

The Roots of the Polarization of Modern U. S. Politics

Keith T. Poole
Department of Political Science
University of California, San Diego

13 October 2008

Abstract

The elites of the United States are deeply polarized. Polarization of the Democratic and Republican Parties is higher than at any time since the late 19th Century. How could this be true given the obvious economic success of the United States? This essay describes how the modern polarization trend emerged.

To understand the historical forces producing modern polarization it is necessary to understand the British colonial origins of the U. S. political-economic system. Representative democracy, plurality elections, geographic-based representation (the tradition of the representative living with those he represented), and private property rights were established from the beginning of the British colonies and shaped everything that was to follow. How these factors shaped the evolution of political parties over time gives us insight into why the current party system is so polarized and why there may be no simple solution to the serious polarization of the elites in the United States.

Introduction

On 4 November 2008 the United States will conduct its 56th Presidential election and its 111th Congressional election. The U.S. has held elections every two years without an interruption since 1788. It is the World's oldest democracy, third in population, fourth in total land area, and the richest country with a gross domestic product equal to the entire European Union. Yet despite its success its political and cultural elites are deeply polarized ideologically and this polarization is at its highest level since the latter part of the 19th Century. Given its mass affluence, high standard of living, and its prominent role in World affairs, how could U. S. elites be so polarized?

In this essay I explain how this polarization came about. First, I briefly explain how my colleagues and I measure elite ideology. I focus only on the U. S. Congress but the method described below has been extended to many of other voting bodies.¹ Second, in order to make sense of modern U.S. politics, the British colonial origins of the United States and the nature of its geographic expansion must be understood. Representative democracy, plurality elections, geographic-based representation (the tradition of the representative living with those he represented), and private property rights were established from the beginning of the British colonies and shaped everything that was to follow.

Representative democracy and capitalism in North America evolved together in an environment of almost unlimited natural resources. Private property rights and representative democracy have cooperatively cohabited since the earliest British colonial settlements and no real European style socialist party ever gained a lasting

foothold in the United States. This is what Louis Hartz called the “Liberal Tradition in America” (Hofstadter, 1948; Hartz, 1955).² In addition, due to nature of the earliest settlements, geographic based representation in representative assemblies became the norm. That is, the sharp break with British tradition was that legislators lived in the district/town that they represented in the legislature rather than being assigned by a political party to represent a district. The colonies and later the United States always used geographic districts with (usually) one representative assigned to each district. The important shift in the colonial period was that the representative was expected to *physically live in the district*. Later, when mass based political parties emerged in the 1820s this form of geographic representation had the effect of incorporating important regional interests within the political parties. Because the political parties were active throughout the United States, these regional interests were incorporated within the parties and that tended to dampen conflict between the parties. For example, before the Civil War (1861 – 65) Southern Whigs and Southern Democrats shared an interest in representing the economic concerns of the South against high tariffs because the Southern states were commodity exporters (Cotton, Rice, Naval Stores, Indigo). In addition, the U. S. always utilized the English style plurality election system (the candidate with the most votes wins). The plurality voting method tends to produce only two dominant political parties. These electoral characteristics coupled with the emergence of mass based political parties in the 1820s and the colonial legacy of private property rights formed the basis of the U. S. political-economic system that has survived into the 21st Century.

The interaction of these four factors account for the periods of polarization in U. S. history. First, the plurality election system coupled with the requirement that

representatives live in their districts, tended to produce two political parties that were usually divided internally due to regional interests. The primary division between the two parties was almost always economic regulation, taxes, tariffs, and so on. The regional interests cut across these traditional left vs. right divisions thereby dampening down the conflict between the parties. Further dampening this conflict between the two parties was the powerful norm of private property rights. This limited the extent of the division between the two parties on the primary economic dimension because never in U.S. history has private property rights been seriously challenged. The periods of polarization have occurred when conflict between the two parties became completely one-dimensional; that is, when the regional division within the parties becomes the primary focus of conflict or disappears altogether. The former occurred in the 1850s and the result was the Civil War. The latter occurred to some extent after the Civil War to the 1930s and then the regional division re-emerged from about 1937 into the 1980s. Since the 1980s U.S. politics is purely one-dimensional with increasing polarization.

Measuring Elite Polarization

In 1984 Howard Rosenthal and I published a paper in the *Journal of Politics* entitled “The Polarization of American Politics” (Poole and Rosenthal, 1984). We found that beginning in the late 1960s to mid-1970s, U. S. politics became much more divisive. More Democrats staked out consistently liberal positions, and more Republicans supported wholly conservative ones. The primary evidence in that study, which focused exclusively on the Senate, were ratings issued by interest groups such as the Americans for Democratic Action and the United States Chamber of Commerce.³

These early findings motivated Rosenthal and I to develop a better measurement of legislative ideology. Interest group ratings are in fact nothing other than aggregations of legislator roll call voting decisions. We realized that much better information would be available by scaling the individual roll call votes directly. To do this, we adapted the standard dichotomous logit (or probit) model and developed our NOMINATE (*Nominal Three-step Estimation*) procedure. A dynamic version of this procedure – D-NOMINATE – enabled us to analyze all the roll call votes in the first 100 Congresses. In *Congress: A Political Economic History of Roll Call Voting*, we confirmed our earlier analyses and found that the polarization surge had continued unabated through the 100th Congress (1987-88) (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997; 2001). It has continued through 2007 (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006; Poole and Rosenthal, 2007).

Our NOMINATE procedure is based on a simple geometric (spatial) model of voting behavior. Each legislator is represented by one point and each roll call is represented by two points – one for “Yea” and one for “Nay”. These points form a *spatial map* that summarizes the roll calls. In this sense a spatial map is much like a road map. A spreadsheet that tabulates all the distances between every pair of sizable cities in the United States contains the same information as the corresponding map of the U.S. but the spreadsheet gives you no idea what the U.S. looks like.⁴ Much like a road map, a spatial map formed from roll calls gives us a way of visualizing the political world of a legislature. The closeness of two legislators on the map shows how similar their voting records are, and the distribution of legislators shows what the dimensions are.

The number of dimensions needed to represent the points is usually small, because legislators typically decide how to vote on the basis of their positions on a small

number of underlying evaluative or *basic* dimensions. For example, in recent U.S. Congresses, we can easily predict how a “liberal” or a “conservative” will vote on most issues. These basic dimensions structure the roll call votes and are captured by the spatial maps.

For most of American history only two dimensions are required to account for the fourteen million choices of the twelve thousand members who served in Congress. In fact, one dimension suffices except in two periods, roughly 1829-1851 and 1937-1970, when race-related issues introduced a second dimension. The two brief periods where the spatial model fails are the Era of Good Feelings, when there was a one party system, and the 32nd Congress (1851-53), when the Compromise of 1850 unraveled. In these periods, there is a poor fit, even when 10 or more dimensions are used. Voting is chaotic.

The first dimension typically divides the two major parties on the fundamental issue of the role of government in the economy. In the early period of U. S. history before the development of mass political parties in the 1820s, this dimension divided the followers of Alexander Hamilton (Federalists) from the followers of Thomas Jefferson (Jeffersonian-Republicans). The economic conflicts were over excise taxes on goods such as salt, shoes, and whiskey; tariffs; whether to establish a national (central) bank; and similar economic issues. During the Whig-Democrat mass based political party system (1820s to 1852) the first dimension was concerned with taxes, tariffs, and the role of the federal government in the economy. Whigs wanted a stronger federal government and favored business. Democrats were suspicious of a strong federal government and less favorable to business (Gerring, 1996, chapters 3 and 5).

During the post-Reconstruction Republican-Democrat mass based party system (1879 to 2008) the first dimension is again concerned mainly with taxes, tariffs, and the extent to which the federal government should be active in the economy. Democrats have been consistently anti-corporate and anti-capitalist in the sense of favoring the “common man.” Through most of this period Democrats tended to be pro-agrarian and, at least until just the past 20 years, they were also anti-tariff. The Republicans throughout this period have been pro-business, pro-capitalist in the sense of favoring the upper classes and investors, and have generally favored lower taxes. They were pro-tariff until the 1930s (Gerring, 1996, chapters 4, 6, and 7).

The second dimension through almost all of U. S. history differentiates the members of Congress by region mainly over race and civil rights but in the latter part of the 19th Century it picked up regional differences on bimetallism and the free coinage of silver. It reflects the nature of geographic-based representation in the United States; namely, the two dominant political parties are almost always *national* parties that bridge across regions. Hence, both parties throughout U. S. history have some internal divisions due to regional differences.

In the past 40 years U. S. politics has changed dramatically. Although I use the words “liberal” (or “left”) and “conservative” (or “right”) to describe recent U. S. politics it is difficult to reconcile these terms with their classical economic meanings. In the current U. S. political system one party – the Republicans – favors tight regulation of private personal behavior (these are known as “social” or “lifestyle/cultural” issues -- abortion, homosexual rights, assisted suicide, etc.) and low regulation of the economy; while the opposite party – the Democrats – favor little if any regulation of private

personal behavior and much greater regulation of economic behavior. There is no *logically consistent* philosophy that underlies these issues. To make matters even more incoherent, the issue of gun control⁵ does not fit comfortably into the category of an “economic” issue or a “social” issue. Viewed as a “social” issue, gun control has the two parties on the *wrong* sides – the Republicans *oppose* further regulation, the Democrats *want more* regulation. Complicating matters further is the deep politicization of foreign policy. The Iraq War is deeply unpopular with Democrats and the Parties are as split on Iraq as they are on the “social” or “lifestyle” issues (Jacobson, 2007).

The ideological bases of the two political parties are simply two opposing sets of interrelated or *bundled* issue positions. Philip Converse (1964) defined an ideology or *belief system* in just this way. Namely, it is a set of issues that are interrelated or bundled together and that ideology is fundamentally *the knowledge of what-goes-with-what*. Converse called this bundling of issues *constraint* – the ability, based on one or two issue positions, to predict other (seemingly unrelated) issue positions. This constraint or bundling of issue positions does not have to be strictly logical or even *coherent*. And they certainly are not coherent in current U. S. politics.

The British Colonial Origins of the U. S. Political-Economy

The first permanent British colony in what is now the United States was established in Virginia in 1607. Initially this colony was seen as a trading post and a base for raiding the shipping of rival European powers. But it quickly changed into an agricultural settlement with the cultivation of tobacco. The New England colonies were settled in the 1620s and 1630s and these were agricultural settlements from the beginning

and were largely populated by religious dissenters. These colonies grew rapidly and by 1700 over 250,000 people lived in the British colonies that lie inside what is now the United States.

From the very beginning these colonies had English style representative government with popular election of the colonial assemblies. They differed in a very important way from the English House of Commons, however. From the earliest times the colonial legislators used geographic based representation. That is, as settlement spread inward in concentric circles from the original towns on the Atlantic seaboard, representatives were added to the corresponding colonial legislature from the new towns and villages. This established the precedent that a representative in the legislature had to live in the town or village that he represented. This is much different from the method the English used and still use where the political parties can run their candidates in any constituency in the British Isles. This departure from the English system meant that the U. S. political system would always have an important *geographic* component.

The European settlers in the North American British colonies took it for granted that they could move inland to the west at will and settle there. The form of land tenure⁶ in the British colonies was much freer than in England because of the simple necessity of attracting colonists. By the time of the Revolution (1775 – 1781) the prevailing form of land tenure was *free and common socage* or what is referred to in more modern language as *title in fee simple*. This was, in effect, the modern form of land ownership free of the old English feudal burdens.⁷ The land owner could freely sell his land, pass it to his heirs, cut down the trees or dig up the minerals on the land, and so on.⁸ Land quickly

became a commodity that was bought and sold for profit rather than a family estate that was preserved for one's heirs (Carstensen, 1963; Harris, 1970).

In the North American British Colonies private property rights in land and representative democracy were established from the very beginning. In addition, social and political turmoil in England meant that the colonists were largely unfettered in their political and economic affairs through the 17th Century and up to the 1730s (Bailyn, 1970). During this period the losers from the various internal conflicts in the British Isles migrated to the North American colonies. Indeed, one half to two-thirds of the White population crossed the Atlantic as indentured servants (Galenson, 1984). After working for five to seven years the indentured servants were free to strike out on their own. Most moved west-ward to establish farms.

The economic success of the British colonies acted as a magnet for the disaffected and those seeking a better life. The population in what is now the United States grew to 251,000 in 1700, 1,200,000 in 1750, and on the eve of the Revolution in 1775, the population had more than doubled in just twenty-five years reaching 2,500,000. By the outbreak of the Revolution in April of 1775 the per-capita income of the North American colonies was about the same as England (Anderson, 1975; Walton and Shepherd, 1979; Main, 1983; Walsh, 1983; Hughes and Cain, 2007, ch. 3).

The Revolution and the Early Republic to 1825

The Revolution of 1775 – 1781 is best understood as an *English Civil War*. The Revolution was the result of a mix of economic and political grievances that cut to the heart of what the colonists believed was their fundamental rights as *Englishmen* (Bailyn, 1970; 1971). The Revolution succeeded because of the dogged persistence of George

Washington, the crucial Naval assistance of the French near the end of the fighting, and the logistical difficulty the British had in fielding an occupation army several thousand kilometers across a harsh and unforgiving north Atlantic ocean.

The Revolution created a cadre of young leaders with a *national* outlook who did not appreciate the subsequent squabbling and ineptitude of the 13 separate sovereign nations that inherited the nationalists' hard-won victory (Elkins and McKittrick, 1961). The national government was a toothless confederation that had no taxing power and could not defend its own borders. Worse, the individual states erected tariff barriers between themselves that impeded economic activity. But it was finally Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786 that alarmed property holders and persuaded many that a strong national government was necessary. George Washington agreed to attend and the Constitutional Convention convened in May of 1787.

The U.S. Constitution broke with the English form of Parliamentary government. The experience of a weak and ineffectual national legislature with no real executive during the Revolution and its aftermath coupled with the nationalists' fear of Monarchical tyranny that they had just defeated in 1781 led them to craft a hybrid. The national government was to be powerful but power was divided between a national legislature, the executive, and a set of Courts. The executive was easy. Everyone knew that George Washington would be the first national leader.⁹ The Courts were also easy. They set up one Supreme Court and left it to the national legislature to legislate the rest. The national legislature was the most difficult problem. They settled that with the "Great Compromise" which erected a two chamber national legislature with an upper chamber where representation was by State and a lower chamber where representation was by

population. In a decisive break with English tradition, they enshrined geographic-based representation by requiring that both the upper and lower legislators had to live in the State that they represented. They also guaranteed that legislators in the upper chamber would *always* be by State. The Constitution prohibits any amendment changing the nature of representation in the upper chamber -- the Senate.¹⁰ They also were very clear that the new *United States* was to be an economic common market. A fact they underlined by very explicit provisions scattered through the document that limited the power of states over economic activity that crossed state boundaries.

The U.S. Constitution is not a particularly well-written document. It was written by politicians, not Gods. It is full of vague language and it is repetitive. Indeed, there was strong disagreement about the powers of the national government within the first term of Washington's Presidency.¹¹

The major problem with the whole scheme was there was no way that it could possibly work as it was originally designed. James Madison in his famous *Federalist #10* essay discusses the rampant factionalism of colonial politics and how this factionalism was based in economic interests (Bailyn, 1970). His solution, again a sharp break from English tradition, was wholly practical. Factions/Parties exist, they cannot be eliminated, and we must deal with them as they are because they are the price we pay for liberty and a free Republic. But Madison and his compatriots were never able to accept factions/parties as *good* – as a means to coordinate the branches of government and as a means of bridging between the states and the national government.¹² Instead, all the Founders basically thought parties were bad and longed for one party. Their unrealistic ideal was unanimity (Hofstadter, 1969). Consequently, the earliest political parties – the

Jeffersonian-Republicans and the Federalists – were loose coalitions of national level politicians based in the national legislature that cooperated with like-minded state politicians. However, these “parties” were not *mass* based. This was to change in the 1820s when true mass based popular parties emerged.

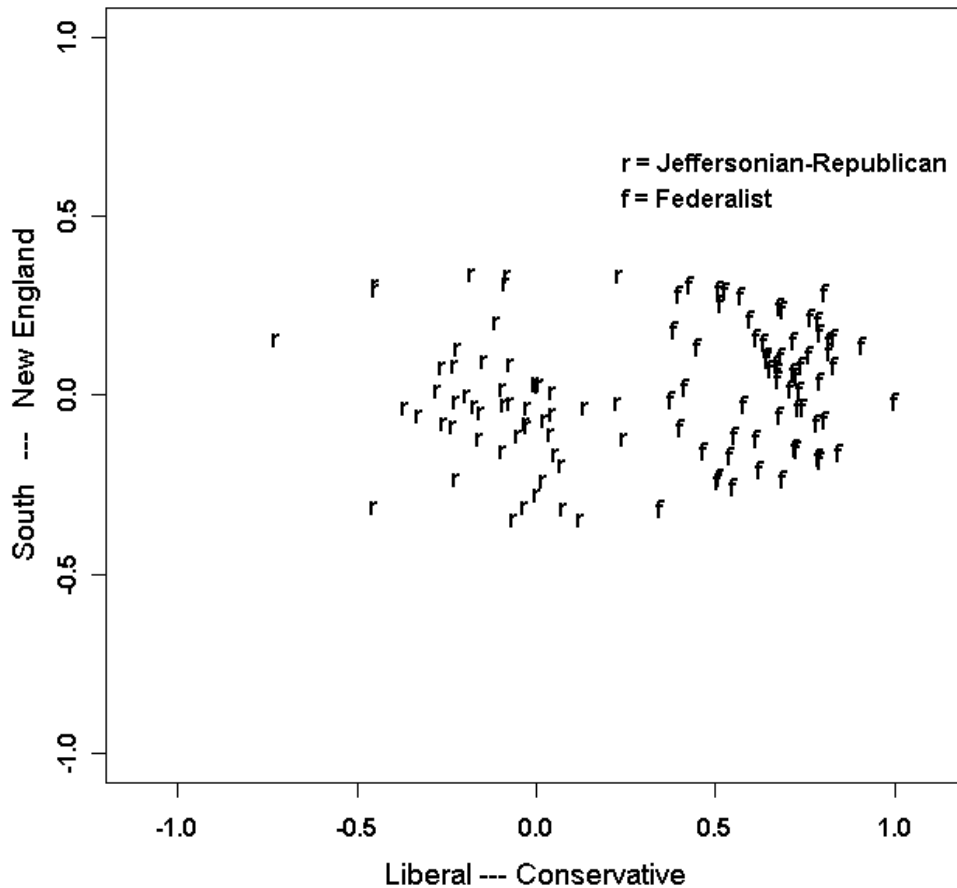
That the U. S. Republic survived is a minor miracle. George Washington understood how perilous the international situation was for the new United States and was determined to keep the country out of European conflicts. The revolutionary era Presidents who followed Washington were not particularly effective. John Adams (President, 1797 – 1801) followed Washington’s lead but was an ineffective and divisive leader. Thomas Jefferson (1801 – 1809) purchased the Louisiana territory from the French and doubled the size of the United States but his foreign policy was ineffectual. James Madison (1809 – 1817) stumbled into war with Britain which the U. S. for all intents and purposes lost. The British burned the capital in 1814 and a peace treaty was signed with the British in December. The great victory of General Andrew Jackson at New Orleans in January of 1815 (before the treaty reached the U. S.) allowed the U. S. to interpret the war as a victory rather than a defeat.

The first political parties emerged during Washington’s first term. These were coalitions of like-minded legislators within Congress along with the major state politicians, merchants, and planters. The *Federalists* as they became known coalesced around Alexander Hamilton (Washington’s Secretary of the Treasury) and the *Republicans* (or *Jeffersonian-Republicans* to distinguish them from the second Republican Party) coalesced around Thomas Jefferson (Secretary of State) and James Madison (Jefferson’s fellow Virginian and ideological soul-mate).

Both parties had support throughout the United States but the Federalists tended to be concentrated in New England and were the conservative party. They supported high protective tariffs, excise taxes, a national bank, the assumption of the Revolutionary era State debt, and policies that encouraged trade and favored merchants and men of property. The Jeffersonians were based more to the interior of the United States and had broad support amongst farmers. They opposed the high tariffs, excise taxes, assumption of the State debt, and national bank advocated by the Federalists.

Figure 1 shows the spatial map for the 5th U. S. House of Representatives (1797-98) that served during the first two years of John Adams' presidency (1797 – 1801). The lower case "r"'s are the Jeffersonians and the lower case "f"'s are the Federalists.

**Figure 1: 5th U. S. House 1797-98
Representative Ideal Points**



The first dimension captures voting on economic issues and shows the clear separation between the Federalists (on the right) and the Jeffersonians (on the left). The second dimension picks up the slight differences between the two parties in their regional bases. The Jeffersonians tended to be concentrated in the interior and in the South (the Planters were Jeffersonians because, as commodity exporters, they opposed the high tariff policies of the Federalists). The Federalists tended to be concentrated in New England and the coastal regions of the Middle Atlantic States (New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware). Because of the colonial legacy of geographic based representation, throughout U. S. history the major political parties have tended to be

concentrated geographically. However, this tendency has almost always been *secondary* to the basic split between the two major political parties on economic policy.

Although Figure 1 shows a clear separation between the Jeffersonians and Federalists with the Jeffersonians on the liberal or left side of the economic dimension, it is important to note that the ideological spectrum in U. S. politics is *truncated*. No one advocated taking private property or socializing resources. Thomas Jefferson was a great believer in the importance of private property rights as one of the pillars of liberty. He swallowed his considerable distaste for government action not explicitly authorized by the Constitution when he purchased the Louisiana territory from the French thereby instantly doubling the land area of the country.¹³ He did so because his vision for the United States was an endless sea of yeoman farmers stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. Alexander Hamilton despised farmers and regarded them as “people of no particular importance.” In contrast, Jefferson believed men (farmers) “habituated to think for themselves” were easier to govern than city dwellers “debased by ignorance, indolence, and oppression.” The debate was over *levels* of taxes and tariffs *not* over taking property from one group and giving it to another group or the government.

The War of 1812 deeply split the U. S. and was a disaster for the Federalists. The maritime areas in New England opposed the War because their shipping interests would be severely affected and the British did not blockade the U. S. coastline from New London, Connecticut northwards.¹⁴ Because the Federalist Party tended to be concentrated in New England the War led to its loss of legitimacy and it collapsed by 1820. The result was that the U. S. for the only time in its history became a one-party nation.

James Monroe (1817 – 1825) managed to heal the regional rift by touring New England in early 1817 just before his assuming the Presidency. The cordiality shown by both sides ushered in the “Era of Good Feelings” and ended the regional crisis.

Although the rift between New England and the rest of the United States was healed, another more serious rift could no longer be ignored -- slavery. Most of the Founders believed that slavery was a doomed system and would wither away. Soil exhaustion in the tobacco growing areas of the Chesapeake Bay region limited the profitability of tobacco exports. The existence of slavery alongside the rhetoric of the declaration of independence and the Constitution was a contradiction that was papered over in the early Republic.

The invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1792 revolutionized the slave system in the United States because it made cotton production profitable. Sugar production with its high death rate was never very important in the U. S. In contrast, the major use of slave labor in the Caribbean was sugar. The much lower death rates of African slaves in the U. S. was in sharp contrast to the slave systems in the rest of the Western Hemisphere (Fogel and Engerman, 1974; Fogel, 1989). By the early 1790s over 80 percent of the African slaves had been born in the United States and the importation of slaves was banned after 1808.

Cotton cultivation spread rapidly through the Deep South and was immensely profitable. The economic success of the large cotton plantations resulted in a large population transfer of African slaves from the old tobacco regions to Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and, eventually, Texas. The geographic spread of slavery and the geographic character of representation in Congress made the expansion of slavery into

the territories a central issue of U. S. politics beginning with the controversy over the admission of Missouri into the Union in 1820.

The problem Missouri posed was that, although it was not a Deep South cotton producer, it had a large enough slave population (16.4%) to cause slavery proponents to seek its admission as a slave state. Congress had the right to set conditions on the admission of states. Congress could stipulate that slavery would be illegal in the state as a condition of entry. In 1820 there were 11 free states and 11 slave states. However, under the Land Ordinance of 1787 (written by Thomas Jefferson) all the territory north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi was closed to slavery. Missouri was west of the Mississippi but almost the whole state was north of the Ohio River junction with the Mississippi River. Hence the controversy.

The total population of the United States in 1820 was 9,638,453 of whom 1,771,656 (18.4%) were African slaves (Missouri's 16.4% slave population was smaller than any of the 11 slave states).¹⁵ After much debate including attempts to ban future imports of slaves into Missouri and free all slave children born after 1825 (gradual Manumission), a compromise was struck. The Compromise of 1820 had three essential elements: first, Maine, a non-contiguous portion of Massachusetts, was carved out into a separate free state and admitted in March 1820; second, Missouri was admitted as a slave state in August 1821, producing a balance of 12 free and 12 slave states; finally, slavery would be prohibited in the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase north of 36°30' latitude (the southern border of Missouri).

The Compromise was doomed to eventually unravel. In the 40-year period between the admission of Missouri and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, only 3

slave states south of the 36°30′ latitude were admitted to the Union. In contrast, 6 free states, including 3 in the area closed to slavery by the Missouri Compromise, were admitted by 1859. Indeed, the attempt to undo the Compromise in the 1850s triggered the Civil War (1861-65).

The Emergence of Mass-Based Political Parties

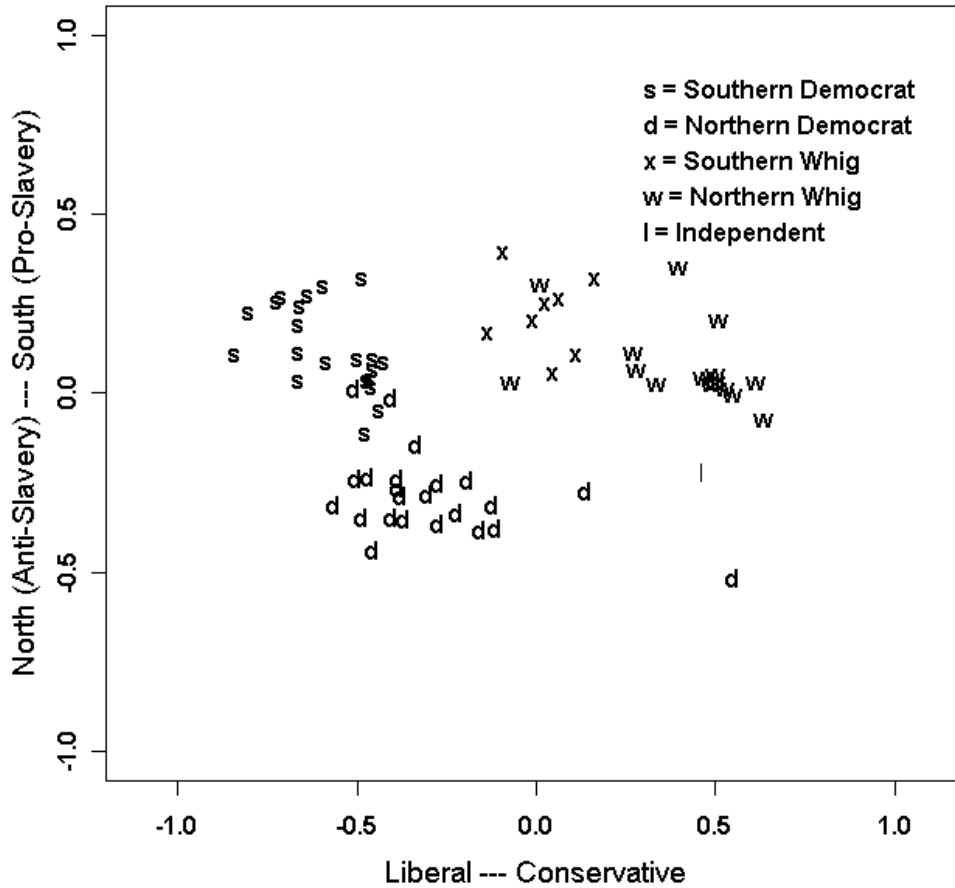
Bubbling below the surface during the early period of U. S. history was a second Revolution – a “Revolution From Below” that demanded popular election of all offices and true mass democracy. It was the “Rise of the Common Man” (Hofstadter, Miller, and Aaron, 1959, v. 1, ch. 13) that culminated in the emergence of mass-based political parties and the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828. In 1790 there were 13 States and by 1821 there were 24 states. As the population spilled over the Appalachian Mountains and into the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys, new states were formed and admitted into the Union. These new states largely dropped property qualifications for voting and made almost all offices popularly elected. This put pressure on the remaining older states to follow suit. In the original Constitution the President was chosen by electors who were in turn chosen by the states. The President was not popularly elected. However, some states did allow the general public to vote on the slates of electors (who were pledged to vote for a particular candidate). The new states all allowed popular vote for the electors. In 1800 only 2 states chose the electors by popular vote; by 1824, 18 of 24 States used popular vote; by 1828, 22 of 24 States by popular vote (only Delaware and South Carolina held out); and by 1832 all 24 States by popular vote. Turnout of eligible voters sharply increased reaching 25 percent in 1824 (324,000 votes, white males only) and 60

percent in 1828 (1,100,000 votes). By the 1840s 80 percent of the eligible voters participated (still only white males, but no property qualifications in most states).

The watershed event was the 1824 election which was a four-way contest between four Jeffersonian-Republicans including Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams (son of President John Adams). Jackson won a plurality of both the popular vote and the electoral votes but lost the election in the House of Representatives to Adams. This enraged Jackson and with his followers, most importantly Martin Van Buren of New York, organized the first true mass based political party (the Democrats) (Hofstadter, 1969). Jackson won by a wide margin in 1828. The opposition party (at first anti-Jacksons) later became known as the Whig Party. This two-party system lasted until the early 1850s.

Figure 2 shows the spatial map for the 30th U. S. Senate (1847-48) that served during the last two years of James K. Polk's presidency (1845 – 1849). In the figure I show the Northern and Southern¹⁶ members of both parties. The lower case "d"'s are the Northern Democrats and the lower case "w"'s are the Northern Whigs. Their Southern counterparts are denoted with "s"'s and "x"'s, respectively.

**Figure 2: 30th U. S. Senate 1847-48
Senator Ideal Points**



The regional divisions in both political parties are clearly displayed in Figure 2. The primary dimension is still economics – taxes, tariffs, and so on. The second dimension is North vs. South on the issue of slavery. During this period of history the great question was the expansion of slavery into the western territories of the United States. Note the slight counter-clock-wise tilt of the two parties. Most voting in Congress was concerned with economics-related issues but by this time the slavery issue had heated up to the point that its importance was rising fast. Hence the tilt.

The territorial question was exacerbated by the war with Mexico from 1846 to 1848. Texas had won its independence from Mexico in 1836 and President Andrew

Jackson's last act as President in March of 1837 was to recognize the Republic of Texas. Thereafter there had been considerable agitation for the annexation of Texas by the United States but because slavery was established along the gulf coast of Texas, it would have to enter the Union as a slave state. James K. Polk won the presidential election of 1844 in part with the slogan "Reoccupation of Oregon and reannexation of Texas." Before he took office President John Tyler got Congress to pass a joint resolution admitting Texas to the Union on 18 February 1845 much to the displeasure of Mexico.

President Polk (1845 – 1849) managed to provoke a war with Mexico in April of 1846, with a U. S. victory in September of 1847. The shortness of the war was a surprise. The U. S. had not fought a war since 1812 and a quick victory was unexpected. The war was opposed by most of the Whig Party and after the victory the central question became whether the territories acquired from Mexico – most of which was below the 36 degree 30 minute parallel -- could be admitted as slave states. Indeed, the act admitting Texas into the Union provided for Texas dividing itself into five states if it so wished. This was seen as a way to balance the many Free states that would almost certainly be admitted west of the Mississippi River in the old Louisiana Purchase. However, it was clear to the Texans that only the gulf coast area would probably enter as a slave state so dividing the state was never given serious consideration (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2000).

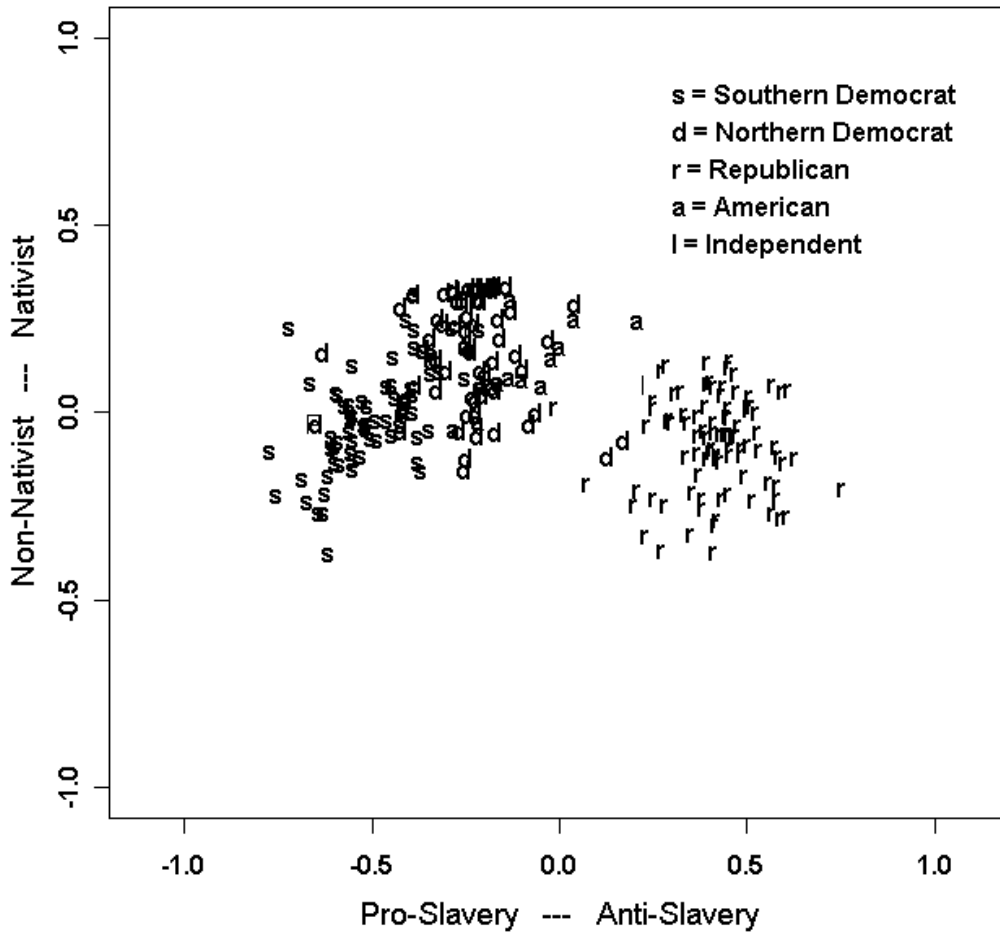
The Civil War (1861 – 65) and its Lasting Impact on U. S. Politics

Attempts to craft compromises on the territorial issue ultimately failed. For a time "popular sovereignty" wherein the residents of a territory desiring admission to the U. S. would vote on whether to legalize slavery within their new state seemed like an ideal solution. It did not work. The great Compromise of 1850 attempted to give

everyone something – California was admitted as a free state (because of its gold), the U. S. assumed Texas’ debt, the Southerners got a fugitive slave law, and so on. The result was the collapse of the Whig Political party because its stronghold in New England was opposed to slavery on moral grounds and could not stomach the fugitive slave law.

The result was a collapse of the political party system that had emerged in the 1820s and the emergence of the Republican Party beginning 1854-56. Figure 3 shows the spatial map for the 35th U. S. House (1857-58) that served during the first two years of James Buchanan’s presidency (1857 – 1861). The lower case “d”’s are the Northern Democrats, the lower case “s”’s are the Southern Democrats, the “r”’s are the Republicans, and the “a”’s are the American (“Know-Nothing”) Party members.

**Figure 3: 35th House 1857-58
Representative Ideal Points**



The primary dimension is now concerned with slavery with the Southern Democrats furthest to the left followed by the remains of the Democratic Party in the North. The Democratic Party managed to barely hold itself together primarily by papering over the divisions on slavery by emphasizing its pro-White policies (Gerring, 1998). The second dimension is barely present and is very weakly related to nativism – that is, anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic sentiments of the American or “Know Nothing” Party.

It was only a matter of time before the United States split into two nations peacefully or a war between the states would break out. The Civil War lasted almost exactly four years – April 1861 to April 1865. Like most major wars in human history, the combatants had no idea at the outset what they had gotten into or how the war would take on a life of its own.¹⁷ The U. S. Civil War was a bloodbath. The largest land armies assembled in human history (to that time) were thrown into battle. By 1863 the North had 1,000,000 men under arms and the South 650,000. Battles involving over 100,000 men were commonplace and some reached 200,000. The total number of dead was 618,000 (more than any other war fought by the U. S.) with at least 500,000 wounded. It devastated the Southern states and their people to such an extent that the South did not fully recover from the war for 100 years.

The cost of the Civil War was a staggering \$6.7 billion in the currency of the time. This was four times all government expenditures, 1789 to 1860; 17 times 1860 export earnings; and it could have purchased all the African slaves at prevailing market prices, given each family 40 acres and a mule, and \$3.5 billion would have been left over. The indirect costs -- hypothetical (consumption if no War) versus actual consumption over time discounted by the prevailing interest rate – were a total of \$14.7 billion (Goldin and Lewis, 1975). The Southern economy was ruined and the spread of hookworm due to the war devastated the rural white and African population until it was eradicated early in the 20th Century (Coelho and McGuire, 1997; Brinkley, 1997).

The political legacy of the Civil War was to turn the Southern states into a bastion of the Democratic Party until the 1970s. African-Americans after a short period of freedom were walled off from the Southern whites by “Jim Crow” laws and systematic

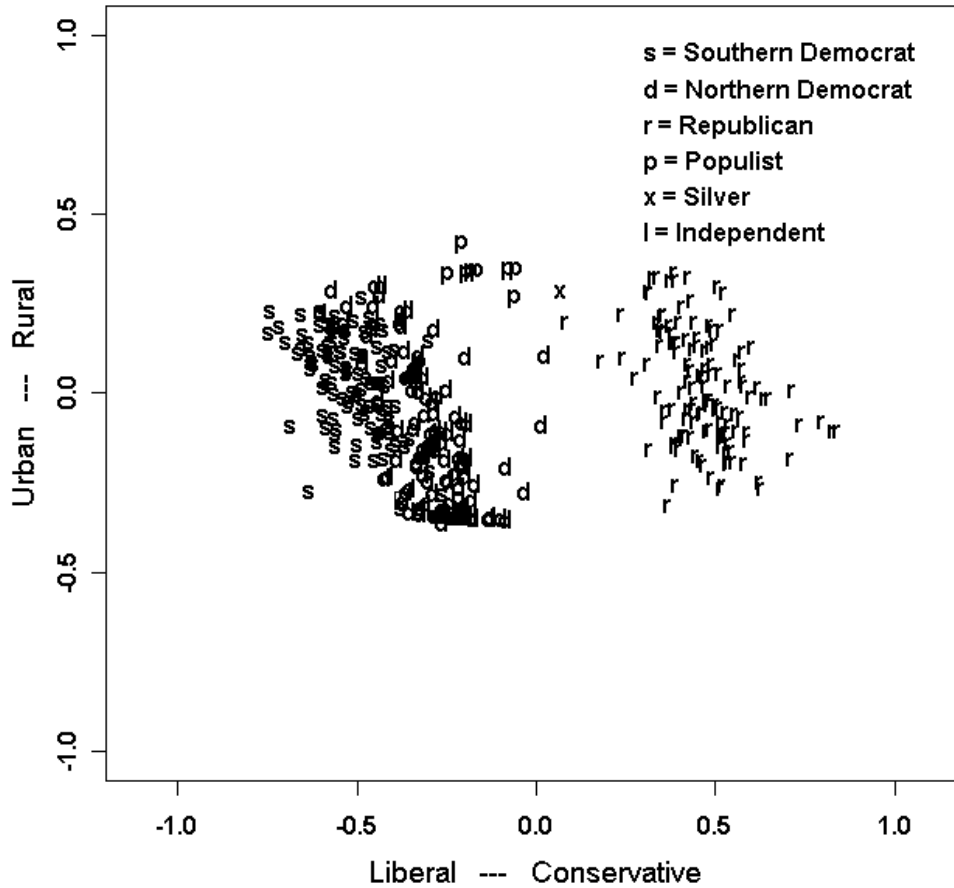
segregation that was not to be relieved until the 1960s. The economic legacy was widespread poverty for both races. The tremendous economic expansion that made the United States the largest economy in the World in 1892 occurred in the North leaving the South a third world country inside the boundaries of the United States.

The Democrat-Republican Party System: 1879 - 2008

The political system that emerged after the final withdrawal of the Union troops from the Southern states after the 1876 presidential election was in many respects a return to the old Democrat vs. Whig system except now the regional divisions were over the use of gold and silver as currency rather than slavery. Race related issues were to be submerged until the latter part of the 1930s. The primary dimension again becomes economics.

Figure 4 shows the spatial map for the 53rd U. S. House (1893-94) that served during the first two years of Grover Cleveland's second Presidential term (1885-89 and 1893 – 97).¹⁸ The lower case “d”'s are the Northern Democrats, the lower case “s”'s are the Southern Democrats, the “r”'s are the Republicans, the “p”'s are Populists, and the “x”'s are Silverists.

**Figure 4: 53rd House 1893-94
Representative Ideal Points**



The primary dimension is economics. The Southern Democrats tend to be the furthest to the left reflecting the strong support for populism in the agrarian South. The Western state Democrats (where populism also was strong) are intermingled with the Southerners. The Republicans are on the right. The weak second dimension picked up divisions on the use of both gold and silver as currency. Many southerners, westerners, and the populists are high on the second dimension. The farm states in the interior of the United States plus the western states where the silver mines were concentrated favored the “free coinage of silver.” That is, the favored solution to the problem of deflation was

for the government to buy the silver from the western mines, coin it into dollars, and place it in circulation.

The wide gulf between the Democrats and Republicans is a reflection of the divisiveness of the economic issues of that time. This Congress occurred near the peak of the industrialization of the United States. By 1892 the U. S. was the World's largest economy. Real per capita income tripled from 1869 to about 1914 while the population increased a factor of 2.5 -- from about 40 million to about 105 million. By 1914 the U. S. produced 36% of the World' manufactured goods, steel output exceeded the combined capacity of the main combatants in World War I (Germany and Britain), produced more coal than all of Europe combined, and had approximately 563,000 km of railroad track of which 464,000 km was main line track. The pace of industrialization was so rapid that the index of manufacturing doubled between 1900 and 1914. This translates into a per capita income growth rate of 2.2 percent annually from 1870 to 1913.

This rapid growth produced enormous social changes that rippled through the political system. The money supply – still based in gold and silver coin (there was no central bank until 1913) -- could not keep pace so that from 1866 to 1896 there was a steady deflation with falling commodity prices. The spread of the railroad network across the Mississippi River and into the Great Plains changed agriculture from a subsistence system to a market-based system in just twenty years. Farmers blamed the falling prices they received for their crops on mortgage companies, “speculators”, grain elevators, and the railroads (Higgs, 1971; Mayhew, 1972; McGuire, 1981; Eichengreen, 1984). In fact, the cost of shipping as a percent of the farm price fell during this period (Williamson, 1974).

In 1887 Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act and for the first time the U. S. government regulated an entire industry – the railroads. The dissatisfaction of the farmers coupled with complaints about discriminatory pricing by businesses and cities forced Congress to act. However, even with the widespread dislike of the railroads (it was known as the “Railroad problem”) out and out confiscation of railroad property was never seriously considered (the railroads were briefly “nationalized” during World War I) because the norm of private property rights was so strong in U. S. politics.

Industrialization also produced a huge change in the nature of employment. By 1915 more people were employed in manufacturing than in agriculture. Working conditions in the factories and mills were appalling. Twelve hours a day and seven days a week men worked in close proximity to belts that ran machines with no safety equipment. A worker was one accident away from poverty. Consequently, labor agitation for better wages and working conditions increased rapidly in the latter part of the 19th Century. Again, the goal of these labor unions was not to socialize private property. Rather, like the men who struck Andrew Carnegie’s Homestead Steel Works in 1892, they simply wanted better wages and better treatment. But like the men of the Homestead Strike, the unions were fiercely opposed by the industrialists who more often than not were backed by the federal courts and the U. S. government. It was not until the Wagner Act (National Labor Relations Act) of 1935 that U. S. workers were guaranteed the right of collective bargaining.

These economic-based divisions are shown clearly in Figures 5 and 6. Figures 5 and 6 show the average positions of Democratic and Republican legislators in the House of Representatives from the end of Reconstruction through the 110th Congress (1879 –

2007) on the liberal-conservative and regional dimensions.¹⁹ The most notable features are: (1) the long rightward drift on the first dimension of the southern Democrats after World War I, followed by a reverse movement to the left that began in the late 1960s; (2) the slow drift leftward of the Republicans on the first dimension beginning in the early 1900s with a turn back to right beginning in the early 1970s; and (3) the emergence of a significant second dimension related to Civil Rights that split the northern and southern Democrats from the late 1930s onward. The forces driving these changes in the party means over time are the same for both chambers. The correlation between the House and Senate Republican first dimension means is .94 and for the Democrats the correlation is .84.²⁰ Despite the institutional differences in the method of election and the length of term served, the basic forces driving U. S. politics affect the two chambers equally over time.

**Figure 5: House 1879-2007
Party Means on Liberal-Conservative Dimension**

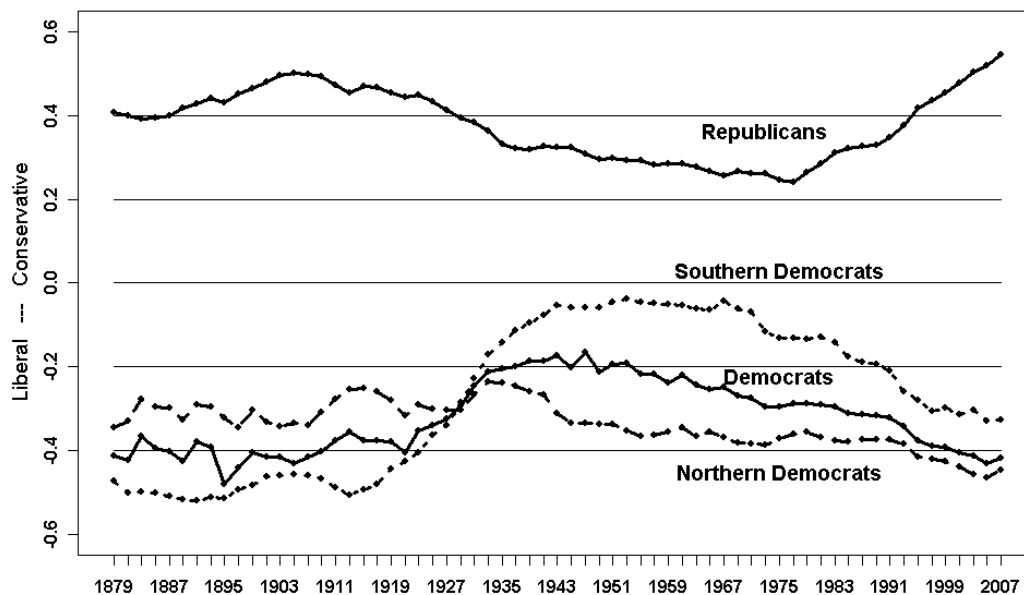
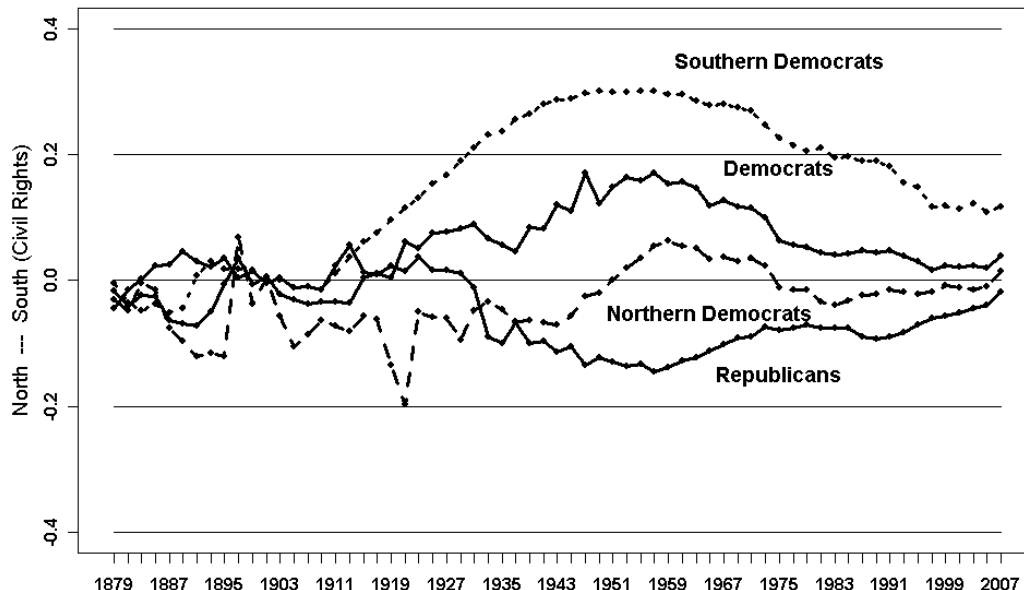


Figure 6: House 1879-2007
Party Means on Regional Dimension

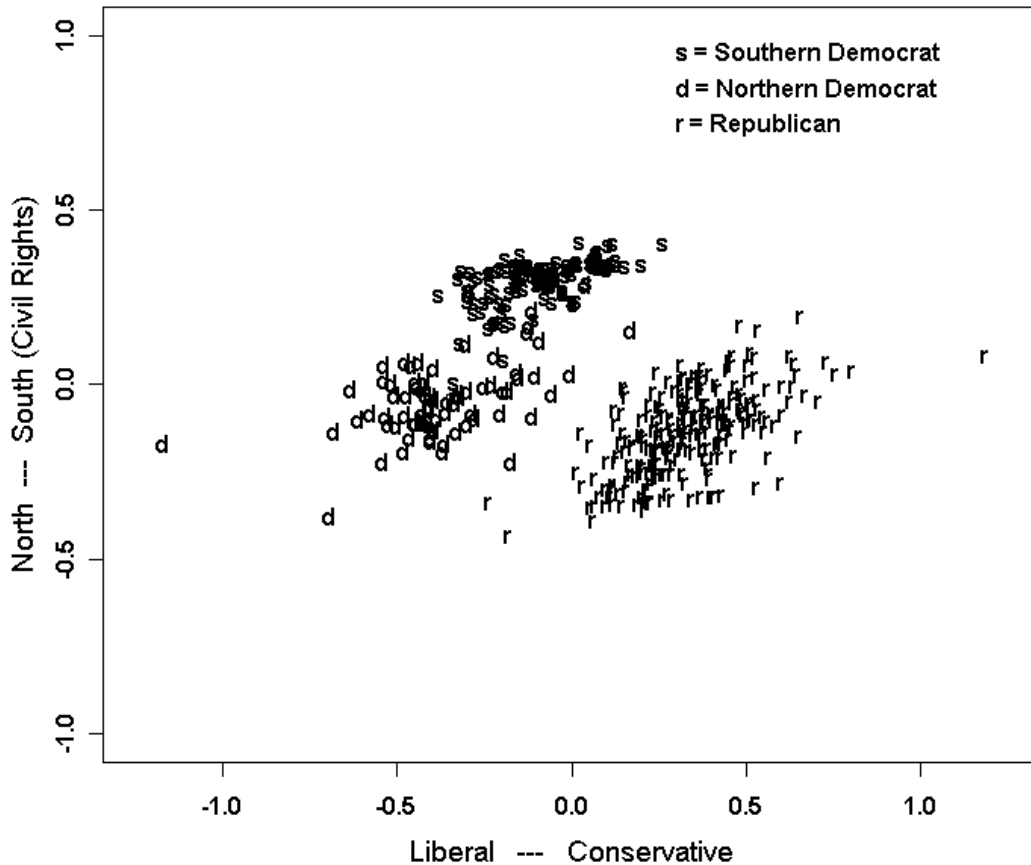


The political party system of the 1940s and 1950s emerged during the latter part of the New Deal when, in the wake of the 1936 elections, northern Democrats heavily outnumbered southern Democrats in Congress. Many of the programs initiated during the subsequent Second New Deal (1937-38) were not to the liking of the South. Voting on minimum wages in 1937 and 1938 split the Democratic Party because southerners did not want minimum wages paid to southern agricultural workers (many of whom were African-American). Northern and Southern Democrats were again deeply split during World War II by voting on the poll tax (used to keep southern blacks from voting) and voting rights in the armed forces (would state law or federal law decide who was eligible to vote).²¹ Voting in Congress became two dimensional in order to differentiate northerners from southerners on civil rights and related votes.

Figure 7 shows the spatial map for the 80th U. S. House (1947-48) that served during the last two years of Harry Truman's (1945-53) first Presidential term²² that

occurred at the peak of the regional separation of the Northern and Southern Democrats shown in Figure 6. The lower case “d”’s are the Northern Democrats, the lower case “s”’s are the Southern Democrats, and the “r”’s are the Republicans.

**Figure 7: 80th House 1947-48
Representative Ideal Points**



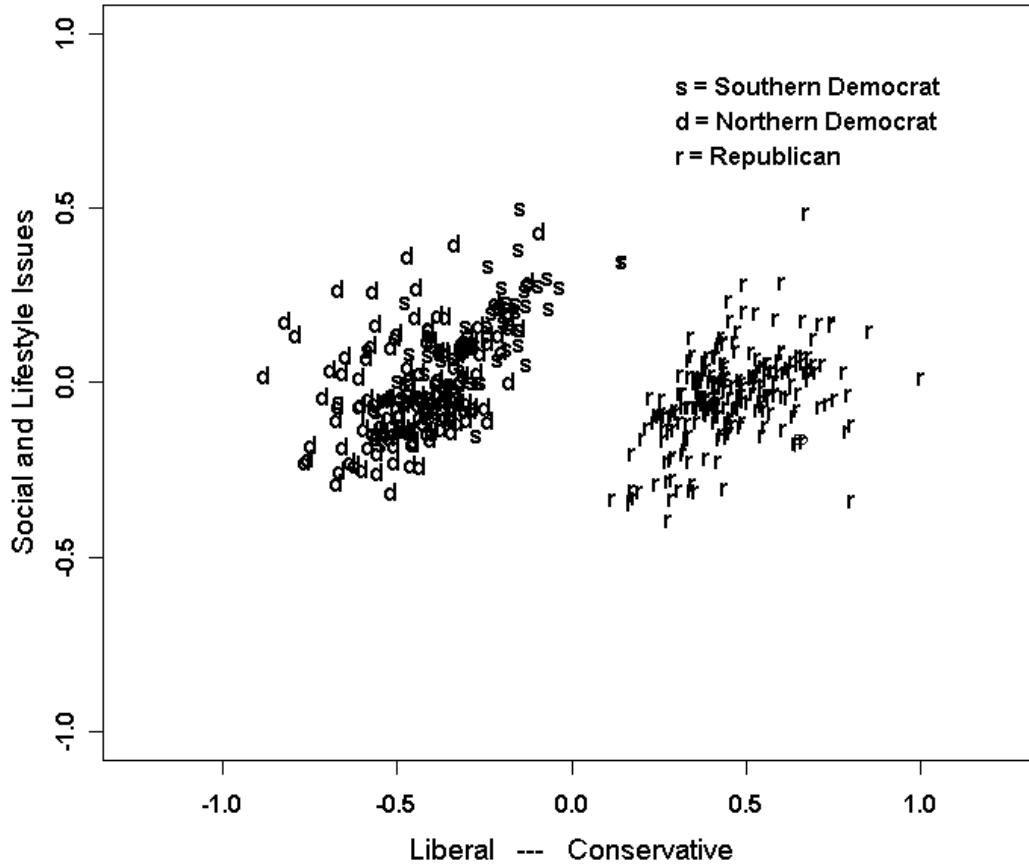
The three-party structure of U. S. politics during this period is clearly shown in the Figure. The Northern and Southern Democrats are distinct clusters reflecting the deep split within the Party. During this period every coalition of two of the three “parties” occurred. The Northern and Southern Democrats voted together to organize Congress and distribute the spoils due to the majority party. The Southern Democrats and the Republicans were known as the “Conservative Coalition” that for most of this

period had majority control in the sense that they could block liberal policies not to their liking. Finally, the Republicans and Northern Democrats formed a coalition versus the Southern Democrats to pass the Civil Rights laws in the 1960s.

The rapid decline in the importance of the second dimension after the passage of the Civil Rights laws in the 1960s reflects the realignment of the South towards the Republican Party.²³ During the past 30 years Republicans have moved steadily to the right on the liberal-conservative dimension with conservatives replacing more moderate Republicans outside the southern states and conservatives replacing moderate and conservative Democrats in the South. The effect has been a right-ward movement on the liberal-conservative dimension of the Republican Party as a whole. As a result the number of southern Democrats declined and as a group they became much more liberal. This is also shown by the fact that the means of the two parties on the second dimension have drawn closer together reflecting the declining importance of region in accounting for roll call voting in Congresses since the 1980s. The regional differences within the Democratic Party have almost completely disappeared. These trends have continued through the 110th Congress (2007-08) in both the House and the Senate.²⁴

Figure 8 shows the 108th (2003-04) that served during the last two years of George W. Bush's first Presidential term (2001-09) that occurred after the realignment of the South into the Republican Party. The lower case "d"'s are the Northern Democrats, the lower case "s"'s are the Southern Democrats, and the "r"'s are the Republicans.

**Figure 8: 108th House 2003-04
Representative Ideal Points**



In recent Congresses there is very little differentiation between Northern and Southern Democrats. With the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1968 Open Housing Act, the second dimension slowly declined in importance and is now almost totally absent. Race related issues – affirmative action, welfare, Medicaid, subsidized housing, etc. – are now questions of *redistribution*. Voting on race related issues now largely takes place along the liberal-conservative dimension and the old split in the Democratic Party between North and South has largely disappeared. Voting in Congress is now almost purely one-dimensional – a single

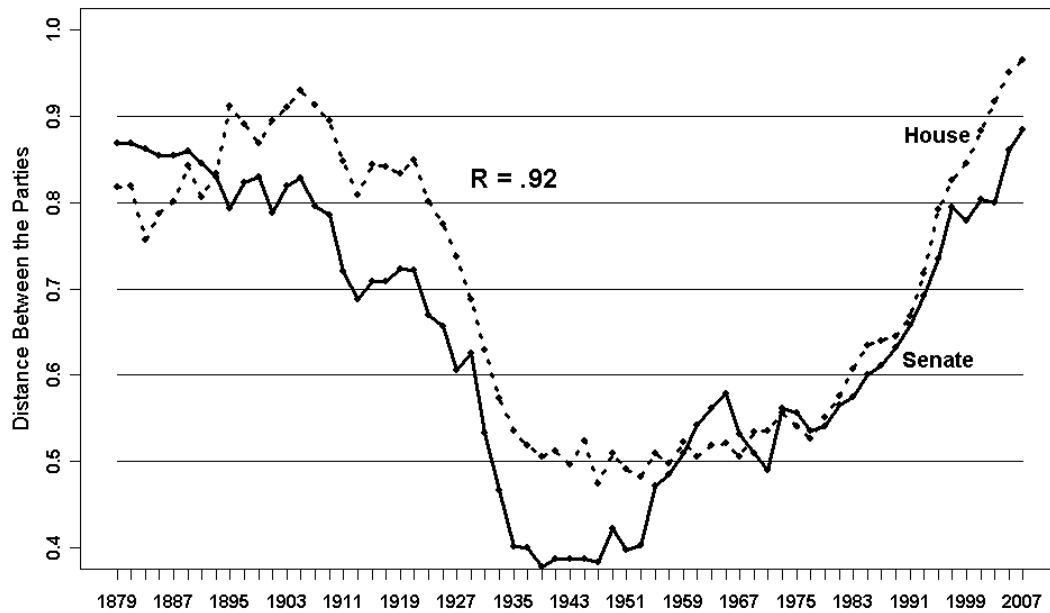
dimension accounts for about 93 percent of roll call voting choices in the 110th House and Senate – and the two parties are increasingly polarized.

Although the old regional issues have largely disappeared traces still linger in what are called the “social” or “lifestyle/cultural” issues – abortion, gay rights, gun control, school prayer, and other similar issues. Because the South tends to be a bit more conservative on these lifestyle issues there is still a tiny bit of differentiation within the Democratic Party. However, there are many Midwestern and Western Democrats who are “conservative” on these issues so the regional component is very weak. Indeed, reflecting the long run impact of the geographic-based system of representation from the British colonial period, now the geographic effect tends to be the major U. S. cities which are heavily liberal Democratic versus the rural areas on many of these lifestyle issues.

The Polarization of Modern U. S. Politics

The wide gulf between the two parties on the economic dimension reflects the dramatic polarization of the two political parties in the past 40 years. Figure 9 shows the difference between the Democrat and Republican Party means for the post-Reconstruction period. Polarization as measured by the distance between the two major party means on the first dimension declined in both chambers from roughly the beginning of the 20th Century until World War II. It was then fairly stable until the mid 1970s and has been increasing steadily over the past 40 years. The polarization trend is essentially the same in both chambers. The correlation between the two series is .92 echoing the point above about the basic political forces affecting the two chambers equally.

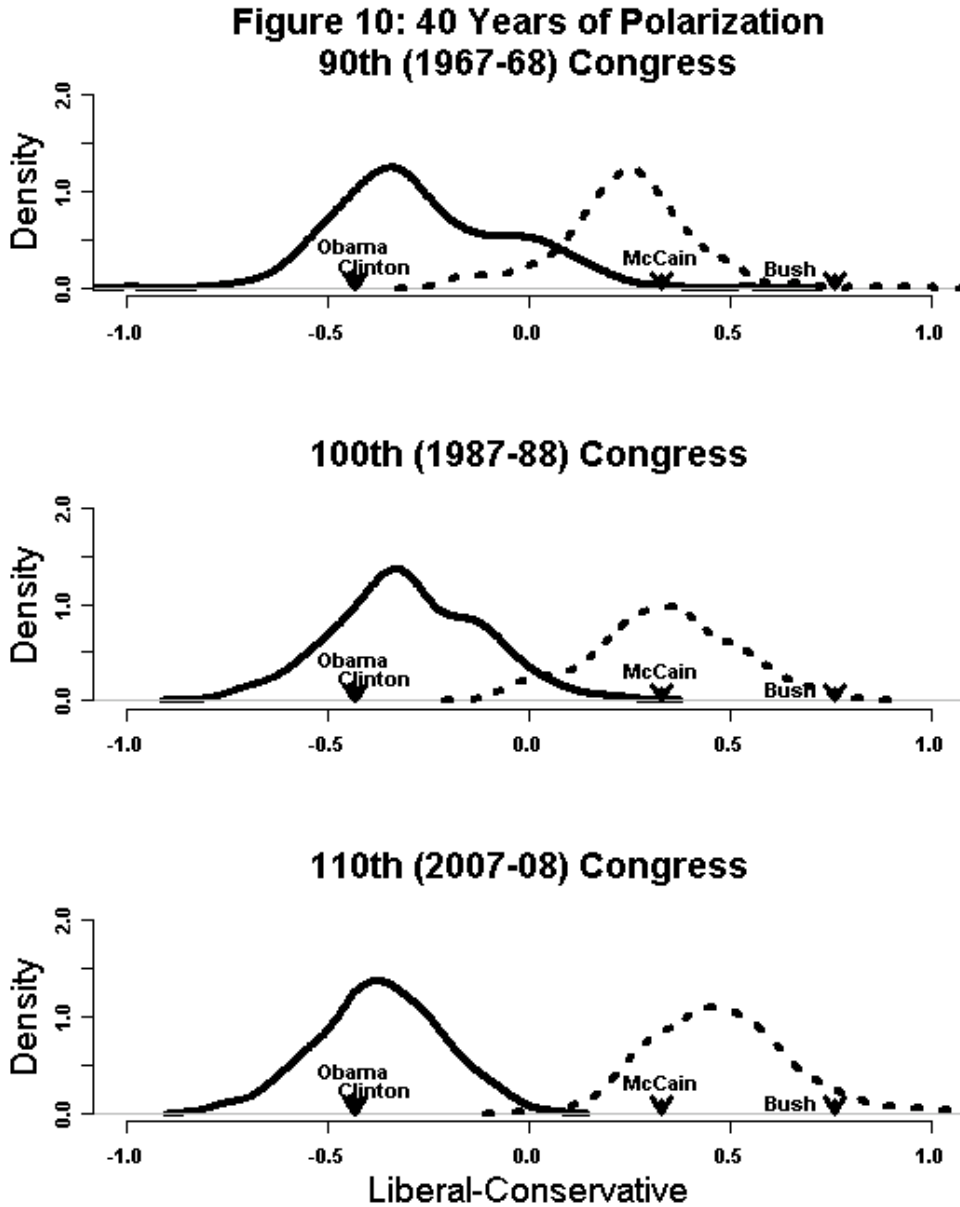
Figure 9: Party Polarization 1879-2007
Distance Between the Parties First Dimension



Moderates have virtually disappeared during the past 40 years and the parties have pulled apart. In the early 1970s there was considerable overlap of the two political parties. In the past ten years that overlap has almost completely disappeared. In addition to the pulling apart of the two parties, the Republican Party is now skewed to the right with a sizable bulge in its right flank. In contrast, the old right flank of the Democratic party composed mostly of southerners is now gone. To reiterate the point I made above, Republicans have moved steadily to the right on the liberal-conservative dimension with conservatives replacing more moderate Republicans outside the southern states and conservatives replacing moderate and conservative Democrats in the South.

Figure 10 compares the ideological distributions of the members of Congress for three Congresses over the past 40 years -- the 90th (1967-68), the 100th (1987-88), and the 110th (2007). In each Congress I show the positions of Senators Clinton, Obama, and McCain and President George W. Bush for reference. The Democrats are on the left (the

solid line smoothed histogram) and the Republicans are on the right (the dotted line smoothed histogram).

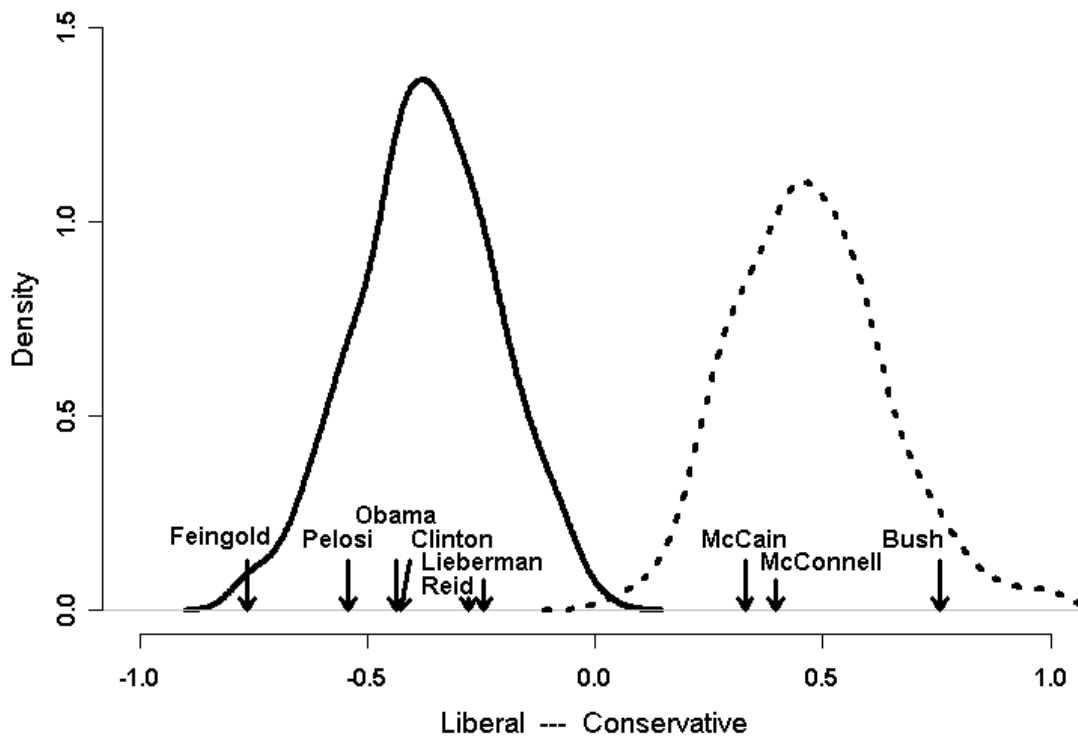


During the past 40 years the political parties have steadily diverged ideologically to the point that they are further apart than at any time since the end of Reconstruction. This polarization is clearly evident in Figure 10. Forty years ago Senator McCain at 0.33

would have been to the right of the Republican mean at 0.25. Twenty years later in the 100th Congress McCain would have been slightly left of the Republican mean at 0.34. By 2007 the Republican mean had shifted all the way out to 0.47 and President Bush at 0.76 was now within the Republican Caucus. Senators Clinton and Obama would have been *very liberal* forty years ago in the 90th Congress when the Democratic Party mean was -0.26. By the 100th Congress the Democratic Party mean was -0.30 and by 2007 it had moved all the way out to -0.37.

Figure 11 shows just the 110th (2007) Congress with a variety of important members for reference. The Democrats are on the left (the solid line smoothed histogram) and the Republicans are on the right (the dotted line smoothed histogram).

Figure 11: 110th (2007) Congress



Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin is one of the furthest left legislators in Congress and was Senator John McCain's partner in passing the campaign finance reform law in 2004. Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California is in the left wing whereas both Senator Obama of Illinois and Senator Clinton of New York are near the middle of the distribution of Congressional Democrats. Majority Leader Senator Harry Reid of Nevada and Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut are in the right wing of the Democratic Party. Finally, Senator McCain of Arizona and Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky are in the left wing of the Republican Party.

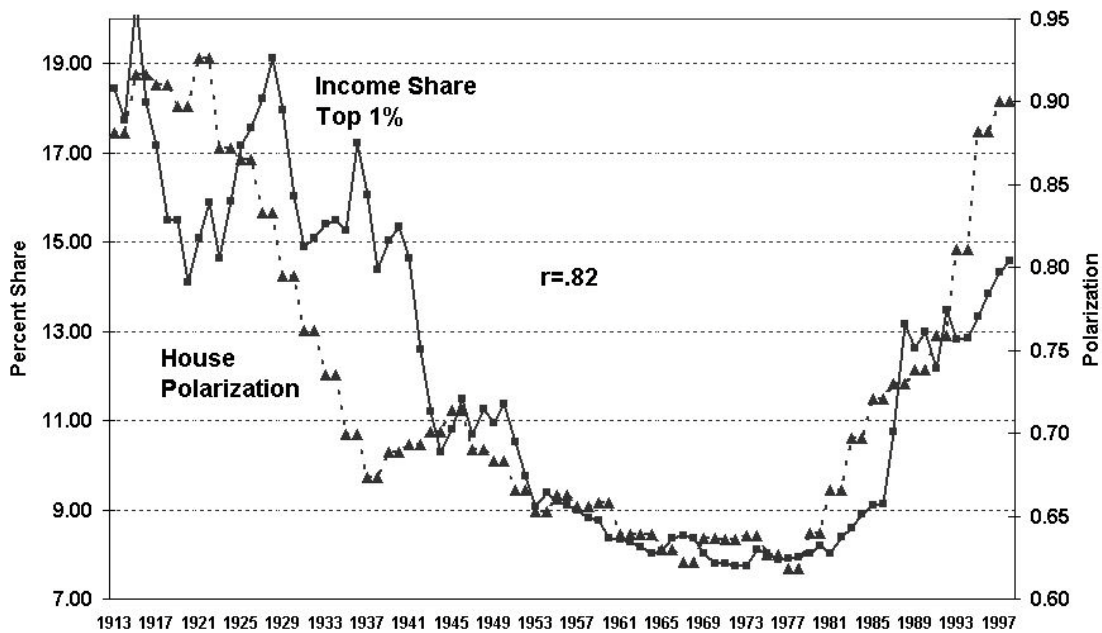
It is still the case that the left side of the ideological spectrum is truncated in that there is almost no support for classical socialism in the sense of the federal government nationalizing industries and directly running large sections of the national economy. In addition, the norm of private property rights and the right of an inventor or entrepreneur to "make a buck" is unchallenged.

Why is the U. S. political system so polarized? There is no clear answer but there is some evidence that elite polarization is related to income inequality and immigration (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006). The mass public does not *appear* to be as polarized as the elites. Public opinion on most issues appears nicely "bell-shaped" with large numbers of people taking moderate or centrist positions (DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson, 1996; Fiorina, 2005). However, strong party identifiers have increasingly polarized over the past 30 years and they are likelier to vote (Jacobson, 2007).

Elite political polarization, income inequality, and immigration have all increased dramatically in the United States over the past several decades. However, these increases have followed an equally dramatic decline over the first seven decades of the twentieth

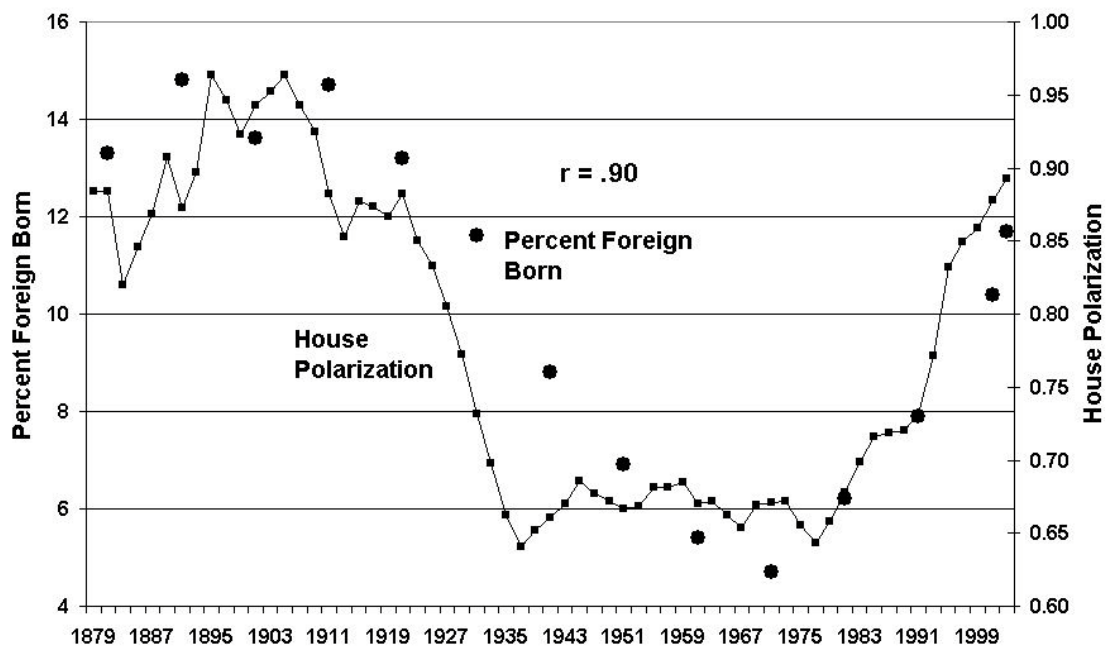
century. All three have moved roughly in tandem since the passage of the Income Tax Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (ratified in 1913) that allowed the federal government to tax individual incomes. Figure 12 shows the percentage share of all income garnered by the top one percent of income earners against House polarization and Figure 13 shows the percent of the U. S. population that was foreign born against House polarization.

Figure 12: Top 1% Income Share vs. House Polarization 1913 - 1999



The income data for Figure 12 are from Piketty and Saez (2003). Early in the series the income share of the top 1% was disproportionately capital income – over 50% was from dividends, interest, rents, and royalties. At the end of the series over 50% was from wage income. The percent foreign born data for Figure 13 are from the U.S. Census and are gathered every ten years. The last point is an estimate from the Census Bureau.

Figure 13: House Polarization vs. Percent Foreign Born 1880 - 2004



At the height of industrial capitalism early in the 20th Century wealth and income were very unequally distributed. Congress passed an income tax in 1892 but it was struck down by the Supreme Court by a 5-4 vote in 1895. This led to efforts to amend the Constitution to permit income taxation and that effort was successful in 1913. At first the rate was very low but after the entry of the United States in World War I the top marginal rate went up to about 75% and, after falling to about 25% during the 1920s, from the Great Depression until the 1960s it always exceeded 80%.

Paralleling the movement of the income series, immigration was essentially cut off in 1924. Until then, the U. S. essentially had an “open doors” policy since the British Colonial period. The doors were only open the Europeans, however. Immigration from Asia was discouraged if not outright prohibited (the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) as was African immigration after the Civil War. After 1924 the percentage of foreign born

in the U. S. population steadily fell for the simple reason that it was very difficult to get into the country. This changed with the immigration reform act that was passed in 1965. The new system abolished the racial (area) quotas and switched the emphasis to family reunion. The unforeseen consequence of the policy change was the enormous increase in immigration from Latin America and Asia. These immigrants tended to be lower on the income scale relative to the European immigrants and this has exacerbated income inequality in the U. S.

Immigration, income inequality, and political polarization interact in ways that are as yet not fully understood. Social, economic, and political phenomena are mutually causal. For example, immigration might lead to policies that increase economic inequality if immigrants are at the bottom of the income distribution and do not have the right to vote (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006). There are no easy answers to the problem of income inequality in the United States and the high level of polarization makes any kind of elite consensus almost impossible to reach.

Conclusion

The political-economic system of the United States originated in the British North American colonies. Representative democracy and private property rights were established from the beginning and shaped everything that was to follow. In addition, the nature of the settlement of the eastern seaboard produced geographic based representation; that is, the norm that the representative must physically live in the area/town that he represented in the local legislature. This norm became enshrined in the Constitution guaranteeing that mass based political parties would almost always have some regional concentration. In addition, because the U. S. always used the English style

plurality election system (the candidate with the most votes wins), this strongly biased the system towards just two political parties.

Through most of U. S. history there have been two major mass based political parties. A “Left” party represents the less well off and the “Right” party represents the somewhat better off. To be competitive both the “Left” and “Right” parties had to aim their appeals at people of middling incomes. Because of the nature of the system of representation both parties have tended to be internally divided over regional issues. For most of U. S. history this regional issue has been concerned with race.

The beginning of the modern trend to greater polarization began with the break down of the three party system in the late 1960s. For almost 50 years the United States had a three political party system (late 1930s to early 1980s). In Congress all three parties easily formed coalitions with one of the others against the third depending on the issue at hand. The northern and southern Democrats united to organize the House and Senate and thereby seize the spoils due the “majority” party. The northern Democrats and Republicans united to pass the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the “conservative coalition” of Republicans and southern Democrats united to block liberal economic (and in the 1970s, social) policies.

The demise of this system began with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (1961 – 63). President Lyndon Johnson (1963 – 69) was able to do what Kennedy was unable to do – push fundamental civil rights legislation through Congress. This was followed by President Johnson’s 1964 landslide victory over an “extremist” Barry Goldwater that produced a liberal northern Democratic Congressional majority for the first time since 1936. This destabilized the Democratic coalition. Democrats in the

89th Congress (1965-66) no longer required southern support to pass expansive federal programs. These programs along with other redistributive programs initiated by the federal courts – mandatory school busing to alleviate racial disparities in the public schools being the most conspicuous – led to a polarizing backlash²⁵ in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The effects of this backlash were blunted by the Watergate scandal (1972-74) and the Republican Party did not fully recover its footing until the 1980 elections.

The old southern Democratic Party has, in effect, disintegrated, and with it the disappearance of the second dimension of congressional voting. Race has been drawn into the first dimension because race-related issues are increasingly questions of redistribution. In addition, the “social/lifestyle” issues are increasingly being drawn into the main dimension of conflict. The end result is that the Democrat and Republican parties have become more homogeneous and are now deeply polarized. The moderates are gone and we are left with a polarized, unidimensional U. S. Congress.

Are there any lessons from the U. S. experience that are useful for other countries? I am quite reluctant to make any generalizations because U. S. diplomats and politicians have been making simplistic statements for decades about how U.S. institutions should be tried in other countries because they have been proven to “work.” To some extent this is true. There is little argument that Democratic Capitalism, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, is the worst possible system except for all the others. North and Thomas (1973) make a compelling historical case for how the emergence of government guaranteed private property rights in England and the Netherlands made them economically successful while other European countries lagged behind. However, this process was highly path dependent and at many historical junctures very tenuous

indeed (North and Weingast, 1989). The success of the U.S. is a product of a unique set of circumstances that produced a political culture that valued both representative democracy and private property rights. This political culture cannot be forced upon other countries that do not have this experience (North, Summerhill, and Weingast, 2000).

As to the problem of how to keep a Democratic Capitalist country from polarizing as the United States now has, I can only answer that political institutions must be designed so that not all interests line up along a single dimension of conflict. How to do that I do not know. I can only hope that in the coming decades the U. S. depolarizes before it is too late.

References

- Anderson, Terry. 1975. "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies, 1650-1709." *Explorations in Economic History*, 12(2):151-176.
- Bailyn, Bernard. 1970. *The Origins of American Politics*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Bailyn, Bernard. 1971. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brinkley, Garland. 1997. "The Decline in Southern Agricultural Output, 1860-1880." *The Journal of Economic History*, 57:116-138.
- Carmines, Edward G. and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Carstensen, Vernon, ed. 1963. *The Public Lands: Studies in the History of the Public Domain*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Coelho, Philip and Robert McGuire. 1997. "African and European Bound Labor in the British New World: The Biological Consequences of Economic Choices." *The Journal of Economic History*, 57: 83-115.
- Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: Free Press.
- DiMaggio, Paul, John H. Evans, and Bethany Bryson. 1996. "Have Americans' Social Attitudes Become More Polarized?" *American Journal of Sociology*, 102:690-755.
- Eichengreen, Barry. 1984. "Mortgage Interest Rates in the Populist Era." *American Economic Review*, 74: 995-1015.

- Elkins, Stanley and Eric McKittrick. 1961. "The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution." *Political Science Quarterly*, 76:181-216.
- Ellenberg, Jordan. 2001. "Growing Apart: The Mathematical Evidence for Congress' Growing Polarization." *Slate*, 26 December 2001.
- Fiorina, Morris, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Longman.
- Fogel, Robert William. 1989. *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*. New York. Norton.
- Fogel, Robert William and Stanley L. Engerman. 1974. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. New York: Norton.
- Galenson, David W. 1984. "The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas: An Economic Analysis." *Journal of Economic History*, 44:1-26.
- Gerring, John. 1998. *Party Ideologies in America, 1828 – 1996*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldin, Claudia and Frank Lewis. 1975. "The Economic Cost of the American Civil War: Estimates and Implications." *The Journal of Economic History*, 35: 299-326.
- Harris, Marshall. 1970. *Origin of the Land Tenure System in the United States*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Hartz, Louis. 1955. *The Liberal Tradition in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

- Higgs, Robert. 1971. *The Transformation of the American Economy, 1865-1914: An Essay in Interpretation*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1948/1973. *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made it*. New York: Knopf (25th Anniversary Edition).
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1969. *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780 - 1840*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hofstadter, Richard, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron. 1959. *The American Republic* (2 vols.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hogue, Arthur R. 1966. *Origins of the Common Law*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund (reprint).
- Hughes, Jonathan and Louis P. Cain. 2007. *American Economic History (Seventh Edition)*. New York: Pearson.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2007. *A Divider, Not a Uniter: George W. Bush and the American People*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Main, Gloria L. 1983. "The Standard of Living in Colonial Massachusetts." *Journal of Economic History*, 43:101-108.
- Mayhew, Anne. 1972. "A Reappraisal of the Causes of Farm Protest in the United States." *Journal of Economic History*, 32: 464-475.
- McCarty, Nolan M., Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2000. "Congress and the Territorial Expansion of the United States." In *New Directions in Studying the History of the U.S. Congress*, ed. by Mathew McCubbins and David Brady. Stanford, CA: University of Stanford Press.

- McCarty, Nolan M., Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- McGuire, Robert A. 1981. "Economic Causes of Late-Nineteenth Century Agrarian Unrest: New Evidence." *Journal of Economic History*, 41:835-848.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot. 1965. *The Oxford History of the American People*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot and Henry Steele Commager. 1942. *The Growth of the American Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- North, Douglass C., William Summerhill, and Barry R. Weingast. 2000. "Order, Disorder, and Economic Change: Latin America Versus North America." In *Governing for Prosperity*, edited by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Hilton L. Root. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- North, Douglass C. and Robert Paul Thomas. 1973. *The Rise of the Western World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- North, Douglass C. and Barry R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *The Journal of Economic History*, 49:803-832.
- Phillips, Kevin B. 1969. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co.
- Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2003. "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913 – 1998." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(1):1-39.
- Poole, Keith T. 1990. "Least Squares Metric, Unidimensional Scaling of Multivariate Linear Models." *Psychometrika*, 55:123-149.

- Poole, Keith T. 2005. *Spatial Models of Parliamentary Voting*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 1984. "The Polarization of American Politics." *Journal of Politics*, 46: 1061-1079.
- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 1997. *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 2001. "D-NOMINATE After 10 Years: An Update to *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 26:5-29.
- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 2007. *Ideology and Congress*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Press.
- Scammon, Richard M. and Ben J. Wattenberg. 1970. *The Real Majority*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc.
- Schattschneider, Eric E. 1942. *Party Government*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Schattschneider, Eric E. 1960. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Tuchman, Barbara W. 1962. *The Guns of August*. New York: Macmillan.
- Tuchman, Barbara W. 1966. *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914*. New York: Macmillan.
- Walsh, Lorena S. 1983. "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake." *Journal of Economic History*, 43:109-117.

Walton, Gary M. and James F. Shepherd. 1979. *The Economic Rise of Early America*.

New York: Cambridge University Press.

Williamson, Jeffrey G. 1974. *Late Nineteenth-Century American Development*. New

York: Cambridge University Press.

Endnotes

¹ There has been an explosion of applications of the spatial (geometric) model of choice in the past ten years. Poole (2005) has an extensive bibliography.

² Hofstadter (1948/1973, p. xxx) states it this way: “The sanctity of private property, the right of the individual to dispose of and invest it, the value of opportunity, and the natural evolution of self-interest and self-assertion, within broad legal limits, into a beneficent social order have been staple tenets of the central faith in American political ideologies...” Gerring (1998) in his history of party ideologies argues against both Hofstadter and Hartz. In Gerring’s view “American political culture has been a looser constraint on the development of party ideologies than was hitherto supposed” (p. 41).

At bottom this is a debate about the absence of a true socialist party or broad mass socialist movement in American history – in short, a truncated ideological spectrum. In my opinion, Gerring is correct that Hartz overstates his case. However, the fact remains that private property rights and the primacy of the common law and the courts that enforce it, have never been seriously challenged in U. S. history. The importance of the common law lies in its *English* origins. “Medieval common law was principally land law.....for several centuries every family fortune in England has been protected and regulated by intricate rules of common law.....Thanks to the rise of Parliament in the Middle Ages and to the medieval evolution of the House of Commons, English property owners thereafter had a channel for the expression of alarm and opposition to sudden, revolutionary changes in the law of Property” (Hogue, 1966, p. 246-247).

³ A larger set of interest group data were analyzed in Poole (1990). The results confirm our 1984 analysis.

⁴ I borrowed this analogy from Jordan Ellenberg, who used it in an article about our political polarization research (Ellenberg, 2001).

⁵ The second amendment to the U. S. Constitution states that “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” The controversy is whether or not U. S. citizens have an *individual* right to own firearms or whether the right of individuals to own firearms is derivative of the right of the States to field militias. Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that the right to own firearms is an individual right but they left it unclear how much regulation of firearms was permissible by the States.

⁶ Technically, *land tenure* refers to the manner in which and the period for which *rights in land are held*. In this regard, property is *rights*, not *things*. “The things are property objects, and tenure is concerned with rights in these things” (Harris, 1970, p.2). Tenure in land is a *bundle of rights* and rights in land held by a private party is an *estate in land*. See Harris (1970, pp.1-10) for a full discussion of these definitions.

⁷ In feudal England these were: 1) Homage; 2) Fealty; 3) Wardship; 4) Marriage; 5) Relief; 6) *primer seisin*; 7) Aids; 8) fines for Alienation; and 9) Escheat. See Harris, 1970, pp. 25-27 for a full discussion of these definitions.

⁸ Technically, the characteristics of *free and common socage* were: 1) it was perpetual; 2) it could be inherited; 3) it could be passed in a will; 4) obligations were fixed and certain; 5) the owner had the right to waste; 6) it was freely alienable (you could sell it, etc.).

⁹ Indeed, unlike Lenin or Mao, Washington had *turned down* absolute power and had retired to his home in Virginia at the end of the war. He did not subvert his Revolution.

¹⁰ Article V lists how the Constitution can be amended. The last sentence reads: “no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.” As a practical matter this makes the Senate *permanent* because no State would ever agree to give up its right to two Senators.

¹¹ For example, the argument over the Constitutionality of the National Bank favored by Alexander Hamilton. Madison and Jefferson claimed it was Unconstitutional because the national government was not explicitly empowered to charter corporations. Attorney General Randolph equivocated and Hamilton prevailed. Hamilton argued that Congress has the power to regulate currency; therefore it had the implied power to establish a Bank to issue Currency. Washington decided in favor of Hamilton. Washington tended to side with the “staff officer” who had authority over the subject matter area. It passed in House on 8 February 1791 by 39 – 20, 36 of the 39 came from commercial areas, 19 of the 20 were from the South. In the Senate the 3rd reading of the bill (passage) was on 24 February 1791 by 22 – 3. There was no pattern to the Nay voters; two were Jeffersonians and one was a Federalist.

¹² Schattschneider (1942; 1960) argues that mass based political parties were *essential* for making the federal government work and preserving democracy.

¹³ Specifically, the Constitution did not explicitly delegate power to the Executive to purchase foreign territory. Jefferson initially wanted to amend the Constitution to specifically authorize such a purchase. However, he was warned that it was essential to move quickly so he authorized the purchase on his own authority. See Hofstadter, Miller, and Aaron (1959, volume 1, p. 314-318), Morison and Commager (1942, volume 1, p. 389-392), and Morison (1965, p. 363-367) for detailed discussions.

¹⁴ Hofstadter, Miller, and Aaron (1959, volume 1, chapter 11), Morison and Commager (1942, volume 1, chapter 20), and Morison (1965, chapter 24) have comprehensive discussions of the circumstances surrounding the War of 1812 and its aftermath.

¹⁵ For the Southern states, the percentage of the total population that were slaves in 1820 was: Alabama, 33%; Delaware, 23%; Georgia, 44%; Kentucky, 23%; Louisiana, 52%; Maryland, 36%; Mississippi, 44%; North Carolina, 34%; South Carolina, 53%; Tennessee, 20%; and Virginia, 50% (Source, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, series A 195-209).

¹⁶ I use the *Congressional Quarterly* definition of South – the eleven states of the Confederacy plus Kentucky and Oklahoma.

¹⁷ For example, see Barbara Tuchman's account of the events leading up to August, 1914 (Tuchman, 1962). Also see her book *The Proud Tower* (1966) about the social milieu of the elites in Europe and the U. S. who triggered the Great War.

¹⁸ Grover Cleveland was the only U. S. President who served two terms that were not contiguous.

¹⁹ For Congresses 46 – 99 (1879 – 1986) the patterns are essentially the same as those shown in Poole and Rosenthal (1997, p. 62-63, Fig. 4.3, 4.4).

²⁰ The correlation of the two chamber means was .77. As Rosenthal and I noted in *Congress* (p. 63), cross-chamber differences are affected by party ratios within the respective chambers and these tend to lower the correlation between the chamber means.

²¹ See Poole and Rosenthal, 1997, chapter 5.

²² Truman was Franklin D. Roosevelt's Vice President and became President when Roosevelt died in April of 1945.

²³ See Carmines and Stimson, 1989; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006.

²⁴ Graphs of party means for the Senate are very similar to those for the House shown in Figures 5 and 6.

²⁵ The reasons for this polarization are discussed in Phillips (1969) and Scammon and Wattenberg (1970).