

The Politics of Manufactured Crisis

Tea Party strategy during the fiscal wars of 2011-2013

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Abstract

The paper concerns a distinct element of political leadership: the manufacturing of crises. It is a widely used assumption in the literature on political decision-making that leaders 'choose their battles' according to their interests. This strategic approach often results in seemingly 'fake crises', that is crises which are not exogenous in nature (e.g. natural disasters). These crises are exceptional in that they are avoidable and are the product of political actors following deliberate agendas. In this paper the logic of crisis manufacturing is illustrated by a case study of the "fiscal wars" of 2011-2013. The complex interactions involving various Republican and Tea Party-associated actors highlight the dynamic nature of networked, coalition-based crisis manufacturing.

Introduction¹

The sources of a policy crisis constitute a major topic in contemporary policy studies, and rightly so. Depending on their nature, policy crises involve significant losses in human lives (disasters, armed conflicts etc.) or economic value (in the case of financial meltdowns, for example). The prevention of crises, therefore, is a natural preoccupation for both politicians and researchers.

Effective crisis-resolution starts with a clear understanding of the nature of the emergency situation. A key factor in this is the provenance of the crisis. Elimination of the root causes must be high on the agenda of decision-makers, even as the consequences (as in the case of rescue efforts) tie up most of the attention. This reasoning yields the research question "why do policy crises happen?", with a connecting set of answers related to emergency situations exogenous or endogenous in nature.

Whereas outside shocks tend to lead students of public policy towards the global context—seismology in the case of tsunami prediction—, crises with endogenous root causes highlight the role of political actors and institutions. Endogeneity—here defined as the impetus for the crisis initiated from inside the realm of the political system—may still be the unpredictable outcome of unintended acts. But, at least in some cases, crisis will stem from premeditated deeds of the political class. The logic of these *manufactured crises*—to borrow a term used by Porter (2014), among others—is distinct from those initiated by exogenous causes, and also from those of the "unintended" subclass of the endogenous kind. Further research on this variety, therefore, is useful both from a theoretical and practitioner's perspective.

In this article, the logic of manufactured crisis is explored through outcome-centric research (Gschwend – Schimmelfennig, 2011: 184). As opposed to inductive research aimed at generalization from a sample, its focus is on internal validity as it develops a causal link between independent political factors and dependent policy variables. That said, as the theoretical framework matures over prospective studies questions of external validity may once again come to the fore.

Our case of choice is the role the Tea Party movement played in the U.S. debt ceiling crises of the early 2010s. This episode in U.S. policy history seems particularly suitable for an outcome-based study of the logic and consequences of manufactured crises. First, it was an obviously endogenous crisis: opponents of public debt accumulation would not have much leverage over other political actors without the debt ceiling. In this it was an exemplary case of "man-made" emergencies, as nothing stood between the political class and normalcy except a simple vote (as it was the case on a number of previous occasions).

Moreover, the debt ceiling debate offers a natural case for the study of crisis-manufacturing as there was a distinctive set of players who played an active part in fomenting the crisis—the Tea Party movement and its Congressional allies. With our primary actors thus defined, the subject of the debate is just as suitable for our present purposes. The high stake negotiations surrounding the debt ceiling provided a real-life ticking bomb scenario, in which a shortcut to large-scale political capital accumulation was matched with a corresponding political risk.

In the given settings, all the major components of a major endogenous policy crisis were at play: political entrepreneurs striving for a return on political investment; easily

removable institutional constraints; a high risk-high reward environment and a firmly set timetable for the negotiations to unfold. In light of these features, Tea Party involvement with the debt ceiling promises to be a classic case of a manufactured crisis.

The discussion unfolds as follows. First, an overview is provided for the literature on the endogenous causes of crises in general, and the role of political entrepreneurs in particular. Second, three propositions are introduced which form the foundation of the analytic narrative. Third, an empirical case study is presented of the fiscal wars of 2011-2013 with an emphasis on the logic of crisis manufacturing as implemented by the political leaders of the Tea Party movement. A discussion of the theoretical relevance of the networked, coalition-based strategy of the Tea Party follows. The final section concludes the paper.

Theory. Endogenous policy crises and political entrepreneurship

The phrase *manufactured crisis* is a recurring term in reports and studies ranging from public schools (Berliner – Biddle, 1995) to social security (Baker – Weisbrot, 2001; here under the more derogatory "phony crisis" moniker). Most recently it was applied to the Iran "nuclear scare" (Porter, 2014). Its wide-ranging usage points toward a concept that travels well through fields and paradigms.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of political research, a more compact definition is required. Such a definition can be constructed by combining the notion of endogenous crisis and political entrepreneurship. A non-exogenous policy crisis is one initiated from within the domestic political system, as opposed to e.g. the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-1981. A subtype of this are man-made crises, intentional or unintentional: their subject,

severity or timing is not dictated by factors from outside the community of political actors. Finally, a manufactured crisis is both endogenous and is ushered in by the strategic intent of political entrepreneurs as opposed to unintended consequences.

Our primary concern in this paper is the subtype of endogenous crises initiated by political entrepreneurs. The notion of manufactured crisis, then, posits a causal link between independent political factors and dependent policy variables. Case studies under this or other monikers abound in the literature. Hay (2010) demonstrates that the "Winter of Discontent", the period of major strikes in 1979 against the policies of the Labour government in charge at the time, was "in many respects a manufactured crisis", concluding that "'Keynesianism's death in Britain was not economically given, but politically orchestrated". This literature, in contrast to the similar research direction centered on the term "crisis exploitation", does not take crisis as a given. While crisis opens new avenues for strategic behavior (as described in e.g. Boin et al., 2009: 83), our focus is less on "post-crisis politicking" and "framing contests" than pre-crisis brinkmanship.

In this, its roots are in theories of endogenous crisis in general, and the role of political entrepreneurship initiating these in particular. Studies of endogenous crisis are now abundant in economics where financial meltdowns provide ample data on intra-system imbalances, upsetting more traditional theoretical accounts (see Lucarelli, 2011: 7-9). While these may be endogenous crises of the unintended sort, intentionality is more difficult to avoid—or: easier to establish—in political science studies. Here, the prevalence of exogenous explanations of change is more of an obstacle (Mahoney – Thelen, 2010: 5-7). Furthermore, endogeneity may be defined by factors other than the

general political system, as in the case of political institutions, which can change according to varying patterns of “self-enforcement and reinforcement” (Greif – Laitin, 2004: 639).

In order to cut through some theoretical complexity, our focus is on political entrepreneurship as a distinct force for endogenous policy change. In this we follow the literature on public, political and policy entrepreneurs (see e.g. Schneider – Teske, 1995; Sheingate, 2003; Laffan, 1997, respectively), which portrays bureaucrats and politicians as “agents of change”. Mintrom and Norman (2009) go on to directly link policy entrepreneurship and policy change.

What is somewhat less elaborate in this line of research is an account of political entrepreneurship performed by groups or networks, as opposed to individuals or homogenous coalitions. This approach may be particularly fruitful in assessing the subtypes of manufactured crisis. The subjects of agency (i.e. individuals or groups) are of interest insofar as they reshape how the crisis unfolds: more heterogeneous players with instable preferences may—but need not to—add dynamic depth to the game.

Needless to say, there are multiple sources that contribute to the conversion of simple games to multi-staged dynamic games. The shifting membership and, therefore, underlying preference-structure of coalitions as political entrepreneurs is one such factor. Their capability to “manufacture opportunities themselves by transforming ‘events’ into ‘crises’” (Polsby, 1983:168-170, cited by Sheingate, 2003: 189) may be both reinforced or diluted by their multi-agent setup.

It is also affected by the nature of the leverage and the stakes involved. Baumgartner and Jones (2010: 21-22) make the distinction between policy subsystems

and the macropolitical level. Crises of only subsystem level interest can be pushed up to the level of macropolitics, where attention is scarce and sequential: at any given time, general interest cable news channels will only cover a handful of events. One indicator of such macropolitical potential is the leverage involved. The Cuban missile crisis was of utmost importance not only because the exact location or destructive capability of the missiles involved; it was magnified by its relation to defense doctrines and the validity of verbal ultimatums in a multi-phased cold war game.

Similar near existential threats include protracted strikes (as in the case of the Winter of Discontent) and other disruptions to the ordinary provision of basic goods and services. Legislative gridlock may also be the source of emergency situations: obstruction (in the form of filibuster or other institutionalized veto points) can undermine government policies impacting the everyday life of citizens. This paper provides a sneak preview of one such subtype of manufactured crisis: a case study of a high-stakes, dynamic game involving a networked coalition of agents serving as "crisis entrepreneurs".

Propositions and methodological concerns

The major purpose of this paper is to unearth strategic intent on behalf of an overlapping selection of groups of Republican politicians and activists in precipitating a shutdown showdown. Based on the relevant research question ("why do policy crises happen?"), the following propositions can be put forth:

Proposition 1: The 2011-2013 debt ceiling emergency was a manufactured crisis;

Proposition 2: It was selected as an agenda item and manufactured by a diverse selection of players founding common ground for at least some part of the period (coalition thesis);

Proposition 3: This strategy was exerted without the help of a formal organization or central leadership (network thesis);

The novelty of these propositions lies not in their historical nature: according to reliable sources—most importantly the players themselves—the basic facts of the history of debt ceiling debates are uncontested. The merit of this investigation stems from its generalizable features, which, in turn, are less trivial. Of particular note are the shifting coalitions at the center of strategic and tactical planning throughout this extended period.

This attribute points toward the potential of the collateral damage only relatively minor, unorganized set of players may exert on their opponents with help of proper institutional leverage. Insurgencies—a moniker often applied to the Tea Party, and with good reason—frequently resort to elements of asymmetrical warfare, such as hostage taking, suicide bombers, and other suspensions of the laws of war (or in this case: conventions and gentleman’s agreements not to tinker with the full faith and credit of the U.S.). Notions of guerilla warfare are substantiated by the small numbers of mutineers (or “freedom fighters”), their dependence on popular help, and their decentralized, amorphous and, therefore, less tractable command.

For the insurgents, the institutional arrangement of the debt ceiling proved an accurate choice for a battlefield with its high risk nature and sound footings in popular

opinion (see unpopular bailouts). Nevertheless, despite the generally favourable setting it took proficient political entrepreneurship to manufacture a crisis of the given proportions. This is a relevant theoretical outcome for political scientists seeking to understand endogenous crises. And in this the propositions are best viewed as the central pillars of a key case study in the analysis of such crises with an unusually high destructive potential.

The examination of these propositions is undertaken by utilizing the conventions of qualitative case study research. Our aim is to provide an “analytic narrative” that “pays close attention to stories, accounts and context” while at the same time extracting “explicit and formal lines of reasoning, which facilitate both exposition and explanation” (Bates, 1998: 10). Strategic intent on behalf of debt ceiling warriors is unearthed by an analysis of secondary sources, including media reports, voting behavior, pressure group scorecards, FCC filings etc. The wealth of information surrounding the debt ceiling crises provides a magnificent target for a study of such low demands with regard to external validity.

The U.S. debt ceiling debate is an obvious case for the study of manufactured crisis, for a number of aforementioned reasons, including the conclusion of various participants and commentators that in fact it was the result of strategic intent aimed at policy stability.² Besides its evidently endogenous nature, and the clear deadlines and high stakes associated with its resolution, it also offers a control group of previous instances when the renewal of federal borrowing authority was a routine drill. Ever since the introduction of a wholesale debt limit—as opposed to individual authorizations— in 1917 and the subsequent extension of the rule to nearly all U.S. financial obligations the debate had largely steered clear of the fiscal cliff: despite the

rhetoric, when push comes to shove debt ceiling increases get the votes they need—though often not without considerable political strife” (Wallach, 2013: 3).

It is no overstatement that an “exemption consensus” prevailed in U.S. politics for almost a century before the fiscal wars of 2011-2013.³ This encompassed two strands of opinion: the very cessation of the debt ceiling provision and the de facto termination of the requirement to be achieved by circumvention (see the so-called Gephardt and the McConnell rules). While important differences remain between the two positions, for our purposes they signify the same content: the elimination of the debt ceiling provision as a means of crisis manufacturing.

Case study. The debt ceiling and crisis manufacturing by coalition

The first proposition states that the 2011-2013 debt ceiling emergency was a manufactured crisis. For the purposes of this article, crisis manufacturing was defined as an emergency due to endogenous, man-made and intentional causes. It was argued that the debt ceiling case of 2011-2013 meshes perfectly with the first two elements of the definition. Strategic intent, on the other hand, may only be discovered by the analysis of the players and their actions. All in all, proposition 1 can be ascertained by studying proposition 2 and 3.

Starting with Proposition 2, it is assumed that the debt ceiling crisis was initiated by a coalition of players. A manageable cast of characters should include assorted Republicans from House Speaker John Boehner and Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, to Tea Party members of both Houses of Congress, and the grassroots and its unofficial leaders in former VP-nominee Sarah Palin or radio talk show host Rush

Limbaugh. A further refinement is to detach the group of fiscally conservative Young Guns (House majority leader Eric Cantor, whip Kevin McCarthy and Rep. Paul Ryan) from establishment figures in other leadership and senior committee positions. Tea Party financiers (such as the Koch brothers) and their networks also merit consideration as autonomous players.

The Congressional arm of the Tea Party movement had its origins in the stance of “strident fiscal conservatives like Senator Harry F. Byrd” (Wallach, 2013: 2). A more immediate progenitor was the historic Republican takeover of the House hallmarked by the Contract with America, brainchild of former House Speaker, Newt Gingrich. His standoff with president Bill Clinton resulted in two consecutive government shutdowns—for reasons very similar to the limited government-themed demands of the Tea Party insurgency.

The protagonists of this second coming of a Republican revolution were more diverse and less centralized, as stated by Proposition 3. A month before the 2010 midterms a nationwide canvass of Tea Party organizers by the Washington Post asked "which national figure best represents your groups?" and got the following responses: no one 34%, Sarah Palin 14%, Glenn Beck 7%, Jim DeMint 6%, Ron Paul 6%, Michele Bachmann 4%.⁴ Before the intake of decidedly Tea Party-affiliated new members of Congress—and her own thematic presidential run in 2012—Bachmann formed the Tea Party Caucus, which—at least as an official center of Tea Party politics—could not take hold.⁵ Tea Party activists revered the individual citizen and reviled the Beltway elite.

The focal point of the Tea Party had always been outside Congress, dispersed across America and less structured than what would have normally been the case with a

movement of such political clout. In consequence, members of Congress associated with the Tea Party often resorted to a constrained view of their mandate, summarized in the approach of a “Contract from America” and the practice of signing pledges (such as the Anti-Tax Pledge). In face of this power vacuum, talk show hosts, TV commentators and out-of-job Republican politicians vied for leadership status and popular support.

Nevertheless, the movement has not entirely been grassroots or self-financed. Non-profit organizations set up by conservative businessmen or activists (such as Tea Party Patriots, FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity) have provided support to like-minded causes (sometimes by astroturfing) and candidates from the beginning.

The basic cleavages were thus encoded in the structure of the debt ceiling debate from the beginning of 2011. Three blurred blocs of political actors took to the trenches: Democrats, by and large united around a strategy of cost minimalization in exchange for raising the debt ceiling; establishment Republicans sharing in, and often leading party efforts to exert maximum concessions from Democrats in non-military spending cuts without sacrificing the full faith and credit in U.S. debt; and Tea Party faithfuls who were only interested in abrupt changes of dramatic proportions in the face of a perceived “big government takeover” of America. With this cast of characters crisis manufacturing unfolded in three overlapping phases between 2009 and 2013.

Phase 1 Debt is in the air (2009-2011)

The movement that has come to known as the Tea Party had its first bursts of political activity early 2009 in response to the first stimulus package by incoming president Barack Obama and a Congress controlled by Democrats.⁶ With upcoming

legislation that included the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”), an aborted attempt at introducing cap and trade-style climate change regulation, and the Dodd-Frank financial regulation package right-wing activists were mobilized by a “leftward lurch” in federal policy. The icing on the cake was a 1.9 trillion increase in the debt ceiling, which even some Democrats—mostly “blue dogs” from vulnerable districts—voted down, along with insisting on tougher rules for future spending (pay-as-you-go rules).

In light of these developments, elements of the credo and legislative agenda of the upstart Tea Party movement were shortlisted via online voting (with more than 450,000 participants according to organizers)⁷. The resulting 10-point Contract from America included a balanced budget Constitutional amendment, a tax code of 4,543 words (the length of the original constitution), limiting annual growth in federal spending, a moratorium on earmarks and a ban on tax increases. This selection attests to the preoccupation of the Tea Party with all things fiscal (and with a sound constitutional foundation).

Furthermore, opinion polls seemed to suggest that the public was on board with a more restrictive budgetary approach. An AP-CNBC poll showed a 14% increase over two years in the category “very worried” for the question “How worried are you that increasing federal debt will harm the financial future of your children?”. The result (56%, with 29% “somewhat worried”) substantiated Tea Party claims that the majority of the electorate had become hostile towards new interventionalist programs by the federal government.⁸ Nevertheless, as to the structure of budgetary rebalancing, participants were evenly split between spending even more on priorities such as education on the one hand, and cutting spending on the other.

Explanations for the causes of runaway public debt were just as conflicting. Democratic conventional wisdom blamed the Bush tax cuts, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the combo of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent recession. Tea Party rhetoric was centered around crises of a different sort: manufactured crises. At the time, Glenn Beck made frequent references to the echoes “possible arrival of a “New World Order”, which would be ushered in by Mr. Obama is using “a strategy of manufactured crisis to destroy the economy and pave the way for dictatorship.” Tea Party activists were echoing these arguments around the country. It was not before long that Republican strategists—by principle, and also convinced that they were on the right side of public opinion—set out to manufacture a crisis of their own.

Phase 2 Strategic unity – tactical diversity (2010-2011)

It has to be emphasized that the moral panic surrounding soaring public debt that ensued was not, by any stretch, the invention of right-wing conspiracy theorists. Federal debt was increasing at a historic rate in nominal terms (see Figure 1), with a surge in Debt/GDP from the mid-fifties range of the period 1990-2006 to 91% in 2011.⁹ Projections looked even worse with entitlement-related spending getting especially out of hand (CBO, 2011: 80). In the short term, the unusually long recession took its toll, as did—the short-lived—discretionary spending increases denounced by Tea Party activists (again, see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

The fiscal situation was worsening but immediate repercussions were not expected: bond yields had remained low for a sustained period. Debt was in the air, fiscal collapse was not. In this situation it would require political entrepreneurship to convert a moral panic into political, let alone legislative, strategy. Not that Republican leaders had much choice¹⁰: Tea Partiers held liable *both* parties for runaway debt and also posed a larger threat to the establishment of the GOP: most Patriots were Republicans and, by virtue of their mobilization networks, a threat to reckon with in Republican primaries.

Post-crisis accounts of events were unerring in declaring that “the establishment held back the Tea Party by basically co-opting their issues and rhetoric — while in the process moving the party even more to the right.”¹¹ Yet there was a fine line between co-option and forcing a shutdown, as Boehner made clear to incoming freshmen in December 2010: “For people who’ve never been in politics it’s going to be one of those growing moments (...) but we’ll have to find a way to (...) help people understand the serious problem that would exist if we didn’t do it.”¹²

Based on the premises of “adult” behavior on the part of the 85 incoming House members a coalition between establishment and Tea Party Republicans firmly set in: Boehner had donated “millions of dollars from his own campaign chest to the challengers”¹³, singled out the “monstrous” ACA as a target for repeal and, after the election, he announced a renewal of the Republican moratorium on budgetary earmarks”. The speaker-in-waiting was also no stranger to some leading Tea Party organizers, notably Dick Armey, with whom he had served as a member of the Gingrich House leadership (and Armey duly endorsed him for Speaker¹⁴). He was fully preparing to “lead by being led” (Draper, 2012: 50).

Even then there were ominous signs: candidates with Tea Party backing—such as Peter Schiff in Connecticut—were touting their pledges to devote all their “time in the US Senate to forcing an immediate end to deficit spending, by leading a filibuster against the raising of the national debt ceiling and fighting every big spending bill that comes across the Senate floor” (in the event Schiff lost his primary).¹⁵ Similar pledges were made by hundreds of Tea Party candidates in an Ulysses-like act tying themselves to a mast against the sirens calls of big government. It was not before long (in December) that there was “disagreement between Boehner and (...) at least one freshman member of the leadership team, about how to control the federal deficit.”¹⁶

Thinly veiled threats were also issued by the Young Guns. When Boehner had suggested in an interview that “he might compromise with Democrats if the middle-class tax cut was the only option” McCarthy was quick to push back: “It’s a generational thing (...) we have our ideals, but also our principles”. Ryan added: Boehner never asked him to tone down his anti-debt rhetoric: “I think he realizes the kind of class we’ve got coming in, and the kind of times that we are in (...) And I think he realizes that he can’t stand athwart history or the direction of this new conference, anyway. If he tried, they’d throw him out”.¹⁷ With a potential challenge for the speakership by Cantor looming, Boehner had a vested interest in championing the cause of spending and—by inference—debt reduction.

Next on the agenda was how to approach the issue in an adult, but at the same time expedient and unhesitating manner. “Starving the beast” of federal government had been a favourite pastime of conservatives for decades—even when a balanced budget (or, indeed, debt reduction in general or a ban on earmarked funds to be used in the states or

locally) was not high on the agenda.¹⁸ While fiscal conservatism was the order of the day, House Republicans were also conscious of the fact what the Tea in T.E.A. Party stood for: taxed enough already.

Thus the issue of spending reduction was chosen as the carrier for a strategy of confrontation with a Democratic president and Senate. As Rep. Ryan put it: “we owe it to our employers, the people who elected us, to give them a choice of two futures”.¹⁹ The other signature item on the Tea Party agenda was even more self-evident: over 2009 the conservative base developed an obsession with the Democrats’ health care proposal, fretting over a purported government takeover of their insurance policies in general, and “death panels” in particular.²⁰ "Obamacare" perfectly fit the bill being a second issue directly related to the overarching Leviathan theme so popular with Tea Partiers.

In the event, the combination of spending cuts and an anti-health care stance had naturally developed into a winning combination for Republicans preparing to gain a majority in the House in the 2010 midterms (the Senate, for the moment, seemed out of reach). It was selected as an agenda item and manufactured by the coalition of a diverse selection of players founding common ground for at least some part of the period. All participants did their part: talk show hosts and town hall warriors amplifying the negative message, Young Guns rolling out alternative policy proposals and party leadership recruiting and aiding candidates to take on vulnerable Democrats.

Yet one piece was missing: a bridge between electoral and legislative strategy or, put more simply, a path to “get things done”. This was not trivial as Democrats were expected to hold on to the Senate and the president professed to be trigger happy with vetoing any acts that would have undone his first term achievements. In a a system based

on the separation of powers, a freshly mobilized House majority needed allies, or at least some sort of an institutional leverage. If they could not expect anything to get passed in concert with the Senate, they needed to create previously non-existent veto points to extract concessions.

The debt ceiling was an obvious target. Ryan himself lambasted it²¹ during the previous increase, which was passed with zero Republican votes and 37 Democrats joining them in opposition²² (see Table 2). Some Democrats even suggested that it was the job of the Republican House majority to make sure that the country avoids default (Draper, 2012: 56). Ultimately, Republicans were convinced they would come out victorious of this high-stake game, even if—realistically—it boiled down to a choice between government shutdown and/or default or lifting the debt ceiling (at best, with strings attached). The Young Guns were perfectly cognizant of this fact and proactively discouraged talk of a “nay” vote, in contrast to their otherwise belligerent rhetoric (see e.g. *ibid*: 225).

TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

However, some members of the Republican conference did not share this approach of a game of strategy. Political capital was to be accumulated not only by crisis-resolution, but by creative destruction. For these Republicans compromise on fiscal issues meant antagonizing their dearly held principles *and* guaranteed primary defeat in 2012.

Despite these ominous signs, and in stark contrast with the social conservative-neocon coalition behind the George W. Bush presidency, incoming majority leader

Cantor highlighted four issues for his conference: jobs and the economy; cutting spending; shrinking the federal government and expanding individual liberty (Draper, 2002: 47). During a closed-door retreat mid-January Cantor also pleaded with his troops to “look at a potential increase in the debt limit as a leverage moment when the White House and President Obama will have to deal with us. (...) Either we stick together and demonstrate that we’re a team that will fight for and stand by our principles, or we will lose that leverage”.²³

The first application of the general strategy came in March-April, 2011 by which time previous appropriations for the fiscal year October 2010-September 2011 had run out. As no budget had been passed by September 2010, continuing resolutions covered expenditures on the general level of the previous fiscal year. As no grand bargain had been conjured up during the lam duck session of December (or based on the Bowles-Simpson recommendations) the federal government was now on a ticking clock until March 4. House Republicans kicked down the can twice more in exchange for roughly \$10 billion in spending cuts. At this point a government shutdown was scheduled for April 8. A seventh continuing resolution was agreed to just hour before furloughs taking place at the cost of an additional cut of \$38 billion from the budget proposal. However, as these mostly targeted expected or mandatory expenditures subject to conditions, a CBO estimation put actual savings at a mere \$355 million. For all their negotiations, compromises and painful votes, Tea Party Republicans felt tricked.

Incremental changes were made to the strategy before the next potential showdown, the August 2 debt ceiling deadline. This included a more concentrated voting procedure, as the previous approach created “divisions rather than promot[ing] unity

within the conference”. Among the ideas floated as preconditions for a potential compromise, the usual subjects came up: repealing Obamacare, a balanced budget constitutional amendment and caps on mandatory spending. Only a “dozen or so” members ruled out a deal (Draper, 2012: 226).

In a quest to instill unity in a rowdy caucus a bill was put forth by the majority leadership that embraced a series of popular proposals by the membership in order to “cut, cap and balance” (CCB) the budget. In exchange for raising the debt limit it stipulated steep cuts in non-military spending, and made future debt ceiling hikes conditional on passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. However, as it did not contain provisions to defund Obamacare (and based on their general anti-increase stance) Reps. Bachmann, Paul and Jones did not support it (along with 181 Democrats).²⁴

With this display of purity most House Republicans were basically done negotiating with the White House—it took a concerted effort on behalf of the leadership of both chambers and the president to reach a last minute agreement based on a modified version of CCB, a far cry from any sort of grand bargain. Boehner was right to emphasize the similarities of the two proposals, including avoiding tax increases and guarantees of future spending cuts in the form of sequestration.²⁵

That said, the vote had ambiguous results as to who won or lost. From the perspective of this paper the most important development was that it provoked a lasting rift in camaraderie within the Tea Party caucus, and also within the Republican conferences in Congress. Throughout the entire crisis period between 2011 and 2014 the Republican House majority mustered by itself the necessary 218 votes for key fiscal roll calls just one time (on March 2, 2011, see Table 2). It was no different with this first debt

ceiling showdown as—on August 1st, just one day before the shutdown deadline—66 Republicans “defected” (and the others were accused of defection by Tea Party media²⁶).²⁷

Phase 3 Taking sides (2011-2013)

The most important takeaway for hardcore Tea Party believers from the events of March-August 2011 was that gratification had been delayed once again. Obamacare was the law of the land; there was no realistic chance for passing a balanced budget amendment; and several compatriots gave in under pressure from party leadership. Along with the impending presidential primaries, the 2012 elections provided a new opportunity for Tea Party strategists to advance their agenda.

Throughout the tense process of the 2011-2013 fiscal crisis, members of Congress repeatedly refused to rule out testing the waters when it came to default. Tim Scott denounced thinking that a deal was “a foregone conclusion (...) I’d like to let the proof be in the pudding.”²⁸ When presented with projections regarding the fallout from default, “conservatives like Georgia Rep. Phil Gingrey read (...) emails from banker friends who didn’t buy it.”²⁹ John Fleming went on the record stating that “nothing happens” if the debt ceiling is reached.³⁰ With default, or a protracted shutdown, remaining uncharted territory, some House Republicans were still preparing for a final fiscal showdown.

Yet circumstances had somewhat changed for the second half of the period. As opposed to the 2010 midterms, Democrats now picked up 8 seats in the House (but remained the minority party), and two in the Senate. President Obama also won a second

term against the mainstream Republican Mitt Romney who previously had defeated a number of Tea Party backed contenders (including House firebrand Bachmann).

The wars of 2011 also left the Republican more divided on and averse to fiscal brinkmanship. By fall the Republican “cardinals” on the appropriations committees were in full revolt over hardliners undercutting their proposed bills (Draper, 2012: 278). Cantor was progressively becoming a main target for the media at large over Republican intransigence. While he was still described by some as "the Republican leadership's tether to the Tea Party," in fact he donated money to moderates and never joined the Tea Party Caucus (nor did the other Young Guns). Even ideologues who were otherwise on friendly terms with House Tea Partiers, such as Karl Rove, denounced slash and burn tactics when it came to bargaining with Democrats: passing a viable measure “will require the GOP to accept less than total repeal of the Obama agenda, vote for spending cuts smaller than what they want, and support a debt increase all Republicans wish were not necessary.”³¹

The exemption consensus was now ever powerful, and duly led to compromise (brokered once again in the Senate, with the help of vice-president Biden) on the upcoming editions of the crisis: the “fiscal cliff” of December 2012, and also a temporary debt ceiling increase. The silver lining in all this was the arrival of new ally for “liberty”-focused House members with the 2012 elections: Ted Cruz, the new junior senator for Texas. Along with Mike Lee and Rand Paul from the 2010 intake, he developed a new veto point in a Senate that still retained individual members’ right to obstruct—or “filibuster”—proceedings. New methods also took root to persuade members of Congress to responsible fiscal behavior: the next temporary debt ceiling hike was linked to passing

a budget in 3 months. If not, members of the chamber in question would have their pay withheld: no budget, no pay.

However, the resulting new debt ceiling deadline of mid-May initiated once again a contentious process with the Young Guns now firmly in the leadership camp. Reps. Bridenstine and Huelskamp (along with 28 others) proposed to eject Obamacare out of a bill under consideration. This, in turn, "shocked" Boehner and Cantor who prevented a full-blown revolt by rescheduling related votes.³² Tea Party activists, such as Erick Erickson of RedState, a blog, were unimpressed announcing "House Conservatives Will Prove They Are the Problem".³³

Open season was once again declared on the debt ceiling, but with Democrats less inclined to compromise a sensible exit point was wanting. As Rep. Stutzman, who supported the ensuing government shutdown in October 2013, put it: "we have to get something out of this. And I don't know what that even is."³⁴ Inside this "Republican suicide machine" tensions were brewing.³⁵ As the Treasury announced late-September that extraordinary measures would be exhausted no later than October 17, Cruz prepared for filibustering any legislation that funded Obamacare. In the meantime, the Wall Street Journal, no foe of spending cuts, concluded that "Kamikaze missions rarely turn out well, least of all for the pilots."³⁶

Unrepentant, the no-compromise wing of the Republican Party crafted a letter to House leadership with 80 signatures demanding that the budget bill "affirmatively defund" Obamacare. Simultaneously, a Tea Party rally ("Exempt America"³⁷) was held on Capitol hill featuring revolting lawmakers from both chambers. The "Williamsburg

Accord” of early 2013, devised to offer a “unified Republican strategy drove toward a new debt ceiling standoff with the president” was now officially void.³⁸

When Tea Partiers refused to vote for any debt ceiling increase and continuing resolution that did not defund Obamacare, the government went into a partial shutdown on October 1. The ball was once again in the court of the Senate to come up with a solution. Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell admitted that “we were talking in the Senate Republican conference as early as July that (the hardcore strategy) had no chance of success”.³⁹ Calling the 21-hour filibuster speech on September 24 by Cruz a “quixotic venture”, he was already busy brokering a deal with Senate majority leader Harry Reid that included the McConnell rule and various other stopgap measures in order to avoid a recurring of a fiscal showdown. Three days later cloture was finally voted on with only 18 other Republican Senators joining, falling short of a blocking minority of 40.

With the Tea Party losing the Senate front of the battle, House Republicans were once again confronted with the choice of default or a debt limit hike. Finally, on October 16, a conference amendment was passed with no Democrats opposed, but only a minority of House Republicans joining Boehner and Cantor in voting yea.⁴⁰ As John McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential candidate, observed: “It did change the environment when the American people rejected the shutdown”. He referred to polls conducted during the long 2 weeks of the shutdown showing that 53% blamed Republicans, compared with 31% who blamed Mr. Obama for the crisis. These also presented the lowest party approval scores for the GOP in 20-plus years.⁴¹

In two months’ time a budget agreement involving Rep. Ryan ended “the four year quest for a “grand bargain” by funding the government above the levels set in 2011

and not cutting entitlements”.⁴² And with a “clean” debt limit raise passed with mostly Democratic votes in February 2014, a three-year era of fiscal wars was finally over.

Discussion

The fiscal wars of 2011-2013 were not the product of a centralized planning of a coherent player. But they were the product of strategic planning nevertheless. In the previous section evidence was presented describing the premeditated nature of the fiscal wars of 2011-2013. Republicans repeatedly voted for clean debt limit increases or invoked the Gephardt rule to the same effect. In line with *Proposition 1* of this paper, the recurring debt ceiling emergencies proved to be manufactured crises. It also turned out, however, that these crises may come in many forms. They are shaped by the nature of the leverage involved; by the might and structure of the opposition; by the extant rules within the institutional arena, and by the allies positioned without; as well as by the dynamics of a protracted period of contention.

This is not to say that all manufactured crises are unique and that generalizations are futile. Quite the contrary, the case of the fiscal wars was significant in that it provided insight into the subtype of endogenous crisis hallmarked by a disjointed collection of participants with partly overlapping aims. It is something to be expected in a separation of powers system powered by large sums of regulated and “dark” money and partisan media operations. What is less trivial is that such a fragmented selection of players may nevertheless be adept at concocting, revising and executing strategies over years.

The dynamic of the fiscal wars is key to understanding the consequences of the coalition presumption in *Proposition 2*. Diverse preferences generate different payouts and exit points for participants. A complete alignment of preferences is not a precondition

for success. Rather, it depends on the circumstances. In August 2011 House Republicans reached a deal that contained no tax increases, yet at the same time it involved significant spending cuts. It also passed without the votes of Tea Party Republicans. This verged on achieving a maximum ransom without actually shooting the hostage.⁴³ However, divergent preferences caused tectonic movements in political tactics (i.e. breaking ranks with Cruz in the Senate), without which the strategy might have paid off.⁴⁴

After all, the strategy was based on common ground in terms of *threats* of a default. In this, coalition-based strategy is analogous to a multi-stage rocket, with each stage consuming a separate propellant: in the case of the establishment it was deterrence; for Tea Partiers it was the capability of a first strike. It is also important to note that the dynamic nature of coalition-based strategy may eventually play into the hands of the more radical participants. They had a chance to jettison the majority leadership altogether by carrying over their momentum to a new stage with new veto points: Senate filibuster in this case. Escalation strategies may be developed throughout the dynamic game despite constraining initial circumstances.

In light of this discussion, the Tea Party revolt was at its best when forcing temporary unity on the Republican leadership, compelling it to play hardball in the negotiations. At various points until August 2011 they exerted concessions from a president with his sights on a grand bargain that had previously been inconceivable. Congressional Democrats were less impressed, leading in most cases to idiosyncratic agreements involving (for the most part) Congressional leadership and ex-Senate stalwart Biden. Throughout the fiscal wars parallel channels of negotiations were open, with no clear indication of future prospects. As *Proposition 3* stated: strategy was exerted without

the help of a formal organization or central leadership. In the event, it was not so much a fully-fledged strategy as a blueprint thereof.

This network-based crisis manufacturing had both its upsides and downsides. An unclear and shifting “membership”—without a pre-defined mission statement—produced a slipping towards the most extreme participants, and thus shifting goals. Veto points popped up inside the coalition at various times, undermining the bargaining of the day (along with previously agreed gains). These drawbacks were, however, largely offset by the advantages of network governance: time and time again outside pressure provided impetus for breaking gridlocks, such as threats of “primarying” disloyal members. Moreover, obedience came on the cheap with a handful of blogs and dozens of local activists in each House district playing the role of disciplinarian.

In this, network-based crisis manufacturing proved particularly adept at expanding the conflict from the fiscal policy subsystem to macropolitics and the general political agenda (as described by Baumgartner and Jones [2010: 21-22]). Manufacturing it was: there were no low hanging fruits in the fiscal wars with entrenched interests (e.g. providers and recipients), the prevailing “exemption consensus” and—at the end of the line—a progressive president and Senate majority. Just as in 1995, with the previous edition of shutdown politics, it took political entrepreneurship to reap the potential rewards of network-based brinkmanship. This entrepreneurship—on behalf of activists (such as Grover Norquist and Heritage Action, led by ex-Senator Jim DeMint), financiers (see Koch Brothers) and politicians (Bachmann, Cruz etc.)—provided the ideological coherence, chain of command, money source and talking heads) to an improbably successful revolt.

For successful it was: despite being labeled “suicide missions” in hindsight by bona fide conservatives, such as Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell, the insurgency gained maximum leverage with the hand it was given. At the end of the day, it took no more than a nucleus of 20 House republicans to stand up to the powerful exemption consensus and capture a large part of the political agenda for years in a row. Figure 2 demonstrates that a core group of less than two dozen House members were joined by fellow Conservative Study Group, Tea Party Caucus and Liberty Caucus members (and from the other end of the ideological spectrum: progressive Democrats) for key bipartisan votes. However, legally speaking, they never constituted a blocking minority in either chambers.

FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE

It took a concerted effort by radical fiscal conservatives in both chambers and outside Congress to leverage a relatively weak hand to palpable concessions and an ongoing struggle lasting more than three years. Entrepreneurship was present not just in engineering voting blocks for specific roll calls, but also in amassing bargaining chips in a highly institutionalized environment. From a complex web of structural constraints on political agency two institutional factors emerged as crucial for Tea Party success: gerrymandering and primary rules favoring more extreme policy positions; and a ban on pork-barrel projects in appropriations bills that served as a positive feedback for the emergent fiscal radicalism in the House.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In this article, the logic of manufactured crisis was explored through outcome-centric research: our goal was to establish a causal link between independent political factors and dependent policy variables by way of a thick description of the case at hand. The origins of the fiscal wars of 2011-2013 were assessed and Proposition 1 put forth an explanation centered around the notion of manufactured crisis. The descriptive study of the factors at play pointed towards sources of contention which were previously lacking. The term “exemption consensus” summed up the forces at play in the long history of debt ceiling brinkmanship highlighting the absence of strategies aimed at defaulting on federal debt.

The Tea Party template to exert fiscal restraint from an unwilling political establishment constituted therefore a new breed of crisis manufacturing—a sharp turn from debt ceiling politics as usual. It was intentional, it made use of the institutional and social background—and it relied on a dynamic, coalition-based approach framed by outside pressure and steered by network governance. It was presented as a potentially representative or key case “politics by hostage taking”, professing the power of political leverage. The case study served as a demonstration of the logic of crisis manufacturing, a logic that may or may not travel to cases other than the debt ceiling wars. Its external validity can only be reinforced by further research. New avenues for inquiry may also be opened up by elaborating on the topics presented in this paper. Of these, perhaps the most promising concerns our tentative outline of the specific consequences of various types of crisis manufacturing. The internal structures of players and the dynamics of the game over time may have large purchase on the prospects of such strategies.

It is also clear that the debt ceiling case itself is worth further inquiry. It was not before long after the fiscal wars that a new theme emerged linking climate change policies and funding for the Environmental Protection Agency to raising the debt ceiling⁴⁶. Until Congressional politics is “exempted” from the debt limit, it is bound to produce new empirical flesh for the study of manufactured crises.

This may also come in unexpected forms or with varying roles for well-known players. After all Barack Obama, then junior senator from Illinois, did argue on the Senate floor in 2006 that raising the debt limit was "a sign that the U.S. government can't pay its own bills." As president, Obama admitted: "you start realizing . . . we can't play around with this stuff."⁴⁷ Or, to cite a convert in the other direction: Mitch McConnell contemplated his short odds of becoming Senate majority leader in August 2014 by claiming Obama "needs to be challenged, and the best way to do that is through the funding process."⁴⁸ It takes a saint to withstand the lure of crisis manufacturing.

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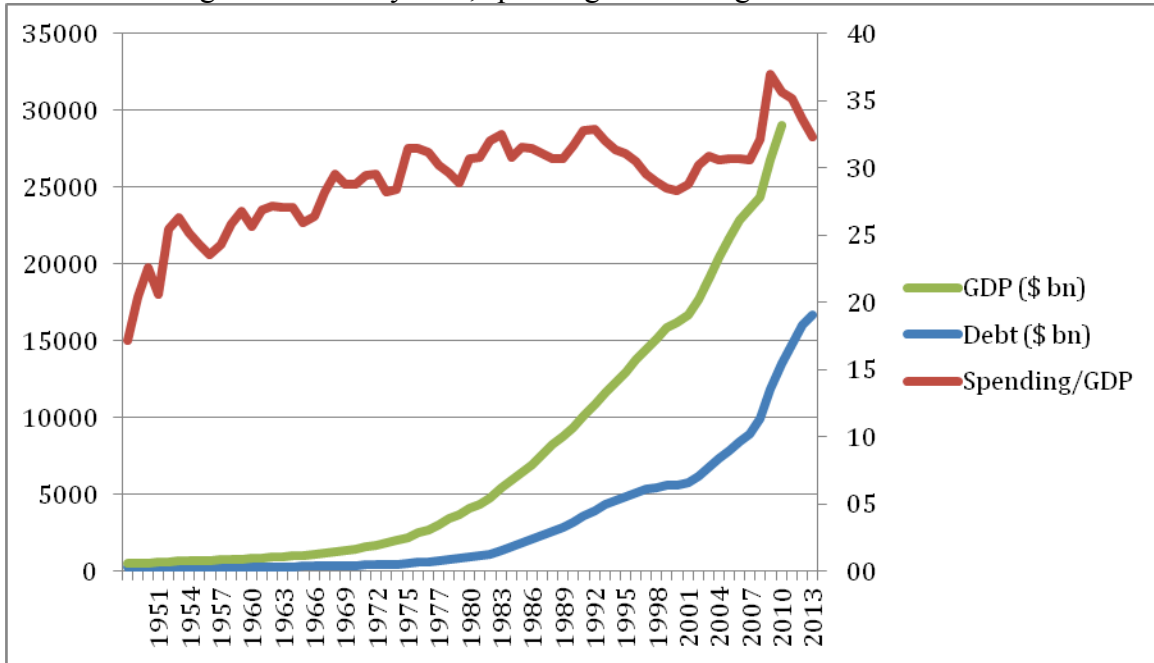
TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1 Selected fiscal roll calls in House of Representatives (2010-2014)

Date	Subject	Act name	Nr	Dem Y	Dem N	Rep Y	Rep N	Y Total	Note
111th Congress – Speaker: Pelosi (D)									
Feb.4, 2010 ⁴⁹	Debt ceiling, PAYGO	Statutory pay-as-you-go	HJ 45. PL. 111-139	217	37	0	175	217	N: Blue Dogs (Giffords)
Dec. 16, 2010 ⁵⁰	Tax cuts expiring	Tax relief, unemployment...	HR 4853. PL. 111-312	139	112	138	36	277	Y: Cantor, McCarthy, Ryan, Ron Paul N: Bachmann, Gohmert
112th Congress – Speaker: Boehner (R)									
March 2, 2011 ⁵¹	Continuing resolution (4)	Further Continuing Appropriations Amendments	HJ 44. PL. 112-4	104	85	231	6	335	Y: Cantor, Ryan McCarthy N: Bachmann, Gohmert, Paul; Pelosi
March 16, 2011 ⁵²	Continuing resolution (5)	Additional Continuing Appropriations Amendments	HJ 48. PL. 112-6	85	104	186	54	271	N: Bachmann, Gohmert, Chaffetz, Labrador, King (IA), Jordan, Mulvaney, Paul N: Pelosi
April 9, 2011 ⁵³	Continuing resolution (6)	Further Additional Continuing Appropriations Amendments	PL. 112-8	140	42	208	28	348	N: Bachmann, Gohmert, Chaffetz, Labrador, King (IA), Jordan, Mulvaney
Apr. 14, 2011 ⁵⁴	Continuing resolution (7)	Full-Year Continuing Appropriations	HR 1473.	81	108	179	59	260	Y: Cantor, Ryan N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members, Pelosi
Aug. 1, 2011 ⁵⁵	Debt ceiling, sequestration rule	Budget control	S 365. PL 112-25	95	95	174	66	269	Y: Cantor, Pelosi N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members; McGovern and other progressives
Jan. 1, 2013 ⁵⁶	Fiscal cliff	American taxpayer relief	HR 8. PL. 112-240	172	16	85	151	257	S: Only 8 Nays, incl. Rand, Rubio, Lee
113th Congress – Speaker: Boehner (R)									
Jan. 23, 2013 ⁵⁷	Temporary debt ceiling	No budget, no pay	HR 325. PL 113-3	86	111	199	33	285	Y: Cantor, Ryan, Scalise, Jordan N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members, Pelosi
October 16, 2013 ⁵⁸	Debt ceiling, Continuing resolution	Continuing appropriations	HR 2775. PL. 113-46	198	0	87	144	285	Y: Cantor, Pelosi N: Bachmann and other Tea Party members
Feb.11, 2014 ⁵⁹	Clean debt ceiling	Temporary debt limit extention	S 540.	193	2	28	199	221	Y: Cantor, McCarthy N: Ryan
AVERAGE				137	65	138	86	275	

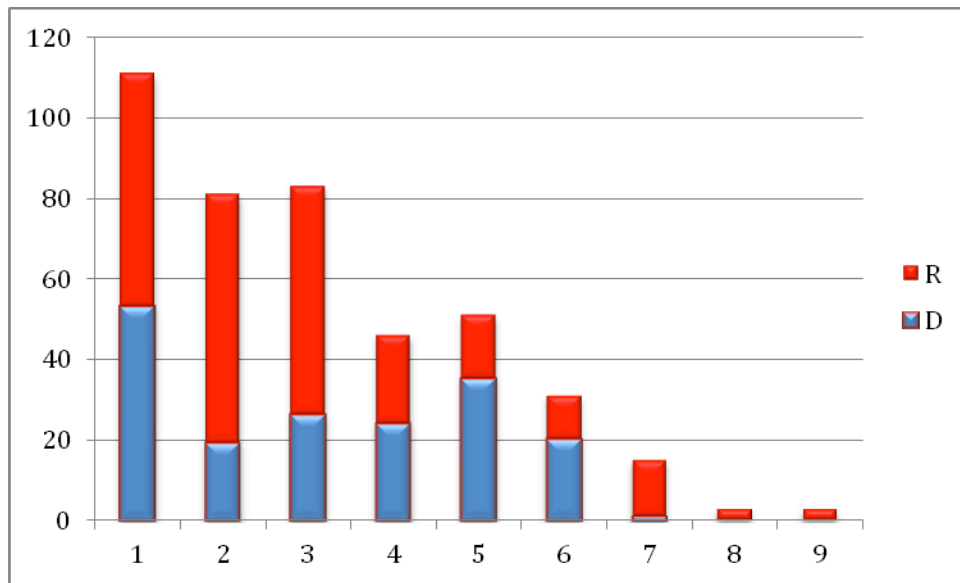
Source: Author and <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL31967.pdf> Note: Y=Yea/Aye, N=Nay/Noe, S=Senate

Figure 1 Statutory debt, spending and GDP growth: 1948–2013



Source: OMB, Bureau of Economic Analysis. End of fiscal year.

Figure 2 (Tea) Party of No: Number of “nay” votes by members on selected roll calls



Source: <http://clerk.house.gov/>, author's own calculations

¹ I am thankful for the comments by Gábor Györi. Any errors that remain are my sole responsibility.

² See e.g. a Wall Street Journal article assuming that House Speaker John Boehner's "decision to postpone a debt ceiling showdown is best understood as the GOP's attempt to break a cycle of manufactured crises that have worked to President Obama's advantage." <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324624404578258221969657306>

Similarly, a New York Times editorial called the fiscal feuding "an artificial national crisis that put the economy and the savings of Americans at risk." <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/05/opinion/end-the-debt-limit.html>

³ Besides most Democrats, at various times and in different forms this view was endorsed by an extremely heterogenous group of Republican policy-makers and stakeholders. This included FED-chair Ben Bernanke, former OMB directors David Stockman, Mitch Daniels and Jim Nussle, and former presidential candidate Steve Forbes. Similarly, business leaders (such as Goldman Sachs CEO Llyod Blankfein and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), and an overwhelming majority of a Booth Business School survey of 36 leading economists questioned the usefulness of the provision and/or decried attempts to use it for political brinkmanship. Even the Wall Street Journal joined the ranks of the repeal camp arguing that since "Republicans are never willing to shoot their debt-limit hostage (...) the limit has now become Democratic leverage against Republicans. Why continue the pretense of fighting over a debt limit that doesn't limit debt?"

http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304104504579377303355489512?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEADTop

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/tea-party-canvass/>

⁵ Form some, any formal caucus constituted a betrayal of the grassroots origins of the movement (Chaffetz – <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0810/40528.html>). For others, even the Tea Party Caucus was not radical enough: they went on to form the Liberty Caucus (<https://www.facebook.com/houselibertycaucus>).

⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28keli.html>

⁷ http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15contract.html?_r=0

⁸ <http://surveys.ap.org/data%5CGfK%5CAP-CNBC%20Poll%20Topline%201%2012310.pdf>

⁹ Indexes differ according to the specifics of underlying data. The calculations presented here are corroborated by St. Louis FED data: <http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/series/GFDEGDQ188S>.

¹⁰ Even as they acted as agents of the agenda. Their analytical status is, therefore, ambiguous.

¹¹ <http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/editorials/2014/08/09/tea-party-steers-gop-right-away-from-white-house/TrzINOrjXO4Oin3MI1RVEN/story.html>

¹² <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/house-rule-4?currentPage=all>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/10/20/dick-armey-backs-john-boehner-for-house-speaker/>

¹⁵ <http://www.redstate.com/diary/goper/2010/05/26/with-rob-simmons-out-support-the-tea-party-candidate/>

¹⁶ <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/house-rule-4?currentPage=2>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The Reagan presidency was notorious for its rocketing public debt (see Savage, 1990). And anti-earmark crusaders in Congress (such as Tom Coburn—who even earned the nickname Dr. No) were often vilified by fellow Republicans more captivated by the idea of getting reelected.

¹⁹ <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/13/house-rule-4?currentPage=2>

²⁰ A term coined by Sarah Palin to describe—incorrectly—a segment (the Independent Payment Advisory Board) of the proposed legislation as authorizing bureaucrats to decide who were "worthy of medical care". Between 2010 and 2012 about four in 10 U.S. adults consistently shared this opinion. <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/258753-poll-four-in-10-believe-in-health-law-death-panels>

²¹ <http://www.c-span.org/video/?291937-1/house-session>

²² http://houlive.gov/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=4317

²³ http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/origins-of-the-debt-showdown/2011/08/03/g1QA9uqIzI_story.html

²⁴ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll606.xml#N>

²⁵ http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/08/01/us/politics/20110801_BOEHNER_DEBT_FRAMEWORK.html?_r=0

²⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/29/allen-west-tea-party-schizophrenia-debt_n_913283.html

²⁷ This is telling even as most votes allowed for tactical voting.

²⁸ <http://dailycaller.com/2010/12/21/house-freshman-leader-voices-doubts-about-boehners-first-adult-moment-raising-debt-ceiling/>

²⁹ http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/02/debt_limit_brinkmanship_is_dead_the_republican_strategy_of_crisis_budgeting.html

³⁰ http://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/house-republicans-government-shutdown-96968_Page2.html

³¹ <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324581504578231672194516556>

³² <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/10/how-gop-hardliners-hijacked-boehner-debt-ceiling-obamacare>

³³ <http://www.redstate.com/2013/03/06/today-house-conservatives-will-corrupt-america/>

³⁴ <http://washingtonexaminer.com/gop-stands-firm-against-funding-bill-will-link-to-debt-ceiling-fight/article/2536750>

³⁵ In retrospect, Paul Ryan also called it a "suicide mission". <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-the-republican-suicide-machine-20131009>

<http://blogs.rollicall.com/218/paul-ryan-rules-out-another-government-shutdown/?dcz=>

³⁶ <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323846504579073083671216784>

³⁷ <http://exemptamerica.com/>

³⁸ <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-the-republican-suicide-machine-20131009?page=2>

³⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/us/politics/senate-minority-leader-faces-dual-battles-in-gop.html>

⁴⁰ No surprise, then, that in June 2014 Cantor was "primaried", and suffered a shocking defeat from a relatively unknown college professor backed by the Tea Party.

⁴¹ <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303382004579127571975912810>

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/02/debt_limit_brinkmanship_is_dead_the_republican_strategy_of_crisis_budgeting.html

⁴³ A widely-cited Wall Street Journal editorial quipped: "We'll support efforts to cut spending and reform entitlements, but the political result will be far worse if Republicans start this fight only to cave in the end. You can't take a hostage you aren't prepared to shoot".

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323874204578217912983267062>

⁴⁴ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/paul-ryan-betrayer-110186.html?hp=17>

⁴⁵ "It's made my job a lot more difficult," Boehner admitted. "I've got no grease." <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/inside-the-republican-suicide-machine-20131009>

⁴⁶ <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/dc/gop-senators-want-to-block-obamas-climate-rules>

⁴⁷ <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/04/president-barack-obama-exclusive-concedes-senate-vote-against-raising-debt-limit-political/>

⁴⁸ <http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uid=35E1D6E3-562D-4DB1-ADE3-6376BC656D02>

⁴⁹ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll046.xml>

⁵⁰ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll647.xml>

⁵¹ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll154.xml>

⁵² <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll179.xml>

⁵³ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll253.xml>

⁵⁴ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll268.xml>

⁵⁵ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll690.xml>

⁵⁶ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2012/roll659.xml>

⁵⁷ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll030.xml>

⁵⁸ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll550.xml>

⁵⁹ <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll061.xml>