

The New Political History

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It is now commonplace to refer to the emergence in recent years of a new political history. For most scholars, textual sources still constitute the mainstay for research in past politics and empathy remains a primary means to historical understanding. Narrative and often episodic accounts that provide detailed descriptions of the behavior and presumed motives and attitudes of individuals and groups still dominate the literature of political history. At the same time, however, a growing minority of students of past politics have begun to exploit formerly neglected types of source materials, to employ new methods, and to pursue new research themes and problems. The consequence has been the emergence of a literature that seems in many cases to have little in common with conventional political historiography.

Yet commentators and practitioners alike differ in their delineations of the characteristics of the new political history. For some, the quantitative efforts of historians are of central importance, but the

view that underlies this essay is substantially different. We believe that any discussion of new developments in the study of past politics must necessarily pass beyond the work of historians. Many of the most innovative and important contributions of recent years to the study of past politics have come from students of disciplines other than history. Moreover, one of the most gratifying recent developments in the study of historical politics has been the growing interdisciplinary cooperation.

In our view, references to a new political history should include a broad array of developments. Among these are growing emphasis on comparative inquiry; concern for analysis of political change whether described as political modernization, development or under some other label; growing interest in the use of scientific approaches and in the development of empirically based theory; and growing methodological sophistication. Various recent and highly quantitative studies of historical politics, on the other hand, merely use new methods and sources in attempting to describe the past.

We have not attempted to provide a comprehensive review of the literature of the new quantitative history, nor are we prescribing the ways in which the politics of the past ought to be studied. Rather, we welcome a diversity of interests, orientations, and goals. Our interest, however, lies in progress, or lack thereof, toward development of scientific approaches to the study of the past defined in terms of the contemporary behavioral sciences. The following section considers aspects of the new political history of the United States viewed from this perspective. We have focussed on developments in the United States because of our familiarity with them, but investigation of the political past of the United States has also been characterized by much experimentation and both the successes and false starts characteristic of this work are of interest. A second section is addressed to broader-scale comparative studies in historical politics.

THE NEW POLITICAL HISTORY: THE UNITED STATES

When viewed superficially at least, the new political historians of the United States have addressed themes similar to those of interest to political specialists in other disciplines, including popular participation in politics, the behavior of the mass electorate, and the characteristics and behavior of elite groups. But there are also differences—some of them profound. The historians have devoted relatively less attention to

political parties as central focii of inquiry, and have tended to neglect institutional factors such as electoral law and procedures although noteworthy exceptions may be cited. (Rusk, 1970, 1971, 1974; Burnham, 1965, 1970, 1974). Of greater importance, much of the new political history of the United States has focussed on relatively narrow topics of a short time span, often topics of long standing historical concern, such as the nature of the progressive movement or of Radical Reconstruction. The focus of such conventional historical inquiry tends, therefore, to be episodic. As a consequence, such publications tend to present an essentially static view of politics and do not involve analysis and explanation of change. Moreover, the view of politics that emerges from the new political history of the United States tends to be excessively compartmentalized and the interrelations between elements of the political system are rarely explored directly by the use of empirical methods. But the work of the new historians has also substantially modified our understanding of the historical political processes of the United States.

From a number of perspectives, the most impressive and important product of these new approaches has been the so-called ethnocultural synthesis. Stated in simplified form, this synthesis finds in ethnic and cultural—particularly religious—attachments the primary basis of cleavages within the mass electorate of the nineteenth century and, to a lesser extent, that of the twentieth century as well. First propounded by Benson (1954, 1958, 1961) and subsequently elaborated by Hays (1960, 1964) in somewhat different form, this view found substantial empirical support in the work of Holt (1969), Luebke (1969), Kleppner (1970), Jensen (1971), Allswang (1971), and numerous others. By the early 1970s some believed the ethnocultural interpretation to be the most important interpretive development in American political history since Turner enunciated the frontier hypothesis. On the other hand, members of the ethnocultural persuasion sometimes appeared to be replacing a monocausal and simplistic economic interpretation with an equally simplistic and monocausal cultural interpretation.

The ethnocultural synthesis has demonstrated the utility of new methods and approaches to the study of the past, the potential value of historical inquiry for social scientific knowledge, and less explicitly, the value of the related social sciences in historical investigation. Despite the important reorientation that it has produced, this interpretation presents historians with a number of highly important and difficult problems. In some of their work, the ethnoculturalists have sought not only to assess the nature and strength of the relations between objective ethnocultural characteristics and objective political

behavior, but also have explained that relationship in terms of attitudinal and motivational factors. In effect, they postulated a highly consistent belief system which subsumed attitudes toward diverse areas of life and which linked together (1) the theological principles and views of various religious and ethnic groups, (2) the standards and norms of individual behavior characteristic of those groups, and (3) their partisan attachments and policy preferences. Put simply, ritualistic religious groups, believing in salvation by faith alone and tolerant approach to such matters of personal conduct as the use of liquor, preferred the Democratic Party, a passive government, and public policy that tolerated diversity. The pietists, believing in salvation by works and in public enforcement of right standards of personal conduct—defined, of course, by their own criteria—supported the Republican Party, a strong government, and public policy that enforced high standards of public and private morality.

However plausible, the formulation requires several comments. The attitudinal aspect of the ethnocultural synthesis raises major and general issues of historical research and interpretation—problems of data and measurement. That religion and religious issues were serious matters in the nineteenth century seems undeniable, but systematic empirical data are weak indeed. Church membership, attendance, and nominal identification cannot consistently be distinguished and estimates of each of these forms of religious affiliation have varied (Wright, 1973). At best, moreover, the interpretation in question involves concepts that are either unmeasured or measured in highly indirect and dubious fashion. Even if unmeasured differences between church membership, attendance, and nominal identification are assumed away, there is no direct means of ascertaining that individuals affiliated with a particular religious denomination held particular theological views much less to measure the strength with which those views were held. The presence of these attitudes can only be inferred from the formal theological tenets of the denomination, from the pronouncements of clergy and other church officials, or from the testimony of outside observers. By the same token, the presence of particular standards of correct personal conduct on the part of the rank and file affiliates of religious denominations can only be inferred from the formal tenets of the denomination and from the pronouncements and exhortations of denominational leaders and spokesmen.

The same difficulties are present where inferences bearing on the partisan attachments and policy preferences of the mass electorate are

concerned. In the most basic sense, only two types of data are available on which to base such inferences: the recorded observations and opinions of members of elite groups and the data of voting behavior. The frailties of the first type of data as a basis for inferences about mass attitudes are well known, and on any particular occasion a variety of attitudes, singly, or in combination, can be postulated as compatible with an observed pattern of voting behavior. Voting returns cannot demonstrate that observed behavioral consistency was based on attitudinal attachments to the parties, or any other factor, nor can that data establish in any straightforward way the policy preferences of the electorate. Such problems, of course, are not unique to the ethnocultural interpretation or to the new political history nor do they undermine their value.

A conceptual irony of the intellectual history of the ethnocultural interpretation can also be noted. In his early formulations of the interpretation, Benson emphasized reference-group theory, citing the work of Robert E. Merton (1957). At some points he seemed to treat ethnocultural groups as no more than a specific case of the general reference-group phenomena. In subsequent formulations of the ethnocultural interpretation, reference-group theory and its various conceptual elements were largely lost. Despite some exceptions to this generalization, reference-group theory was, in effect, specialized and used to explain a specific case, the choice of party affiliation among the members of a specific historical group; thus a specific example of a general class of phenomena—reference group decision-making—became the focus of attention, and the general class and theory were ignored. In social science it is the theory that is important, rather than specific examples of its application, and the goal is to generalize rather than to specialize theories. From this point of view, the major value of the ethnocultural research lies in demonstrating that reference group concepts apply in earlier historical eras which in turn increases confidence in the utility and generality of this body of concepts.

The strategy of the ethnocultural historians has been unfortunate in another respect as well. If they had retained the concept of multiple-reference groups and group memberships already developed by social scientists, for example, we might have eliminated much of the either/or character of the debate over the ethnocultural interpretation, reconciled the apparent antinomy between ethnocultural groups on the one hand and occupational, class, status, and other groups on the other, and devoted more attention to assessing the relative weight of multiple factors in explaining behavior. Had the concept of group pressures toward attitudinal and behavioral agreement and conformity been

retained, less attention might have been directed to assigning specific attitudes to particular groups and more to the actual operation of group processes.

A further characteristic of the ethnocultural interpretation requires comment. As McCormick (1974) points out, the interpretation as usually stated does not look toward identification of the linkages between the processes and institutions of government, on the one hand, and mass political phenomena, on the other. If anything, indeed, the formulation, as usually stated, suggests a sharp discontinuity between these aspects of political life. Hays (1967), drawing on the work of Merton and others, has suggested a formulation intended to bridge this gap by postulating a "local-cosmopolitan continuum." Ethnocultural voting patterns, he suggested, reflected community-level perceptions and interests, although there seems no reason in principle why ethnocultural attitudes might not be cosmopolitan, no less than local in orientation. But as stated, the formulation seems to reinforce the bifurcation between mass politics and elite politics and government. Popular interests seemingly do not involve concern for cosmopolitan issues and where cosmopolitan issues are concerned, elites and government officials are essentially free of public pressures.

Since the ethnocultural research has largely focussed on relatively limited temporal eras, its authors have shown little explicit interest in examining the determinants and processes of change. Indeed, by insisting on the continuing primary salience of ethnocultural determinants throughout the twentieth century, these researchers have implicitly emphasized continuity as opposed to change. The formulation, however, is not necessarily static and various researchers working within the orientation have explicitly or implicitly tried to link their research to a second major area of inquiry, as yet concerned primarily with electoral politics. Investigators in this area are concerned explicitly with the type of political change involved in the phenomenon of partisan or critical realignment. Periodicity in American politics has long intrigued social scientists, and it is not surprising, therefore, that political scientists and other social scientists have played the dominant role in developing this aspect of the new political history.

The current interest in realignment research began, and remains heavily concerned, with certain regularities that have marked the political history of the United States. These observed regularities provided the basis for the typology of elections begun by Key (1955), expanded on somewhat different grounds by Campbell et al. (1966), and further expanded by Pomper (1967). Numerous investigations have provided evidence that a high degree of stability characterized the partisan

distribution of the popular vote and partisan control of government in the past. That stability has been periodically interrupted by realigning elections which involve lasting shifts in the partisan distribution of the popular vote and in partisan control of the institutions of government toward one or the other parties. The periods that follow such elections are viewed as characterized by more or less consistent domination of government by the party advantaged by the realignment and by relatively stable alignments of voters and groups within the mass electorate. From this perspective, elections during these periods of stability are classified as either maintaining, the partisan distribution of the popular vote does not change significantly, or deviating, a temporary shift in that distribution occurs and the patterns of partisan control of government are briefly interrupted. Burnham (1967, 1970) has described these successive stable periods as "party systems."

Stated in such terms, the research on partisan realignment amounts to little more than a systematic empirical description and classification of aspects of the historical past. Moreover, in much of the research, scholars have tried merely to refine the description of the realignment phenomenon.

Although the fact is frequently neglected by investigators, and perhaps particularly by historians, some of the formulations of the realignment perspective are related to the broader conceptual framework elaborated in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960) and in other publications by the same (1966) and other scholars. This framework also draws on reference group formulations and views individual members of the electorate as marked by enduring psychological identifications of varying strengths with the parties—identifications that are produced and sustained primarily by primary and secondary group processes. Political parties are seen as reference groups which, by their nature, are politicized. The members of other reference groups—such as trade unions, occupational groups, religious denominations, and ethnic groups—tend to share political valences which can either reinforce or cross-cut the partisan identification of their members. The political valences of groups may be either active or latent and may be activated or deactivated by the characteristics of candidates and campaigns, by particular issues or other stimuli. On the basis of the distribution of individual partisan identifications measured through sample-survey research, a normal vote can be constructed which is simply the standing strength of the parties in terms of the number of identifiers adjusted by the propensity of various population groups to turn out to vote. In realigning elections the underlying distribution of partisan identification changes. In this form, the realignment

perspective is related to a social-psychological conceptualization of mass-voting behavior.

The realignment perspective is primarily concerned with the behavior of the mass electorate. In some of its formulations, however, the perspective looks toward, albeit very tentatively and in limited ways, an explanation of political change and of the relation between the behavior of the individual components of the electorate, on the one hand, and the performance of government, on the other. Partisan realignments are frequently seen as involving significant change in the direction of governmental action and policy-making. The following stable periods, on the other hand, are seen as marked at best by an absence of innovative policy-making (Burnham, 1970; Sundquist, 1973; Burnham et al., forthcoming). These views, of course, lead toward research seeking the causes of realignments and the innovative bursts of policy change that are seen as accompanying them. To date, the occurrence of realignments has been explained primarily in terms of exogenous factors in the form of crises, usually of an economic nature. Burnham has also suggested that because of the bias against change in the United States political system, it has a strong propensity to produce crises. At this point, however, none of these views is convincingly supported by empirical research.

As is to be expected in pioneering research, some of the early contributions to both the ethnocultural and realignment formulations were open to criticisms of a technical nature. Although in his early formulations of the ethnocultural interpretation Benson stressed the need for multivariate analytic approaches, much of the early work, including Benson's was based heavily on univariate distributions and bivariate comparisons. By the same token, some of those investigating realignment phenomena were overly restrictive in trying to identify the correlates of change in realignment eras. In their use of evidence, both groups have been primarily restricted to aggregate electoral data and, initially, the pitfalls of ecological inference in such research were not well understood by the historians involved, leading to dubious methods and potentially fallacious conclusions.

Both types of researchers also have been constrained by the fact that their data reflect behavior and not necessarily, motives or attitudes. Although both types of analysis are concerned with partisan consistency in voting behavior, this can only, except in a very few instances, be inferred from the observed stability of the partisan distribution of the aggregate vote. While that distribution has appeared to be highly stable historically, a stable distribution of the aggregate vote does not necessarily demonstrate partisan consistency in individual voting behavior.

Indeed, forthcoming research suggests greater volatility in this respect than some versions of the realignment perspective seem to tolerate. Finally, both the ethnoculturalist and the realignment analyst have, on occasion, used a case-study approach which has provided results of dubious general application. But growing technical sophistication and improvements in research design suggest that both ethnocultural and realignment analysis provide starting points for further fruitful activity.

Research efforts have not been confined, of course, to the examination of electoral behavior, and, in fact, extensive attention was devoted to the characteristics and behavior of political elites. Here we will concentrate attention on two subareas of elite analysis: (1) investigations of legislative phenomena which involved a heavy emphasis on the recorded votes of members of legislative bodies, and (2) investigation of the characteristics of political elites by drawing on information recorded in biographical directories and other similar sources. These were once viewed as particularly promising fields for empirical inquiry into the historical politics of the United States. But after the production of a considerable volume of research, scholarly concern declined until recently when indications of renewed interest appeared.

Neither the characteristics of the available data nor of the analytical tools available explain the diminishing of interest in elite studies. Historical records of the legislative process are voluminous. Since the data relate to individuals rather than aggregates, they appear to be substantially more tractable than the data on electoral behavior. Powerful techniques pioneered by Rice (1928) in the early years and, more recently, by MacRae (1958) and others are available for analysis of legislative voting behavior. A variety of conventional statistics are also at hand that appear fully adequate for analysis of biographical characteristics. We suspect, therefore, that the explanation for decline of interest in these research areas is to be found in the characteristics of the early research itself.

The early research by historians in historical legislative behavior tended to be excessively empirical and conceptually barren. Most of it addressed limited temporal eras, usually those marked by tension and controversy, and was directed primarily toward identification of the positions of legislators with regard to particular historical issues, events, and controversies. A powerful measurement model—the Guttman scalogram—was widely employed to identify voting alignments in legislative bodies. But little in the way of analysis was directed to identifying empirically the bases of those alignments, although the findings of such research were of some intrinsic historical interest.

From the standpoint of the development of social scientific knowledge the research had other limitations. Little effort was made to explore long-term trends in legislative behavior, to assess the impact of organizational change or leadership on legislative behavior, to relate legislative behavior to constituency factors, or in more general terms, to cast legislative behavior in terms of any broader, or explicit, conceptual model of legislative or political processes, much less of human behavior. In these terms, the research sometimes came to a conceptual dead end in the erroneous assumption (Murphey, 1973) that the Guttman model constituted a direct and necessary measure of attitudes.

Some of the same limitations also characterized the early collective biographies of elite groups. Here, the underlying assumption was that the background personal and socioeconomic characteristics could explain aspects of the behavior of those groups. In this instance investigators employed a conceptual model involving status anxiety: David Donald (1956) suggested that Abolitionist leaders of the 1830s were reacting to social and economic developments that had reduced, or were threatening to diminish, their social status. Richard Hofstadter (1955) suggested a similar explanation for the behavior of progressive leaders and, in different form (1965), of the "Radical Right."

Other researchers focused particularly on the attributes of elite groups of the progressive period of the early twentieth century. Although they seldom articulated it clearly, the collective-biography analysts of this era employed a model in which the behavior of progressives provided the dependent variable, the independent variables were economic and social changes, and the basic theoretical proposition underlying the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was the hypothesis that individuals threatened with, or experiencing, declines in social status would take corrective or protective political action. The indices that the new historians tried to use as proxies for social and economic change were measures derived from the biographical characteristics of the legislators.

Unfortunately, the interesting findings of some researchers were contradicted by those of others. The initial impression that a breakthrough had been made in progressive scholarship faded to resigned acknowledgement of the fact that the efforts to identify progressive attributes and explain progressive motivation were highly contradictory. Failure to use control groups had led to unjustified conclusions in some of the studies; sampling problems and overconfidence in the efficacy of case studies had jeopardized other results; and inadequate analytical tools had been employed. Neither the conceptual

complexities of the dependent or the independent variables had been adequately understood, nor had the conceptual theory been specified with appropriate rigor. In short, the collective-biography analysis of the progressives foundered on the rock of research design, although artifacts of such research have substantive usefulness.

Relatively more recent research relating to legislative bodies in the United States and the elites that served in them requires separate comment. In general, that research has involved an attempt to cast the behavior and characteristics of legislative elites in terms of broader conceptual frameworks, to employ more comprehensive data, and to identify and examine longer-term historical trends. Thus, this newer research departs from the essentially episodic nature and the narrow temporal focii of much of the earlier work in these areas.

Partial examples of this newer orientation are provided by Hall (1972) and Main (1973). These authors attempted to explain legislative behavior and policy during the years of the Confederation by combining roll call and collective biographical analysis within the framework of the local-cosmopolitan continuum suggested by Hays (1967). In their view, the law makers of the Confederation period coalesced in voting blocs, reflecting parties or protoparties that expressed the shared attitudes and perceived needs of their constituencies, one set of these referents being local and the other cosmopolitan in nature. But, there has been no successful effort to use this model as the explanation of political change through long periods of American politics.

Other scholars have examined the processes of institutional development in the House of Representatives. They have been concerned with long-run change in turnover, the growth of seniority norms, professionalism, careerism, rotation, and indicators of institutionalization such as institutional complexity, differentiation of function and the growth of a body of accepted administrative principles and automatic procedures (Polsby, 1968; Polsby et al., 1969; Price, 1975, 1977; Fiorina et al., 1975; Kernell, forthcoming). In their research, these scholars have used or developed a number of numerical indices, covering extended periods of time in some instances, and paid considerable attention to the timing of the more pronounced changes in their data series. These investigators have employed a number of rather simple conceptual formulations, including the suggestion that the institutional change apparent after 1890 was rooted in the impetus that the realignment of that decade gave to the development of one party constituencies. Recent research, however, brings this relationship into some question (Budgor et al., 1977).

Theorists of political development have posited change in the character of elites through the course of the development process and a few researchers have tried to investigate the implications of these suggestions utilizing data assembled from the *Biographical Directory of Congress*. Bogue, et al. (1976) examined the characteristics of each decadal cohort of members of the House of Representatives from the 1790s through the 1950s. They found few striking indications of long-run change in the gross socioeconomic characteristics of representatives, aside from their educational background and certain occupational trends that paralleled more general change in the population at large. On the other hand, evidence of growing professionalization of the congressional career revealed in their work, and the timing of these developments reinforces other evidence of fundamental change subsequent to 1890. Recently, Seligman and King (forthcoming) have linked the attributes of congressmen to the realignment process. Studying the members of six congresses (1872-1956), they argue that only in the realignment congresses, elected in 1896 and 1932, were the characteristics of newly elected members markedly different from those of defeated incumbents. Although we are reluctant to define congressional realignment in terms of single congresses, Seligman and King have made a case for generational turnover as an aspect of realignment that must be taken seriously.

Clubb and Traugott (1977) have examined voting in the House of Representatives from 1861 through 1974. Their data series suggest a strong tendency for party voting in the House of Representatives to deteriorate since the early twentieth century. They also detected indications of somewhat weaker, but pronounced, cyclical fluctuations in party voting associated with the time elapsed since the previous electoral realignment. Chronologically the long-term decomposition in party solidarity in voting was associated with the institutionalization of the Congress and with the indications of declining party identification in the general electorate that Burnham has termed "partisan disaggregation."

Investigations of the sort described above cast the characteristics and behavior of legislative elites in broader perspective. The conceptual formulations on which these studies are based and for which they provide suggestive support are excessively vague and even inchoate; their longer-term value remains to be demonstrated. But the effort to examine legislative and elite phenomena in extended temporal perspective may be of particular value. At a minimum, they lessen the likelihood that the characteristics of particular periods will be seen as peculiar to those periods when in fact they could better be seen as

elements of longer-term trends or processes. In a broader sense, however, such studies look toward identification of long-term patterns of change and development.

But despite optimistic indications for the future, the view of the past politics of the United States produced by the new history remains at present excessively compartmentalized and fragmented, and major areas of the research terrain are virtually unexplored. Promising conceptual formulations have appeared, as we have noted, that suggest linkages between elements of the political system but these presumed linkages have not been demonstrated or, in some cases, even examined in empirical terms. The relation between popular political processes and elite behavior and the processes of government has not been examined effectively and the same can be said of the influence of elite and popular behavior on policy formulation. Although historical studies of state and local governments have been conducted, the relation between political processes at those levels and those at the national level have not been effectively explored. By the same token, studies of the organization and functions of political parties have been neglected and, in general, primary emphasis has been placed on formal political and governmental processes while less formal processes have received substantially less attention. In short, an integrated, systemic view of the political life of the nation in historical perspective has not yet emerged.

It may be that the development and availability of new and more comprehensive data collections, along with increased capacity to employ data effectively, will contribute to the emergence of such a view. Without in any way minimizing the value of more, and better, data we suspect that a more basic and necessary ingredient must be found in the realm of theory. And here it seems likely that the most promising source of theoretical stimulation and breakthrough is to be found in relatively larger-scale comparative political inquiry.

THE FUTURE OF QUANTITATIVE POLITICAL HISTORY

In this concluding section we can note, primarily as an illustration, one conceptual formulation drawn from comparative political inquiry that might serve to guide research in political history. We emphasize that it is only one of many perspectives that might be drawn from comparative studies of political change and development—studies that are largely the work of nonhistorians. This approach casts American poli-

tical history in a broader conceptual perspective that is not tailored to a single country and its unique characteristics.

Conceptually, the comparative developmental literature provides more in the nature of a scheme of conditions and sequences with a smattering of general propositions directed toward aspects of development or democratization than a complex theory of political change. The conceptualization of sequences of political development in the maturing of modern democratic states has been offered most elaborately in the writings of Stein Rokkan and much of what follows draws on his work (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 26-56; Rokkan, 1970). This scholar has been concerned especially with drawing attention to the initial causes of major cleavages in the party systems of Western European democracies, but his framework, at least by implication, is much broader than an emphasis on the party system suggests. More generally, he postulates a small set of major problems that are likely to occur in any developing nation in modern times and draws attention to many interrelated consequences following from either solving or avoiding these problems.

Conceptually these elements are distinct enough but much of the discussion of political change focuses on aspects of the political system that are sufficiently institutionalized that the precise mix of leader and follower characteristics is difficult to untangle. At a rather high level of abstraction the crucial phases of political modernization can be viewed as a series of crises. The initial crisis involves the creation of the nation-state with the maintenance of boundaries and the establishment of dominance over the hinterland. American political history has not treated the factors contributing to the Civil War or the frontier wars against the Indians as elements of national integration yet the outcome of these struggles are important determinants of the present form of the United States.

A second crisis, at least in anglo-European nations, has been associated with religious-secular controversies and their resolution. These two phases are broadly concerned with nationalization and in some polities, like the United States and the United Kingdom, these potentially disruptive matters were apparently settled several centuries ago. In comparison with European cultures, the United States apparently established early an accommodation among diverse religious groups. However, as the ethnocultural historians argue, the reflection of social differences associated with these groups may even dominate political cleavages depending on the salience of competitive factors.

The third and fourth phases are aspects of the industrial revolution. First is the conflict between landed and industrial interests in the

changing economy. A strong, long-standing tradition of political analysis in American historiography emphasizes economic divisions in society and draws on inferences about economic interests. The comparative perspective should force analysts of American political history to account for the presence or absence of strong economic influences on political behavior.

In a series of extensive case studies, Barrington Moore (1966) put great emphasis on the resolution of the conflict between landed and industrial interests as a determinant of democracy or dictatorship in the major political systems of the world. Subsequent to this crisis, a second class conflict became salient, relating to the division between labor and management. Obviously this division appeared in American politics more than a century ago and continues to play a role in political conflicts until the present.

Such conceptual perspectives on political change do not deal with the disappearance of these conflicts but rather their peaceful settlement into political institutions like the party system or, alternatively, their continued disruption of the nation. Rokkan has argued that the basic divisions in the twentieth century party systems result from cleavages associated with the resolution of these national crises. A particular system may experience these crises at a rapid or leisurely pace, may borrow resolutions from other nations, inherit irreconcilable arrangements, or have solutions imposed from the outside.

An obvious, continuing crisis in American history is a complex set of national integration problems dividing north and south. By the middle of the nineteenth century the political forces promoting and resisting national integration on a wide range of policies, but most saliently on slavery and related issues, were strong enough to divide the nation. Reconstruction represented a brief effort to provide a new basis of national integration but the more lasting solution, the southern system, depended on demobilizing a large proportion of the electorate. In this context racial matters are viewed as obstacles to integration of the polity; the governing elites in the United States have devised various solutions to alleviate the effects of this disturbing element, each—whether implemented or merely considered—has had a unique impact on the character of American political development. Only in the second half of the twentieth century has the lingering failure to bring all segments of this society into full political participation approached resolution.

Understandably, political historians have concentrated on participants in the electorate rather than nonparticipants, but the patterns of differential mobilization or political exclusion are of clear signi-

ficance and susceptible to systematic analysis. Not only does a partial mobilization of the population lead to expectations of misrepresentation of interests but there are constant strains on an ostensibly democratic polity that retains restrictions on the franchise. The general policy consequences of the massive disfranchisement of blacks and whites in the South is clear enough but the more complex aspects of the politics of imposing and maintaining the southern system are only beginning to be examined (Kousser, 1973; Rusk and Stucker, forthcoming).

A large part of the new political history can be treated as mapping the translation of social cleavages into the party system; the controversies in this literature are disagreements over which cleavages are more important in determining partisan divisions. Some generalizations are well established, however, as a basis for research in this broad perspective. The American party system was fixed by the time of the Civil War and has enjoyed a high degree of partisan loyalty ever since. The Civil War realignment was the last major determining factor that significantly changed the roster of major parties, subsequently only the strength of the parties shifted. From this point of view, the late nineteenth century is the first opportunity to study the cleavages underlying the modern party system in the United States.

The great diversity of American society, the layers of subsystems that characterize the federal structure, and the varying times of entry into the national political system all contribute to a complex mix of cleavages underlying the party system (Huntington, 1968). The high degree of individual loyalty or the stable patterns of party support in local areas do not translate into a homogeneous national pattern. Rather, the state and local cleavages vary so that no single pattern emerges in the national political parties. This represents a departure from the expectation that social cleavages of importance will be clearly reflected in the parties—a view that is fully justified in the light of European experiences. Considering this aspect of American political history as a deviant case does not diminish the usefulness of the comparative perspective. Rather it serves to identify the particular stresses and strains found in the American political system.

The electoral connection between the mass public and political leaders has received a major share of attention in political history. Representation in many forms remains a significant research focus. The failure to translate social cleavages simply and directly into disciplined political parties provides greater freedom for political leaders. There

remains more of importance to analyze in policy-making institutions like Congress because legislators are relatively free of restrictions imposed by the party or constituency. The institutionalization of legislative bodies or their internal politics are appropriate analytic concerns independent of other political variables.

Two generalizations found in quantitative political history illustrate this characteristic. First, there is an increasingly high degree of stability in voting for congressmen over more than a century of elections. Second, there has been less partisan loyalty in roll call voting by congressmen during the same period. While the role of party in the electoral connection remains important, party does not determine the behavior of the system. The policy performance of the system must be assessed in more complex fashion than has been typical of the new political history. Surely great difficulties face analysts who attempt to examine patterns of policy-making in historical depth but this appears a necessary thrust for future research that aspires to cover the significant aspects of the political system.

The authors of comparative studies of political change are not trying to reconstruct the past as it actually happened or to provide detailed intuitive descriptions of the motives and behavior of specific historical individuals. Rather they are trying to provide an essentially theoretical description and explanation of the operation and development of political systems. They attempt to identify and elucidate the interrelations between the various elements of political systems, to explicitly relate political systems and their functions to other elements of society, and to identify and describe processes and determinants of political change. It is certainly true that they often assume critical relationships rather than demonstrating them. The fact is that the detailed monographic studies required to demonstrate and clarify those relationships have not yet been written. Indeed, in some cases the requisite data foundations have not yet been developed. It may be, moreover, that macroscopic comparative research is not yet far enough advanced to provide a completely adequate base from which to derive fruitful and testable hypotheses or to provide guidance in the design and execution of more limited empirical research. Even so, the strength of these studies lies in their attempt to develop an integrated view of political systems and to identify and explain the nature and determinants of political change. These elements have, to a considerable degree, been lacking in American political historiography. Thus, these comparative studies open doors which American political historians have too long left closed.

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