversight could also refer to a number of other activities, such

as making a public request for the committee to divulge some pertinent information. To take one example, in 2012, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee investigated a failed gun-trafficking operation known as "Fast and Furious," which was conducted by the Department of Justice. As part of this investigation, the committee had subpoenaed documents from the Department of Justice and Attorney General Eric Holder (Calamur, 2012). Moreover, the Attorney General had appeared before the committee to address questions about the scandal during a congressional hearing.

We formalize agency wrongdoing as a state variable ω, such that $\omega = 1$ when wrongdoing has occurred, and $\omega = 0$ when there is no wrongdoing. Our conceptualization of agency wrongdoing is fairly broad, encompassing misuse of appropriated funds, bureaucratic drift in policy implementation, and other activities that run afoul of congressional intent. One example is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) during the tenure of Administrator Anne Gorsuch, from 1981-1983. Democrats in Congress were concerned that the Reagan Administration was "manipulating [EPA] programs for political ends" by requesting deep budget cuts to the agency's enforcement activities (Lazarus, 1991). This led to congressional hearings and ultimately Gorsuch's resignation.

Conditional on conducting oversight ($x = 1$), I receives a signal s of agency wrongdoing ω (i.e., the state of the world), where $Pr(s = 1 | \omega = 1) = Pr(s = 0 | \omega = 0) = p > \frac{1}{2}$.[4] Thus, p represents the "effectiveness" of oversight, or how informative congressional hearings and subpoenas are in recovering the existence of wrongdoing (or lack thereof) in the executive branch.

After I's oversight decision, she can choose to take corrective action $y \in \{0, 1\}$, where $y = 1$ matches the state $\omega = 1$. Such corrective action ($y = 1$) could come in the form of a legislative proposal to reorganize the agency, an appropriations rider limiting the policy

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[4]The assumption that $p > \frac{1}{2}$ is required so that the information from oversight is at least as informative as one's prior. Otherwise, incumbents would never gain from exercising oversight (Austen-Smith and Banks, 1996).

discretion of the agency, or a cut to the agency's funding. In the 1980s, for example, Congress employed a limitation rider through the Boland Amendment, which restricted funding to the CIA and the Department of Defense for the purpose of supporting the Contra rebel groups in Nicaragua. This rider was passed by Congress after it was revealed that the CIA had mined Nicaraguan harbors without informing the Senate Intelligence Committee. After the choice to take corrective action is made by the incumbent, the voter observes x, I's decision to exercise oversight, y, I's decision to take corrective action, and s, the signal from oversight (if oversight is conducted), and decides whether to retain the incumbent ($r = 1$) or elect the challenger ($r = 0$).

In our model, it is possible for the incumbent to take corrective action ($y = 1$) without conducting oversight ($x = 0$). This happens with some frequency in the real world, typically through the inclusion of a limitation rider in an appropriations bill. For example, in every year from 1995 through 2001, the Republican-controlled House inserted a provision into the appropriations bill funding the Department of Transportation (DOT) that prohibited the department from increasing the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. Conservatives in Congress used this provision during divided government to prevent the Clinton administration from pursuing environmental goals that ran counter to Republican policy preferences. These provisions and other appropriation riders can change policy without being the subject of hearings or going through the relevant authorizing committees (Hager, 1995).[5]

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[5]David R. Obey (D-WI), the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee during the 104th Congress, decried the new Republican majority's efforts to prohibit increases in CAFE standards through the appropriations process. "They're trying to bury all these policy issues so their (authorizing) chairmen don't have to take these issues on frontally," Obey stated (Hager, 1995).

Beliefs

One main element of our game is the uncertainty of the voter about whether the incumbent is the sincere type ($t = 0$) or the partisan type ($t = 1$). Incumbents in our model have two types that are differentiated by their preferences over how to utilize the information from oversight investigations. We assume that, ex-ante, the voter believes that there is a π_I probability that the incumbent is the sincere type and a π_C probability that the challenger is the sincere type. Empirically, these probabilities may be captured in the approval rating of the incumbent and the status of the challenger in pre-election polls.

As mentioned before, we assume that the voter observes three parameters before voting —the decision to conduct oversight, x, the decision to take corrective action, y, and the signal that the incumbent observes s (conditional on oversight ($x = 1$)).[6] The voter updates her beliefs about the incumbent's type based on x, y, and s in the first round. We denote μ_I as the posterior probability that the incumbent is sincere after the voter observes these three parameters. We assume that $Pr(\omega = 1) = \frac{1}{2}$, meaning that the states are equally likely, ex-ante.[7]

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[6]Accountability models often assume that the voter can observe the state of the world with some probability (Canes-Wrone, Herron and Shotts, 2001) or probability one (Besley, 2006; Maskin and Tirole, 2004). We are using an arguably more realistic assumption for our context here. The intuition for this can be thought about in the case of the recent impeachment inquiry against President Trump in 2019. Many pundits and commentators openly suggested that if information from the inquiry was revealed to the public, a wave of opinion change on the president's impeachment would transpire. Thus, we might imagine that when voters make decisions to hold politicians accountable, they may not observe with certainty the extent of wrongdoing by the executive branch, but rather they may base their electoral decisions on information gathered in the public eye through congressional investigation. In the Appendix, we solve an extension of our model in which we relax the assumption of observability of the signal of the state of the world in addition to that of the incumbent's oversight decision.

[7]In the Appendix, we relax this assumption and show how results differ where $Pr(\omega = 1)$ is equal to some parameter $q \in (0, 1)$.

Utility Functions

The utility functions for the voter and the incumbent are as follows:

$$U_V = \omega y + (1 - \omega)(1 - y)$$

$$U_I = t(x + y) + (1 - t)(\omega y + (1 - \omega)(1 - y)) + r(t(x + y) + (1 - t)(\omega y + (1 - \omega)(1 - y)))$$

The voter's utility is equal to 1 if the action matches the state of the world and 0 otherwise. Note that there are two scenarios in which the voter's utility is equal to 1. The first is that corrective action is taken ($y = 1$) and there exists agency wrongdoing ($\omega = 1$), and the other scenario is that corrective action is not taken ($y = 0$) in the absence of agency wrongdoing ($\omega = 0$).

Moving to the utility function of the incumbent, we can examine the difference between the sincere type ($t = 0$) and the partisan type ($t = 1$). The partisan type's utility is increasing in conducting oversight ($x = 1$) and taking corrective action ($y = 1$), whereas the utility of the sincere type is increasing in the extent to which corrective action is equal to the state of the world ($y = \omega$). The sincere type prefers to exercise oversight to the extent that she can use the information gathered from congressional investigations to make a better decision with respect to corrective action, but the partisan type always prefers oversight and has no intention of leveraging the information gathered. Rather oversight, as a way to embarrass the opposite party, is beneficial in and of itself. Both types reap utility from taking their preferred actions in the second round if they get reelected ($r = 1$) after the first round.

The motivations that underlie the partisan type's utility function require some additional explanation. In our setup, absent reelection concerns, the partisan type has a strict preference for two different actions: conducting oversight ($x = 1$) and taking corrective action against

the executive ($y = 1$). We are black-boxing certain motivations in the oversight "rent" for the partisan type. We can think of these motivations as desires to affect the reelection chances of the out-party president or alter the relative strength of the two national parties' brands. In an extension that we derive in the Appendix, we build this out more explicitly by substituting the oversight "rent" with a preference for replacing the executive (in the context of divided government). In this extension, the partisan type wishes to conduct oversight to the extent that it would reveal executive wrongdoing and convince the voter to "throw out" the executive. We show that the main results in our paper remain substantively the same with these more specific motivations. We stick with the more stylized oversight rent for the purpose of parsimony.

The partisan incumbent's preference for corrective action, on the other hand, can be much more straightforwardly interpreted as a strongly-held policy preference. The partisan type is motivated to achieve a specific outcome ex-ante.[8] An example is provided by House Republicans in the 113th Congress holding oversight hearings on the troubled rollout of the Affordable Care Act website.[9] In light of the fact that House Republicans had already voted over 40 times to repeal the Affordable Care Act, it did not seem likely that any information revealed by these hearings would serve to update any members' beliefs or their preferences to take corrective action. Indeed, calls from some Republicans to remove HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius preceded much of the official hearings.[10]

Game Sequence

Our game proceeds as follows:

1. Nature chooses the state of the world $\omega \in \{0, 1\}$.

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[8] As such, any desire to make use of the information generated by oversight in the subsequent choice of corrective action purely comes from reputational concerns.

[9] Politico

[10] NY Times

2. The incumbent I chooses whether or not to conduct oversight $x \in \{0, 1\}$.

3. Conditional on $x = 1$, I receives a signal of the state of the world $s \in \{0, 1\}$.

4. I chooses corrective action $y \in \{0, 1\}$. I has the same options independent of whether $x = 0$ or $x = 1$.

5. The voter V observes x, y, and s (if $x = 1$) and chooses whether or not to retain the incumbent: $r \in \{0, 1\}$.

6. The (re)elected politician repeats stages 1-4.

Analysis

To begin the analysis, note that the voter prefers the sincere type over the partisan type because the sincere type will be more likely to choose the right policy in the last period of the game. When there is no reelection incentive, both types choose to exercise oversight. The sincere type does so because with probability p, the incumbent learns the true state of the world and enacts the right policy[11] (whereas the incumbent would only choose the right action with probability $\frac{1}{2}$ in the absence of oversight). On the other hand, the partisan type engages in oversight to receive the oversight rent, not because of any policy gain. The difference in the types' behavior comes from the choice of corrective action, y; the sincere type chooses the action that matches her signal so with probability p, she chooses the action consistent with the state of the world. However, the partisan type strictly prefers corrective action ($y = 1$), independent of the state of the world, and only gets the action right with probability $\frac{1}{2}$. Thus, the voter, after observing the first-period behavior of the incumbent, will choose to reelect the incumbent if the incumbent is more likely to be the sincere type than a random challenger.

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[11]Here, we mean the policy that matches the true state of the world.

Lemma 1: V chooses to reelect $(r = 1)$ if $\mu_I > \pi_C$, and V chooses not to $(r = 0)$ if $\mu_I < \pi_C$.

Proof: All proofs are in the Appendix.

Given that the voter rewards behavior typical of sincere types, in any equilibrium in which the types separate (i.e., the sincere type and partisan type choose different actions), the voter will only reelect the sincere type. There exists a separating equilibrium of this game, in which the sincere type does not engage in oversight $(x = 0)$ and the partisan type does $(x = 1)$. Conditional on engaging in oversight, the sincere type would receive higher policy utility in the short term; the probability that she enacts the policy that matches the state of the world increases from $\frac{1}{2}$ to p. But, because only the partisan type conducts oversight in equilibrium, the voter believes that the incumbent is partisan w.p. 1 upon observing oversight and prefers not to reelect. Thus, the incumbent loses reelection and any policy utility in the second period by conducting oversight in the first period. Since the utility loss in the second period is larger than the potential policy gain in the first, the sincere type would prefer to trade off additional information in the short-term for gaining reelection and enacting the right policy in the next period.

Proposition 1: There exists a separating equilibrium in which the sincere type does not exercise oversight $(x = 0)$ but the partisan type does $(x = 1)$. In this equilibrium, the partisan type takes corrective action $(y = 1)$, the sincere type chooses not to do so $(y = 0)$, and the voter reelects $(r = 1)$ if and only if $x = 0$ and $y = 0$.

In the equilibrium described in Proposition 1, the types separate on policy as well. The sincere type does not conduct oversight, so given that the states are equally likely, she is indifferent between choosing corrective action $(y = 1)$ and not doing so $(y = 0)$. The partisan

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type is not indifferent, however. Since both x, the choice to conduct oversight, and y, the corrective action, are observable to the voter, the partisan type loses reelection regardless of her choice to take corrective action, conditional on exercising oversight. So, she has a strict preference to take corrective action.[12]

One key intuition we can draw from this equilibrium is that the sincere type is choosing not to conduct oversight or take corrective action for fear of appearing too partisan to the voters and losing reelection. This provides an alternative explanation for variation in the frequency of oversight that contrasts with others presented in the literature. While previous papers have noted that oversight could yield few political benefits, in the sense that it does not garner enough attention from constituents (Scher, 1963) or it is more efficient to wait for constituents to sound the "alarm" first (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984), our model is suggesting that oversight can actually be politically costly by revealing that the politicians' interests are not exactly aligned with their constituents.

Semi-Separating Equilibrium

In the separating equilibrium, one cannot draw any comparative statics on the probability of oversight beyond looking at the probability that the incumbent is sincere, which somewhat limits the analysis. Moreover, in equilibrium, all incumbents who exercise oversight do not get reelected, which is not realistic. To analyze some more interesting comparative statics and more realistic results, we first look at a semi-separating equilibrium in which the sincere type exercises oversight with some probability $\beta \in (0, 1)$. We focus on equilibria in which the sincere type's corrective action strategy is a function of the signal, conditional on oversight (otherwise, the sincere type's mixed strategy is trivial and uninteresting). One should note

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[12]Note that it cannot be an equilibrium strategy for the sincere type to take corrective action ($y = 1$) when $x = 0$, since that would provide a profitable deviation for the partisan type. The partisan type would deviate by neglecting oversight in the first period in exchange for the oversight rent and policy utility in the second period.

here that there are other equilibria beyond the ones that are presented in the body of the analysis. We describe our equilibrium selection decisions in the Appendix.

In this equilibrium, to make the sincere type indifferent between exercising oversight $(x = 1)$ and not exercising oversight $(x = 0)$, the voter reelects the incumbent with some positive probability when the incumbent exercises oversight $(x = 1)$ and reelects always when the incumbent does not $(x = 0)$. On the flip side, to make the voter indifferent, the sincere type exercises oversight with some probability β so that the voter thinks that the incumbent is just as likely to be sincere as a random challenger upon observing oversight. This equilibrium requires that the incumbent is at an advantage with respect to the challenger $(\pi_I \geq \pi_C)$ so that the voter's posterior can decrease to π_C upon observing oversight. We describe this formally in Proposition 2 and show it visually in Figure 1.

Proposition 2: There exists the following semi-separating equilibrium, which can be divided into two regions:

1. When $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the partisan type always exercises oversight $(x = 1)$, and the sincere type mixes between $x = 1$ and $x = 0$. Both types choose the policy that matches her signal $(y = s)$, and the voter reelects with probability $\frac{1}{2p}$ when the signal matches the action (and with probability 0 otherwise). The voter always reelects when $x = 0$.

2. When $\pi_C > \pi_I$, both types exercise oversight $(x = 1)$. The sincere type chooses $y = s$, and the partisan type chooses $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ but mixes between $y = 1$ and $y = 0$ when $s = 0$. The voter reelects with probability $\frac{1}{2}$ when $x = 1$, $y = 0$, and $s = 0$, and with probability 0 otherwise.

In this equilibrium, when the incumbent is at an advantage with respect to the challenger $(\pi_I \geq \pi_C)$, as oversight becomes more informative (i.e., as p increases), the probability that

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Figure 1: Parameter Space for Semi-Separating Equilibrium $\left(\beta = \frac{\pi_C}{1-\pi_C}\frac{1-\pi_I}{\pi_I}\right)$
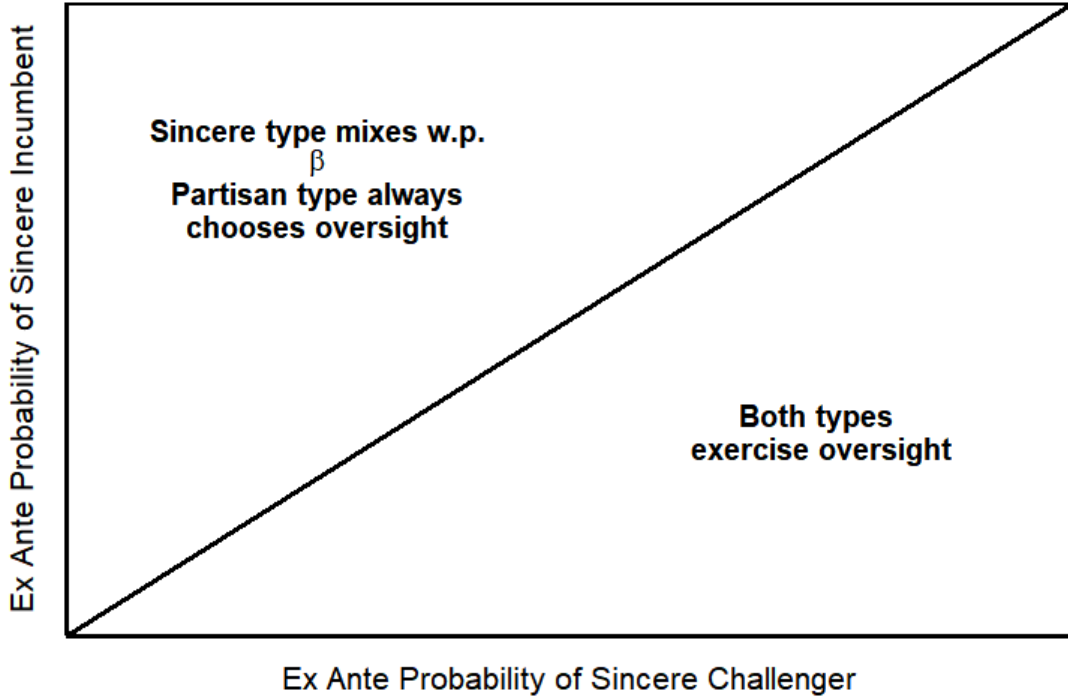
the voter reelects when $x = 1$ shrinks to preserve the indifference of the sincere type. The partisan type and the sincere type pool on corrective action and always choose the action that matches their signal. The fact that the signal is observed by the voter leaves little flexibility for the partisan type to choose corrective action even when $s = 0$, as that immediately reveals that the incumbent is unaligned with the voter.

In the second region, both types conduct oversight. When $\pi_I < \pi_C$, there exists an equilibrium in which the partisan type mixes on the corrective action parameter (when $s = 0$) such that she mimics the sincere type some of the time. This allows the voter's posterior to increase conditional on no corrective action ($y = 0$) when that corresponds with the signal ($s = 0$), such that the voter reelects with some probability when the game reaches this node. The voter's reelection probability serves to make the partisan type indifferent between taking corrective action ($y = 1$) and not doing so ($y = 0$) when $s = 0$.

When oversight reveals evidence of executive wrongdoing ($s = 1$), both types have the same ideal action here. The sincere type prefers to take corrective action ($y = 1$) because it matches the signal, and the partisan type prefers to do so because $y = 1$ is always her ideal policy. Thus, even though neither type wins reelection when $y = s = 1$, this strategy is justified in equilibrium because they correspond to their ideal actions in this case. This is not the case, however, when oversight does not reveal evidence of wrongdoing ($s = 0$). Here, the types' ideal actions diverge, and so the voter's positive reelection probability conditional on $y = s = 0$ incentivizes the partisan type to choose $y = 0$ some of the time.

Comparative Statics

The semi-separating equilibrium allows us to examine predictors of variation in the level of oversight. The total probability of oversight is a function of the probability that the incumbent is sincere (π_I) and the probability that the challenger is sincere (π_C). We draw some additional comparative statics on the likelihood of wrongdoing in an extension of our model in the Appendix. As seen in panel A of Figure 2, the probability of oversight is weakly decreasing in the proportion of sincere incumbents. As the incumbent is more likely to be the sincere type *ex ante*, in order for the voter to be indifferent between the challenger and incumbent upon observing oversight, the sincere type must exercise oversight with sufficiently low probability. The reason that this curve begins as a flat line is that for $\pi_I < \pi_C$, the probability of oversight is always 1.

On the other hand, the probability of oversight is increasing in the proportion of sincere challengers. As the challenger is more likely to be the sincere type, the voter must believe that the sincere type exercises oversight with a sufficiently high probability to make the voter think that the incumbent, when she has exercised oversight, is just as appealing as the challenger. Similarly as before, the relationship is flat when the proportion of sincere challengers (π_C) is higher than the proportion of sincere incumbents (π_I).

Figure 2: Comparative Statics on the Probability of Oversight
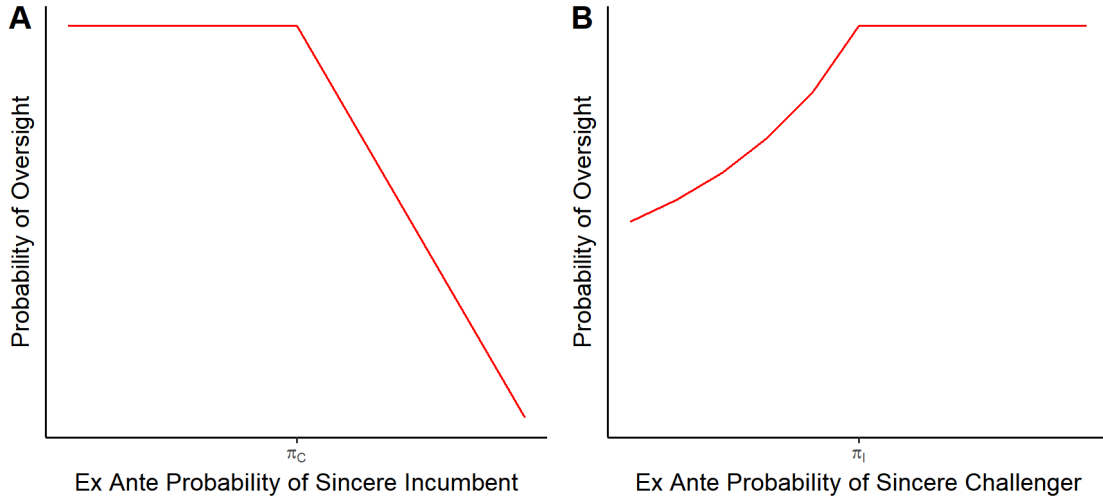
Voter Welfare

One can also examine some comparative statics on voter welfare. In this model, the voter's welfare is a function of whether or not the action taken by the incumbent matches the state of the world. We look at the effects of the probability that the incumbent is sincere, the probability that the challenger is sincere, and the effectiveness of oversight on voter welfare.

According to Figure 3, when the ex ante probability that the incumbent is sincere is smaller than the ex ante probability that the challenger is sincere (i.e., when the challenger is at an advantage with respect to the incumbent), there is a positive relationship between how likely the incumbent is to be sincere and voter welfare. This is true for two reasons: (1) as the incumbent is more likely to be sincere ex ante, the partisan type chooses the action that matches her signal with higher probability, specifically when she gets the signal $s = 0$, to make the voter indifferent; and (2) the sincere type of the incumbent is more likely than the partisan type to choose the action that matches her signal in equilibrium. When the incumbent is at an advantage with respect to the challenger, the sincere type exercises oversight with a lower probability as the incumbent is more likely ex ante to be sincere, to make the voter indifferent. Thus, there is a negative relationship between the ex ante

Figure 3: Comparative Statics on Voter Welfare ($p = 0.6$ in panels A and B and $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$ in panel C)
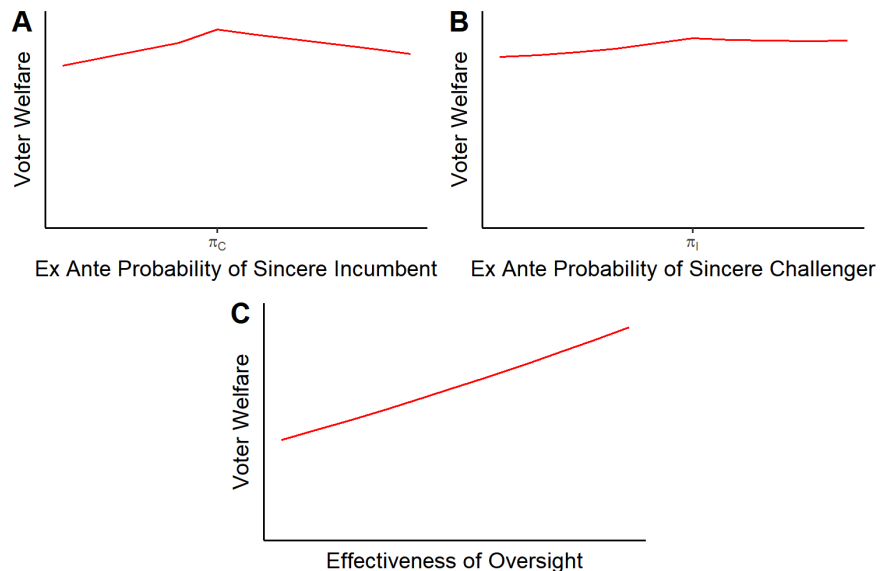
probability of the sincere type and voter welfare in this region.

One can also look at the ex ante probability that the challenger is sincere. The relationships here are broadly similar to those discussed above. When the incumbent is at an advantage with respect to the challenger, the incumbent exercises oversight with higher probability as the challenger attains improved standing. When the challenger is at an advantage with respect to the incumbent, there are two counteracting effects: (1) the partisan type is less likely to choose the action that matches her signal as the challenger's standing improves; and (2) the challengers that get elected in place of the partisan type are more likely to choose the right policy in the second period as the challenger's ex ante probability increases. The first effect outweighs the second effect, except for π_C sufficiently large.

Finally, as one might expect, there is a positive relationship between the effectiveness of oversight and voter welfare. This is true because the types' information about the state of the world is more precise. It is also true because as effectiveness (p) increases, the probability of reelection decreases for types who exercise oversight. Since the partisan type is more likely

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to exercise oversight than the sincere type, this means that greater effectiveness of oversight weeds out the partisan type at reelection time. Interestingly, when the incumbent has the advantage over the challenger, the effectiveness of oversight performs both a sanctioning and a selection role in this model simultaneously - both types play the right action in the first period more of the time (i.e., sanctioning), and the partisan type is more likely to be thrown out of office (i.e., selection), as effectiveness (p) increases. When the challenger is at an advantage, however, there is only a sanctioning effect.

Note on Assumptions

One assumption we make in this model is that voters do not evaluate their representatives' oversight behavior in and of itself through a partisan lens—rather, they favor oversight to the extent that it would help match the degree of corrective action with the state of the world, like the sincere type. However, one could reasonably argue that there exist some constituencies where this assumption may not hold. In particular, during any given administration, we might imagine constituencies populated by out-partisans that would favor oversight to the same extent that the partisan type in our model would.

However, one should note that if we relax this assumption and instead assume that the voters derive some inherent utility from their incumbent conducting oversight, then our equilibrium results above stay exactly the same. The rationale for this is that both types exercise oversight in the second period; the only reason the voter prefers reelecting the sincere type is that the sincere type utilizes the extra information she is given whereas the partisan type strictly prefers corrective action independent of the state of the world.

Moreover, we do not assume any inherent cost to the act of oversight in this model. The reason is that adding a cost of oversight c to the utility function of the incumbent in our model does not add to or change any of the fundamental insights we derive from the model. In the interest of making our model parsimonious, we excluded a cost to exercising oversight.

Scholars that have a particular conceptual interest in oversight capacity can examine this kind of extension in more depth using the framework in our model.[13]

One possible extension to the model that one might consider is applying weights to the types of errors that incumbents make in the voter's utility function. One might argue that voters care more about whether or not a lack of corrective action was taken ($y = 0$) when it was needed ($\omega = 1$) than if corrective action was taken ($y = 1$) in the absence of wrongdoing ($\omega = 0$). Define two exogenous parameters —γ and α —simply the weights that the voter places on two different scenarios: $\omega = 1, y = 1$; and $\omega = 0, y = 0$. Assuming that both $\gamma > 0$ and $\alpha > 0$, these two cases in which the incumbent takes an action y that matches the state of the world ω are the only scenarios in which the voter can obtain positive utility. Allowing γ and α to differ from one another formalizes an assumption that voters may differentially weight corrective action warranted by agency wrongdoing, and the lack of corrective action when such action would prove unnecessary. When applying these weights to the voter's utility function, the results above remain completely unchanged. The reason is that these weights cancel out when the voters care about the likelihood that the incumbent is the sincere type versus that of a random challenger. The voter still only prefers to reelect the incumbent when $\mu_I > \pi_C$, as per Lemma 1.

In the Appendix, we solve four extensions to our model. In the first extension, we relax the assumption that the likelihood of wrongdoing is exactly $\frac{1}{2}$. We assume some parameter $q = Pr(\omega = 1) \in [0, 1]$ to denote the likelihood of wrongdoing and show that q weakly increases the level of oversight and corrective action. The second extension allows the voter to replace the executive (and as a result, make a new draw of the state of the world). In this version of the game, the partisan type cares about the partisan affiliation of the executive

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[13]Scholars interested in the strategic development of congressional oversight capacity could potentially extend our model by making investments in oversight capacity an ex ante choice made by incumbents. In reality, each time Congress deals with a legislative branch appropriations bill, it is making collective decisions about how much funding to allocate to congressional committees, staff, etc. that are instrumental to oversight activity. These appropriations decisions could potentially affect oversight in the next Congress.

and taking corrective action only when the executive is a member of the opposite party. This version of the game actually yields similar results to our original game, suggesting that our baseline model is essentially a parsimonious version of one in which the partisan type explicitly cares about the reputation of the executive. The third extension introduces the minority party (M) as a new player and allows M to endorse/exercise oversight as well. One might imagine that perceptions of the incumbent's partisanship are affected by whether or not the minority party backs the investigations as well. We show that when the minority party joins in on oversight, the voter perceives the majority party incumbent's oversight activities to be more sincere than otherwise, and the incumbent's reelection chances are higher in this case. Finally, we solve an extension in which we relax the assumption that the voter always observes the actions of the incumbent and the information revealed by those actions (x, y, and s). One interesting aspect of this extension is that voter attention may be welfare-reducing in the sense that the sincere type foregoes information-gathering because of the observability of oversight.

Case Studies

We now present some case studies that flesh out the logic of the model. We should note here that an empirical analysis is beyond the scope of the paper. These cases do not comprise a test of our theory but rather serve to show behavior that is consistent with the model. We think this exercise is important because our model is designed to reflect real oversight phenomena in the United States Congress.

The first case deals with a situation where the majority party in Congress held back on oversight for fear of appearing too partisan to the voters. The second case concerns an instance where oversight was initiated at least in part because of political/partisan motives. Additional cases may be requested from the authors.

The Elián González Custody Case

Elián González was found on Thanksgiving Day, 1999, by two fishermen off the southern coast of Florida. The five-year-old González was one of three survivors from a group of Cuban refugees who had taken a small boat from Cuba to Florida in an attempt to seek asylum in the US. His mother, Elizabeth Brotons Rodriguez, had drowned on the ill-fated voyage. The fishermen who came across the young boy handed him over to Coast Guard agents, who took him to the hospital to be treated for dehydration and minor lacerations. Soon, Elián González would be at the center of a heated public custody battle that would draw international attention and would be punctuated by an armed raid carried out by federal agents.

The controversy surrounding Elián's custody was complex and inherently emotional, involving issues of family values, federalism, and international relations with the Castro regime in Cuba. González had been released from the hospital on November 26th, 1999 to his relatives living in Miami. In order to remain in the United States legally, an asylum claim needed to be made on behalf of Elián, who, as a minor, did not have standing to make such a claim himself. While Elián's relatives in Miami argued that they had the authority to make a political asylum claim on the boy's behalf, the boy's father, who remained in Cuba, contested this claim. Juan Miguel González, Elián's father, wanted custody and demanded that his son be repatriated to Cuba. Fidel Castro joined the father in his demands, and on December 5th, 1999, the Cuban Communist leader took to state-run television to give the United States an ultimatum to return Elián to Cuba within 72 hours (Associated Press, 1999).

Beginning in January of 2000, the Clinton administration took a series of decisive actions supporting Juan Miguel González's claim of custody over his son Elián. On January 5th, Doris Meissner, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) Commissioner, declared that Elián's father was responsible for his custody, and announced that the boy would be

returned to Cuba by January 14th. A week later, Attorney General Janet Reno rejected the jurisdiction of the family court in Miami, in which Elián's extended family had filed a suit for guardianship. Attorney General Reno also asked that the extended family's federal lawsuit for political asylum be dismissed. To the extent that any of these actions ran counter to the policy preferences of majority party legislators, they would seemingly have been obvious candidates for congressional oversight and potentially corrective action—especially since they took place during divided government. However, due to a number of political considerations, extensive congressional oversight never materialized.

The flashpoint of the Elián González saga occurred in the pre-dawn hours of April 22nd, 2000, when armed federal agents seized the boy from the home of his Miami relatives in order to reunite him with his father. Almost immediately, this highly publicized armed raid drew heated rebukes from Republicans across the country. Tom DeLay (R-TX), the House Majority Whip, referred to the federal agents involved in the incident as "jackbooted thugs." New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani disdainfully called the agents "storm troopers" and decried the raid as "unconscionable." Congressional Republicans in both the House and the Senate called for hearings and investigations in the immediate wake of what some of their members had termed the "Easter raid" (Foerstel and Taylor, 2000).

However, on April 28th, only 6 days after the raid, the Republican majority indefinitely postponed Senate Judiciary Committee hearings that they had previously scheduled for May 3rd. This sudden reversal on the part of the Republican majority was driven largely by the logic explicated in our model. Namely, congressional Republicans were extremely wary of how oversight would be perceived by the electorate. Quotes from Republican lawmakers in the wake of the INS raid demonstrate their concerns that hearings would portray them to the public as overzealous partisan types, in the language of our model. Senator Don Nickles (R-OK), in an interview with the New York Times, expressed his concerns that hearings "could be turned into political theater" (Alvarez, 2000). Indicating that there were in fact

some policy differences between Republicans and the Clinton administration when it came to the custody question and how it was handled, Nickles went on to say, "I'd like to get some answers to some questions, but I don't think we need a big show" (Alvarez, 2000). In a similar vein, Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) stated, "[Hearings] would look like a lot of political grandstanding, and I would be concerned about that. This could be done without hearings" (Alvarez, 2000).

Commentators like Thomas Mann, writing about the Republican reaction to the INS raid, illustrated both the strategic concerns of the Republican majority and the fundamental logic of our model. In an opinion piece published by the Brookings Institute, Mann asked, "How could any fair-minded American take seriously an investigation launched by House Majority Whip Tom DeLay's invective on 'jackbooted thugs' and supported by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's characterization of federal agents as 'storm troopers'?" (Mann, 2000).

Mann's question speaks to an important assumption of our model—that congressional decisions about oversight are influenced by electorally-based considerations about how the public will perceive oversight. In the framework of our model, Mann is essentially saying that congressional oversight in the wake of the INS raid would have been a strong signal to constituents that Republican incumbents were not aligned with their interests. It is precisely for this reason, then, that the Republican majority *did not* end up holding hearings in either the House or the Senate. Anticipating that hearings and investigations would be perceived as political theater and grandstanding, rather than objective and fact-based efforts to address real executive branch malfeasance, the Republican majority ultimately backed down from their initial oversight plans.

Our model suggests that when incumbents are at an advantage electorally, they, with some probability, exercise restraint in oversight. We see some anecdotal evidence of this in the case of Elián González. In particular, while the 2000 election was one of the closest elections

(both in the presidential and congressional races), polling ahead of time indicated that the Democrats had a narrow lead in the generic congressional ballot, which Gallup shows, historically, usually means that the Republicans may have been more likely than not to carry a majority in the House, given how districts are designed.[14] Indeed, the Republicans were successful in keeping their House majority after the election in November. At the individual member level, there is some anecdotal evidence for our predictions as well. Senator Snowe and Senator Nickles were both incumbents who had been initially elected to their states with large margins and were not likely expecting to face a formidable challenge (in fact, they both went on to win their next election handily). On the other hand, Giuliani, who at the time was running for Senate in New York and, as mentioned before, was in favor of vigorous oversight, was arguably an underdog against then-First Lady Hillary Clinton, his opponent in the race.

Legislators considered both corrective action and oversight in the Elián González case, but moved ahead with neither. There were multiple legislative proposals that would have given Elián either citizenship or residency status, thereby allowing him to stay in the US. However, whip counts conducted by the Republican House leadership consistently failed to show sufficient support for these bills, which were never brought up for a vote (Foerstel and Taylor, 2000).

Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi

On the evening of September 11th, 2012, a U.S. diplomatic consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was besieged by an armed group of insurgents. In a series of attacks that began late in the evening of the 11th and spanned through the early morning of the 12th, four Americans were killed. While the attacks were first believed to have developed spontaneously out of a

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[14]Gallup

protest of a video made in the U.S. mocking Islam, they were later determined to have been the product of deliberate and premeditated terrorist action.

Questions were immediately raised around the lack of security at the Benghazi compound, and the adequacy of the U.S. government's response to the terrorist attacks. The FBI, the Director of National Intelligence, and an independent Accountability Review Board assembled within the State Department were all involved in investigatory probes concerning the cause of the attack, and the existence of government intelligence that may have helped to thwart it. The investigatory response was not limited to the executive branch. In the five months following the attack, hearings were held by four different standing committees across the two chambers of Congress,[15] with the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs also issuing a special report on the Benghazi attacks.[16]

The upshot of this initial round of investigations and hearings is well characterized by a report from the Accountability Review Board citing "systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies" at the senior levels of two bureaus in the State Department. Despite these failures, the internal review board also stated that it "did not find reasonable cause to determine that any individual U.S. government employee breached his or her duty."[17]

However, congressional Republicans were not entirely content with these findings, and persisted in investigations that increasingly focused on one individual: then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. On April 26, 2013, Darrell Issa (R-CA), then the chair of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, claimed that Secretary Clinton had personally signed off on security cuts to the U.S. mission in Benghazi, and had thus perjured herself in congressional testimony claiming otherwise. Issa's allegation proved to be false,[18]

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[15] House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, October 10th, 2012; Senate Committee on Intelligence, November 15th, 2012; House Foreign Affairs Committee, January 23rd, 2013; Senate Foreign Relations Committee, January 23rd, 2013.

[16] Flashing Red: A Special Report on the Terrorist Attack at Benghazi

[17] Accountability Review Board Report

[18] Washington Post

but certainly did not signal the end of Republicans' focus on Secretary Clinton.

In early May 2014, nearly two years after the Benghazi attack, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) announced his intention to create a select committee for further investigation of the circumstances surrounding the attack.[19] Less than a month before this announcement, Boehner had stated that such a committee would be superfluous, as extensive hearings had already been conducted by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the House Armed Services Committee, and several other committees in the Senate. However, the revelation that the White House had withheld emails between an administration official and the U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice coordinating a communications strategy in the wake of the 2012 attacks enraged conservatives and sparked demands for renewed and intensified congressional investigations.

House floor debate on the measure creating the new Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi (H.Res. 567, 113th Congress) allowed Democrats an opportunity to vent their frustration at what they saw as a partisan sham. William Lacy Clay (D-MO), arguing that the "sham select committee is already blatantly being used for political purposes," cited an online fundraising solicitation released by the National Republican Congressional Committee that included the following message to potential donors: "You're now a Benghazi watchdog. Let's go after Obama and Hillary Clinton. Help us fight them now."[20]

When the select committee released its final report on December 7th, 2016, it revealed no new evidence of wrongdoing on the part of Secretary Clinton. The report, which ran over 800 pages long, found evidence of bureaucratic mismanagement, administration obstruction of select committee investigations, and misleading statements by the administration in the

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[19]Roll Call

[20]Congressional Record, May 8th, 2014 (Vol. 160, No. 69)

immediate wake of the attack. However, the report did confirm that the U.S. military could not possibly have responded in time to save the lives of the four Americans who were killed.

Aside from any policy-relevant information that may have been revealed through the oversight actions of the select committee, Republicans made it clear that the committee had achieved an important political objective—driving down the poll numbers of Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic nominee for president at the height of the committee's activities. In an interview with FOX News' Sean Hannity, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) discussed the political effects of the investigations in a manner that many political observers took to reveal base partisan motivations behind the work of the select committee: "[E]verybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi Special Committee... What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping."

Referring to the comparative statics derived from the semi-separating equilibrium of our model, oversight is expected to be most likely when the majority party in Congress is perceived to be at an electoral disadvantage relative to the minority party—in the language of the model, when $\pi_I < \pi_C$. In the 2016 generic congressional ballot measured by contemporaneous polling, the Democrats arguably had a sizeable lead over Republicans.[21] Referring to Figure 1 above, these circumstances most likely describe a scenario that could be plotted somewhere along the 45° line or below this line. Recall that in the parameter space above this line, the partisan type always conducts oversight, while the sincere type plays a mixed strategy. In the parameter space below the 45° line, oversight is conducted by both types.

While this case study does not constitute a direct test of the relationship between relative party approval and the Republican-led oversight efforts on the circumstances surrounding the Benghazi attack, it does help to illustrate the intuition of our model. Republicans' own statements about the publicity created by the investigations of the select committee suggest that the popularity of Secretary Clinton as the likely Democratic nominee for president in

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[21]2016 Congressional Vote

2016 was, if not a direct motivation in the creation of the committee, at least a consideration.

Conclusion

Our model captures a powerful intuition that observable oversight decisions made by members of Congress act as informative signals to their constituents. We build on informational asymmetries that are inherent to our system of representative democracy in order to explain patterns of congressional oversight. Voters are uncertain about the "type" of representative serving them in Congress, and both voters and representatives are uncertain about the exact details of decisions being made in the executive branch. Members of Congress can mitigate this second type of uncertainty by conducting oversight of the executive branch—and by doing so, they also send a noisy signal about their type to their constituents.

The American people express diffuse support for congressional oversight in the abstract, but it is evident that any particular instance of oversight can be perceived as partisan posturing rather than objective fact-finding. Precisely because the potential political benefits of conducting oversight during divided government are so readily apparent to the public, members of Congress often face the rebuttable presumption that their oversight behavior is driven by partisan motivations. This strong presumption can dissuade members of Congress from exercising congressional oversight in the first place.

We show in our case studies that this theory explains some congressional decisions that appeared anomalous under existing theoretical frameworks. While the actions of the Clinton administration in the case of Elián González initially drew the ire of Republicans in Congress, the concern about ultimately retaining the majority in Congress ultimately dissuaded any formal oversight efforts. From contemporaneous coverage, it is evident that Republican members of Congress were keenly aware of how oversight would be perceived by the public. In the context of the attack of the embassy in Benghazi, the Republican congressional majority

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was particularly eager to hold investigations and hearings into the behavior of Secretary Clinton when it appeared in 2015 that Clinton was enormously popular with the voters and that she would be the future Democratic presidential nominee. The Republican Party's perceived electoral gains from doing this outweighed the risk of appearing partisan to the voters.

Our model also has relevant implications for understanding patterns of oversight and interbranch relations during the recent impeachment of President Trump. The behavior of Democratic leadership in the House leading up to the impeachment is largely consistent with the logic of our model. While the Democratic-controlled House ultimately did impeach President Trump, Speaker Nancy Pelosi was reticent to support an impeachment inquiry. Pelosi's early opposition to broaching the idea of an inquiry in the House Oversight Committee stemmed from a desire to insulate Democrats from electoral repercussions in 2020. Much like the partisan types get kicked out of office in the equilibrium described in Proposition 1, the objective on the part of the Speaker was to be restrained in exercising oversight so as to appear more sincere. It was only when the likelihood of wrongdoing increased in September after the surfacing of a memo detailing the President's conversation with the Ukrainian Prime Minister that Congress resolved to undergo a formal impeachment inquiry and a formal vote later. Our extension in the Appendix shows that when the likelihood of wrongdoing increases, we witness more oversight, even when incumbents are at an electoral advantage.

While an empirical test of the model is outside the scope of this paper, we do believe that the model offers many fruitful avenues for future empirical research. In particular, if we operationalize our key parameters, the strength of the incumbent and challenger, as public approval of the majority party in Congress and the out-party, respectively, then Figure 2 provides clear predictions on outcomes like oversight hearings: there is a negative relationship between public approval of the majority party and instances of oversight, and there is a

positive relationship between public approval of the out-party and instances of oversight. In addition, our extensions in the Appendix offer more testable predictions. We show that the effectiveness of oversight, which might be measured by the level of staff/resources, and the likelihood of wrongdoing, which one might measure by using the politicization of agencies or their relative level of expertise (or lack thereof), increase instances of oversight, specifically when public approval of the majority party is higher than that of the out-party. Finally, we show that minority party support for oversight is increasing in the public approval of the majority, decreasing in the public approval of the minority party, and increasing in staff/resources.

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Extension: Relaxing the Equal States Assumption

In this section, we allow the ex-ante likelihood of agency wrongdoing to be anywhere from 0 to 1. We denote this likelihood by $q = Pr(\omega = 1)$. We retain the assumption that $p > \frac{1}{2}$. Moreover, in this extension, we also allow regions of the parameter space in which oversight is informative ($p > max\{q, 1 - q\}$) and regions of the parameter space in which oversight is relatively uninformative ($p \leq max\{q, 1 - q\}$), in the sense that a signal that opposes the prior would not change the optimal decision of the sincere type.

If it is the case that $q > p$, then that means that in the second round, both types will pool on corrective action ($y = 1$); the sincere type does so because regardless of her signal, she will pick $y = 1$. The partisan type does so because she always prefers that action. Any of the equilibria described in the body of the paper can be justified under this condition, given that the voter is indifferent at every possible node.

We consider the less trivial cases in which $q < p < 1 - q$ or $p > max\{q, 1 - q\}$. In the former case, in the last round, regardless of her signal, the sincere type will choose $y = 0$

and the partisan type will choose $y = 1$. In this case, Lemma 1 and the equilibrium in Proposition 1 remain unchanged. The new version of our more flexible result is described in Proposition 3:

**Proposition 3:** When $q < p < 1 - q$, there exists the following equilibrium:

1. When $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the partisan type always exercises oversight $(x = 1)$, whereas the sincere type mixes between oversight and no oversight. Both types choose $y = 0$ always. The sincere type chooses $x = 1$ with probability $\frac{\pi_C}{1-\pi_C}\frac{1-\pi_I}{\pi_I}$. The voter always reelects.

2. When $\pi_I \leq \pi_C$, both types always choose oversight $(x = 1)$. The sincere type always chooses no corrective action $(y = 0)$, and the partisan type mixes between $y = 1$ and $y = 0$. The partisan type chooses $y = 0$ with probability $\frac{\pi_I}{1-\pi_I}\frac{1-\pi_C}{\pi_C}$.

When $p > max\{q, 1-q\}$, Lemma 1 and Proposition 1 remain unchanged. This condition means that the sincere type prefers to choose the action that matches the signal. In the last round, the sincere type chooses the action that matches her signal, and the partisan type chooses $y = 1$ always. Proposition 4 describes how the semi-separating equilibrium described before changes with the relaxation of the equal states assumption:

Proposition 4: There exists a semi-separating equilibrium in which the partisan type always exercises oversight $(x = 1)$, and the sincere type does so w.p. β:

1. When $q \leq \frac{1}{2}$ and $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the sincere type exercises oversight w.p. $\beta_1 = \frac{\pi_C}{1-\pi_C}\frac{1-\pi_I}{\pi_I}$, the partisan type always exercises oversight $(y = 1)$, and both types choose the action consistent with their signal $(y = s)$. The voter reelects w.p. $\frac{1-q}{p}$ when $y = s$ and w.p. 0 otherwise.

Figure 4: Probability of Oversight and Likelihood of Wrongdoing
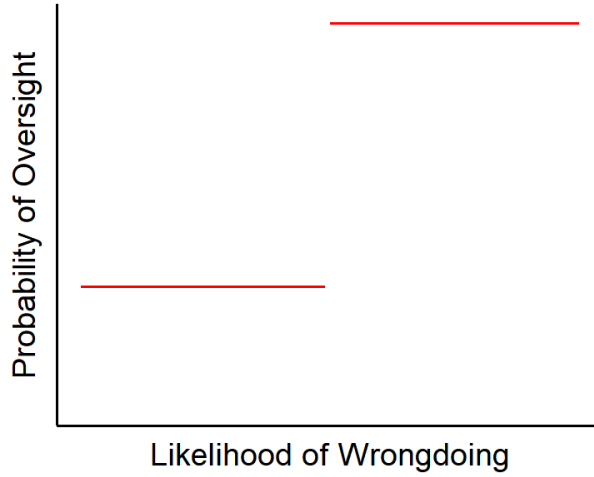
2. When $q > \frac{1}{2}$ and $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, both types play $x = 1$ and $y = s$ always.

3. When $\pi_C > \pi_I$, both types exercise oversight. The sincere type takes the action consistent with their signal ($y = s$). The partisan type plays $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ but mixes when $s = 0$.

In Figure 4, we show how the probability of oversight varies with respect to the likelihood of wrongdoing. As one can see, the ex ante likelihood of wrongdoing weakly increases the level of oversight. The reason for this is that the equilibrium in Proposition 2 breaks down when the likelihood of wrongdoing is sufficiently high. When the likelihood of wrongdoing increases, the reelection probability conditional on oversight decreases, making it less incentive-compatible for the partisan type to choose the action that matches her signal when $s = 0$ and forego the corrective action rent. Thus, the equilibrium that holds in this parameter space is one in which both types exercise oversight and the voter always reelects conditional on oversight.

Extension: Reputation of the Executive

We now consider an extension of the model in which there is a (nonstrategic) executive that the voter can reelect out and replace with a new executive. As before, the state of the world $\omega \in \{0, 1\}$ denotes whether or not the executive has committed wrongdoing, but now we assume that the partisan type explicitly has preferences over which party has control over the executive. Without loss of generality, the executive in the first round is of party $\tau = 0$, and the partisan type prefers executives affiliated with party $\tau = 1$. We now parameterize the partisan type's preferences as follows:

$$U_{I,t=1}(\cdot) = (1 - y)\tau + y(1 - \tau) + r(\tau + (1 - y)\tau + y(1 - \tau))$$

Thus, the partisan type prefers an executive of $\tau = 1$ and wishes only to take corrective action when $\tau = 0$. As before, the partisan type only benefits from exercising oversight to the extent that the executive will look "bad" to the voter and be replaced - the partisan type does not actually wish to utilize the information from oversight, unlike the sincere type.

One additional component we add here is that the voter now has two decisions after x (oversight) and y (corrective action) are chosen by the incumbent. The voter first has to choose whether to reelect the incumbent or elect the challenger, as before. But now, the voter decides whether to keep the executive or replace her. We now assume the state of the world is drawn once at the beginning of the game and only is drawn again when the executive is replaced.

In the second period, the partisan type takes corrective action when $\tau = 0$ and does not take corrective action when $\tau = 1$. The partisan type is indifferent between exercising oversight ($x = 1$) and not doing so ($x = 0$). The sincere type on the other hand exercises oversight and chooses the action that corresponds to the signal. The sincere type is indifferent between $y = 1$ and $y = 0$ if she gets a signal that is different from the first-period signal,

and she strictly prefers $y = s$ otherwise.

Given this, one can show that the decisions to replace the executive and reelect the incumbent are independent of each other. That is, Lemma 1 still holds here; the voter chooses to reelect if $\mu_I > \pi_C$ and not to reelect if $\mu_I < \pi_C$. Moreover, the voter replaces the executive if $\eta > \frac{1}{2}$ (η is the posterior probability that $\omega = 1$) and retains if $\eta < \frac{1}{2}$. I assume that when indifferent, the voter retains the executive. The full first-period equilibrium is described in Proposition 5:

Proposition 5: There exists the following semi-separating equilibrium:

1. When $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the partisan type always exercises oversight ($x = 1$), and the sincere type mixes between $x = 1$ and $x = 0$. Both types choose the policy that matches her signal ($y = s$), and the voter reelects with probability $\frac{1-p}{p}$ when $y = s = 1$ and probability 1 when $y = s = 0$ (and with probability 0 otherwise).

2. When $\pi_C > \pi_I$, both types exercise oversight. The sincere type chooses $y = s$, and the partisan type chooses $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ and mixes when $s = 0$. The voter reelects always when $y = s = 0$ and with probability 0 otherwise.

Proposition 5 is very substantively similar to Proposition 2. The only slight difference is that the voter reelects with a higher probability conditional on $y = 0$ in both regions of the parameter space. This is because when $s = 0$, the partisan type needs to be incentivized more than before to abstain from corrective action (given that the partisan type does not yield the benefit of her preferred executive being in office). This result suggests that our model is a parsimonious version of one in which the partisan type is explicitly concerned with the reputation of the executive.

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Extension: Minority Party and Oversight

In this extension, we allow the minority party to also make public decisions about oversight. To motivate this extension, one might imagine that the extent to which voters/constituents view oversight as partisan or sincere is affected by whether or not the minority party joins in on oversight of the executive as well. As such, we modify the original game to introduce a new player, which we refer to as the minority party, M. M and the incumbent I make decisions to conduct oversight simultaneously (and before corrective action is taken). As the minority party in Congress often does have resources to gather information, we assume that M can opt to receive another signal of the state of the world as well.

The new sequencing of the game is:

1. Nature chooses the state of the world $\omega \in \{0, 1\}$.

2. Nature chooses whether the incumbent I is sincere or partisan (and both I and the minority party M observe this choice)

3. I chooses whether or not to conduct oversight $x \in \{0, 1\}$, and simultaneously, M also chooses whether or not to conduct oversight $z \in \{0, 1\}$.

4. Conditional on $x = 1$, I receives a signal of the state of the world $s_1 \in \{0, 1\}$. Conditional on $z = 1$, I also receives a signal $s_2 \in \{0, 1\}$.

5. I chooses corrective action $y \in \{0, 1\}$. I has the same options independent of x and z.

6. The voter V observes x, y, z, s_1, and s_2 and chooses whether or not to retain the incumbent: $r \in \{0, 1\}$.

7. The (re)elected politician repeats stages $1 - 5$.

We specify the utility function of the minority party as follows:

$$U_M = y\omega + (1-y)(1-\omega) - r$$

We assume that the minority party has payoffs that can be thought of as a composite of sincere and partisan preferences. The minority party cares about matching the state of the world but also wants the incumbent to be thrown out of office. We also assume that the minority party observes the type of the incumbent so that her actions may communicate to the voter whether the incumbent is sincere or partisan. In Proposition 6, we lay out the following semi-separating equilibrium.

Proposition 6: There exists the following semi-separating equilibrium:

1. When $\pi_I \geq \frac{\pi_C}{\pi_C + (1-\pi_C)\beta}$:

   - The partisan type of the incumbent always exercises oversight ($x = 1$), and the sincere type of the incumbent mixes between $x = 1$ and $x = 0$. Both types choose $y = 1$ when either (or both) of the signals are equal to one (i.e., $s_1 = 1$ or $s_2 = 1$ or both).

   - When $t = 0$, the minority party mixes between oversight ($z = 1$) and no oversight ($z = 0$), but when $t = 1$, the minority party never exercises oversight ($z = 0$).

   - The voter reelects the incumbent with probability one when $x = 0$ or $z = 1$ and with probability $\frac{1}{2p}$ when $x = 1$ and $z = 0$.

2. When $\pi_C \leq \pi_I < \frac{\pi_C}{\pi_C(1-\pi_C)\gamma}$:

   - Both types of the incumbent exercise oversight ($x = 1$), and the minority party never exercises oversight.

- Both types choose $y = 1$ when either (or both) of the signals are equal to one (i.e., $s_1 = 1$ or $s_2 = 1$ or both).

- The voter reelects always.

3. When $\pi_I < \pi_C$:

- Both types of the incumbent exercise oversight ($x = 1$), and the minority party never exercises oversight.

- The sincere type of the incumbent chooses $y = 1$ when $s_1 = 1$ and chooses $y = 0$ otherwise. The partisan type of the incumbent mixes between $y = 0$ and $y = 1$ when $s_1 = 0$ and chooses $y = 1$ when $s_1 = 1$.

When the incumbent is at a sufficient advantage with respect to the challenger, the minority party sometimes exercises oversight when the incumbent is the sincere type. However, the tradeoff here is that while it wants to seek information about the state of the world, it communicates to the voter that the incumbent is, with certainty, the sincere type. The intuition is that the voter knows that only the sincere incumbent abstains from oversight, so when the minority party engages in oversight to uncover the true state, that improves the voter's posterior. Thus, the minority party mixes when the incumbent is sincere and is made indifferent by the sincere type's mixing on the oversight parameter. The minority party mixes to make the voter indifferent conditional on oversight by the incumbent ($x = 1$) and no oversight by the minority party ($z = 0$). Finally, the voter mixes to make the sincere type indifferent between oversight ($x = 1$) and no oversight ($x = 0$).

In the other regions of the parameter space, the equilibria look similar to those in Proposition 2, with the addition that the minority party always abstains from oversight ($z = 0$). The minority party does so because adding an additional signal of the state of the world does not, in expectation, make it more likely that the incumbent chooses the right policy.

Figure 5: Comparative Statics on Minority Oversight
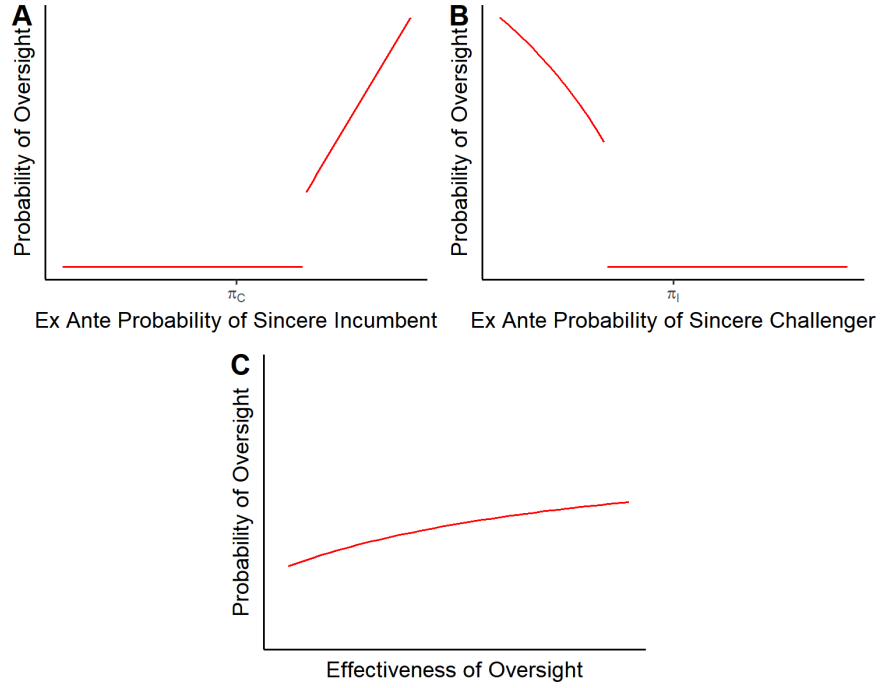
Moreover, choosing to exercise oversight makes the voter think that the incumbent is sincere w.p. 1.

In Figure 5, we outline the comparative statics for minority party oversight. Minority party oversight is increasing in the ex ante probability that the incumbent is sincere and decreasing in the probability that the challenger is sincere. It is increasing in the proportion of sincere incumbents because when $x = 1$ and $z = 0$, the minority party needs to be more likely to exercise oversight when the incumbent is sincere to make the voter indifferent when no minority party oversight is conducted. Furthermore, when the proportion of sincere challengers increases, the minority party needs to be less likely to exercise oversight when the incumbent is sincere to make the voter indifferent as well.

Finally, minority party oversight is increasing in the effectiveness of oversight. This is because the incumbent's oversight probability is increasing in p, given that the minority party needs to remain indifferent between exercising oversight and not doing so when the

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incumbent is sincere. Since the sincere type's oversight probability is increasing in p, the minority party's oversight probability is also increasing in p in order to make the voter indifferent at the node where $x = 1$ and $z = 0$.

Extension: Observability of Incumbent Actions

One assumption in the baseline model is that the actions taken by the incumbent, oversight (x) and corrective action (y), are observed by the voters. Aside from footage from hearings that become "viral" or public comments that spark rabid news coverage, one might suspect that voters do not pay attention to these kinds of actions. In this section, we assume some probability $\xi \in [0, 1]$ that the voter does not observe the actions of the incumbent (or the signal). For simplicity, we assume that the voter either observes both actions or none at all. Proposition 7 describes how the equilibrium in Proposition 1 changes.

Proposition 7: If $p \leq \frac{1}{2(1-\xi)}$ or $\pi_I < \pi_C$, there exists a separating equilibrium in which the sincere type does not exercise oversight $(x = 0)$ but the partisan type does $(x = 1)$. The partisan type takes corrective action $(y = 1)$ and the sincere types chooses not to do so $(y = 0)$. The voter reelects if and only if $x = 0$ and $y = 0$.

Note that Proposition 1 stays the same, except that we need an extra condition on the effectiveness of oversight, specifically when the incumbent is at an advantage with respect to the challenger. In particular, if the sincere type suspects that there is some probability that the voters may not observe the oversight activities of the incumbent, the sincere type has an incentive to conduct oversight to get more information about the state of the world (and she gets reelected because a lack of updating means that the voter's prior π_I is larger than that of the challenger π_C). The risk of appearing too partisan becomes smaller. However, the

sincere type does not have an incentive to deviate if oversight is not sufficiently informative. In the limit in which $\xi = 0$ (or oversight and corrective action are never observed), oversight has to be completely uninformative ($p = \frac{1}{2}$) for this to be justified in equilibrium.

We now show how this extension affects the result in Proposition 2. When the incumbent has the electoral advantage ($\pi_I \geq \pi_C$), then the incumbents pool by taking the action consistent with the signal (conditional on conducting oversight). However, when the probability that the voters observe the action declines ($\xi < \frac{1}{2}$), it becomes less tenable for the partisan type not to always take corrective action. Intuitively, when observability decreases, the incentive to take one's ideal action (at the cost of losing reelection) grows. This equilibrium also requires that the effectiveness of oversight be sufficiently small; otherwise, it is very difficult to make the sincere type indifferent between her choices on oversight.

Proposition 8: There exists the following semi-separating equilibrium, which can be divided into two regions:

1. When $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the partisan type always exercises oversight ($x = 1$), and the sincere type mixes between $x = 1$ and $x = 0$. Both types choose the policy that matches her signal ($y = s$) when $\xi \geq \frac{1}{2}$, and the voter reelects with probability $\frac{1}{2-\xi}$ when $y = s = 1$ (with probability 1 when $y = s = 0$ and with probability 0 otherwise). When $\xi < \frac{1}{2}$, the partisan type always takes corrective action ($y = 1$).

2. When $\pi_C > \pi_I$, both types exercise oversight ($x = 1$). For $\xi \geq \frac{1}{2}$, the same equilibrium as before is justified here (and the mixing probability on the partisan type's account is $\frac{1}{2\xi}$). For $\xi < \frac{1}{2}$, each type plays their ideal action.

When $\pi_I < \pi_C$, the same equilibrium as before holds when observability (ξ) is sufficiently high. However, when it falls below $\frac{1}{2}$, the partisan type chooses her ideal action ($y = 1$)

always, given that it is unlikely that the voters would observe that the partisan type is ignoring the information from oversight.

List of Equilibria

In this section, we catalog the equilibria that exist in this model that are not addressed in Propositions $1 - 6$; note that we ignore those that rely on knife-edge conditions like $p = 1$ or $\pi_I = \pi_C$. In addition, as stated in the paper, we ignore mixed strategy equilibria in which the sincere type is trivially indifferent (e.g., when the sincere type always chooses not to take corrective action independent of any signal from oversight).

We sketch out the remaining equilibria that exist in this model and explain our selection decisions. To select equilibria, we first look for those that satisfy the D1 refinement. We then narrow down the equilibria on substantive grounds, pursuant to our focus on congressional oversight. For the mixed strategy equilibria, we summarize them by class, as in some cases, there are multiple ways in which voters or the types of incumbent can mix to make other players indifferent.

1. Both types never exercise oversight.

    (a) Both types choose $y = 0$. All incumbents who choose $x = 0$ and $y = 0$ are reelected.

    (b) Both types choose $y = 1$. All incumbents who choose $x = 0$ and $y = 1$ are reelected.

2. Both types exercise oversight.

    (a) The sincere type plays $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ but mixes between $y = 0$ and $y = 1$ when $s = 1$. The partisan type plays $y = s$. The sincere type gets reelected w.p.

1 when choosing $y = 0$ when $s = 1$ or when choosing $y = 0$ when $s = 0$. When choosing $y = 1$ when $s = 1$, incumbents get reelected w.p. $\frac{1-p}{p}$.

In the region $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, all of the equilibria described in our Propositions satisfy the D1 refinement. Equilibrium $2a$ above also belongs to this region but does not satisfy the D1 refinement. The ones remaining in this region listed above that do satisfy this refinement are $1a$ and $1b$. However, we argue that these equilibria are unrealistic because there are plenty of cases of oversight where one party has an electoral advantage (e.g., Democratic oversight of the Bush Administration during the 2007-2008 legislative session). Note that even if we used these equilibria for the region in which $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the comparative statics on oversight carry the same sign as the ones that we present in the paper.

Proofs

Proof of Lemma 1: In the second period, the sincere type of the incumbent chooses to exercise oversight ($x = 1$) and chooses $y = s$. The partisan type of the incumbent chooses $x = 1$ and $y = 1$. Thus, the utility that the voter derives when the second-period incumbent is the sincere type is p, and the utility that the voter derives when the second-period incumbent is the partisan type is $\frac{1}{2}$.

As a result, the voter prefers the incumbent to the challenger when

$$\mu_I p + \frac{1}{2}(1 - \mu_I) > \pi_C p + \frac{1}{2}(1 - \pi_C)$$

which reduces to $\mu_I > \pi_C$.

Proof of Proposition 1: First, we establish the voters' beliefs.

$$\mu_I = \begin{cases} 1 & x = 0 \text{ and } y = 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Given these beliefs, the sincere type prefers not to exercise oversight when

$$U_I(t=0, x=0) = \frac{1}{2} + p \geq p = U_I(t=0, x=1)$$

The partisan type prefers to exercise oversight when

$$U_I(t=1, x=1, y=1) = 2 \geq 2 = U_I(t=1, y=0, x=0)$$

We also verify that neither type has an incentive to deviate from their corrective action strategies. For the sincere type,

$$U_I(t=0, y=0) = \frac{1}{2} + p \geq \frac{1}{2} = U_I(t=0, y=1)$$

The partisan type prefers $y=1$ to $y=0$ since

$$U_I(t=1, y=1, x=1) = 1 + 1 \geq 1 = U_I(t=1, y=0, x=1)$$

One can verify the voters' beliefs are consistent with the actions taken by the incumbent.

Proof of Proposition 2: For $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the voters' beliefs are characterized as:

$$\mu_I = \begin{cases} 1 & x = 0 \text{ and } y = 0 \\ \pi_C & x = 1, y = s \\ 0 & x = 0 \text{ and } y = 1 \text{ or } x = 1 \text{ and } y \neq s \end{cases}$$

Moreover, $\beta = \left(\frac{\pi_C}{1-\pi_C}\right)\left(\frac{1-\pi_I}{\pi_I}\right)$, $r_{00} = r_{11} = \frac{1}{2p}$, and $r_{10} = r_{01} = 0$. The partisan type prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ if:

$$U_I(t=1, s=1, y=1) = 1 + 2\left(\frac{1}{2p}\right) \geq 2 = U_I(t=1, s=1, y=0)$$

and the partisan type prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ if

$$U_I(t=1, s=0, y=0) = 2 \leq 1 = U_I(t=1, s=0, y=1)$$

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Moreover, the sincere type prefers to follow her signal when

$$U_I(t = 0, s = 1, y = 1) = p + p(\frac{1}{2p}) \geq 1 - p = U_I(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0)$$

Moreover, we need the same inequality when $s = 0$.

Now, we need the sincere type to be indifferent between exercising oversight ($x = 1$) and not doing so ($x = 0$). This is the case if and only if

$$U_I(t = 0, x = 0) = \frac{1}{2} + p = p + p(\frac{1}{2}r_{11} + \frac{1}{2}r_{00}) = U_I(t = 0, x = 1)$$

One can verify that this holds for the value of r_{11} and r_{00} described above.

Conditional on $x = 1$, $y = 1$, and $\omega = 0$, the voter is indifferent between electing a random challenger and reelecting the incumbent when

$$U_V(r = 1, x = 1, y = 1, \omega = 0) = \frac{\beta \pi_I}{\beta \pi_I + (1 - \pi_I)} = \pi_C = U_V(r = 0, x = 1, y = 1, \omega = 0)$$

One can verify that this holds for the value of β_1 described above.

For $\pi_I < \pi_C$, both types exercise oversight ($x = 1$), the sincere type chooses $y = s$, the partisan type chooses $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ and $y = 0$ with probability $\xi = \frac{\pi_I}{1 - \pi_I} \frac{1 - \pi_C}{\pi_C}$ when $s = 0$. The voter's beliefs are:

$$\mu_I = \begin{cases} 1 & x = 1 \text{ and } y = s = 0 \\ \pi_C & x = 1 \text{ and } y = s = 0 \\ 0 & x = 0 \text{ or } x = 1, y = 1, \text{ and } s = 0 \end{cases}$$

The voter reelects with probability $r_{00} = \frac{1}{2}$ and chooses $r = 0$ otherwise. The partisan type is indifferent between $y = 0$ when $y = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, y = 0, s = 0) = 2 = 1 + 2r_{00} = U(t = 1, y = 1, s = 0)$$

which is satisfied for $r_{00} = \frac{1}{2}$. The sincere type strictly prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ if

$$U(t = 0, y = 0, s = 0) = p + \frac{1}{2}p \geq 1 - p = U(t = 0, y = 1, s = 0)$$

and strictly prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ if

$$U(t = 0, y = 1, s = 1) = p \geq 1 - p = U(t = 0, y = 0, s = 1)$$

Proof of Proposition 3: When $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the sincere type is indifferent between exercising oversight and not doing so trivially because she plays $y = 0$ conditional on both actions and always gets reelected. The voters' beliefs are:

$$\mu_I = \begin{cases} 1 & x = 0 \text{ and } y = 0 \\ \pi_C & x = 1 \text{ and } y = 0 \\ 0 & y = 1 \end{cases}$$

The partisan type prefers to play $y = 0$ when

$$U(t = 1, y = 0) = 2 \geq 1 = U(t = 1, y = 1)$$

and the sincere type prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 0) = \frac{p(1 - q)}{p(1 - q) + (1 - p)q} + 1 - q \geq \frac{(1 - p)q}{p(1 - q) + (1 - p)q} = U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 1)$$

and prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0) = \frac{(1 - p)(1 - q)}{(1 - p)(1 - q) + pq} + 1 - q \geq \frac{pq}{(1 - p)(1 - q) + pq} = U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 1)$$

When $\pi_I \leq \pi_C$, the voters' beliefs are:

$$\mu_I = \begin{cases} \pi_C & x = 1 \text{ and } y = 0 \\ 0 & y = 1 \text{ or } x = 0 \end{cases}$$

The partisan type is indifferent between $y = 0$ and $y = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, y = 0) = 2r_0 = 1 = U(t = 1, y = 1)$$

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which is true for $r_0 = \frac{1}{2}$. The sincere type prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 0) = \frac{p(1-q)}{p(1-q) + (1-p)q} + \frac{1}{2}(1-q) \geq \frac{(1-p)q}{p(1-q) + (1-p)q} = U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 1)$$

and prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0) = \frac{(1-q)(1-p)}{(1-q)(1-p) + qp} + \frac{1}{2}(1-q) \geq \frac{qp}{(1-q)(1-p) + qp}$$

Proof of Proposition 4: We define $\theta^1 = Pr(\omega = 1|s = 1) = \frac{pq}{pq + (1-p)(1-q)}$ and $\theta^0 = Pr(\omega = 0|s = 0) = \frac{p(1-q)}{p(1-q) + (1-p)q}$.

We show the results for $q \leq \frac{1}{2}$ and $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$. Both types play $y = s$. The partisan type prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, s = 1, y = 1) = 1 + 2(\frac{1-q}{p}) \geq 0 = U(t = 1, s = 1, y = 0)$$

and prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 1, s = 0, y = 0) = 2(\frac{1-q}{p}) \geq 1 = U(t = 1, s = 0, y = 1)$$

which holds if $1 - q \geq \frac{1}{2}p$. Since $1 - q \geq \frac{1}{2}$, this always holds.

The sincere type prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 1) = \theta^1 + p(\frac{1-q}{p}) \geq 1 - \theta^1 = U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0)$$

The analogous inequality holds for $s = 0$.

The sincere type is indifferent between exercising oversight and not doing so when

$$U(t = 0, x = 0) = 1 - q + p = p + r(p) = U(t = 0, x = 1)$$

which holds for $r = \frac{1-q}{p}$.

For $q > \frac{1}{2}$, the types pool and play $x = 1$ and $y = s$. The voter always reelects. The partisan type

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prefers to play $y = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, y = 1) = 1 + 2 \geq 0 = U(t = 1, y = 0)$$

The sincere type prefers to play $y = s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 1) = \theta^1 + p \geq 1 - \theta^1 = U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0)$$

and $y = s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 0) = \theta^0 + p \geq 1 - \theta^0 = U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 1)$$

For $\pi_I < \pi_C$, the sincere type always chooses $y = s$, and the partisan type mixes between $y = 0$ and $y = 1$ when $s = 0$ and chooses $y = 1$ when $s = 1$.

The partisan type is indifferent between $y = 0$ and $y = 1$ when $s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 1, y = 1, s = 0) = 1 = 2r_{00} = U(t = 1, y = 0, s = 0)$$

which holds when $r_{00} = \frac{1}{2}$. The partisan prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, y = 1) = 1 \geq 0 = U(t = 1, y = 0)$$

The sincere type prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, y = 1, s = 1) = \theta^1 + \frac{1}{2}p \geq 1 - \theta^1 = U(t = 0, y = 0, s = 1)$$

The analogous inequality holds for $s = 0$.

Proof of Proposition 5: When $\pi_I \geq \pi_C$, the voters' beliefs are:

$$\mu_I = \begin{cases} 1 & x = 0 \text{ and } y = 0 \\ \pi_C & x = 1 \text{ and } y = s \\ 0 & x = 0 \text{ and } y = 1 \text{ or } x = 1 \text{ and } y \neq s \end{cases}$$

The sincere type prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 1) = p + p(\frac{1}{2p}) \geq 1 - p = U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0)$$

and the same inequality holds for $s = 0$. The partisan type prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 1, s = 0, y = 0) = 1 \geq 1 = U(t = 1, s = 0, y = 1)$$

and prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, s = 1, y = 1) = 1 + 2(\frac{1 - p}{p}) \geq 0 = U(t = 1, s = 1, y = 0)$$

The sincere type is indifferent between exercising oversight and not doing so when

$$U(t = 1, x = 0) = \frac{1}{2} + p = p + p(\frac{1}{2}r_{00} + \frac{1}{2}r_{11})$$

which is satisfied for $r_{11} = \frac{1-p}{p}$ and $r_{00} = 1$.

For $\pi_I \leq \pi_C$, the sincere type prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 1) = p \geq 1 - p = U(t = 0, s = 1, y = 0)$$

and prefers to play $y = 0$ when $s = 0$ when

$$U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 0) = 2p \geq 1 - p = U(t = 0, s = 0, y = 1)$$

The partisan type is indifferent when $s = 0$ between $y = 1$ and $y = 0$ when

$$U(t = 1, s = 0, y = 1) = 1 = 1 = U(t = 1, s = 0, y = 0)$$

and prefers to play $y = 1$ when $s = 1$ when

$$U(t = 1, s = 1, y = 1) = 1 \geq 0 = U(t = 1, s = 1, y = 0)$$

Proof of Proposition 6: When $\pi_I \geq \frac{\pi_C}{\pi_C + (1-\pi_C)\gamma}$, the sincere type of the incumbent chooses $y = 0$ when $x = 0$ and $z = 0$ and $y = s_2$ when $x = 0$ and $z = 1$. If $x = z = 1$, both types choose $y = 1$ if $s_1 = 1$ or $s_2 = 1$, and $y = 0$ otherwise. Conditional on $x = 0$, the sincere type of the incumbent is indifferent between conducting oversight and not doing so when

$$U_I(t = 0, x = 0) = \gamma(p) + (1 - \gamma)\frac{1}{2} + p = p + \gamma(p)(1 - \gamma)rp = U_C(t = 0, x = 0, z = 0)$$

which is satisfied for $r = \frac{1}{2p}$.

The partisan type prefers to exercise oversight when

$$U_I(t = 1, x = 1, z = 1) = 1 + \frac{1}{2} \geq \frac{1}{2} = U_I(t = 1, x = 0, z = 1)$$

and

$$U_I(t = 1, x = 1, z = 0) = 1 + \frac{1}{2} \geq 0 = U_I(t = 1, x = 0, z = 0)$$

The minority party is indifferent between exercising and not exercising oversight when the incumbent is sincere when

$$U_M(t = 0, z = 0) = \beta p + (1 - \beta)\frac{1}{2} - (\beta(r) + (1 - \beta)) = p - 1 = U_M(t = 0, z = 1)$$

which solves out to $\beta = \frac{2p^2 - p}{2p^2 - (1-p)}$.

The minority party prefers to not exercise oversight when the incumbent is partisan when

$$U_M(t = 1, z = 1) = p - 1 \geq p - r = U_M(t = 1, z = 0)$$

When $\pi_C \leq \pi_I < \frac{\pi_C}{\pi_C + (1-\pi_C)\gamma}$, the sincere type of the incumbent exercises oversight when

$$U_I(t = 0, x = 1) = p + p \geq \frac{1}{2} = U_I(t = 0, x = 0)$$

and the partisan type does so when

$$U_I(t = 1, x = 1) = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + 2 \geq 0 = U_I(t = 1, x = 0)$$

The minority party abstains from oversight when

$$U_M(t=1, z=0) = p - 1 \geq p - 1 = U_M(t=1, z=1)$$

and the same is true when $t = 0$.

The proofs for the corrective action stage are analogous to those in Proposition 2.

Finally, when $\pi_I < \pi_C$, the proofs for the incumbent are analogous to Proposition 2 for both the oversight and corrective action stages. The minority party abstains from oversight when

$$U_M(t=0, z=0) = p - \frac{1}{2}(\frac{1}{2}) \geq p - 1 = U_M(t=0, z=1)$$

and

$$U_M(t=1, z=0) = p - (\frac{1}{2}\alpha\frac{1}{2}) \geq p - 1 = U_M(t=1, z=1)$$