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The Shrinking Middle in the US Congress

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The virtual disappearance of moderate and cross-pressured members from the US Congress is analysed in this article. There were substantial numbers of these partisan non-conformists in both parties and in both chambers until the early 1980s when the middle began to shrink. This trend continued and accelerated in the 1990s. Partisan non-conformists disappeared through *replacement* and *conversion*. When moderate and cross-pressured members left Congress, their replacements were much more likely to be mainstream partisans in the 1980s and 1990s than they had been in earlier decades. The occurrence of some type of conversion (a shift towards the party's ideological mainstream or a party switch) is also much more common in recent decades. We present evidence that the shrinking middle in Congress resulted from electoral changes.

Senator James Jeffords's decision to leave the Republican party sent shock waves through Washington. Senator Jeffords, a moderate to liberal Republican, explained the reasons for his decision: 'In order to best represent my state of Vermont, my own conscience and principles I have stood for my whole life, I will leave the Republican Party and become an Independent … Increasingly, I find myself in disagreement with my party.'[1]

Although this party switch is especially noteworthy because it shifted party control in the evenly divided Senate, it is a manifestation of a broader political trend: increasing party polarization of American politics. The genesis of this trend towards polarization of American political parties can be traced to the mid-1980s and has continued to the present.[2] It was first noticed in the behaviour of elected representatives in Congress, but there is evidence of polarization in the mass public and even the Supreme Court.[3]

In this article, we document the increasing party polarization in the House and Senate, and explore why it happened. We observe that parties polarized because the shrinking

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[1] Quoted in Charles Babbington, 'Jeffords leaves GOP, shifts Senate control', *Washington Post*, 24 May 2001, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A71000–2001May24.html (accessed 24 May 2001).

[2] Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, 'Why Has Party Conflict among Elites Increased if the Electorate Is Dealigning?' (presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 1996); Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, 'The President in a More Partisan Legislative Arena', *Political Research Quarterly*, 49 (1996), 729–48; Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, 'Congress and the President in a Partisan Era', in Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, eds, *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000), pp. 1–8.

[3] David Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), was among the first to document party polarization in the House. Evidence of polarization in the mass public can be found in Fleisher and Bond, 'Why Has Party Conflict Among Elites Increased if the Electorate Is Dealigning?'; Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, 'Evidence of Increasing Polarization among Ordinary Citizens', in Jeffrey E. Cohen, Richard Fleisher and Paul Kantor, eds, *American Political Parties: Resurgence and Decline* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001); and Gary C. Jacobson, 'Party Polarization in National Politics:The Electoral Connection', in Bond and Fleisher, eds, *Polarized Politics*, pp. 9–30. For evidence of polarization on the Supreme Court, see Corey Ditslear and Lawrence Baum, 'Selection of Law Clerks and Polarization in the US Supreme Court', *Journal of Politics*, 63 (2001), 869–85.

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number of partisan non-conformists – i.e., moderate and cross-pressured members like Senator Jeffords who have policy preferences outside the ideological mainstream of their party – resulted in more ideologically homogeneous parties. As predicted by the 'conditional party government' thesis, when the condition of ideological homogeneity is met, party caucuses empower party leaders with more tools to foster party discipline and expect them to use them to pursue a party agenda.[4]

Electoral changes in the states and districts account for most of the decline in the number of partisan non-conformists. That is, partisan non-conformists disappeared mostly through *replacement*, as constituencies that once elected such members began to send mainstream partisans to Congress. The remaining non-conformists experience additional pressure as party leaders use their powers more aggressively to pursue a party agenda preferred by the more homogeneous party caucus. This additional pressure produces some *conversion* as moderate and cross-pressured members become more supportive of the preferences of their party mainstream or they switch parties.[5] Although less common than replacement, conversion adds an additional increment of ideological homogeneity to party caucuses. Conversion is also influenced by electoral concerns. The perception of what voters in the constituency will accept is a consideration in the decision to shift one's voting record towards the party mainstream or switch parties. Note that Jeffords switched to independent. This move seems compatible with a tradition of independence in Vermont, and less electorally risky than switching to Democrat. Another recent party switch, that of Alabama Senator Richard Shelby in 1994, may reflect different electoral conditions. Rather than yield to pressure from the Clinton administration to support liberal policies, this conservative Democrat switched to the Republican party. This move all the way across the aisle was probably not risky in Alabama where voters had strongly supported Republican presidential candidates in the three previous presidential elections.[6]

We begin with an overview of what the literature suggests about party cohesion in Congress, and document the virtual disappearance of moderate and cross-pressured members in the 1980s and 1990s. Next, we look for changes in the partisan character of districts that elect moderate and cross-pressured representatives. Then we look at the disappearance of these members through conversion and replacement.

FROM FOUR PARTY POLITICS TO TWO

For much of the twentieth century, congressional parties exhibited considerable ideological diversity. Both parties had a sizeable faction of ideological misfits – conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans – who experienced frequent cross-pressures as their party leaders and most of their party colleagues pressed them to support policies that ran counter to the ideological preferences of the constituencies they represented. These cross-pressured members were a recurring source of frustration. As presidents and party leaders tried to put together and pass a coherent party agenda, they encountered resistance, not only from the opposing party but also from the cross-pressured

[4] Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform House*; John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, 'The Consequences of Party Organization in the House: The Role of the Majority and Minority Parties in Conditional Party Government', in Bond and Fleisher, eds, *Polarized Politics*, pp. 31–72.

[5] Some members respond by retiring, opening an opportunity for replacement by a mainstream partisan.

[6] Shelby won re-election as a Republican in 1998 with 63 per cent of the vote, only slightly less than the 65 per cent in his previous election as a Democrat.

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members of their own party. The lack of party discipline led some scholars to argue that Congress had four rather than two parties.[7]

The Electoral Basis of Party Discipline

Undisciplined, ideologically diverse parties in Congress resulted in large part from ideologically diverse electoral constituencies. Although most Democratic constituencies contained voters with liberal preferences, some, mainly in the South, contained conservative voters. Most Republican constituencies were conservative, but some, mostly along the east coast and in the Midwest, had more liberal voters. Ideologically diverse parties in Congress, therefore, reflected heterogeneous policy preferences across partisan constituencies in different parts of the nation.

Although parties in the United States are less disciplined than are those in parliamentary democracies, party cohesion in Congress varies over time. The level of party cohesion is a function of the partisanship of the electorate and the power and skills of party leaders. The distribution of voters' preferences across constituencies, however, is the most important condition for cohesive parties in Congress.[8] When partisan constituencies across different regions of the nation have diverse policy preferences, parties in Congress reflect that diversity. During such periods, each party contains a sizeable cross-pressured minority with policy preferences that reflect those of their constituencies but differ from their party mainstream.

Conditional Party Government and Party Polarization

When changes in the electoral system produce more homogeneous partisan constituencies across the nation, parties in Congress become more ideologically homogeneous internally and more divergent from each other. A more ideologically homogeneous majority party caucus adopts reforms that empower leaders to forge party discipline so as to pass key issues on the party agenda – what David Rohde and John Aldrich term 'conditional party government'.[9] Electoral changes in the 1970s and 1980s created more homogeneous policy preferences across partisan constituencies nationally, and the parties at both the mass and elite levels began to polarize.[10]

Internally homogeneous parties tend to diverge, or polarize, because the cross-pressured tails of each party's distribution shrinks. Cross-pressured members are ideological misfits

[7] James MacGregor Burns, *The Deadlock of Democracy: Four-Party Politics in America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963); Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, *The President in the Legislative Arena* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 43–5.

[8] Joseph Cooper and David W. Brady, 'Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn', *American Political Science Review*, 75 (1981), 411–25; John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, 'The Logic of Conditional Party Government: Revisiting the Electoral Connection', in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds, *Congress Reconsidered*, 7th edn (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001).

[9] Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform House*; John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Aldrich and Rohde, 'The Consequences of Party Organization in the House'.

[10] Fleisher and Bond, 'Why Has Party Conflict Among Elites Increased if the Electorate Is Dealigning?'; Fleisher and Bond, 'Evidence of Increasing Polarization among Ordinary Citizens'; Jacobson, 'Party Polarization in National Politics'; Fleisher and Bond, 'Congress and the President in a Partisan Era'; Richard Fleisher and Jon R. Bond, 'Partisanship and the President's Quest for Votes on the Floor of Congress', in Bond and Fleisher, eds, *Polarized Politics*, pp. 154–85.

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in that they have policy preferences closer to the centre of the other party than to their own.[11] As the cross-pressured members disappear, more ideologically extreme members in the party mainstream wield more power in the caucus because they no longer have to contend with a sizeable faction with policy preferences closer to the other party.

In addition, party moderates – i.e., members near the centre of the liberal–conservative continuum but closer to the centre of their own party than to the other one – experience greater pressure to conform to more extreme party positions. Consequently, the number of moderates in each party declines along with the cross-pressured members.[12]

The Evidence: Persuasive but Incomplete

The major part of the explanation for the rise of conditional party government focuses on electoral changes in the South that led to the demise of conservative Democrats in the House.[13] The story and evidence are well known and convincing. Traditionally, most conservative Democrats were from the South and reflected the conservative values of voters in that region. Starting in 1964 with the selection of Senator Barry Goldwater as the Republican presidential nominee, the Republican party increasingly became the home for white voters with conservative policy preferences.[14] The 1965 Voting Rights Act reinforced these changes in southern electoral politics and contributed to the development of a viable Republican party in the region. With the implementation of the Voting Rights Act, African Americans in the South entered the electorate almost exclusively in support of Democrats.

Responding to this change in their constituencies, some southern Democrats in Congress moved to the left. In many districts, however, a large African American electorate that was less than a majority was not sufficient to elect a progressive Democrat. In such districts, the election of liberal Democrats required the presence of a sufficient number of progressive white voters to join with African Americans.[15] When this occurred, the electoral interests and policy preferences of southern and northern Democrats converged. Democrats representing districts where white voters remained conservative and African Americans were less than a majority were more hesitant to move in a liberal direction. As the most conservative white southern voters began to abandon the Democratic party, even conservative Democrats found it more and more difficult to hold on to their seats, and the number of Republicans elected to office in the South increased dramatically. Republicans gained an additional boost in 1992 as redistricting siphoned off black voters from districts represented by white Democrats to create majority-minority districts.[16] While these newly

[11] Bond and Fleisher, *The President in the Legislative Arena*, pp. 44–5; Fleisher and Bond, 'Partisanship and the President's Quest for Votes on the Floor of Congress'.

[12] Although it is conceivable that the number of individuals in the extreme opposing tails of each party distribution could shrink and be replaced by moderates, we suspect that the electoral changes that alter the ideological distribution in the parties are more likely to shrink the middle.

[13] Aldrich, *Why Parties?* Aldrich and Rohde, 'The Consequences of Party Organization in the House'; Jacobson, 'Party Polarization in National Politics'; Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform House*.

[14] Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[15] Richard Fleisher, 'Explaining the Change in Roll-Call Voting Behavior of Southern Democrats', *Journal of Politics*, 55 (1993), 327–41; Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform House*.

[16] Kevin A. Hill, 'Does the Creation of Majority Black Districts Aid Republicans? An Analysis of the 1992 Congressional Elections in Eight Southern States', *Journal of Politics*, 57 (1995), 384–401.

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elected African American representatives voted quite liberally, the changes produced by redistricting cost a number of Democratic incumbents their seats. Because of this realignment in the region, southern House districts are more likely to elect either conservative Republicans or liberal Democrats than conservative Democrats, as in the past.

The disappearance of conservative southern House Democrats is an important part of the explanation of party polarization in Congress. Yet the analysis of one region and one party in one chamber provides an incomplete explanation. While moderate and cross-pressured Democrats often came from the South, some came from other regions. From 1960s to 1990s, only 60 per cent of moderate and conservative Democrats in the House and 65 per cent of those in the Senate were from the South. Although electoral changes in the South provide a convincing backdrop for an understanding of the declining number of conservative southern Democrats, it obviously does not explain the decline in non-conformist Democrats from other regions.

Changes within the Republican party have also reduced the number of moderate and liberal Republicans elected to the Congress, but the causes are less clear. A study by Stonecash, Brewer and Mariani provides some insight to help us understand the disappearance of cross-pressured Republicans. Their analysis shows that the 'Democratic Party has steadily increased its electoral success in the North, and it now derives a greater percentage of its seats from this region.'[17] They go on to note that Democrats have made gains in winning seats in urban, less affluent, areas with more minority voters. Given the zero sum nature of two-party politics, Democratic gains in the North must have come at the expense of Republicans in Congress. If Republicans elected in districts where Democrats have made sizeable gains were moderates or even liberals, then Democratic success in winning these seats contributed to the disappearance of moderate or liberal Republicans.

Much of the research on party polarization in Congress has focused on the House. Yet there is evidence that parties in the Senate have also polarized, although the Senate lagged the House.[18] To gain a more complete understanding of how and why the parties polarized, we need to analyse both parties and both chambers of Congress.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MODERATE AND CROSS-PRESSURED MEMBERS

The ideology of members of Congress varies along a left–right continuum. The distribution tends to be bimodal with Democrats concentrated on the left and Republicans on the right. But there is also variance within each party so that the tails of the party distributions in many Congresses overlap in the middle of the continuum.[19]

It is in this middle range where the tails overlap that we find the cross-pressured members. Bond and Fleisher defined cross-pressured members as those with ideological preferences closer to the centre of the other party than to their own.[20] Yet because the

[17] Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Mark D. Brewer and Mack D. Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment, and Party Polarization* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2002), p. 438. North is defined as Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

[18] Fleisher and Bond, 'Congress and the President in a Partisan Era', pp. 3–4.

[19] Keith T. Poole, 'NOMINATE: A Short Intellectual History', http://voteview.uh.edu/nominate/nominate.htm (accessed 30 May 2003); Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[20] Bond and Fleisher, *The President in the Legislative Arena*, pp. 44–5.

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distribution of ideological preferences is relatively continuous, there is considerable variation within both mainstream and cross-pressured factions. Both parties, for example, contain moderates. Moderates have policy preferences in the middle of the ideological spectrum that differ from the dominant ideology of both parties. Like cross-pressured members, moderates are partisan non-conformists in that they frequently dissent from the positions of their party leaders and most members of their party caucuses.

To examine the relative numerical strength of moderate and cross-pressured members, we need a reliable and valid measure that will allow us to make comparisons of the ideological distributions of Democrats and Republicans over time. Students of Congress have used a number of measures based on roll-call votes to indicate the ideological orientation of individual members. Although roll-call based measures have been criticized, there is evidence that they are reliable and generally valid proxies of members' ideology at any one point in time.[21] Making comparisons across time, however, remained problematical until recently. One measure that has gained widespread acceptance is Poole and Rosenthal's NOMINATE Scores based on all non-unanimous roll-call votes.[22] DW-NOMINATE scores adjust for changes in the underlying scale over time, allowing for valid comparisons across Congresses at least within a particular party era.[23]

Dividing this continuum into discrete categories – i.e., mainstream, moderate and cross-pressured – raises questions about where to draw boundaries. Any dividing line between categories is arbitrary, and errors in classification are inevitable. Bond and Fleisher defined four partisan-ideological groups: cross-pressured members in each party who had ideology scores closer to the centre of the other party than to their own, and the political base within each party made up of members whose party affiliation and ideology reinforced one another.[24] Although this measure has an intuitive appeal, it has limitations. First, considerable variation remains within each faction. Some members are a substantial distance from the centre of their own party but do not cross the mid-point between the parties. Such 'mainstream' members may have more in common with most cross-pressured members than with the median member of their party caucus. Secondly, whether a member is defined as mainstream or cross-pressured may depend entirely on the behaviour of members of the other party. The mid-point between the parties depends on the location of each party's mid-point. If one party shifts to the left or right while the other does not (or shifts less), then the mid-point between the parties will shift in the same direction. Thus, some members may shift from one category to the other even if their voting behaviour is the same as in the past.

[21] John E. Jackson and John W. Kingdon, 'Ideology, Interest Group Scores, and Legislative Votes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (1992), 805–23, identify a number of problems associated with roll-call based measures of ideology. For evidence that roll-call based measures of ideology are valid and reliable, see Richard Herrera, Thomas Epperlein and Eric R. A. N. Smith, 'The Stability of Congressional Roll-Call Indexes', *Political Research Quarterly*, 48 (1995), 403–16; Kim Quaile Hill, Stephen Hanna and Sahar Shafqat, 'Liberal–Conservative Ideology of US Senators: A New Measure', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41 (1997), 1395–414; and Eric R. A. N. Smith, Richard Herrera and Cheryl L. Herrera, 'The Measurement Characteristics of Congressional Roll-Call Indexes', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 15 (1990), 283–95.

[22] Poole and Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*.

[23] Keith T. Poole, 'Description of NOMINATE Data', Keith Poole's website 23 October 2001, http://voteview.uh.edu/page2a.htm (accessed 30 May 2003). Another approach is to use liberalism scores constructed by the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) adjusted for time as suggested by Tim Groseclose, Steven D. Levitt and James M. Snyder Jr, 'Comparing Interest Group Scores across Time: Adjusted ADA Scores for the US Congress', *American Political Science Review*, 93 (1999), 33–50. These indicators are highly correlated ($r > 0.90$). ADA scores are less useful for our purposes than DW-NOMINATE, because ADA penalizes for absences, which can make a very liberal member look more moderate.

[24] Bond and Fleisher, *The President in the Legislative Arena*.

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An alternative is to specify *a priori* cut-points along the ideological continuum. We specify cut-points to create three groups within each party corresponding to liberal, moderate and conservative ideologies. One can select cut-points that increase or decrease the number of members in the moderate category. Because we are interested in analysing the decline of cross-pressured and moderate members, we use criteria to err in identifying more of such members.

DW-NOMINATE scores range from -1 (most liberal) to $+1$ (most conservative). Moderates are members with scores in the middle of the distribution. Recognizing the different ideological tendencies in the parties, we define moderate Democrats as moderate liberals (Democrats with scores between zero and -0.2 on the liberal side of distribution), and moderate Republicans as moderate conservatives (Republicans with scores between zero and $+0.2$). Cross-pressured members are liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats. Any Democrat on the conservative side of the scale (scores greater than zero) is defined as a cross-pressured Democrat, and any Republican on the liberal side (scores less than zero) is a cross-pressured Republican. Although these are arbitrary cut points, they provide a reasonable standard to identify liberals, moderates and conservatives in each party, and to compare changes in their relative prominence in each party caucus over time. Using other cut points changes the number of individuals in each category in each Congress. The trends over time, however, tell the same story regardless of which definition is used.

Table 1 shows the mean number of partisan non-conformists in each decade from the 1950s through the 1990s.[25] Until the early 1980s in both the House and the Senate, each party contained substantial numbers of members with ideological predispositions outside their party mainstream. During the 1980s, the number of moderate and cross-pressured members began to decline in both parties in both chambers. This trend accelerated in the 1990s, as the number of moderate and cross-pressured members plummeted. Cross-pressured liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats have all but disappeared from Congress. Although the overall patterns are similar, there are partisan and chamber differences in the specific turning points and shape of the trend lines.

To get a better picture of the changes in the relative size of the moderate and cross-pressured wings of each party, Figure 1 shows the percentage of such members in each party's caucus from the 1950s to the 1990s.[26] Although much of the explanation of party polarization in Congress has focused on changes in the Democratic party, this analysis shows that the middle began shrinking in the Republican party first, starting in the 1970s. The percentage of moderate and liberal Republicans in both chambers climbed from an average of a little more than one-third in the 1950s to more than half in several Congresses of the 1960s. Then throughout the next three decades, moderate and liberal Republicans dwindled from a substantial, perhaps even dominant, presence in House and Senate Republican caucuses to fewer than 10 per cent in the 1990s.

Changes in the Democratic caucus lagged the Republicans about a decade. The trend in the percentage of moderate and conservative Democrats was relatively flat from the 1950s through the 1970s, fluctuating around an average of about 42 per cent in the House and 38 per cent in the Senate. It was not until the 98th Congress (1981–82) that the

[25] Decades refer to apportionment periods (year ending in '2' to the year ending in '0'). The number of conservatives, moderates and liberals in each party by Congress are in the Appendix available with the website version of this article

[26] To see the effect of different definitions, we show trends based on both $+/-0.2$ and $+/-0.15$ cut-points. The percentage of partisan non-conformists is lower with the 0.15 standard, but the trends are the same regardless of the standard used.

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TABLE 1 *Number of Moderate and Cross-Pressured Members of Congress by Decade*

Decade	Moderate	Liberal	Total Non-con.	Total Non-con.	Conserv.	Moderate
	House Republicans			House Democrats		
1950s	64	0	64	119	14	105
1960s	83	4	87	109	24	85
1970s	71	1	72	108	11	97
1980s	28	0	28	94	2	92
1990s	10	1	11	52	1	51
	Senate Republicans			Senate Democrats		
1950s	11	3	14	26	5	21
1960s	17	5	22	23	5	18
1970s	19	3	22	21	3	18
1980s	16	0	16	14	0	14
1990s	7	0	7	3	0	3

Note: Entries are mean number of partisan non-conformists in Congress during each decade. Decades refer to apportionment periods.

percentage of moderate and conservative Democrats began to fall. In the House, there was a small downward shift to an average of about 36 per cent during the 1980s, followed by a monotonic decline during the 1990s to a low of 16 per cent in the 106th House. In the Senate, there is a precipitous decline from about 37 per cent in the 98th Senate (1981–82) to zero in the 105th Senate (1998–99) and 2 per cent in the 106th (1999–2000).

Elections determine the composition of Congress. So we turn now to analyse the electoral forces that determine whether a Democrat or Republican wins a seat in Congress and, within each party, whether the representative is liberal, moderate or conservative.

THE CONSTITUENCY BASIS OF MEMBER PARTY AND IDEOLOGY

Voters in local constituencies elect representatives with a particular party affiliation and ideological profile. The preferences of voters included in the district boundaries set the basic parameters for the type of candidate – Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal – who can win. Partisan and ideological preferences of elected representatives typically reflect those of their constituents. Some districts are composed of voters who are overwhelmingly Democrats or Republicans, while others are more balanced. Policy preferences across partisan constituencies, however, vary. Although most districts are composed of Democrats with liberal preferences or Republicans with conservative preferences, some are dominated by conservative Democrats or liberal Republicans. Within the political context set by a constituency's partisan and ideological make up, the resources and behaviour of the candidates in a given election influence the level of competition and the outcome.[27] But except under unusual circumstances such as scandal,

[27] Jon R. Bond, Cary Covington and Richard Fleisher, 'Explaining Challenger Quality in Congressional Elections', *Journal of Politics*, 47 (1985), 510–29; Gary C. Jacobson, *Money in Congressional Elections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980); Gary C. Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government: Competition in U.S. House Elections, 1946–1988* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990; Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 5th edn (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2001); Gary C. Jacobson and Samuel Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*, 2nd edn (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983).

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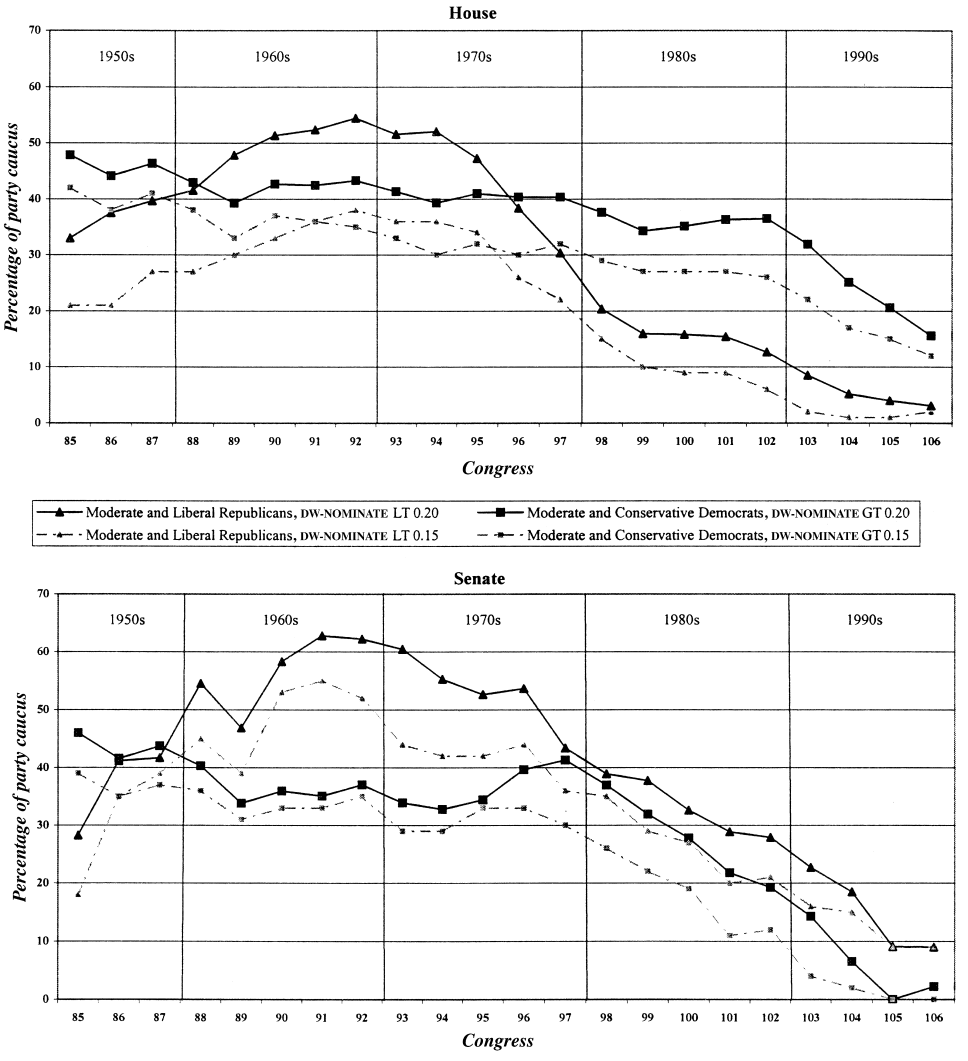


Fig. 1. Moderate and cross-pressured Members of Congress

a political blunder by the dominant party candidate or strong national tides, no amount of spending or campaigning can elect a representative who does not share the district's underlying political character.[28] Yet a number of districts remain where either party's candidate can win given adequate campaign resources and effective campaigning.

Thus, the first place to look for electoral changes that might explain the decline of moderate and cross-pressured members is in the underlying political preferences

[28] On the effects of scandal, see Susan Welch and John R. Hibbing, 'The Effects of Charges of Corruption on Voting Behavior in Congressional Elections, 1982–1990', *Journal of Politics*, 59 (1997), 226–39; and John G. Peters and Susan Welch, 'The Effects of Charges of Corruption on Voting Behavior in Congressional Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1980), 697–708. For a discussion of national tides, see Jacobson, *Electoral Origins*, pp. 75–80.

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TABLE 2 *Effect of Constituency Partisanship on Democratic Success in Winning House and Senate Seats*

	1960s			1970s			1980s			1990s		
	b	sig.	*Δp*	*b*	sig.	*Δp*	*b*	sig.	*Δp*	*b*	sig.	*Δp*
House												
Constituency partisanship	0.047	0.000	0.14	0.109	0.000	0.27	0.167	0.000	0.41	0.206	0.000	0.56
Elect2				0.573	0.000		−0.001	0.997		−0.280	0.110	
Elect3	−0.495	0.001		0.328	0.034		0.067	0.688		−0.554	0.002	
Elect4	−0.503	0.001		0.172	0.263		0.012	0.941		−0.545	0.002	
Elect5	−0.411	0.005		−0.182	0.234		0.134	0.425				
Constant	0.801	0.000		0.336	0.002		0.590	0.000		0.775	0.000	
−2XLLR		2,197.2			2,447.0			2,162.7			1,530.6	
% Null prediction		60			62			60			51	
% Correct prediction		60			69			75			84	
PRE		0.00			0.18			0.36			0.68	
Senate												
Constituency partisanship	−0.010	0.271	0	0.053	0.000	0.09	0.072	0.000	0.11	0.135	0.000	0.21
Elect2	0.025	0.933		0.215	0.463		0.074	0.801		−0.126	0.682	
Elect3	−0.154	0.607		0.160	0.585		0.366	0.211		−0.548	0.074	
Elect4	−0.443	0.132		0.031	0.917		0.347	0.235		−0.510	0.096	
Elect5	−0.542	0.065		−0.443	0.128		0.431	0.141				
Constant	0.704	0.001		0.390	0.062		−0.048	0.817		0.514	0.019	
−2XLLR		654.8			654.8			665.2			493.4	
% Null prediction		62			57			52			52	
% Correct prediction		62			60			61			67	
PRE		0.00			0.07			0.18			0.31	

Notes: Entries are logit coefficients. The dependent variable is Democrat won = 1; Republican won = 0. The independent variable is Democratic Party Strength in the constituency; *Δp* is the change in probability of electing a Democrat associated with a 1 standard deviation change (+ / − 1/2 s.d. from the mean) in Democratic constituency party strength.

of electoral constituencies. Specifically, we seek to determine if there have been changes in the partisan character of districts that elect Republicans or Democrats, and whether constituencies that once elected moderate and cross-pressured members have become less likely to do so.

Because direct measures of constituency preferences are not available for either House or Senate constituencies, researchers must rely on indirect indicators.[29] One serviceable indicator is presidential election returns. Presidential election returns are a behavioural indication of constituents' political preferences, and this measure is available for congressional districts back to the 1960s. Several researchers have used election returns to measure constituency partisanship.[30] Presidential election returns, of course, reflect influences other than party (e.g., policy preferences, ideology and candidate image to name a few), and the influence of party and other forces on the national presidential vote varies across elections.[31] To control for the effects of forces other than party in presidential elections, we standardize the district presidential vote relative to the national vote. Specifically, we define *Constituency Partisan Strength* as the district's (or state's) Democratic percentage of the two-party vote minus the national Democratic vote percentage in the most recent presidential election. Positive scores indicate districts where the Democratic presidential candidate ran stronger than in the nation; negative values indicate a worse performance.[32]

Table 2 reports logit models that predict which political party (Democrat = 1, Republican = 0) won House and Senate seats in elections in each decade as a function of Democratic party strength in the constituency. To control for influences such as partisan tides specific to particular election years, we include dummy variables for election years.[33]

[29] Measures of public opinion in the National Election Studies are problematical because of small samples in congressional districts. Measures of citizen ideology at the state level do not reflect ideology in congressional districts, except for the handful of states with a single House seat. For estimates of public opinion in states, see Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright and John T. McIver, *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). The US Census reports population characteristics for states and congressional districts, but characteristics of the 'geographical constituency' do not accurately reflect preferences of voters in members' 're-election' and 'primary' constituencies. Richard F. Fenno Jr, *Home Style: House Members and Their Districts* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1978), discovered that representatives tend to view constituencies in these terms.

[30] William T. Bianco, 'Strategic Decisions on Candidacy in US Congressional Districts', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 9 (1984), 351–64; Bond, Covington and Fleisher, 'Explaining Challenger Quality'; Jon R. Bond, Richard Fleisher and Jeffery C. Talbert, 'Partisan Differences in Candidate Quality in Open Seat House Races, 1976–1994', *Political Research Quarterly*, 50 (1997), 279–97; David Canon, *Actors, Athletes, and Astronauts: Political Amateurs in the United States Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[31] Norman R. Luttbeg and Michael M. Gant, *American Electoral Behavior* (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1995), p. 71.

[32] This standardized presidential vote measure performs as well as one based on district-level voting returns for multiple offices in years when data for both are available (see Bond, Fleisher and Talbert, 'Partisan Differences in Candidate Quality in Open Seat House Races').

[33] We also tested for regional differences in electoral outcomes to see if there have been systematic changes in the tendency for conservative Democrats to come from the South and liberal Republicans to come from the Northeast. We added dummy variables for South (Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virgina), and Northeast/Midwest (Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wisconsin). The analysis indicated that after controlling for Democratic party strength in the constituency, Democrats were more likely to win House and Senate elections in the South during the 1960s, but this electoral advantage declined across the decades so that by the 1990s

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TABLE 3 *The Effect of Constituency Partisanship on Representatives' Ideological Profile*

	1960s		1970s		1980s		1990s	
	b	sig.	*b*	sig.	*b*	sig.	*b*	sig.
House Democrats								
Constituency partisanship	−0.013	0.000	−0.010	0.000	−0.010	0.000	−0.009	0.000
Constant	−0.166	0.000	−0.195	0.000	−0.218	0.000	−0.260	0.000
R^2	0.48		0.24		0.35		0.40	
Moderate tip point	2.62		0.50		−1.80		−6.67	
Cross-pressured tip point	−12.77		−19.50		−21.80		−28.89	
House Republicans								
Constituency partisanship	−0.012	0.000	−0.010	0.000	−0.011	0.000	−0.010	0.000
Constant	0.148	0.000	0.180	0.000	0.265	0.000	0.361	0.000
R^2	0.24		0.13		0.24		0.19	
Moderate tip point	−4.33		−0.20		5.91		16.10	
Cross-pressured tip point	12.22		18.00		24.10		36.10	
Senate Democrats								
Constituency partisanship	−0.009	0.000	−0.007	0.000	−0.012	0.000	−0.008	0.000
Constant	−0.257	0.000	−0.266	0.000	−0.304	0.000	−0.377	0.000
R^2	0.18		0.04		0.17		0.11	
Moderate tip point	−6.33		−9.43		−8.67		−22.12	
Cross-pressured tip point	−28.56		−38.00		−25.33		−47.12	
Senate Republicans								
Constituency partisanship	−0.018	0.000	−0.018	0.000	−0.015	0.000	−0.008	0.000
Constant	0.131	0.000	0.123	0.000	0.224	0.000	0.347	0.000
R^2	0.25		0.21		0.24		0.07	
Moderate tip point	−3.83		−4.28		1.60		18.37	
Cross-pressured tip point	7.28		6.83		14.93		43.37	

Note: Entries are OLS regression coefficients. The dependent variable is the DW-NOMINATE score of the winning candidate. The independent variable is Democratic Party Strength in the constituency. Tip points are the levels of partisanship at which the models predict ideology crosses the maximum moderate ideology (DW-NOMINATE score LT −0.20 for Democrats and GT +0.20 for Republicans) and crosses the point at which a member would be defined as cross-pressured (DW-NOMINATE score GT 0 for Democrats and LT 0 for Republicans).

To observe any changes in relationships over time, we estimate a model for each apportionment period from the 1960s to the 1990s.[34]

The underlying partisan character of constituencies affects which party wins House and Senate elections in all three decades. Although it is not surprising that districts which vote for a particular party's presidential candidates tend to elect the same party's candidates to Congress, the important finding is the increasing strength of this relationship over time. The effect of constituency partisanship on partisan outcomes increased monotonically from the 1960s to the 1990s in both House and Senate elections.

To see substantive effects of the logit analysis, we report the predicted change in probability of electing a Democrat associated with a standard deviation change in constituency Democratic party strength. If Democratic party strength increased one standard deviation, the probability of electing a Democrat in House elections increased from 0.14 in the 1960s to 0.56 in the 1990s. In the Senate, the probability increased from not significantly different from zero in the 1960s to 0.21 in the 1990s. Also note that the explanatory power of district partisanship increased from trivial in the 1960s to substantial in the 1990s. In House elections, the proportional reduction in error (PRE) increases from zero in the 1960s to 68 per cent in the 1990s. The change in explanatory power in Senate elections is smaller, but still substantial, rising from zero in the 1960s to 31 per cent in the 1990s. The weaker relationships in Senate elections are understandable given that state boundaries are fixed and cannot be manipulated for political or partisan purposes. The rise in the strength of the relationship in Senate elections, therefore, mainly reflects changes in the behaviour of voters over time. In the House, the redistricting process every decade allows state legislatures to manipulate district boundaries to favour one party or the other, which would magnify the effects of increasing partisan behaviour among the voters.

In addition to exploring the effect of district partisanship on which party wins the seat, we also want to see the effect of constituency partisanship on the ideological orientation of those elected. If cross-pressured and moderate members were more likely to win in districts where the other party's presidential candidate ran well, the changing impact of underlying constituency partisanship may account for the decline of such members. We turn now to a consideration of this possibility.

Table 3 reports an ordinary least squares (OLS) model in which we regressed the representative's DW-NOMINATE score on constituency partisanship in each decade from the 1960s to the 1990s. Because Democrats and Republicans tend to concentrate on opposite ends of the liberal–conservative continuum, we estimate models within parties.

The negative coefficients for constituency partisanship indicate that as the constituency becomes more pro-Democratic, the representative tends to be more liberal. The slopes are similar for both parties and both chambers, but Democrats and Republicans start from different points on the liberal–conservative continuum. Intercepts for Democrats are on the liberal (negative) side of the continuum and become increasingly liberal across the decades, while Republican intercepts are on the conservative (positive) side and become increasing conservative over time. Since our measure of constituency partisanship is normed relative to the national Democratic presidential vote, the intercept is the estimated DW-NOMINATE score in constituencies where presidential voting matched the national vote.

To see the changing substantive effects of these relationships over time, we

(F'note continued)

Republicans had an advantage in the South. Partisan advantages in the Northeast were less clear. Democrats had advantages in some decades and Republicans in others, but there was no increasing or decreasing trend.

[34] The presidential vote in congressional districts is not available in 1962 and 2000.

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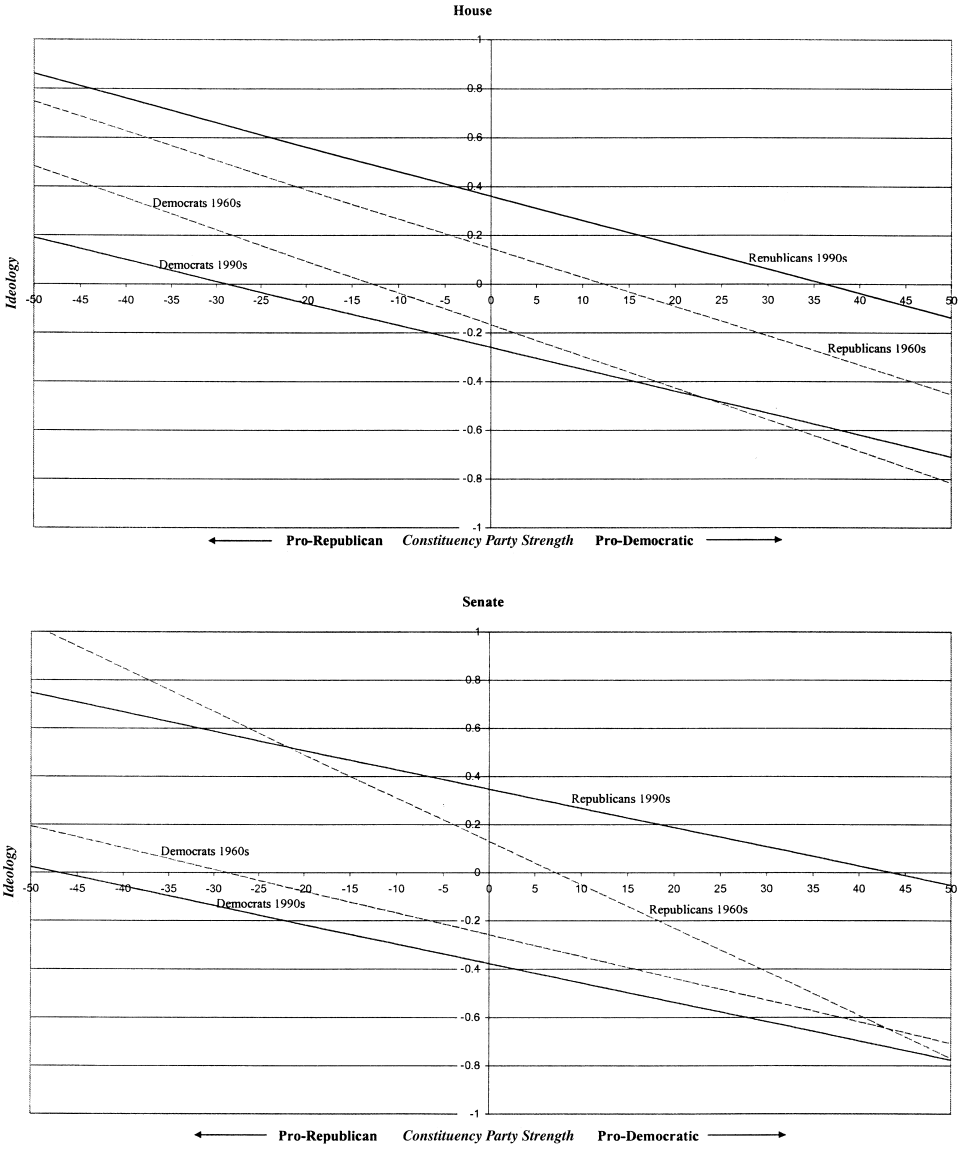


Fig. 2. Relationship between constituency partisanship and representatives' ideology in the 1960s and 1990s

used these linear models to estimate tip points for electing a moderate and cross-pressured member of each party. That is, we report the level of constituency partisanship at which the lines cross the moderate cut-point (DW-NOMINATE = -0.2 for Democrats and $+0.2$ for Republicans) and the cross-pressured cut-point (DW-NOMINATE = 0). Figure 2 plots the relationships for the 1960s and 1990s so that we can better see how the points at which the lines cross these thresholds have changed over time.

Changes across the four decades are striking. Observe first the pattern in the House. In the 1960s, the Democratic line crossed the -0.20 tip point at 2.62, indicating that a slightly

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pro-Democratic constituency could elect a moderate Democrat. Over time, the district partisanship needed to elect moderate Democrats became increasingly pro-Republican (Democratic party strength = − 6.67). The change for Republicans is larger. The level of constituency partisanship where the Republican line crosses the + 0.20 tip point shifted from slightly pro-Republican (Democratic party strength = − 4.33) in the 1960s to strongly Democratic (Democratic party strength = 16.10) in the 1990s.

Relationships in the Senate are similar, but the changes are much larger than in the House. In the 1960s, moderate Senate Democrats tended to come from states that were only moderately pro-Republican (Democratic party strength = − 6.33); by the 1990s, the level of constituency partisanship needed to elect a moderate Democrat had become strongly pro-Republican (Democratic party strength = − 22.12). We see a similar change for Republicans. In the 1960s, moderate Republicans could be elected in states that were only slightly pro-Republican (Democratic party strength = − 3.83), but in the 1990s it took a strongly pro-Democratic state (Democratic party strength = 18.37) to elect a moderate Republican.

The chances of electing a cross-pressured member declined considerably over time. Cross-pressured members tended to come from constituencies that favour the other party. The tip points for electing cross-pressured House members in the 1960s were about 12 points in favour of the opposite party for both Democrats and Republicans. In the Senate, the tip point was a modest 7.28 points for cross-pressured Republicans, but a more substantial − 28.56 for cross-pressured Democrats. Strong candidates with compatible ideologies could overcome adverse constituency partisanship at these levels. By the 1990s, the tip points needed to elect a cross-pressured member had shifted so far that there was almost no chance that a minority party candidate could win. To elect a cross-pressured Democrat or Republican in the 1990s, constituencies needed to favour the other party by about 30 points in House elections, and more than 40 points in Senate elections.

Thus, moderate and cross-pressured members tend to come from constituencies in which partisanship favours the other party. But recall from Table 2 that the relationship between constituency partisanship and party success increased over time, resulting in fewer party non-conformists being elected to Congress.

These results might appear inconsistent with research showing that the frequency of split-party Senate delegations increased during the 1970s and 1980s, and remain common in the 1990s.[35] One might expect that the tightening of the relationship between constituency partisanship and party success would result in a decline in split-party delegations in the Senate, and we do see a decline in the late 1980s and 1990s from peaks in the mid-1970s.[36] But our argument does not necessarily imply that split-party Senate delegations should disappear. The competitiveness of many state electorates and the sequential nature of senate elections mean that different partisan coalitions can be mobilized in different elections. Our argument, however, does suggest that when moderate and cross-pressured senators leave Congress, their replacements are more likely to be mainstream partisans. If so, then the ideological distance between senators in split-party delegations should increase from the 1970s to the 1990s. We do see such a divergence.

[35] Gary M. Segura and Stephen P. Nicholson, 'Sequential Choices and Partisan Transitions in US Senate Delegations: 1972–1988', *Journal of Politics*, 57 (1995), 86–100; Thomas L. Brunell and Bernard Grofman, 'Explaining Divided US Senate Delegations, 1788–1996: A Realignment Approach', *American Political Science Review*, 92 (1998), 391–5.

[36] Segura and Nicholson, 'Sequential Choices and Partisan Transitions in US Senate Delegations', at p. 87; Brunell and Grofman, 'Explaining Divided US Senate Delegations', at p. 394.

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TABLE 4 *Proportion of Partisan Non-Conformists Disappearing through Replacement and Conversion*

	House				Senate			
	1960s–70s		1980s–90s		1960s–70s		1980s–90s	
Democrats								
Replacement	91%		79%		96%		72%	
Did not seek re-election		60%		54%		57%		62%
Defeated (primary or general)		31%		25%		39%		10%
Conversion	8%		20%		4%		29%	
Party switch		1%		5%		4%		5%
Ideological		7%		15%		0%		24%
Republicans								
Replacement	89%		65%		92%		73%	
Did not seek re-election		67%		45%		52%		55%
Defeated (primary or general)		22%		20%		40%		18%
Conversion	12%		36%		8%		27%	
Party switch		2%		2%		0%		0%
Ideological		10%		34%		8%		27%

The absolute difference in DW-NOMINATE scores of split-party Senate delegations was 0.46 in the 1970s, 0.54 in the 1980s and 0.69 in the 1990s. We turn now to a description of what happened to these partisan non-conformists.

REPLACEMENT AND CONVERSION OF NON-CONFORMIST MEMBERS

Partisan non-conformists who were once common in Congress disappeared through two processes: replacement and conversion. *Replacement* occurs when a mainstream partisan replaces a moderate or cross-pressured member who leaves Congress because of electoral defeat, running for another office, retirement or death. *Conversion* occurs when a partisan non-conformist undergoes either an ideological shift in the direction of the member's party mainstream, or a party switch to another party or to independent.

Table 4 shows that replacement is by far the most common path through which partisan non-conformists disappeared from Congress. In the 1960s and 1970s in both chambers in both parties, about nine in ten of moderate and cross-pressured members who disappeared left through retirement or defeat. In the 1980s and 1990s, replacement remains the most common path of exit for partisan misfits, but the overall proportion declined.

Although conversion is less common than replacement, the occurrence of some type (ideological conversion plus party switches) is much more common in recent decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, only 8 per cent of non-conformist House Democrats and 12 per cent of House Republicans experienced any type of conversion. In the 1980s and 1990s, 20 per cent of Democrats and 36 per cent of Republicans either shifted their voting records towards their party mainstream or switched parties. The number of cases in the Senate is much smaller, but we see a similar pattern as conversions grew from less than one in ten during the early decades to more than one in four for both parties in the recent decades. This result is consistent with the conditional party government thesis that as party caucuses become more ideologically homogeneous, party leaders use the tools available to them to pressure any remaining partisan non-conformists to be more supportive of party positions. The added pressure leads to more ideological shifts and party switches. Some non-conformists retire or run for another office, leaving their seat open for replacement.

Table 5 shows that when partisan non-conformists left Congress, their replacements were much more likely to be mainstream partisans in the 1980s and 1990s than in earlier decades. During the 1960s and 1970s, another partisan misfit filled the seats vacated by moderate and cross-pressured members who did not seek re-election more than 60 per cent of the time (except for House Republicans for whom the figure was 42 per cent). During the 1980s and 1990s, the probability of another partisan misfit winning an open House seat was cut nearly in half to 36 per cent for Democrats and 21 per cent for Republicans. In the Senate, the decline in moderate and cross-pressured replacements in open seats is greater, falling to 8 per cent for Democrats and 25 per cent for Republicans.

We see a similar pattern of replacement of partisan non-conformists who were defeated for re-election. When such members lost, they were much less likely to lose to another non-conformist in the 1980s and 1990s than in earlier decades. Non-conformist House members lost to another non-conformist about 23–30 per cent of the time in the 1960s and 1970s; such members in both parties lost to another non-conformist only 16 per cent of the time in the 1980s and 1990s. The number of cases in the Senate is small. A number of moderate and cross-pressured members of both parties were defeated by another non-conformist in the early period. No cases exist in either party in the two recent decades.

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TABLE 5 *Who Replaced Moderate and Cross-Pressured Representatives?*

	House		Senate	
	1960s–70s	1980s–90s	1960s–70s	1980s–90s
Non-Conformist Democrats				
Did not seek re-election				
Replaced by: Another non-con.	61%	36%	62%	8%
Non-con. Rep.	1%	1%	8%	0%
Non-con. Dem.	60%	35%	54%	8%
Mainstream partisan	39%	63%	39%	93%
Conserv. Rep.	26%	40%	39%	62%
Lib. Dem.	13%	23%	0%	31%
Defeated in primary or general election				
Replaced by: Another non-con.	30%	16%	44%	0%
Non-con. Rep.	6%	0%	22%	0%
Non-con. Dem.	24%	16%	22%	0%
Mainstream partisan	70%	84%	56%	100%
Conserv. Rep.	62%	71%	56%	50%
Lib. Dem.	8%	13%	0%	50%
Non-conformist Republicans				
Did not seek re-election				
Replaced by: Another non-con.	42%	21%	62%	25%
Non-con. Rep.	35%	21%	62%	25%
Non-con. Dem.	7%	0%	0%	0%
Mainstream partisan	57%	79%	39%	75%
Conserv. Rep.	24%	41%	8%	33%
Lib. Dem.	33%	38%	31%	42%
Defeated in primary or general election				
Replaced by: Another non-con.	23%	16%	20%	0%
Non-con. Rep.	4%	8%	10%	0%
Non-con. Dem.	19%	8%	10%	0%
Mainstream partisan	78%	84%	80%	100%
Conserv. Rep.	11%	0%	0%	0%
Lib. Dem.	67%	84%	80%	100%

WHY DID THE NON-CONFORMISTS DISAPPEAR? SOME SPECULATION

Thus, we see that moderate and cross-pressured members of both parties disappeared through both replacement and conversion. Although the explanation for the shrinking middle in Congress is somewhat tentative, we believe that three interrelated changes account for the decline: (1) changes in party self-selection decisions of aspiring politicians, (2) changes in activities of party officials and activists recruiting candidates, and (3) changes in the behaviour of voters.

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Changes in Party Self-Selection

Candidates for Congress are primarily self-starters.[37] Nonetheless, ambitious politicians typically climb a relatively structured political ladder to get to Congress. Members of the House come primarily from state legislatures, and numerous others have experience in local offices. Senators traditionally come from two major pools: members of the House and Governors.[38] Although the number of amateurs elected to Congress increased in the 1970s, most successful candidates for Congress are individuals who climbed the various rungs of the ladder in pursuit of a political career. The trend has swung back towards more politically experienced candidates in recent years.

Regardless of whether the path to Congress goes through local and state offices or not, the vehicle that transports successful politicians through a political career is the political party. A crucial early decision that every aspiring politician must make, therefore, is the choice of a political party. And given the political and legal barriers facing minor parties in the United States, the choice is effectively limited to the two major parties.

We suspect that the relative weight of the criteria on which this early political decision is based has changed. For most individuals, this decision reflects a combination of (1) the ideological fit between their own policy views and the party's platform, (2) personal and familial experiences, and (3) political expediency. Individuals tend to gravitate towards the party that meets most of these conditions. For many non-conformist Democrats and Republicans, the lack of ideological fit was less important than one or more of the other considerations. Recall, for example, that Phil Gramm was first elected to Congress as a Democrat. When the congressional seat where he lived came open in 1978, it was clear that the Democratic nominee would be the overwhelming favourite to win. A staunch conservative, Gramm ran as a Democrat because political expediency outweighed the lack of ideological fit with other Democrats. After winning a closely contested primary, Gramm won a lopsided victory in the general election against a weak Republican candidate, and coasted to easy re-election in 1980 and again in 1982. He co-sponsored President Reagan's budget cuts in 1981, exploiting his strategic position on the Budget Committee to defeat the Democratic leadership's alternative. When the 98th Congress was organized after the 1982 election, embarrassed Democratic leaders punished this disloyalty by declining to reappoint Gramm to the Budget Committee. In a much-publicized move, Gramm resigned his seat in Congress, switched parties, and won a special election as a Republican. With a large campaign fund and the advantages of incumbency, running as a Democrat was no longer politically necessary. Indeed, the statewide publicity he received from the party switch and special election victory set up his successful campaign for the Senate two years later.

Over time, however, we suspect that ideological compatibility has come to dominate other considerations that once led aspiring politicians to associate with one party rather than the other. Individuals with views outside of a party's ideological mainstream have become less likely to associate with that party in the first place. In some cases, the lack of ideological fit can overcome even strong familial ties to a particular party. Consider the case of Hamilton Fish Jr. From 1968 to 1994, his father, Hamilton Fish Sr, represented a district in New York that was north of New York City in the Hudson Valley. The Fish family was among the most prominent Republican families in New York state politics; the

[37] Thomas A. Kazee, *Who Runs for Congress? Ambition, Context, and Candidate Emergence* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1994), p. 13.

[38] Canon, *Actors, Athletes, and Astronauts*, pp. 51 and 59.

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first member of the family to represent this area of New York in the House was elected in 1842. When his father retired, the liberal Hamilton Fish Jr ran for the seat not as a Republican but as a Democrat. The attempt to succeed his father failed. Sue Kelly won the seat. Her voting record has been more moderate than that of the typical Republican in the 1990s, but more conservative than that of the senior Fish.

Changes in Recruitment

In addition to the self-selection of a party affiliation by prospective candidates, the recruitment process also seems to have changed in ways that discourages the emergence and nomination of moderate and cross-pressured partisans. Since most congressional candidates are self-starters who win a nomination in direct primaries, party leaders have little direct control over who wins the right to be the party's standard-bearer. Successful candidates must appeal to the political preferences of voters in the local constituency, rather than preferences of national party leaders or fellow partisans from other regions. If voters in the local constituency have preferences that differ from those of partisan voters in other districts, the successful candidate is likely to reflect local preferences and be a moderate or cross-pressured member of Congress.

Although party leaders and activists cannot control the nomination process, they have engaged in a number of activities to encourage certain individuals to run for Congress and helped them get the resources necessary for a successful campaign. In recent decades, recruitment of congressional candidates has been increasingly influenced by state and national party organizations. In addition to encouraging certain individuals to run, these party organizations have become more active in training and tutoring candidates on how to run an effective campaign for Congress. Perhaps most importantly, these party organizations have been active in helping candidates raise adequate campaign funds for a viable electoral effort.[39]

Starting with the Goldwater nomination in 1964 and continuing through the Nixon and Reagan years, the conservative wing of the Republican party gained control of the national party organization. Furthermore, the conservative movement extends to the local level. In a number of states, grass-roots conservative groups have succeeded in taking control of the state party organization and winning local political offices. These local party and government offices serve as rungs on the political career ladder. As the local Republican party apparatus falls under the control of conservatives, they are more likely to seek out individuals to run for political offices who themselves are conservative. Liberal Republicans not only are less likely to get the support of the party organization, they also may have to run against candidates who have such support. Marge Roukema of New Jersey and other moderate Republicans accused Majority Leader Dick Armey and Majority Whip Tom Delay of targeting moderate Republicans for primary challenges during the 2000 election cycle. The moderates threatened to cut their ties to the National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee by not paying their annual dues.[40]

Although the Democratic party remains somewhat more diverse ideologically than the Republicans, in all likelihood, non-conformist Democrats as well as Republicans are less

[39] Paul S. Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 3rd edn (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000).

[40] John Bresnahan and Susan Crabtree, 'Moderates fume at GOP leaders: Roukema race helps spark talk of revolt', *Roll Call*, 16 March 2000.

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likely to receive the encouragement and support from various groups allied with the party. Potential Democratic candidates who are perceived as not being supportive of labour or whose positions run counter to those of the various environmental, pro-choice or gun-control groups that frequently support Democratic candidates will have a much tougher time raising campaign funds and attracting the support needed to win a seat in Congress.

As a result, the pool of potential candidates and the candidates recruited to run are more uniformly anchored in the ideological base of the party. Where non-conformists may have once been attracted to a party because of family ties or political expediency, such considerations carry much less weight now. Rather than having an easier time fulfilling their political ambitions, those out of touch with their party's ideological core may find it more difficult to get elected as a non-conformist even if their views are anchored in the political centre. Thus, even if voters in a district might prefer a moderate representative, they frequently must choose between a conservative Republican and a liberal Democrat. Regardless of who wins, the result is one less non-conformist in Congress.

Changes in the Behaviour of Voters

Finally, voters have a crucial role to play in this party polarization process. The move towards party polarization of elected representatives cannot be sustained unless voters are willing to elect these more ideological partisans. But there is evidence of increased party polarization of voters since the mid-1980s. At least some voters anchored in the core of each of the parties have become more ideologically extreme over the period covered by our study.[41] In particular, ideological polarization has been sharpest among the strong partisans who are the most likely to participate in primaries or to contribute financial and other resources to candidates' campaigns.

To be sure, many voters remain unaware of or indifferent to the ideological profile of the candidates. Yet as the percentage of ideologically driven candidates increases, ideological consistency among voters should also increase. In particular, we can look at the ideological shift of the Republican electorate in the Northeast, a region that once elected a large share of that party's non-conformists. Using data from the 1976 and 1996 National Election Studies, we looked at the distribution of self-identified ideology of Republican voters and Republican party identifiers in the regions that once elected liberal Republicans. Although these national samples are not adequate to analyse voter preferences in particular districts, they can reveal aggregate changes in ideological preferences of voters in different regions of the country. This analysis indicates that Republicans from the Northeast are less moderate to liberal in the 1990s than they were in the 1970s: there were about 8 per cent fewer self-declared moderate and liberal voters in the 1990s, and about 7 per cent fewer moderate and liberal Republican identifiers. Although the change in this region is smaller than for Republican voters nationally, a shift of this magnitude is sufficient to make it more difficult for a moderate or liberal Republican to win in a primary against a more conservative opponent, or if they were nominated, to gain the resources needed to beat a mainstream Democrat in the general election.[42] Take for example, the recent gubernatorial

[41] Fleisher and Bond, 'Why Has Party Conflict among Elites Increased if the Electorate Is Dealigning?'; Fleisher and Bond, 'Evidence of Increasing Polarization among Ordinary Citizens'; Jacobson, 'Party Polarization in National Politics'.

[42] In regions outside the Northeast, there were 11–12 per cent fewer moderate and liberal Republican voters and identifiers in the 1990s than in the 1970s.

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primary in New Jersey. Bob Franks, a moderate and politically experienced Republican, lost to Brett Schundler, a relative newcomer who is much more conservative than Franks.

In addition, there is no reason to believe that this problem plagues only non-conformist Republicans. We expect that in many districts and states, conservative Democrats would face an uphill battle in the primary against a more liberal Democrat.

Thus, it is clear that moderate and cross-pressured members have largely disappeared from Congress. The few remaining partisan non-conformists have managed to wield a pivotal influence on some big issues on the agenda in recent years (e.g., campaign finance reform, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the patients' bill of rights). These cases of moderate influence, however, may be more of a last gasp of an endangered species rather than a sign of resurgence. Moderates were able to exert influence on these issues mainly because of the close party split in Congress. With such a close split, the loss of only a handful votes is the difference between victory and defeat. But if the changes in partisan self-selection, recruitment of candidates and preferences of voters described above continue in future elections, the number of partisan non-conformists will continue to decline.

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APPENDIX *Conservative, Moderate and Liberal Democrats and Republicans, 85–106th Congresses*

Congress	Conservative Republicans	Moderate Republicans	Liberal Republicans	Conservative Democrats	Moderate Democrats	Liberal Democrats
	House					
1950s						
85th	134	66	0	11	100	121
86th	95	57	0	14	110	157
87th	105	69	0	16	106	141
1960s						
88th	104	74	0	21	89	146
89th	73	67	0	23	92	178
90th	91	90	6	28	77	141
91st	90	92	7	25	79	141
92nd	82	92	6	24	86	144
1970s						
93rd	93	97	2	14	86	142
94th	69	72	3	12	102	176
95th	77	67	2	12	106	170
96th	98	61	0	9	102	164
97th	133	58	0	7	91	145
1980s						
98th	133	34	0	4	96	166
99th	153	29	0	1	85	165
100th	149	28	0	1	89	166
101st	148	27	0	2	92	165
102nd	145	21	0	0	97	169
1990s						
103rd	161	15	0	0	82	175
104th	218	12	0	0	51	152
105th	215	9	0	4	39	166
106th	216	5	2	1	32	178
	Senate					
1950s						
85th	33	12	1	4	19	27
86th	20	11	3	5	22	38
87th	21	11	4	6	22	36
1960s						
88th	15	14	4	7	20	40
89th	17	12	3	5	18	45
90th	15	15	6	3	20	41
91st	16	19	8	5	15	37
92nd	17	23	5	4	16	34
1970s						
93rd	17	22	4	4	15	37
94th	17	17	4	4	16	41
95th	18	16	4	3	18	40
96th	19	20	2	1	22	35
97th	30	22	1	1	18	27
1980s						
98th	33	20	1	0	17	29
99th	33	20	0	0	15	32
100th	31	14	1	0	15	39
101st	32	13	0	0	12	43
102nd	31	12	0	1	10	46
1990s						
103rd	34	10	0	0	8	48
104th	44	9	1	0	3	43
105th	50	5	0	0	0	45
106th	50	5	0	0	1	44

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