



Introduction to American Government

POLS 1101

The University of Georgia

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Nature of Parties

Important questions:

If the first generation of leaders elected under the Constitution rejected political parties on principle, why did they create them anyway?

Why does a nation as diverse as the United States sustain only two major parties?

Today national party conventions merely certify the winners of primary elections instead of choosing the presidential nominees, as they did in the past. So why do the parties continue to hold these gatherings?

Ninety percent of Americans claim they always vote for the person best suited for the job, regardless of party. Why then is party line voting so prevalent and why are partisans so polarized?



Nature of Parties



Scholars have proposed a variety of formal definitions of political party. Two of the most prominent stand in contrast.

- Burke (eighteenth century) –A body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.
- Downs (twentieth century) –A team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election.

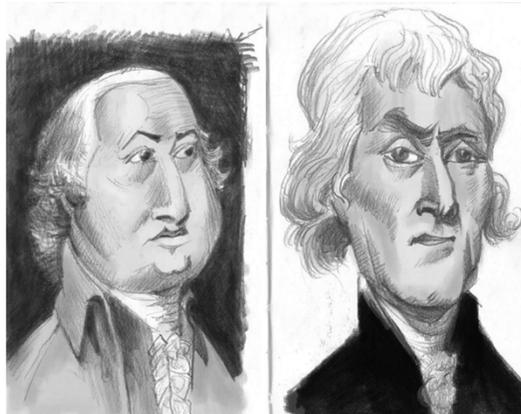
The Constitution's Unwanted Offspring

The Constitution.

- No mention of political parties.

Parties were widely considered to be a threat to good government and public order.

- Pervasive fear of parties/factions => not taking into account society as a whole/leading to internal strife
- Based on historical evidence => England, Greece, Rome



“If I could not get to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.” – *Thomas Jefferson*

“A division of the republic into two great parties [...] is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution.” – *John Adams*

Unwanted Parties: Why Create Them?



BUT, major incentives for party building.

The Constitution's provisions for enacting laws and electing leaders put a huge premium on building majority alliances across institutions and electoral units.



STUBBORN AS A...

Political Parties are incentivized to:

- build stable legislative and electoral alliances
- mobilize voters
- develop new electoral techniques
- use party labels and enforce collective responsibility

Unwanted Parties: Why Create Them?

Build Stable Legislative and Electoral Alliances

Organized competition for votes in Congress leads directly to:

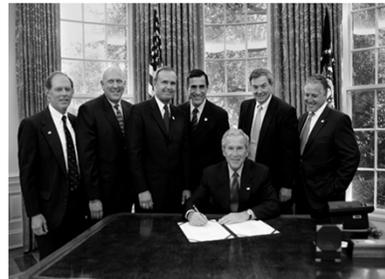
- organized competition for votes in congressional elections

This requires negotiating and maintaining electoral alliances:

- expands legislative parties into electoral parties

The presidential selection rules:

- incentives for building electoral alliances across districts and states
- organizational work required for the collective pursuit of political office results in a national party organization



Unwanted Parties: Why Create Them?



Mobilize Voters

Electoral alliances fail if they cannot get enough people to vote for their candidates. Parties are motivated to attract voters and get them to the polls.

Early days of the Republic, electioneering followed traditional forms.

- deferring to ones “betters”

After the adoption of the Constitution, suffrage expanded

- egalitarian spirit of the frontier gradually eclipsed the habits of deference.

As the size of the electorate grew, so did the task of identifying and attracting supporters. Networks of leaders and activists assembled to mobilize electoral support became the first party organizations.

Unwanted Parties: Why Create Them?

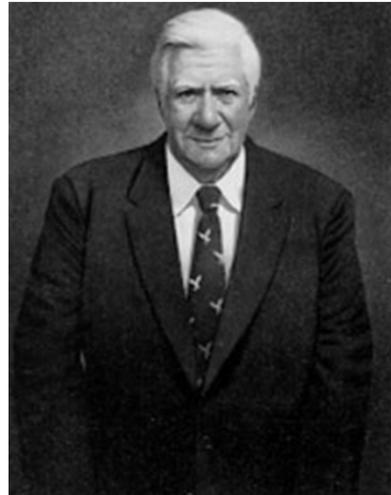
To Develop New Electoral Techniques

Electoral parties initiated new relationships between voters and elected leaders.

Politics was not simply “local”:

- a larger, more dispersed electorate had to be reached
- parties turned to mass communication: newspapers, pamphlets, public letters, and printed speeches

These were designed to excite voters emotionally so that they would be motivated to vote and avoid the free-rider problem.



“All politics is local.” Former House Speaker *Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill*

Unwanted Parties: Why Create Them?



Politico (6/24/15): "I cannot believe he would tell a flat-out lie...What we just saw today was an absolute demonstration that, not only what he told every Republican senator, but what he told the press over and over and over again was a simple lie." – *Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)*

Use Party Labels and Enforce Collective Responsibility

Party labels offer a shorthand cue that keeps voting decisions cheap and simple:

- as long as the labels are informative

The more accurately a candidate's label predicts behavior in office, the more useful it is to voters, and the more it will continue to be used.

- Candidates: personal stake in value of label
- Require some sacrifice of preference (conformity cost)

Unwanted Parties: Why Create Them?

Overall political and organizational expedience may explain parties' existence, but the activities that maintain them contribute to successful democratic politics in unforeseen ways.

- Recruit and train leaders, foster political participation, and teach new citizens democratic habits and practices.
- Knit citizens and leaders together in electoral and policy coalitions.
- Allow citizens to hold their elected agents collectively responsible for what the government does.
- Help channel and constrain political conflicts, promoting their peaceful resolution.
- Organize the activities of government, facilitating the collective action necessary to translate public preferences into public policy.
- In short, they make democracy possible.



"Political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties."
– *E.E. Schattschneider, American Political Scientist, 1892 - 1971*

Basic Features of the Party System



Parties developed because the institutional structures and processes established by the Constitution made them too useful to forgo.

As they formed, they changed, but a number of basic features remained throughout:

- two-party competition
- decentralized, fragmented, party coalitions
- professional politicians

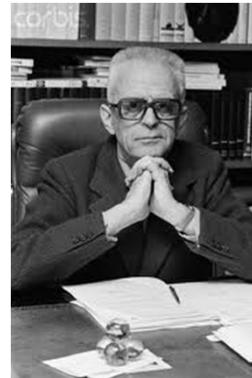
Two Party Competition

Two-party system norm in United States.

- Most modern democracies have more than two parties.

Our system of elections, where only a single winner is chosen by plurality vote, generally reduced competition to two.

- People tend to vote strategically, i.e. if a voter's favorite party has no chance to win, they turn to the less objectionable of the major-party candidates who does have a chance to win. This is known as Duverger's Law.
- Popular aspects of third parties are copied by the major parties.



Maurice Duverger (1917 – 2014)

Major parties, with incentives to expand their electoral coalitions, help maintain the two-party system.

- Erected legal hurdles to getting on the ballot.
- Banned fusion tickets, which allowed minor parties to boost their votes by nominating candidates also nominated by major parties.

Two Party Competition



2012 and 2016 Libertarian Party Presidential Nominee Gary Johnson (NM)

An alternative to the American system is one based on proportional representation.

Under most proportional representation (PR) systems, people do not vote for a person. They vote for the political party with which they most agree.

Each political party submits a list of names prior to the election.

- A party will get roughly the same proportion of seats in parliament as the proportion of the votes it received in the election.
- Proportional representation promotes ideological representation and helps to preserve smaller parties.
- Votes for their other candidates are not wasted.
- Because people have diverse ideas, proportional representation tends to produce multi-party systems.
- Some countries try to combine the benefits of both systems.

Decentralized, Fragmented Party Coalitions



Former Rep. Paul Brown (R-GA)

With geographic representation, the legislature is divided according to districts with each legislator representing a particular region.

This fragments the political system and thus promotes the two-party system. Since the beginning, the major parties have been diverse, unwieldy coalitions.

- People can specifically identify their representative and they know who to contact with their opinions.
- Representatives must maintain contact with the voters who will decide whether they return to the legislature.
- This system favors moderate political parties that can create coalitions to gain sizeable amounts of voters.

Professional Politicians

Transition from political leadership from successful, prominent men (elites) who served out of duty to ambitious people (many with status but it was no longer essential) who latched onto the party for personal advancement.

- Elites were also motivated by ambition

The variety and frequency of elections generated by the multilayered federal system made party management a full-time job for many.

Electoral machinery had been managed through patronage. But the system was destroyed with the reforms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Today, full-time professionals manage the parties.



Third Parties and Partisan Realignment



What drives the ideological movement of parties?

What effects do third parties have in American elections?

Miller and Schofield (2003, 245): "Politics may appear to be characterized by a single cleavage, but this is because the two parties [led by ideological activists] themselves 'organize' politics along the dimension that separates them. Party disagreement on one dimension of politics makes that dimension more salient, while the other dimension is obscured by tacit party agreement."

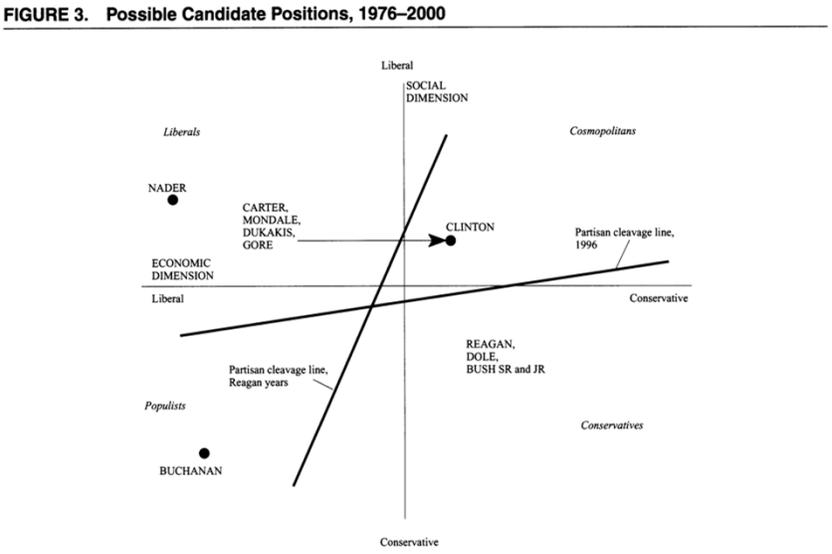
Third Parties and Partisan Realignment

TABLE 1. Reversal of Partisan Presidential Coalitions, 1896 to 2000

	Democratic 1896		Republican 1896
Democratic 2000	<i>Washington</i>		Connecticut Delaware Illinois Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota New Jersey New York Pennsylvania Rhode Island W. Virginia
Republican 2000	<i>Colorado</i> <i>Florida</i> <i>Idaho</i> <i>Kansas</i> <i>Kentucky</i> <i>Montana</i> <i>Nebraska</i> <i>S. Dakota</i> <i>Tennessee</i> <i>Utah</i> <i>Virginia</i> <i>Wyoming</i>	Alabama Arkansas Georgia Louisiana Mississippi^a Missouri Nevada N. Carolina S. Carolina Texas	<i>California</i> <i>Iowa</i> <i>Maine</i> <i>Oregon</i> <i>Vermont</i> <i>Wisconsin</i> <i>Indiana</i> <i>New Hampshire</i> <i>N. Dakota</i> <i>Ohio</i>
	23		22

Note: Italicized states are those that were Republican in 1960. Boldfaced states are those that were Democratic in 1960. $\chi^2 = 24.91$ with 3 df ($p < .005$); $r^2 = .55$.
^a Although Kennedy outpolled Nixon in Mississippi (31% to 25%), a plurality voted for electors who cast their electoral votes for segregationist Harry Byrd.

Third Parties and Partisan Realignment



Third Parties and Partisan Realignment

To maximize their vote share relative to their opponents, parties engage in “flanking” maneuvers.

For the modern Republican party, this would mean picking up economic liberals/social moderates.

Third parties – two types:

Dragging (like Ralph Nader) – encourage the party to move back to an old position.

Leading (like George Wallace) – encourage the party to adopt a new position.



"There's not a dime's worth of difference between the Democrat and Republican parties." – *Former Governor and Presidential Candidate George Wallace (D-AL)*

Development and Evolution of the Party System

First party system (1790–1824): creation of national parties.

Second party system (1824–1860): basic organizational structures set.

Third party system (1860–1894): rise of party machines.

Fourth party system (1894–1932): fall of party machines.

Fifth party system (1932–?): pattern of coalitional nature of American parties clearly illustrated.

Sixth party system (c. 1950s–1960s?)...



THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC DONKEY. Published by H. R. Robinson, N.Y. The distribution of the surplus in "pet banks" had far-reaching effects, particularly in the western part of the country. The new banks issued "wildcat" currency, and with the inflated money, speculation in land was booming. To stop it, Jackson issued "Specie Circular" which demanded hard currency—gold or silver—for payments on land from the public reserves.



Development and Evolution of the Party System



Hamilton and Jefferson as portrayed in the musical "Hamilton"

First party system (1790-1824): creation of national parties:

The American party system was born in the first few Congresses as leaders with opposing views on national issues fought to prevail. The conflict involved two opposing factions:

The Hamilton faction took the name "Federalists":

- promoted commercial and manufacturing interests following the British economic model

The Jefferson and Madison faction:

- sought to protect the interests of farmers, tradesman, and agrarian states in general, and supported diplomatic relations with France.
- Later, the Jeffersonian Republicans would become the Democratic Party (1820s), now the oldest political party in the world

Development and Evolution of the Party System



In 1800 Jefferson challenged Adams for the presidency.

- recruited candidates for state and local offices across the states
- gave Jefferson the ability to remove the Federalists and their influence from the White House and Congress

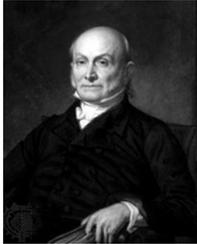
Federalists associated with unpopular policies:

- lost election and began to fade from national politics
- on wrong side of War of 1812
- Rufus King crushed by James Monroe in 1816 and Monroe reelected without significant opposition in 1820

Development and Evolution of the Party System



Treasury Secretary
William H. Crawford
(GA)



Secretary of State John
Quincy Adams (MA)

Monroe was reelected with no competition four years later. There was so little party conflict, the time was called the Era of Good Feelings.

But that did not mean there was no political conflict. There was:

- it took place within one party rather than between two



House Speaker Henry
Clay (KY)



Senator Andrew
Jackson (TN)

Presidents were nominated by congressional caucuses:

- members assembled with their allies to make party decisions. **BUT**, with the Federalists gone, almost everyone in Congress was a Democratic-Republican.
- Worked while there was consensus, but in 1824 no fewer than five serious Democratic-Republicans candidates sought the presidency.

The “Corrupt Bargain”

The presidential election of 1824 featured four serious candidates (initially five): General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee; Secretary of State John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts; Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford of Georgia and Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun of South Carolina withdrew early (became VP).



Jackson wins the popular vote. Adams finishes a close second, and Crawford edged out Clay for third place by just under 1,000 votes.

Since no candidate received a majority of the electoral votes, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. By virtue of finishing fourth, Clay was eliminated from consideration.

The “Corrupt Bargain”



Clay and Jackson did not get along...

Clay throws his support behind John Quincy Adams – who he agreed with on most political issues. This results in Adams overtaking Jackson in the House.

Clay eventually becomes Adams’ Secretary of State.

Jackson and his supporters cry foul! Partisan lines are drawn.

Development and Evolution of the Party System

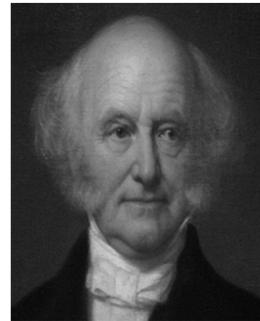
Second party system (1824-1860): basic organizational structures set.

Jackson was able to win the presidency under a new Democratic party in 1828. He trounced John Quincy Adams with help of Martin Van Buren. Established:

- central committees set up in Washington and Nashville
- promoted the formation of state organization which promoted Jackson clubs and committees in towns
- chain of newspapers established to support the cause
- local politicians saw Jackson as a vehicle for their own ambitions

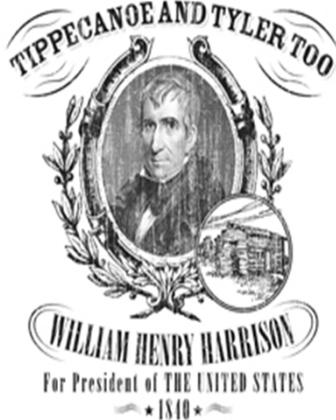
In 1832, Jackson and Van Buren introduce the national party convention. It was promoted as a more democratic alternative to the discredited congressional caucus.

- practical devise for solving problems of conflict and coordination
- occasion for assembling the national party coalition
- like a giant pep rally



“Political combinations between the inhabitants of the different states are unavoidable and the most natural and beneficial to the country is that between the planters of the South and the plain Republicans of the North.” — *Martin Van Buren*

Development and Evolution of the Party System



“Phhh...I don’t need a jacket.” —
William Henry Harrison

Jackson’s strong presidency and personality generated some opposition => led to the creation of the Whig Party (to oppose Van Buren)

The Whigs lost in 1836. Won following campaign year with a popular war hero— William Henry Harrison.

By 1840, the Whigs and Democrats were organized in every state. Competing for the presidency AND state and local elections as well

The two-party competition for president framed competition for offices at all levels of government. Parties solved the problem of free-riding endemic to mass electorates by making participation exciting and fun.

Development and Evolution of the Party System



Third party system (1860-1894):

The Republican Party:

- organized in 1854 as a coalition of forces on the issue of slavery; example of a successful challenge to the two-party system.
- Additional focus on protective tariff & a transcontinental railway as well as promising farmers free land for homesteading => appealing to business and commercial interests
- serves as one example of a successful challenge to the two-party system

Development and Evolution of the Party System



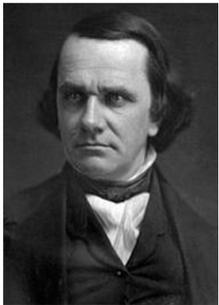
"Ride with the Devil"—possibly the best Civil War movie starring Tobey Maguire and Jewel.

Other third parties that shook the political system:

Anti-Masonic Party and American Party ["Know-Nothings"] (pre-Civil War)

- emerged during periods of economic distress and social crisis, originating as anti-parties
- both had lasting effects on the character of the major parties of their time.
- Anti-Masons joined the Whigs
- Know-Nothings joined the Republicans.

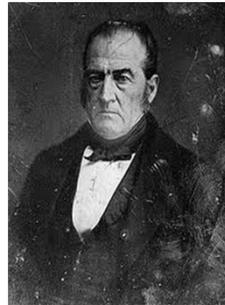
Development and Evolution of the Party System



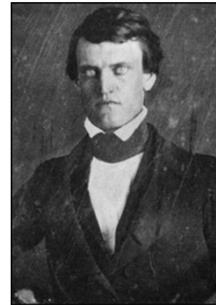
Senator Stephen A. Douglas (D-IL)



Former Representative and vampire hunter, Abraham Lincoln (R-IL)



Former Senator John Bell (CU-TN)



Vice President John C. Breckinridge (SD-KY)

After losing with their first candidate, the Republicans win with Abraham Lincoln in a complicated (and regionally split) presidential election.

- triggered South's secession from Union and then the Civil War
- Republicans emerged as the party of victory and union
- Defeated oncoming Vampire scourge

Development and Evolution of the Party System

You might be asking:

“Wow... Was that the creepiest John C. Breckinridge photo you could find?”

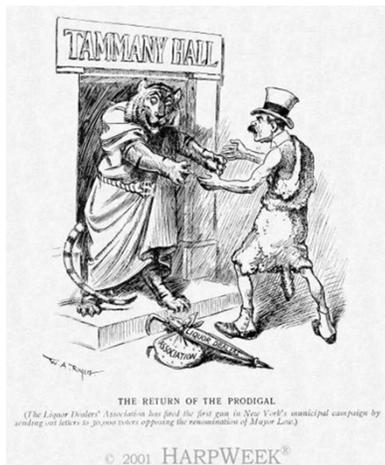
Nope. This is.



Vice President John C. Breckinridge (SD-KY)

Development and Evolution of the Party System

Party Machines:



- party organizations reached their peak of development during the third party system
- built on simple principles of exchange: favors and services for votes on election day
- Party machines were often not discernible from the local government
- regularly attacked as corrupt and inefficient

Lead to the Progressive Era. Reformers sought to destroy the machines by depriving them of patronage.

Progressives sought reforms:

- civil service reform (Pendleton Act)
- Australian (Secret) ballot
- primary elections

Development and Evolution of the Party System

Consequences of Progressive Reforms:

- Turnout declined due to tighter registration laws, the Australian ballot, and literacy tests.
- Shift from parties to candidates => seed of candidate-centered politics
- Incentives shifted from material to non-material: so did who participated: working class no longer base; middle class instead
- Parties weaker, but more entrenched => treated as quasi public entities
- Advent of primary elections encouraged dissidents to work within the established parties, ex. Tea Party 2010 – why establish a new party if easy to convert an established party to the cause?



Development and Evolution of the Party System



“You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.” –*William Jennings Bryan, July 9, 1896*

Fourth party system (1894-1932):

From the end of Reconstruction in 1876 until 1896, the third American party system settled into place.

The Democrats and Republicans competed on nearly even terms.

In 1896, however, the Democrats reacted to a severe economic downturn by adopting the People’s Party (Populist) platform.

- they nominated William Jennings Bryan as their presidential nominee

Development and Evolution of the Party System

Democrats supported Populist monetary policy (making silver as well as gold a monetary standard):

- doing so would increase the money supply
- ease interest rates
- and therefore lift the pressure on debtors, which included farmers and westerners



Republicans were able to paint these policies as unsound (a scheme), convincing urban workers that it was a threat to their jobs.

Republicans framed Democrats as taken over by agrarian interests.

Doing so gave the Republicans a majority:

- **BUT**, the Great Depression

Development and Evolution of the Party System

Fifth Party System (1932-??)



FDR and the New Deal Coalition:

- white segregationists with northern African Americans
- progressive intellectuals with urban machine politicians
- union members and poor farmers
- Catholics and Baptists

The Republican coalition was a smaller, inverted image of the Democratic coalition:

- business and professional people
- upper-income Protestants
- residents of small towns and cities in the Northeast and the Midwest

Only after promise not to repeal the New Deal, but to administer it frugally, election of Republican Eisenhower in 1952

Development and Evolution of the Party System



Economic Erosion of New Deal Coalition:

The first and most important issue was civil rights for African Americans.

- Democrats took on fight for civil rights
- Republicans used states rights appeal
- Southern Democrats began to leave party: Wallace
- Vietnam splintered Democrats as well – along class lines
- Great Society – lacked general appeal—too focused/economy tightened

Republicans

- Infighting between conservative and moderate wings
- Goldwater debacle in 1964

Development and Evolution of the Party System

Republicans gradually recovered from their tremendous loss in 1964

Nixon, Reagan, and Bush built winning coalitions

- Combined affluent economic conservatives with middle, working class social conservatives and the Christian Right.
- They declared war on taxation, regulation, and welfare.
- Made prominent their concerns over law and order and traditional family values.
- Neither party has a completely stable and unified coalition.



Primaries and Conventions

The nomination process enables the parties to solve the coordination problem posed by competing presidential aspirants:

- sometimes party elites do the coordinating (George W. Bush in 2000)
- sometimes an individual caucus (Iowa in 2004) or primary may help generate the consensus favorite (John McCain in 2008, Obama and Clinton in 2008)
- 2008 and 2016 emphasize the importance of the rules. These vary by state.
- Superdelegates: A delegate to the Democratic National Convention who is eligible to attend because or she is an elected party official. The Democrats reserve a specific set of delegate slots for party officials.



Primaries and Conventions



Conventions no longer choose the party's candidate; caucus activists and voters in primaries do. They are important because of the image of the party that it portrays:

- In 2008, both parties' conventions became venues for patching up party divisions arising from the bruising primary season as well as for trumpeting the candidates central themes for the fall

Display at convention is not without risk:

- party activists often hold more extreme views on the issues of the day than do ordinary party voters

Party Differences

Republicans:

- Tend to favor a smaller, cheaper federal government.
- Advocate lower taxes.
- Prefer less regulation of business.
- Advocate lower spending on social welfare.
- Let free enterprise flourish.
- Are more generous only to the Defense Department.
- Would ban abortion and gay marriage.
- Allow official prayer in public schools.

Note: not all members of a party support their party's modal positions.



Party Differences

Democrats:

- Are more inclined to regulate business in behalf of consumers and the environment.
- Are more supportive of government programs designed to improve domestic welfare.
- Would spend less on national defense.
- Are more concerned with “fairness” and equality.
- Support legal abortion.
- Do not support official prayer in school.

Note: not all members of a party support their party's modal positions.



Partisanship Endures

Today party coalitions still retain strong traces of the New Deal alignment.

- Lower-income voters are still more likely to be Democrats.
- Higher-income voters are more likely to be Republicans.
- African Americans strongly loyal to the Democratic party.
- Men have become more Republican
- Women have not — creating the famous “gender gap” between parties.
- Democratic advantage among Catholics has shrunk.
- Regular churchgoers of all kinds have become more Republican.
- During the Reagan years, electorate became more Republican, less Democratic.
- During G.W. Bush administration trend began to move in the opposite direction.



Changes in the Party Coalitions



These changes suggest that a sixth party system is now in place. But the changes have occurred gradually and at different times, so the new system’s starting date is unclear.

Most salient change:

- Republicans grew stronger. Democrats maintain an edge in party identifiers, but those who vote at higher rates tend to be Republicans (higher levels of formal education and higher incomes).

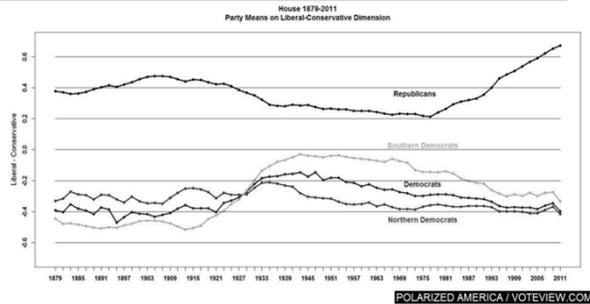
A second distinctive feature is that partisan differences on issues and policy are wider and deeper than they have been during the New Deal party system.

- Polarization, both of elites and activists and those who simply vote

Polarized Parties

“Polarization is Real (and Asymmetric),” Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, and Chris Hare, [the MonkeyCage](#), 1/15/12

The recent outburst of scholarly and popular interest in political polarization has attracted attention to the methods we use to measure this phenomenon. One frequently voiced is that Congress may not have polarized as we have claimed in publications and blogs stretching as far back as 1984...



With the use of overlapping cohorts, we can make the over-time comparisons needed to analyze polarization. A good example is Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), who, after his primary defeat last week, will have served in the Senate between 1977 and 2013. As David Karol points out, Lugar himself did not change very much over time: he was a reliable conservative who moved only somewhat towards the center during a 30-plus year career (from a DW-NOMINATE first dimension score of 0.348 to 0.241). DW-NOMINATE scores range (with slight simplification) from -1 to +1 or a band of two units. So in 30 years, Senator Lugar moved just five percent on the liberal-conservative dimension.

The public policy consequences of polarization are immense. Bipartisan agreements to address looming issues like the budget deficits, spending on entitlement programs, and immigration are now almost impossible to reach. In contrast, during Ronald Reagan's administration, about 40% of the members of Congress could be described as moderates. Reagan was thus able to forge major bipartisan agreements to cut taxes in 1981, raise taxes in 1982, fix Social Security (the Greenspan Commission) in 1983, and pass immigration reform (which included amnesty) and major tax simplification in 1986.

Polarization is real...and it is making the United States dysfunctional.

Parties Revisited



Expediency persists: Parties developed and continue to endure because they have proven so useful to politicians and voters.

Basic pattern of two party competition continues:

- two broad, fractious coalitions persists
- party coalitions remain fractious because party entrepreneurs pursuing majorities must combine diverse groups that are neither natural allies nor disposed to pay high conformity costs for the sake of the party.

Despite disdain, voters still rely heavily on party cues.

Party entrepreneurs have simply redesigned party organizations to operate more effectively in today's media-based, candidate-centered electoral arena.

Conclusion



Questions?

Enjoy the rest of your week!