Chapter 9
Political Parties

The history of the political party system

• George Washington opposed the notion of political parties.
• Immediately the politicians divided into Federalists and Anti-Federalists.
• Even in Washington’s cabinet there were two distinct camps.
  • Washington was a general as much as a politician. He might not have felt comfortable amidst political debate.
  • Washington presided at political functions, but there is not much evidence that he engaged in political activity.
  • His hope that there’d be no political parties, that is, no partisanship was impractical, if not naïve.
• His cabinet was divided into two opposing groups.
• The Constitutional debate produced two groups; those who favored its approval and those who opposed it.
  • Some constitutional scholars believe that party loyal actually harms the separation of powers the Founders intended for the government.
• That is, when one party dominates all three branches of the government they begin to allow party loyalty (partisanship) dominate their performance and results in an “imperial presidency.”

The present-day formation began in 1860

• At the end of the Civil War:
• Democrats were the conservatives
• Republicans were the liberals.
• Democrats would allow slavery to continue
• Republicans opposed slavery in any form.
  • The GOP was formed just before the 1860 election.
  • The GOP (Grand Old Party) is not the older of the two major parties.
  • The Democrats can trace their roots back about 30 years more than the Republicans to the administration of Andrew Jackson.

The Big Switch

• Beginning 100 years ago the parties switched ideological positions.
• Progressives move from Republican to Democrat.
• Teddy Roosevelt was a progressive
• Just completed in the last 25 years.
  • The success of the Republican party as the more progressive party and the one that had opposed slavery result in becoming the dominant political party.
  • The South would be solidly Democratic upon its return to national politics because of the Republican opposition to slavery and its desire to punish the South following the Civil War.
  • This changed only in the last 30 years when the Democrats promoted civil rights for African Americans.
  • Segregationist Democrats began leaving the Democratic Party for the Republican Party.
  • The industrialist and their political allies worked within that dominant party, the Republicans, to further their political interests.
  • Some political historians believe the influx of recent immigrants changed the character of the Democratic Party.
  • European immigrants with communal notions of social welfare and responsibility brought their values into the Democratic Party.

How the political parties have change in 25 years

• The parties were once alliances of liberals and conservatives
• What varied was what branch controlled
• Democrats advocate civil rights for African Americans
• Southern Conservatives leave Democratic Party for Republican Party
  • There were liberal (or moderate ) Republicans in greater numbers in the past.
  • There are still a handful of moderate-liberal Republican Senators:
    • Susan Collins of Maine
    • Olympia Snow of Maine
    • Lincoln Chaffee of Rhode Island
    • Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania
  • Senator James Jeffords left the Republican Party in 2001 to become an independent that sat with the Democrats because he believed he was being punished by the Republican leadership for his liberalism.
  • There are about a dozen moderate Republican congressmen and congresswomen in the House of Representatives.
Why The Change?

- Barry Goldwater’s candidacy appeals to Southern Democrats
- Though not personally a racist Goldwater opposed most forms of federal power.
- Federal authority was what made integration & civil rights possible
- Racists sought refuge in Goldwater’s interpretation of conservative federalism.
- Frustrated by the Democrats’ advocacy of Civil Rights primarily, but also to a lesser degree by gun control, and other positions deemed “liberal,” the states that once made up the Confederacy gradually drift to the Republican party.
- The Conservatives who had been historically members of the Democratic Party because of the Republican Party’s advocacy of the end of slavery during the Civil War, now shift to the party which is promoting state’s rights, which was a philosophy which enabled southern states to delay granting civil rights to African Americans.

Republicans up to 1960

- Midwest and Western conservatives
- The remnants of populists
- Eastern liberals-- Rippon Society
- Nelson Rockefeller-liberal
- Richard Nixon-conservative
- Spiro Agnew- liberal turns conservative
- George H.W. Bush - liberal turns conservative.
- Republican liberals, such as Mayor John Lindsey of New York City, were a minority in Republican Party, but were a far larger minority than today.
- Some conservative members of the Republican Party are actually advocating that a liberal Republican is “A Republican in Name Only,” sometimes called a RINO.
- There are conservative political committees formed to remove all RINOs from the Republican Party.
- Republican leaders in the Senate know that this could be a dangerous approach because without Republican moderates and liberals they would not have a majority in the Senate.
- Conversely there are two or three Democrats in the Senate who are far more conservative than the party.
- Senator Zell Miller, who spoke at the Republican National Convention in 2004, was a Democratic Senator at the time.
Democrats

- Urban political machines
- Liberals
- Ethnic minorities
- Most labor
- A few remaining Southern conservatives.
  - Immigrants change the character of the Democratic Party.
  - They bring their more communal view of social obligation, common to Europe, into the American political culture.
  - Immigrants and their children turn to the Democratic party to address the abuses of the poorer classes of which most immigrants belong.
  - Urban political machines were corrupt before the immigrants arrived, but the first few generations of immigrants (and their children) do nothing to reform the corruption.

Parties are now ideologically defined

- Conservative Democrats become Republicans
- Liberal Republicans become independents
- Only a handful of liberal Republicans are left— they are called RINOS by most conservative Republicans.
- Republicans in name only.
  - Both parties attempt to apply a rigorous ideological standard to party membership.
  - Governor Howard Dean, now Democratic Party National Chairman, says he represents the “Democratic wing of the Democratic Party.”
  - This has not been the history of the parties, in the past they have been alliances of people with different perspectives but common goals.

Ideologies are a self-defined label

- When party membership was easily defined your allegiances were more easily surmised— either a party member or not
- Ideological identifications are subjective, self-defined
- Extremists don’t think they are extreme.
- Place on Liberal– Conservative continuum is in many ways subjective.
• A person who identifies themselves as “conservative” or “liberal” (and labeling others ideologically) is assigning a rigorous identity to what is a collection of beliefs.
• Sometimes this collection of beliefs is consistent logically, sometimes it is not.
• Example: According to many conservatives the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is “evil,” the Defense Department is “good.” Both are divisions of the executive branch of the federal government and subsequently are both the responsibility of the president.
• We are seeing repeated examples of the transient nature of some beliefs allegedly based on ideology.
• Republicans favor the primacy of state’s rights except when they are in control of all three branches of the federal government.
• Terry Schiavo case (2005) Congress intervenes to overrule state courts which decided that life support could be withdrawn from a comatose patient.
• *Bush v. Gore* (2000)—where conservative members of the U.S. Supreme Court overrule the Florida state Supreme Court on interpretations of Florida law.
• *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) forces testing for students on the individual states.

**Religious Conservatives**

• Might not admit it but does not believe in the separation of church and state.
• America is a Protestant nation founded on Protestant values.
• Protestant prayers in public schools
• Vouchers to enable schools with religious affiliations to obtain tax support.
• Though Jefferson’s positions about the separation of church and state have been exaggerated based on one letter, what is lost is that Jefferson saw turmoil among feuding Protestants.
• Jefferson was not a Christian in that he did not believe in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth.
• Once a religion advances a theological position for consideration as public policy it becomes debatable for the theological position itself to be challenged.
• Example: When Protestants sought to restrict business on Sunday in what was called “Blue Laws,” in keeping with the Ten Commandments, it could accurately be argued that Saturday was the true Sabbath of the Biblical reference.

**The Founders and Religion**

• About 60% of Founders were practicing Protestants,
• the rest were non-practicing Protestants, deists, Unitarians, and one Catholic (Charles Carroll of Maryland).
• Most supported Jefferson’s belief in the separation of church and state.
Jefferson believed that feuds among Protestant denominations would be detrimental to public order. Founders were far more concerned with “what would work” than ideology. They were pragmatists. They knew that religion was a source of unnecessary turmoil among people. England had encouraged religious dissenters to emigrate from England so that they would not upset the political and cultural environment with their challenge of the official Church of England (called Anglican in England and Canada, and Episcopal in the United States).

**Fiscal conservative**

- balanced budget
- opposes all forms of welfare
- little if any income tax
- Social Darwinist to the extent that the government should not ameliorate poverty
- Now they claim that the budget does not have to be balanced to allow tax reduction.
- Conservatives promote a “balance budget amendment.”
- President George W. Bush promotes himself as a “conservative” but has run up the biggest federal deficits in U.S. history.
- These people believe that government should not be involved in battling poverty or providing health services.
- These conservatives principles are sound in that government cannot run huge deficits over long periods and remain solvent.
- However, these fiscal conservatives apply their protestations and prohibitions selectively, opposing deficit spending for health care and social welfare, but allowing it for military expenditures.

**Social conservative**

- See a broad moral decline in society
- Opposes Gay & Lesbian rights.
- Often a refuge for racists, bigots when moral decline attributed to minorities
- Generally Social Darwinists
- In the most extreme form, sometimes pathological, general malcontents.
- Some social conservatives sincerely believe the world is getting worse. They do not attribute it to any ethnic group, but believe it is caused by a decline in religious observance.
- These people believe that gays are inherently immoral and any effort to tolerate them is promoting sinfulness.
Almost every generation in recorded history, in nearly every culture, had writers who lamented about the decline in morals, civility, and culture.

Other social conservatives believe the decline of society is caused by the rise of minority rights—these people are bigots—or uninformed people who mistakenly hold bigoted views.

**Political conservative**

- believes in limited government
- opposes all gun control
- Favors state’s rights over federal rights
- Premise is that states are closer to the people than is the federal government
- **Reality:** a smaller portion of the electorate vote in state elections they are easier to control by a well-organized minority.

What is strange about the current generation of political conservatives is that they seem willing to abandon their distaste for big government and advocacy of states’ rights now that they control all three branches of the federal government.

There is one theory that some who professes to be conservative are not philosophically bound to any ideology but who are part of an elite who will adopt any political ideology which furthers or sustains their hold on power.

**Legacy Shaped by History**

- The western states were made by the federal government.
- Government involvement dates to the federal government’s acquisition
- The Civil War led to enormous governmental growth.-Reconstruction
- Great Depression was the failure of laissez faire economics to self-regulate.
  - Ironically, areas of the country (or segments of the population) that seem to most resent federal authority played significant roles in the growth of the same.
- The federal government’s role in developing the western states was critical.
- The Southern states rebelled forcing the federal government to conquer the region, administer the region, and spend vast sums to rebuild it.
- America’s emergence as an imperial power, the greatest cause for the increase in federal power, was the product of the need to protect and expand international business interests of American enterprises.
- The Great Depression was an economic disaster which almost put an end to this country as it is known. There would have been a United States, but with more than 33% of the population facing abject poverty, it would have been like one of those South American dictatorships where large portions
of the population lived in squalor and a government in constant fear that the poor would rise up in armed revolt.

**Ideological Inconsistencies**

- Don’t believe in helping individuals in economic trouble but believe in helping corporations in economic trouble
- Want a large active military, but don’t want to ever use them anywhere—This has changed with the Iraq Invasion.
- Most police officers (many are conservatives) favor gun control.
- The world is complex—ideologies attempt to simplify the complexities.
- Conservatives are like Marxists in that they seem to believe that their ideological perspective has answers for every ill facing society.

**What is a liberal?**

- **Conservative**: A liberal is anyone who questions the opinions of a conservative.
- Moderates are called liberal
- Civil rights
- Limited right to abortion
- Programs for the poor.
- Employment training.
  - With the advent of talk radio, the ideological conflict has become more pronounced.
  - Conservative (and only recently liberal) commentators have become more aggressive in setting the tone for the political debate.
  - In an effort to be more entertaining, thus increasing a listening audience, and hence making more money, the talk radio personalities have become more outrageous in their assertions, and more confrontational in their approach.
  - What might be good entertainment on the radio is bad politics in a political culture where civility in debate is essential to a functioning government.
- The Founders intended compromise to be the lubricant of government—politics based on extreme ideological views make compromise difficult if not impossible.
- McCarthyism—Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin accuse many loyal Americans who were merely liberal of being Communists. Anytime someone questions the loyalty of political dissenters it is often called McCarthyism.
Values Shared by Ideologies

- Different interpretations on critical issues and principles
- Education
- Privacy
- Due process
- Law and order
- First Amendment.
- The ideologies of left and right approach issues differently. Their positions are inconsistent when one takes the principles articulated and attempts to apply it to all issues.
- Here are some examples of inconsistencies:
- Conservatives promote themselves as “pro-life” but then turn to war as an option when there appears to be non-violent solutions still to be played out.
- Liberals believe in “total free speech” when opposing any form of censorship but advocate the removal of a college president who expresses views that might be offensive to women.

Education

- **Liberal**: Schools are inferior because they are under-funded in facing society’s problems
- **Conservative**: Schools are inferior because of poor teaching; teacher’s unions.
- **Liberal**: The answer is to better fund schools
- **Conservative**: Allow non-teachers to teach; allow taxpayers to go to any school with voucher; close underperforming schools. Turn schools over to private enterprise.
- These are simplistic examples of complex arguments, but the fact is that talk radio has so dominated the political environment and they have attempted to make the debate more visceral, more simplistic.

Limits on access to firearms

- **Liberal**: Firearms lead to more than 30,000 deaths annually (including suicide); should be regulated.
- **Conservative**: Firearm ownership is protected by the Constitution.
- **Liberal**: Outlaw handguns & automatic weapons and regulate all other firearms.
- **Conservative**: Enforce existing laws so that criminals will not use firearms to kill.
Conservative activists who believe that any form of gun control is unworkable and believe that all that is needed is for laws to be enforced have no explanation for Columbine-like killing sprees where the killers intend to die and take innocent people with them.

**Affirmative Action**

*Liberal*: By virtue of 300 years of slavery followed by 140 years of discrimination African Americans are due preferential treatment in hiring and advancement

*Conservative*: Addressing past discrimination with new discrimination is unfair to those who will be excluded for opportunities by race; solutions should be color-blind.

**Unrestricted abortion Rights**

*Liberal*: A woman has the right to decide whether to bring a child to full term

*Conservative*: Abortion is a form of murder; there is no right to have one

*Moderate*: Up until a point when the fetus is viable abortion should be allowed, after that point it should not be allowed

**Gay Rights**

*Liberal*: Being gay is just like any other minority status; something that you are born with which should not be the basis for discrimination.

*Conservative*: Being gay is a form of moral depravity which should be as illegal as immoral.

**Unlimited welfare**

*Liberal*: America has the responsibility to care for the poor and those who have met with some of economic hardship.

*Conservative*: Most poor people face that condition due to their own failings. It should not be the responsibility of taxpayers to help those not industrious enough to help themselves.

**Political Parties as Instruments for Incumbent Protection**

*The New York ballot requirement process*

*One of the most restrictive in the nation.*

*Outrageous rules designed to make challenging incumbents almost impossible*

*Both Parties support and use these restrictions*
A Process Designed to protect incumbents

- Signatures must be secured in each congressional district, not statewide.
- The person carrying petition must be from district.
- If you signed another petition you cannot sign any other.

What This Process Counts On

- Congressional districts change every 10 years
- Many people don’t know their district
- Boundaries can change from one side of the street to the other and many don’t know it.

More Absurdly Restrictive Rules

- There can be no errors.
- Example: If you don’t list your town correctly your signature is invalid.
- Town affiliations are the least known.
- Town lines vary from school district lines.

New York State Names are Inconsistent

- Town names are different than addresses.
- You can have your address on your license say you live in town X because that is the post office serving you, you really live in the town Y.
- Solution: you must read the name on the snow plow or the road repair truck

An Example of Working this Anti-democratic system

- In 2000, Bush’s organization obtained 90,000 signatures when they only needed 15,000.
- This meant that McCain had to get his signatures from people other than those 90,000 Republicans.
- The courts ruled in McCain’s favor.

Democrats Almost as Bad

- Organizations tries to block Paul Tsongas in 1992
• They would likely more quickly abandon their support if the Republicans agreed because of pressure from the national organization
• In regions of other states where Democrats are in control are as restrictive

The Courts Have Tried to Intervene

• The courts have ruled that the procedures are unreasonable.
• Neither party has moved to make substantive changes.
• No changes until courts strike down process.
• Is there a need for federal legislation?
• Remember: the state is the sovereign unit.