

# Research Notes

## A Game Theoretical Approach to the Legislative Process

*Stanley Bach, University of Massachusetts*

The American legislative process has been a favorite object of study for political scientists, and for good reason. The Congress has been especially popular, in part because it continues to occupy a critical position in the making of public policy, notwithstanding frequent disagreements over precisely how this position should be defined *vis-à-vis* the president, the bureaucracy, and other formal and informal groups. But the attraction of studying the Congress does not rest solely on its importance as an institution of American government. It is attractive for political analysis also because of the variety of methodological and theoretical approaches which may be applied to it, with apparent ease and success. Some aspects of the legislative process are susceptible to investigation only by relying on interviews, personal observations, memoirs, and official documents. Other aspects of Congressional behavior lend themselves well to quantification, within limits commonly acknowledged and frequently ignored. Theories of integration, roles, communication, decision-making, and intra- and inter-organizational behavior have all provided complementary perspectives on the same institution. The study of Congress has not been defined or narrowed in a way which effectively precludes the potential applicability of any methods and approaches favored by political scientists.

The result has been that we probably know more about the Congress than about any other political institution in the world. In fact, our current problem may not be one of ignorance, but of inadequate conceptualization—a failure to integrate all that we do know into a schema with some claim to closure and elegance. The preliminary development of such a schema is offered here, with the hope that other students of politics generally and of the Congress specifically will be encouraged to elaborate it further.

In recent years, an increasing number of political scientists have

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