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978-1-107-03831-8 - Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America

Hans Noel

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Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America

Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America puts ideology front and center in the discussion of party coalition change. Treating ideology as neither a nuisance nor a given, the analysis describes the development of the modern liberal and conservative ideologies that form the basis of our modern political parties. Hans Noel shows that liberalism and conservatism emerged as important forces independent of existing political parties. These ideologies then reshaped parties in their own image. Modern polarization can thus be explained as the natural outcome of living in a period, perhaps the first in our history, in which two dominant ideologies have captured the two dominant political parties.

Hans Noel is an assistant professor of government at Georgetown University, where he teaches on political parties and statistical methods. He received his PhD in 2006 from UCLA and has been a Fellow at the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University and a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar in Health Policy Reform at the University of Michigan. Noel is the recipient of the 2009 Emerging Scholar Award from the Political Organizations and Parties section of the American Political Science Association. He is the coauthor of *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*.

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*For Grant Noel, who as a father was more than anyone expects
but what I think everyone deserves.*

*For John Zaller, who as a mentor was what everyone expects
but more than I think anyone deserves.*

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Acknowledgments

I have been working on this book for a very long time.

I think it may have started when I was a high school senior at Gresham Union High School, and I refused to write an assigned paper on the grounds that it assumed an exogenous, unidimensional policy space.

The teacher, Bill Tattam, did not use that jargon, of course. Neither did I. But the assignment asked us to consider two specific issues, and then, with the aid of political magazines arrayed from left to right across the back of the classroom, discuss the positions taken by communists, socialists, liberals, conservatives, reactionaries, and fascists on each of those issues. I didn't think this should be done because I felt that ideology was socially constructed (again, without the jargon) and ultimately an inaccurate way to understand political opinions. I instead wrote an essay explaining why this meant the entire project was a sham.¹

My position on the nature of ideology has evolved a lot since high school. I no longer think that it is inappropriate to ask what liberals or conservatives believe on issues. Indeed, it is critical to ask, and to ask carefully. Once I arrived at that conclusion, this project was under way. That makes Mr. Tattam the first person to have influenced this project.

The last has to be my wife, Chloe Yelena Miller, who has been my most enthusiastic supporter, even when I found the project frustratingly incomplete. Chloe has dutifully read every chapter, with the eye of a poet, not a social scientist. It is a cliché to say that one could not have completed a project without one's spouse. Fortunately, as I am not a poet, I have license to use clichés.

I have been working on this book in many different places.

¹ This was a low-stakes experiment in civil disobedience. Being a coward, I worked into the paper a brief discussion of what the assignment would have required me to have written about the two issues of abortion and U.S. intervention in Latin America. But I still technically "refused."

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Between starting the project while in graduate school at UCLA and completing it as an assistant professor at Georgetown University, I have logged time at the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University and as a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar in Health Policy Research at the University of Michigan.² My time at the CSDP was perhaps the most rewarding in terms of working on this project, and perhaps of all my career. At Michigan, this project was both advanced and delayed by my time spent as an RWJ Fellow. Advanced because this project was my primary task at the time, but delayed because much of my time was spent opening up new lines of research that I still have not yet fully explored.

Over that time, and in all those places, I have been working on this book with the guidance and support of many different people, only some of whom I can mention here. All remaining errors and limitations are of course my own.³

I should first thank the teams of undergraduates who helped collect and process the data, and who helped with many other aspects of the project. I have worked with a variety of programs for undergraduate researchers, treating the excellent students at UCLA, Princeton, Michigan, and Georgetown as my own little distributed computing team. Nearly every task was double-coded for accuracy, but that only increased the total labor needed. All of these research assistants were invaluable to the project. Some put in an extraordinary effort and displayed uncommon skill. In fairness to them all, I can single no one out, but those who went further than they needed to know who they are. All of them deserve my thanks:

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² I have also spent a nontrivial amount of time at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago.

³ Except for the second and fifth errors, which are Greg Koger's fault.

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Greg Koger provided usefully compiled data on roll-call votes in the U.S. Congress, Keith Poole provided prompt responses to questions about auxiliary parameters in the calculation of NOMINATE scores, and Jonathan Ladd shared code used in analyzing the American National Election Study.

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Acknowledgments

Finally, I must thank my father, Grant Noel, for all his help throughout this process. I would say I did not follow in his footsteps, but that would suggest he laid any path out for me at all. Aside from presuming that I would go to college, he left my future for me to decide. And decide I did, several contradictory times. I have grown into a very different person from my father, and yet most of the best in me can be found in him.