

Realignment and Party Sorting in the 2008 US Presidential Election

Masaru NISHIKAWA

Abstract: From the 1970s, “party sorting” - the process by which a tighter fit is brought about between political ideology and party affiliation - has occurred within a narrow political class. This article offers a detailed examination of some aspects of the 2008 election which may contribute to the developing or testing of how the realignment related to changes in party structure that in turn triggered the party sorting. First, Chris Shays, the last House Republican in New England was voted out of office in the 2008 election. This extinction of moderate New England Republicans will possibly encourage further party sorting; the Republican Party will likely become a more conservatively cohesive party without its moderator. Second, McCain “sorted out” moderate constituents and tied the Republican Party to cultural conservatives. On the other hand, Obama was successful in enabling the Democratic Party to attract not only liberals, but also diverse groups and different ideologies who seek “change” or “hope.” As a result of these realignments and related changes in the structure of parties, we are now witnessing a deeper and insurmountable partisanship between Democrats and Republicans. Although President Obama is calling for bipartisanship, bipartisan cooperation will seldom, if ever, happen in the 111th Congress.

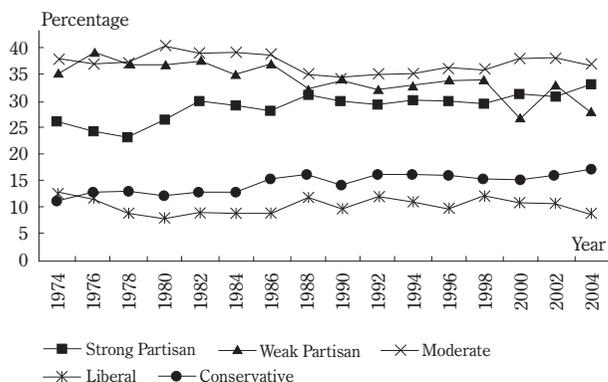
1. Polarization, Party Sorting, and Realignment

In a recent study, Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson have explained why those who have reigned over the US — especially the governing Republican majority in Congress — are committed to ideas and laws that are at odds with the moderate center of American opinion. They also pose the question of why American political leaders veered as far right and “off-center” as they did and why the mechanisms of democratic accountability have not been able to bring them back; a single word captures this state of affairs, “polarization” (Hacker & Pierson, 2005, 2-7). When members of each party are polarized into liberal or conservative camps and are likely to join together and vote against the other party, it makes

it harder to build the legislative coalitions necessary to undertake ambitious new policies. Because of supermajority requirements imposed by bicameralism, the filibuster, and the presidential veto, the majority party is rarely large enough or sufficiently cohesive to go it alone. By exacerbating the difficulty of bipartisan cooperation, polarization lowers the capacity of Congress to enact new laws (Stonewall, Brewer, and Mariani, 2003, 1-4; McCarty, 2007, 223).

However, as Morris P. Fiorina has pointed out, “polarization” implies that the political opinions and attitudes of the public have been pushed away from moderate, centrist positions to the liberal or conservative extreme. When electorate is highly polarized, the middle ground literally vanishes — but that is not the case today. As indicated in Figure 1, the numbers of people who rec-

Figure 1 Self-Identification



Source: http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab2a_3.htm; Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi (eds.) *Vital Statistics on American Politics, 2007-2008*, 2008, p. 123.

ognize themselves as “strong partisan,” “weak partisan,” “moderate,” “liberal,” or “conservative” have stayed almost the same for fifty years. Judging from that fact, the American public doesn’t seem to be deeply divided so far. Instead, over the past generation, “party sorting” — the process by which a tighter fit is brought about between political ideology and party affiliation — has occurred within a narrow political class, especially politicians. As recently as the 1970s, both liberals and conservatives could find a comfortable home in either the Democratic or the Republican Party. However, in recent years, the Republican Party has become much more likely to be the home of ideologically conservative politicians, while the Democratic Party is home to most liberals (Fiorina & Levendusky, 2006, 53).

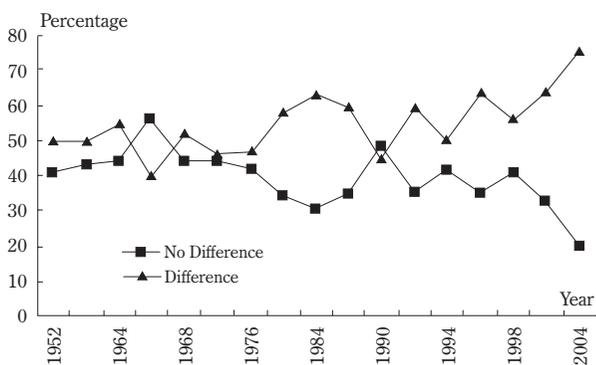
Figure 2 clearly shows that the majority of Americans now feel that two parties are different. In fact, 76% of Americans felt that the two parties were different from each other in 2004, while 50% of Americans felt that the two parties were different in 1952. Viewed in this light, we may say that the American public itself is not polarized, but

two parties have been sorted out and Americans come to feel that the two parties are different.

Thus, in this article, I prefer to use the term “party sorting,” reserving the term “polarization” for bimodal distributions of opinion or movements toward a bimodal distribution of opinion; voters are polarized on an issue if more voters cluster at the extremes rather than locate themselves in the center, or if they are moving from centrist positions toward the extremes. “Sorting” rather than “polarization,” seems to be a more accurate label for the changes we have seen over the last few decades (Fiorina & Levendusky, 2006, 54).

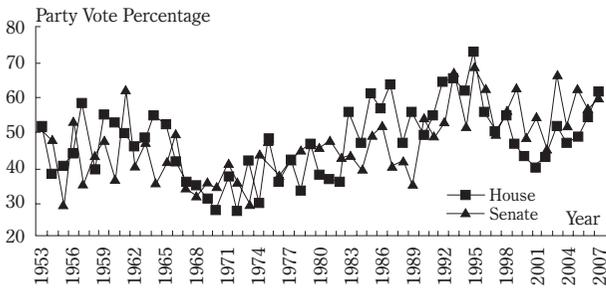
The question now arises: how do we measure party sorting? One common measure of party sorting is the percentage of party votes that take place in the Congress. From even a cursory examination of Figure 3, the following fact emerges; party voting decreased in the 1960s and then increased dramatically from the early 1980s. In addition to party voting, party unity scores shown in Table 1 are a useful measure of party sorting as well (Stonecash, et. al., 2003, 5-7). Party unity scores have steadily increased since the 92nd

Figure 2 Important Difference in What Democratic and Republican Parties stand for, 1952-2004



Source: http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab2b_4.htm

Figure 3 Party Votes in Congress, 1953-2007



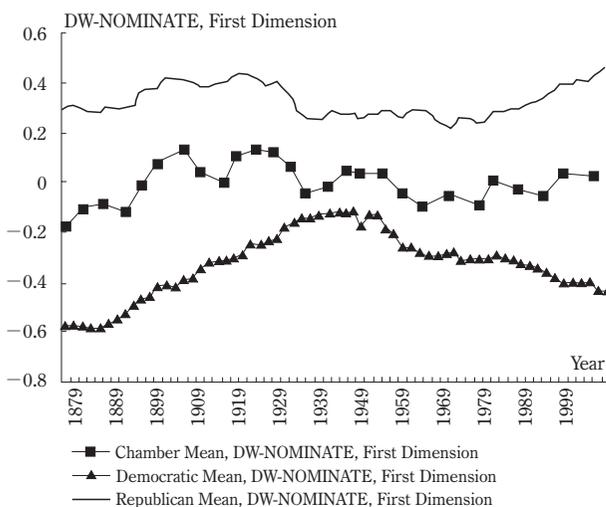
Source: Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin (eds.) *Vital Statistics on Congress*, 2008, 2008, p. 148.

Table 1 Party Unity Scores for Senate and House, 1901-2007

Year	House Rep. Party Unity	House Dem. Party Unity	Senate Rep. Party Unity	Senate Dem. Party Unity
1901	0.94	0.90	0.91	0.91
1911	0.89	0.89	0.82	0.85
1921	0.88	0.87	0.88	0.87
1931	0.79	0.81	0.70	0.73
1941	0.85	0.82	0.79	0.75
1951	0.82	0.77	0.79	0.79
1961	0.81	0.81	0.79	0.79
1971	0.76	0.71	0.74	0.73
1981	0.77	0.77	0.83	0.77
1991	0.82	0.86	0.83	0.82
2001	0.93	0.88	0.89	0.88
2003	0.94	0.91	0.94	0.89
2005	0.92	0.90	0.89	0.89
2007	0.90	0.96	0.85	0.91

Source: Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin (eds.) *Vital Statistics on Congress*, 2008, p. 149; http://pooleandrosenthal.com/party_unity.htm

Figure 4 Senate Polarization



Source: <ftp://voteview.com/junkord/smeans3.txt>

Congress (1971), and they have now reached the highest level since the 60th Congress (1907). DW-NOMINATE provides another measure of party sorting along the liberal-conservative continuum for each congressional term since the end of Reconstruction⁽¹⁾. By 2003, the difference between the parties on the DW-NOMINATE scale has reached levels not witnessed since the 1920s (see Figure 4 and 5). Party votes, party unity scores, and DW-NOMINATE clearly indicate the recent upward trend in party sorting which began after a very long decline (McCarty, 2007, 226-229).

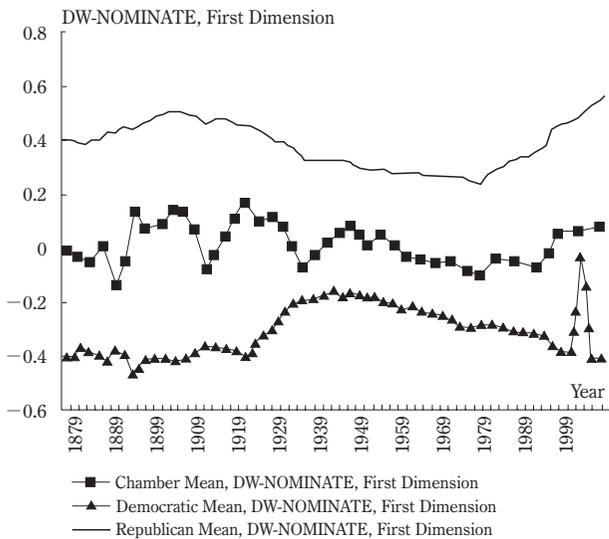
As Noran McCarty has astutely pointed out, the patterns presented in these figures present a formidable intellectual puzzle. Why did a political system based on heterogeneous and moderate parties suddenly reverse course to produce very divided and distinct political parties? One obvious source of the change is “realignment.” Put simply, Republicans in the North and South have moved sharply to the right and moderate Democrats in the South have been replaced by Republicans. The remaining, largely northern, Democrats are somewhat more liberal than the

Democratic Party of the 1960s. It is widely accepted that this realignment triggered the party sorting since the 1970s (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006, 11).

As we all know, the 2008 US presidential election was a triumph for the Democratic Party. It produced a Democratic President, Barack Obama, and also resulted in Democratic control over both houses of Congress. This election might be another watershed moment in the American history.

As Walter Dean Burnham aptly stated in presenting his impressions of the 2008 election, “it certainly smells like a critical elec-

Figure 5 House Polarization



Source: <ftp://voteview.com/junkord/hmeans3.txt>

tion, but I can't say for sure." Much of the debates and discussions of the 2008 election have centered on whether we can classify this election as a critical election or not (Harwood, 2008). Opinions are divided between the conservatives and the liberals. The conservatives insist that America still remains a "center right" country and that the voters gave Barack Obama and the Democrats a majority only because of the financial panic and the limitations of the McCain campaign. On the other hand, liberals promptly declared this to be one of those critical elections that mark a historic political realignment (Starr, 2008).

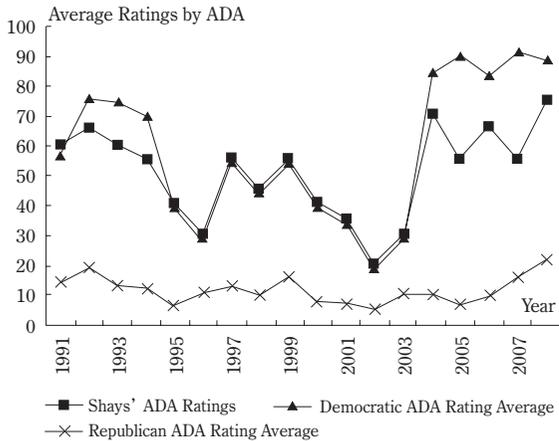
Conceived of in this way, ascertaining whether indeed this election is part of a critical realignment thus does seem to be difficult. However, in fact, there are at least five distinct criteria for realignment. One approach defines a realignment as occurring when there is a change in party dominance or a change in which party is the "sun" and which the "moon" of politics. A second approach looks at changes in the ideological

orientations. A third approach focuses on substantial changes in the composition of each party's sociodemographic support base. The fourth approach emphasizes change in the geographic loci of party support, especially in regional terms. The fifth treats realignment as a change in the defining issue cleavages that structured political competition. All that can be said for certain is that the 2008 election coincides well with all the major premises of the realignment thesis (Merrill, Grofman, and Brunell, 2008, 1-2; Mayhew, 2002; Sundquist, 1983). This article thus offers a detailed examination of some aspects of 2008 election which may contribute to developing or testing how the realignment related to changes in the structure of parties that in turn triggered the party sorting.

2. Geographical Change: Disappearance of the Moderate Republicans in New England

Reid Wilson enumerated five extraordinary things which caught many by surprise in the 2008 election. With respect to the five points identified by Wilson in his article, what seems most important is Republican Representative Chris Shays' defeat by Democratic challenger Jim Himes in Connecticut (Wilson, 2008). As a matter of fact, Shays was the last House Republican in New England. During his career, the moderate Shays had carved out a reputation as a maverick and in supporting the campaign finance reform act, same-sex marriage, abortion rights, expansion of stem cell research, and gun control, he often collaborated with Democrats and frustrated Republican leaders (Shays Profile 2007b, 205-206). ADA ratings are often used as a measure of the ideology of members of congress, and as we can observe in Figure 6, Shays' ADA ratings fit the

Figure 6 ADA Ratings of Shays' and the Party Average 1991-2008

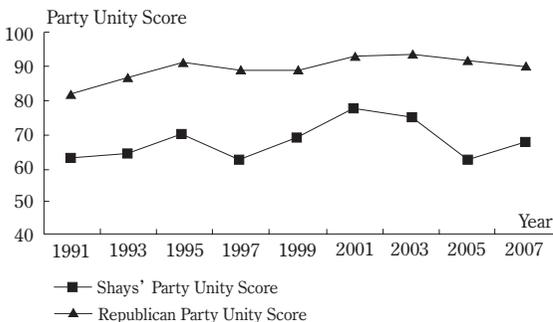


Source: <http://www.adaction.org/pages/publications/voting-records.php>

common pattern of Democrats better than that of Republicans. This fact made his conservative colleagues view him as a liberal troublemaker. Also, when we look at Shays' party unity score (Figure 7) and DW-NOMINATE (Figure 8), it is worth noting that his scores are far below the Republican Party average (Stonecash, et al., 9-11; Shays Profile 2007b, 205-206).

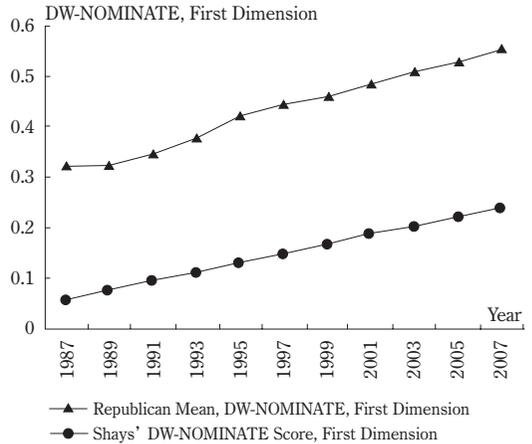
Chris Shays provides a good illustration of the degree of liberalness of New England Republicans. From an examination of Figure 9, we find that New England Republicans are more liberal, and Southern Republicans are more conservative

Figure 7 Shays' Party Unity Score



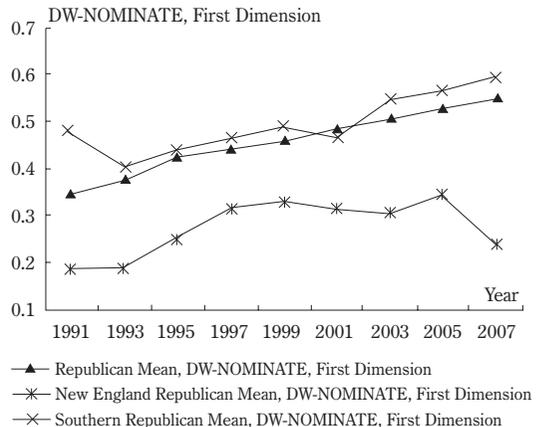
Source: http://pooleandrosenthal.com/party_unity.htm

Figure 8 Shays' DW-NOMINATE Score



Source: ftp://voteview.com/junkord/HL01110D21_PRES_BSSE.DAT

Figure 9 New England and Southern Republican House DW-NOMINATE Scores



Source: ftp://voteview.com/junkord/HL01110D21_PRES_BSSE.DAT

than average Republicans. In taking a middle position between Southern conservatives and other ordinary Republicans, New England Republicans actually acted as moderators within the Republican Party. But as Shays was voted out of office in 2008, a critical moderator vanished from the Republican Party.

Wilson reached the conclusion in his column that "Republicans are going to have to re-establish a foothold in New England," but now the Republican Party is led by a more socially

conservative wing of the party, and will find votes hard to come by. Such a view underlies the following remarks by Thomas Whalen, a political historian at Boston University: “there is no place in the Republican Party now for the moderates and they need to find a home... the brand is dead in New England.” New England’s decision to “go the other way” in 2008 election is a dramatic transformation for a region considered a Republican stronghold a generation ago. Figure 10 demonstrates that the Republican Party and New England have a long history together (Haigh, 2008; Wilson, 2008).

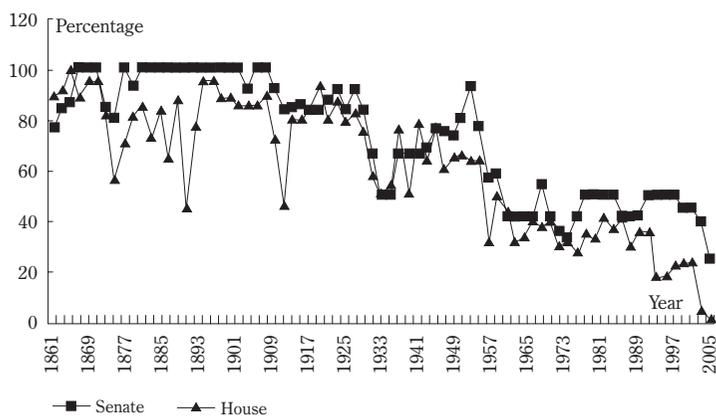
For nearly a century after the Civil War and the humiliation of Reconstruction, the majority of southerners were Democrats (Campbell, 2007, 94). And the liberal wing of the Republican Party had been the dominant political force in New England and the electoral base of the Republican Party. Republicans of the East Coast had also made some accommodations with the public philosophy of the New Deal. As indicated in Figure 10, after the 60th Congress (1907), the liberal wing of the Republican Party based on New England has been gradually eliminated from the

scene (also see Table 2 and Table 3). Especially after 1964, the Republican Party started to erode the Democratic hegemony in the Democratic South (Rae, 1989, 3-6). At the same time, the Democratic Party which once had had its main source of support in the South, also experienced a change in the South. The Democratic Party subsequently has become sufficiently competitive in the North to be able to construct a national political majority (Ware, 2006, xv-xvii, 208-237).

Table 2 and Table 3 show that the partisan Realignment of white southerners was not quickly realized at first. General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s path breaking candidacy in 1952 was directed toward the more dynamic Peripheral South states, where urbanization and industrialization were creating large white middle classes sympathetic to the economic conservatism of the Republican Party (Black & Black, 2002, 24-25). The conservative movement was rising within the Republican Party, personified by the 1964 presidential candidate Barry M. Goldwater. A conservative Republican in the new Western mode, he appealed to voters who resented the intrusion of big government into their personal and economic lives. Goldwater appealed to many southerners and carried Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina where Republicans did not exist before 1960 (Campbell, 2007, 94-97).

In 1980, Ronald Regan made the most of “Goldwater Republicanism” (the opposition to “Big Government” in general) and the Republican Party had an opportunity to reshape southern party affiliations. The Reagan Realignment dramatically expanded the

Figure 10 Republican Congressional Strength in New England



Source: Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the 1st through 105th Congresses*; Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin (eds.) *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2008*, p. 31.

Table 2 Democratic Senate Strength by Region, 1925-2009

Year	South	Border	New England	Mid-Atlantic	Mid-west	Plains	Rocky Mountains	Pacific Coast
1925	100%	50%	8.3%	37.5%	10%	0%	50%	16.7%
1937	100%	100%	50%	75%	80%	50%	93.8%	50%
1949	100%	80%	25%	37.5%	20%	16.7%	75%	33.3%
1961	100%	60%	41.7%	25%	70%	25%	75%	80%
1973	63.6%	50%	58.3%	25%	60%	58.3%	56.2%	60%
1979	50%	70%	58.3%	50%	80%	41.7%	37.5%	60%
1981	54.4%	70%	50%	50%	60%	25%	31.3%	40%
1983	50%	70%	50%	50%	60%	25%	31.3%	40%
1987	72.7%	60%	50%	50%	70%	50%	37.5%	40%
1989	68.2%	60%	58.3%	50%	70%	50%	37.5%	40%
1991	68.2%	60%	58.3%	50%	70%	58.3%	37.5%	40%
1993	59.1%	60%	58.3%	62.5%	80%	58.3%	37.5%	50%
1995	36.4%	50%	50%	50%	60%	58.3%	37.5%	50%
1997	31.8%	50%	50%	50%	60%	58.3%	25%	60%
1999	36.4%	40%	50%	62.5%	50%	58.3%	25%	60%
2001	36.4%	50%	50%	75%	60%	66.7%	25%	70%
2003	40.9%	40%	50%	75%	60%	58.3%	18.8%	70%
2005	18.2%	40%	50%	75%	70%	50%	25%	70%
2007	22.7%	50%	50%	87.5%	80%	50%	31.3%	70%
2009	31.82%	50%	63.64%	87.5%	80%	54.55%	43.75%	80%

Source: Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin (eds.) *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2008*, p. 30.

Table 3 Democratic Party Strength in House by Region, 1925-2009

Congress	South	Border	New England	Mid-Atlantic	Mid-west	Plains	Rocky Mountains	Pacific Coast
1925	97.1%	58.7%	12.5%	26.4%	16.7%	14.6%	28.6%	19%
1937	98%	95.2%	44.8%	68%	72.2%	38.2%	93.3%	80%
1949	93.4%	88.1%	39.3%	48.4%	43.7%	16.1%	75%	36.4%
1961	93.4%	84.2%	50%	48.9%	40.7%	19.4%	68.8%	51.2%
1973	68.2%	77.1%	60%	53.8%	37.6%	36%	42.1%	58.9%
1979	71.3%	77.1%	72%	63.8%	55.3%	40%	47.4%	66.1%
1981	63.9%	68.6%	64%	53.8%	50%	36%	36.8%	56.1%
1983	71.2%	76.4%	66.6%	58.3%	55%	54.2%	33.3%	62.3%
1987	66.4%	67.6%	62.5%	56.9%	57.5%	45.8%	37.5%	59%
1989	67%	67.6%	58.3%	58.3%	59.5%	50%	37.5%	59%
1991	66.4%	67.6%	66.7%	56.9%	61.2%	54.2%	45.8%	60.6%
1993	61.6%	65.6%	60.9%	54.5%	58.1%	54.5%	45.8%	63.8%
1995	48.8%	50%	60.9%	50%	43.2%	36.4%	25%	49.3%
1997	43.2%	40.6%	78.3%	53%	50%	36.4%	20.8%	55.1%
1999	43.5%	40.6%	78.3%	54.5%	50%	40.9%	20.8%	56.5%
2001	42.4%	37.5%	73.9%	54.5%	48.6%	36.4%	25%	63.2%
2003	41.9%	45.1%	68.2%	53.2%	40.6%	31.8%	25%	64.3%
2005	37.4%	45.2%	72.7%	54.8%	40.6%	36.4%	28.6%	63.8%
2007	41.2%	48.4%	95.5%	66.1%	47.8%	54.5%	39.3%	65.7%
2009	45.04%	51.61%	100%	74.19%	57.97%	50%	60.71%	60.78%

Source: Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin (eds.) *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2008*, p. 28.

number of Republicans and conservative independents in the South (Black & Black, 2002, 25-26). As Democrats lost their conservative south-

ern base, they consolidated strength among more liberal constituencies prominent elsewhere — in particular, much of the Northwest and eventually California (Galston & Nivora, 2006, 19-20). By its upsurge in 1994, Republicans won majorities of House and Senate seats in both the North and the South, a feat they had not achieved since 1872, and in both 2004 and 2008, G. W. Bush carried the Solid Republican South plus the border states (Black & Black, 2002, 2-3; Campbell, 2007, 96).

At the same time, Republican moderates began losing their traditional foothold in New England diminishing the party's internal

ballast against harder line conservatives (Galston & Nivora, 2006, 19-20). The 2008 election seems like the *coup de grace* to the moderate wing of the Republican Party in the Northeast, and the solid Republican (Deep) South has emerged and fully developed. While the candidacy of Barack Obama was attractive not only to Northern states but also to the moderate Peripheral Southern states such as Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida, John McCain could only carry the stalwart conservative states of the Deep South, the Border South, and the most

part of the Rocky Mountains and the Plains.

Whereas much of the nineteenth and the twentieth century was characterized by heterogene-

ous legislative parties with large numbers of conservative Democrats from the South and liberal Republicans from New England, those two ideological species have all but been exterminated in the 2008 election (McCarty, 2007, 226). The extinction of moderate Republicans from New England may possibly enhance party sorting more; the Republican Party is likely to become a more cohesive conservative party given the absence of a moderator.

3. Obama Democrats vs. McCain Republicans

Table 4 shows that Obama’s victory depended on the traditional party apparatus such as organized labor, minority groups, and Jewish voters. However at the same time, he added groups that were not previously conspicuous supporters of the Democratic Party: fiscal conservatives, college/post college graduates, and affluent “progressive” baby boomers (Keller, 2008).

Since 9.11, President G. W. Bush had been successfully blended laissez-faire economics, cultural conservatism, and the War on Terror into one package. However in 2008, it is noteworthy that the Republican Party cracked when some moderate Republicans gave up their support for McCain and threw their support to Obama. For example, Christopher Buckley, a son of the late William F. Buckley, Jr., Christopher Hitchens,

Peggy Noonan, David Brooks, David Frum, and Kathleen Parker all switched their support over to Obama (Blankley, 2008). They each acknowledge themselves to be a

“small-government conservative who clings tenaciously and old-fashionably to the idea that one ought to have balanced budgets” (Buckley, 2008). These fiscal conservatives have never given up supporting small government conservatism, but they have denounced how wrong the other conservative wing of the Republican Party has been on many social issues. Colin Powell, a moderate Republican, also endorsed Obama and pointed out that his party moved more to the right than he would have imagined and became myopic on many social issues (Rudin, 2008).

We now turn to the second group of new supporters. Obama’s age, looks, eloquence, and catch-all philosophy make him attractive as well to the college-educated youth. Here the historical analogue shifts to JFK. Obama’s mix of an unthreatening black persona and academic patina echoes JFK’s blend of Irish Catholic smarts and Harvard polish (Keller, 2008). However his efforts to reform the political process to include the public into more rational political discussions/discourse also resonate with many intellectuals.

For the third group, the Boomer liberals, clustered in the media, the academy, the entertainment industry, law information technology, and financial marketing fields, have long been starved for a cause, and a sense of political community, of the sort that prevailed in the glory days of the struggles over Vietnam and civil rights. They yearn for a spokesperson who embodies the new, diverse, post-racist America, and the political “progressivism” with which they identify. Obama’s persona combines a deliciously exotic family background (Black and White, Christian and Muslim, American, African and Asian) with his exceptional poise, personality, intelligence, and rhetorical skill. Obama taps Boomer aspirations with an appeal unmatched since Kennedys

Table 4 Votes by Groups for Obama

Ethnicity	Nonwhite 90%
	Black 99%
	Jewish 74%
Education	Graduate School 67%
	Post Graduate 65%
	College 55%
Labor	64%

Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/112132/Election-Polls-Vote-Groups-2008.aspx>

(Keller, 2008).

While Obama was successful in gaining support from broad range of social groups and different ideologies, John McCain was recognized to be a less dogmatic “maverick” at first and not a standard bearer of the party. McCain, however, urged by conservatives who thought the Republican Party had to abandon the search for a middle way and to become more conservative on social issues such as abortion, gay marriage, affirmative action, gun control, or even simply wearing a flag pin. Finally, McCain nominated Sarah Palin as his running mate which marked the death of moderate Republicanism within the Republican Party. After McCain chose Palin as his running mate, his support from conservative Republicans dramatically increased from 47% to 63%⁽²⁾. His decision to choose her and to smear Obama as “un-American” or “playing the race card” to become the President, provoked a cultural war in the last stage of the election campaign. The 2008 election was a defining moment, in which the American electorate began to recognize that the Republican Party was slowing “change” by desperately attempting to maintain the status quo.

In the early 20th century, the word “liberal” was used without contempt by Republicans, and even used to describe themselves. However, it is easy for us to forget that the liberal wing existed within and often dominated the Republican Party throughout much of the 20th century (Wagner, 2006, 148).

McCain made the Republican Party more likely to be the home of cultural conservatives, while Obama was successful in making the Democratic Party to be the home of not only liberals, but also of diverse groups and different ideologies who seek “change” even though these groups disagreed on specific issues. Many Americans now feel that Obama’s vic-

tory made the nation less politically divided and also to expect the two parties to become less polarized (see Table 5). Eighty-one percent of Americans think the economic stimulus bill to be bipartisan — but while the public overwhelmingly believes Obama is generally reaching out to Republicans, only 41% think Republicans are returning the favor⁽³⁾.

It is interesting to note that 60% of the Republicans feel their party must move in a more conservative direction⁽⁴⁾. However if the Republican Party moves in a more conservative direction in competing with the Democrats, there is no doubt that it will ruin the Republican Party, as the great majority of Americans accept that through such programs as Social Security or Medicare, the federal government must play an essential role in their lives. G. W. Bush was fully aware of this, and appeared at first by identifying himself as “compassionate conservative.” He promised to reform Social Security and Medicare without dismantling the welfare state. This led some conservative pundits to claim that Bush was not one of them, a true conservative. This episode reveals the inevitable stress between purity of principle and political practice, intellectuals and politicians, and ideology and power (Critchlow, 2007, 2).

If the Republican Party continues “sort” itself into more and more conservative, then the Republican Party will be narrowed down to a largely irrelevant minority. This, of course, makes the partisan gap wider.

Table 5 Popular Views of Political Division

Compared with the past, country is...	Dec. 2004	Sept. 2006	Jan. 2007	Jan. 2009
More politically divided	66%	70%	66%	46%
Not more divided	26%	24%	28%	45%
Don't know	8%	6%	6%	9%

Source: <http://www.people-press.org/report/483/>

4. Conclusion

In the preceding parts of this article, I have tried to outline the realignment related to changes in the structure of American political parties that in turn have triggered party sorting. Two things must constantly be kept in our mind. First, the extinction of moderate New England Republicans will possibly make the Republican Party more conservatively cohesive. Second, McCain “sorted out” moderate constituents and made the Republican Party more likely to be the home of cultural conservatives. On the other hand, Obama was successful in making the Democratic Party the home of not only liberals, but also of diverse groups and different ideologies who seek “change” or “hope.” As a result of these changes, we are now witnessing a deeper, unbridgeable partisan chasm between Democrats and Republicans.

In 1964, Republican senators and representatives joined with their Democratic colleagues to support the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the Senate, 27 out of 32 Republicans voted for the bill, and 138 out of 172 Republicans also supported the bill in the House (Critchlow, 2007, 73). Although President Obama is calling for bipartisanship, bipartisan cooperation like we saw in 1964 will seldom, if ever, happen in 2009.

- (1) The DW-NOMINATE algorithm estimates liberal-conservative positions on two dimensions (McCarty, 2007, 226). The first dimension can be interpreted in most periods as the degree of government intervention in the economy or a liberal-conservative continuum. The second dimension picks up the conflict between North and South on Slavery before the Civil War and from the late 1930s through the mid-1970s, civil rights for African-Americans (see, <http://voteview.com/dwnomin.htm>). In this article, I use the first dimension to measure party sorting along the liberal-conservative

dimension.

- (2) Quoted from <http://www.people-press.org/report/450/presidential-race-remains-even>
- (3) Quoted from CBS News Poll, “The Economic Stimulus Bill, the Economy and the Search for bipartisanship,” February 5th, 2009.
- (4) Quoted from <http://www.people-press.org/report/471/high-bar-for-obama>

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