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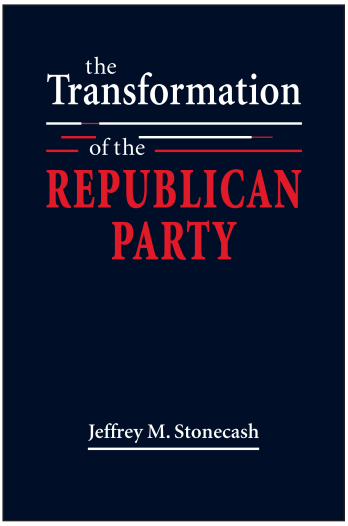
The Transformation of the Republican Party



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Contents

1

The Resurgence of the Republican Party

The Republican Party now competes for majority control in Washington, after decades of struggling to escape minority status in Congress. Its resurgence is a result of a long secular realignment.[1] The south and interior west shifted from Democrat to Republican, with enormous consequences. The fortunes of the Republican Party fluctuated along with this realignment. The party was dominant in the early 1900s, but following the 1930s, it struggled for decades to escape from the minority. Republicans won several presidential elections in the 1950s–1980s, but they were stymied in their quest for control of Congress. Then they burst into the majority in Congress in 1994, and since then they have consistently either won or seriously contended to win the presidency and Congress.[2] These changes brought corresponding variations in party polarization. Partisan divisions in Congress were high in the early 1900s, gradually declined, and have now returned to high levels.[3]

Most important, this resurgence of the Republican Party is not a return of the old party base. In the 1950s and 1960s conservatives and candidates within the party concluded they would not win *conservative* majorities with their existing base. Winning elections became just as if not more important than the theoretical principles of conservative writers. The party pursued new voters, and that yielded a different base with new concerns. Over time the party altered its policy positions,[4] its geographical sources of support,[5] and, ultimately, whom they represent. The three changes are intertwined. The party found support among those resistant to civil rights, those wanting more respect for conservative Christians and their norms, gun rights advocates, those opposed to immigration, and those uneasy about modernity and science.

The new geographical base made it possible to win more seats and made a majority possible. The South was once heavily Democratic but became heavily Republican. That change did not come without a consequence. It is crucial for understanding the current Republican Party. "The South did not become Republican so much as the Republican Party became southern."[6] The party attracted new voters and that in turn revived the party. It also changed conservatism, making it much more an expression of socially conservative positions.[7]

The new composition also came with a cost. The party needed votes from people who did not want change, who were hostile to liberal ideas, who saw Republican elites as giving in to liberals, who wanted to topple their party establishment, and who were focused on culture grievance.[8] That base increasingly came to define the identity of the party and is difficult to appease. The dominance of this base within the party also limits the party's growth. It drives away many who are uncomfortable with the stances emerging from a changed party. The changes also created considerable ambiguity about the nature and future of the party.

Party Revival and the Issues to Consider

There are four sets of issues that emerge from this realignment and resurgence. One set involves simply understanding what has transpired. In the first two chapters I deal with these questions as a prelude to other questions: How has the geographical base changed, and when did the changes occur? Was it abrupt or gradual? Which states did they win, and what states did they lose? Whose and what views has the party come to represent?

Next, central to efforts to understand the party is the White working class. They constitute 60 percent of the party base, and some see the party as a working-class party.[9] How do they vote, what are they like, and what issues have played a role in their loyalty to the party? Contrary to current commentary suggesting that White working-class support for Republicans is new, a majority have been voting for Republican presidential candidates since the 1950s. What is new are the issues animating the base. Principles of limited government are seen as important to many, but the rise of a set of issues important to social conservatives has gained dominance.

Then, there is an ongoing debate about just whom Republicans are actually responding to. Are they agitating the White working class with social issues but responding to business, as many charge? The Trump administration provides an opportunity to assess this, as the party held

complete power for two years and considerable power for four years. What did they do with power? And finally, where are the changes within the Republican Party taking them and the rest of the nation?

Frustrations and the Pursuit of New Voters

The party has changed its geographical base. What created a realignment of state partisanship? That will be explored in depth in later chapters, but a brief summary at this point may help. The stimulus for change came from a combination of the party's minority status after the 1930s, principled conservative concerns, worries about liberalism, and socially conservative activists resisting change. By 1960 Republicans had consistently been in the minority for three decades, winning the House and Senate only twice (1946 and 1952) since 1932. Many saw limited hope for the future. Conservatives were particularly frustrated by neglect of their fundamental principles within the Republican Party. The 1960s and the many liberal Great Society programs enacted made conservatives even more uneasy. Government was growing, and conservatives were frustrated because they did not think the party was presenting a serious alternative to liberal Democrats.

Conservatives were sure that something was wrong in America. As Nicol Rae summarized it, conservatives argued, "Something is rotten in the American body politic: that rottenness is due to liberalism; and only by returning to the economic, moral, and foreign policy precepts of America's past can the promise of America be redeemed."[10] Economic policies were of great concern. The New Deal may have been accepted by many, but small-government conservatives were still opposed to the growth of government. They were also concerned about what government was doing to business. Capitalism, individualism, and achievement were not being honored, and business was facing more oversight as the number of federal regulations grew. Conservatives also worried about the stifling of economic growth due to government regulations and the rise of a population dependent on government programs, which would require higher taxes. These trends were seen as a clear threat to economic growth and freedom, and these concerns increased in the 1970s when the strong economic growth that followed World War II began to slow.

There was also considerable concern about the broad narrative liberals were presenting—they were threatening essential American values. Rather than supporting individualism, liberalism was becoming an expression of empathy regarding the forces that limit people's opportunities. Blacks were moving north and providing an electoral base for

liberal programs.[11] Liberals were intent on using government to address perceived economic and social inequities. Conservatives wanted a limited welfare state: those not succeeding should be encouraged to take responsibility for their lives, and government should not become a vehicle to redistribute from those who are succeeding.[12]

Further, social trends were very troubling. Policies and behaviors that were not acceptable in the 1950s were gradually becoming legitimate. Abortion and homosexuality had been illegal and not discussed, but both became the objects of political debate and eventually became legal. Prayer in public schools had been widespread, but the Supreme Court banned it. Out-of-wedlock births and divorce rates were increasing. Conservatives saw a culture in peril if there was not more assertion of the need for personal responsibility and traditional norms of behavior.[13] Morals were being eroded by liberals who believed in secular humanism and blamed human failures on "social factors."

The challenge was to present a conservatism that would create more electoral support. The conservatism put together was part principle and part expediency. There is the principled argument for limited government, free markets, and freedom presented by people like Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Ronald Reagan.[14] In other cases party stances are not so clearly tied to principle. Candidates for office perceived themes that would draw support, even if the principled connection was questionable. Conservatism became largely built around an expedient response to groups seeking to maintain the dominance of their views of America and their place in it.[15] The principle of freedom from government was presented as a way to connect with various groups that were troubled by social change. Liberals were acting through government to pursue policies that limited the freedom of the dominant social order in favor of those who had previously been limited by government and social norms. Many were resistant to civil rights efforts to reduce discrimination in housing, jobs, and schools. Whites were worried about their declining dominance in America. Conservative Christians in particular, felt their dominance slipping and wanted to maintain it. Gun owners saw regulations as diminishing their freedom. The arrival of more non-White immigrants created anxiety, and conservatives saw illegal Hispanic immigrants as exploiting welfare programs, costing American taxpayers, taking jobs from Americans, and threatening to change American culture.[16] Social conservatives were seeking to resist change and maintain their values and their dominance, and a cultural war began.[17] Thus conservatism evolved into a merger of principle and expedient responses to those

threatened by change.[18] It was reshaped as a vehicle to assemble a majority coalition.

As party candidates responded to these concerns it brought the party new voters, but it also alienated others. Their base expanded in some states, but they lost votes in other states. The party has encountered two central difficulties in trying to expand its base. First, many Americans are conservative in principle but support and wish to retain the programs liberals enact.[19] When the party seeks to cut programs, it faces opposition and reluctance among voters to support the Republican agenda.

Second, the party also regularly faces the problem of capture and excess by the groups it seeks to attract. The conservative movement has attracted those with diverse concerns. The actions of some groups that claim to support a conservative agenda create doubts among voters about whether principle or self-interest and intolerance are involved. Business and the rich say they just want fair treatment, but they seek tax cuts and loopholes for the rich, repeal of environmental laws designed to protect the public, and ways to manipulate or avoid government regulations. Is principle or exploitation of power for selfish interests involved? Cultural conservatives say they just want limited government and respect for traditional values, but they often appear more interested in imposing their values on others. Those reluctant to accept minorities say they want a color-blind society but oppose efforts to make sure civil rights laws about housing, voting, and jobs are enforced. Gun rights advocates say they just want respect for the Second Amendment, but they often come across as concerned about only their interpretation of the amendment and their rights and unconcerned about the extent of gun violence in America. Anti-immigrant groups say they just want to enforce the law about access to the United States, but their language often conveys a visceral rejection of people perceived as different. The notion of freedom presented by conservatives often seems intended to preserve a social order rather than to protect the complexities of freedom in a diverse society. Are conservative stances principled or a cover for reactionary opposition? The difficulty for the party is that its success in attracting new constituencies has alienated others and limited its growth.

Developing the Argument: Sorting and a Changing Political Geography

Why has the Republican Party surged? One explanation is that there are more conservatives within the electorate than liberals, and they have moved into the Republican Party.[20] Some issues have become more

prominent, and over time voters have changed their partisan identification.[21] Several decades ago each party contained some diversity of liberals, moderates, and conservatives, but within-party diversity is steadily diminishing.[22] As a result of realignment, the voters within each party are now more ideologically consistent.[23] The result is that tribalism—largely unquestioning solidarity with one's party—has come to shape much of our political discourse.[24] Political disagreements are often intense and emotional.[25] Agreeing on facts becomes difficult.[26] Democrats and Republicans have very different reactions to social change.[27] Those most committed to each party even have different lifestyle preferences.[28] Party identifiers increasingly see members of the other party negatively,[29] even with contempt.[30] More Republicans identify as conservative, and score high on racial resentment[31] and authoritarianism.[32] They are also more likely to bond together within each party, identifying as a group.[33] Those who identify as Democrat or Republican are voting for their party candidates at record levels.[34] This creates greater partisan and emotional divisions between the parties.[35] As polarization proceeds conservatives are moving into the Republican Party and liberals into the Democratic Party,[36] yielding a bigger base for Republicans.[37]

The "sorting" argument is valuable for directing our attention to the changing national alignment of values and partisan support, but it has its limits. It neglects the essential role parties play in actively pursuing voters and creating a new political geography. People did not just sort out. Politicians have goals and seek votes in specific states and districts in search of seats they can win to attain majority power. The party has not embodied a constant set of policies while voters just moved around; the party adapted its positions to win voters in areas where they were not winning. The party embraced ideas that were in American culture but not dominant and made them dominant—reverse discrimination, Christian nationalism, the notion that the Second Amendment is absolute, that we have one culture and immigrants threaten it. Republicans became resistant to civil rights enforcement. They embraced conservative Christians and their positions. They became pro-gun and anti-immigrant. They became skeptical of experts and science,[38] and skeptical of the dangers of Covid.[39] All of these changes were in pursuit of or in response to voters in specific states. The party changed to win voters. The sorting thesis misleads us by downplaying the extent to which some ideas were elevated to centrality within the party in the pursuit of votes.

These analyses also focus on the nation as a whole, using nationally aggregated survey data.[40] With few exceptions the presumption is that there is one political unit involved and the only significant issue is how liberals and conservatives are aligned within that one unit.[41] Elections,

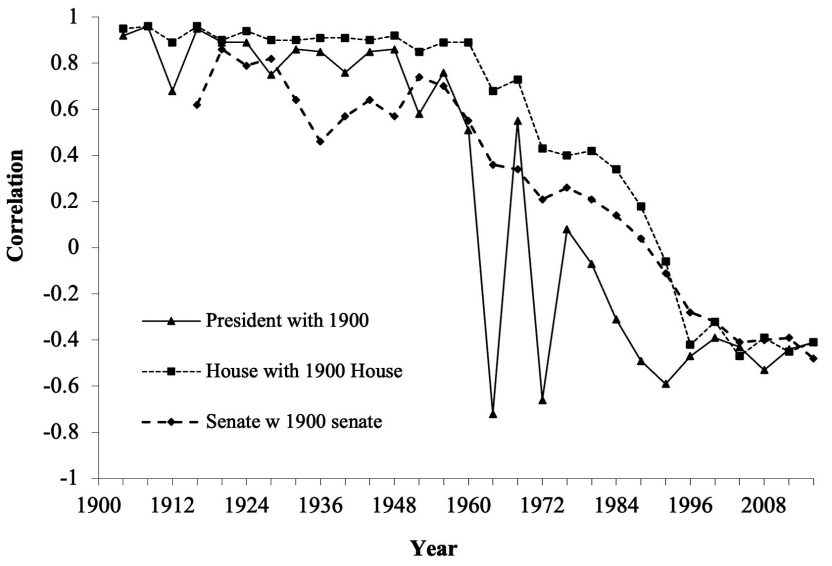
however, are won in subunits of America. Representation in American politics does not emerge through a national plebiscite, but through elections in states and House districts.[42] States differ in their populations, and parties approach elections with a focus on where they have a chance to win.[43] Parties do not build national electoral bases so much as they build coalitions from winners in states and districts favorable to them. "To secure power, a party must capture a majority of the country's political geography."[44] Presidents are elected by combining Electoral College votes from enough states to get to 270 votes. They must put together a coalition of states. Within Congress majorities are a result of winning seats in enough districts and states to form a majority in each house. Political parties approach the political world with a focus on prospects in states and localities.

The major change in American politics is the partisanship of states, and whom each party ends up representing from states and districts.[45] Electoral units in America vary in how many conservatives reside within them. Politicians largely focus on and represent the *majorities* within the political unit that put them in office, so the driving force of political conflict becomes the distribution of dominant concerns across units. Republicans represent the conservatives within the states and districts they win, and not those where they do not win elections. Republicans have become more vested in representing conservative Christians because they are winning more districts dominated by them.

The geographical base of the Republican Party is now vastly different from its past.[46] Their efforts to attract a larger base prompted a lengthy reversal of the political geography of America. From 1900 through the 1940s the geographical bases of each party were stable. States that voted relatively more Republican in 1900 replicated that partisan behavior for over fifty years. This stability can be assessed by correlating the state vote percentages for Republican presidential and House candidates (aggregated to the state level) for each successive year with the 1900 percentages for each office. That is, state percentages for 1904 are correlated with those for 1900, followed by 1908 with 1900, 1912 with 1900 and so forth.[47] For the Senate, the partisan composition of state delegations for 1916–2016 are correlated with those for 1912.[48] The results are shown in Figure 1.1.

From 1904 through the 1950s the relative degree of support for Republicans across states was stable. Some states moved more Democratic after 1932, but a state's *relative* degree of support for Republicans remained stable, so the correlation with 1900 results was high.[49] In the presidential elections of the 1950s Dwight Eisenhower was able to attract more Republican votes in states that had been solidly Democratic, but states that were relatively more Republican in 1900 were still largely the

Figure 1.1 Correlation of Republican Presidential, House, and Senate Results with 1900 State Percentages (1904–2016)



same in the 1950s. In the 1960 election the relationship of state votes with the past declined slightly but was still very positive.

Then in the 1964 presidential election a dramatic reversal resulted, which was then repeated in 1972.[50] In subsequent years this break from the past was gradually solidified. Presidential results shifted first with House and Senate results lagging and eventually catching up. By the 1996 elections state partisan results for presidential, Senate, and House results were highly correlated and largely the opposite of those that prevailed from 1900 to the 1950s. The most pronounced changes involve the South moving Republican[51] and the Northeast moving Democratic.[52] Where Republicans did well had shifted, creating a new geographical base.[53]

The important question is how this reversal of results after 1964 came about. A change from a positive to a negative relationship of election results with 1900 could have come about in two ways. Republicans could have retained their base of 1900–1960 and made such significant gains in previously weak areas that their areas of relative strength reversed. Or, they could have lost support in areas they held from 1900 to 1960 and gained in areas where they had been weak. To assess how change occurred, Table 1.1 compares the party's success in states where

Table 1.1 The Shifting Republican Base: Party Success by State Groupings (1940–1948 and 2008–2016)

	1940–1948			2008–2016		
	R to D[a]	Stable	D to R[b]	R to D	Stable	D to R
Number of states	11	18	19	11	18	19
President						
Republican average percentage vote	48.8	48.3	30.7	38.3	47.6	57.2
Percent of states won by Republicans	39.4	44.4	1.8	0	35.2	93.0
Total EC[c] votes possible	502	557	534	512	468	604
EC votes won by Rep	121	246	11	0	143	530
Percent EC votes won by Rep	24.1	44.2	2.1	0	30.6	87.7
Percent Rep EC votes from	32.0	65.0	2.9	0	21.2	78.8
House						
Total seats elected	738	735	702	755	591	814
Seats won by Rep	432	482	73	214	353	570
Rep average percentage vote	50.6	51.9	19.6	36.9	50.3	56.6
Percent seats won by Rep	58.5	65.6	10.4	28.3	59.7	70.0
Percent Rep seats from	43.8	48.8	7.4	18.8	31.1	50.1
Senate						
Total Seats filled[d]	110	180	190	110	180	190
Rep Seats held of total	66	113	25	16	66	152
Total elections held	36	59	61	38	59	70
Rep average percentage vote[e]	54.2	48.8	29.7	38.3	49.1	57.0
Percent seats won by Rep	61.1	62.7	14.8	18.4	42.4	85.7
Percent Rep seats from[f]	32.4	55.4	12.3	6.8	28.2	65.0

Notes: a. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Vermont.

b. Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

c. EC = Electoral College.

d. This is the total of all seats held by either party during these years, not just those up for election.

e. This is the average for those elections held during the years indicated.

f. This is of all seats held by the party.

the party gained partisan support (moving from Democratic [D] to Republican [R]) and where they lost it (moving R to D) for elections in 1940–1948 and in 2008–2016. The years 1940–1948 are chosen because their correlations with 1900 were still high, and this was before the civil rights movement and other issues eventually altered Republican voting patterns.[54] Eight years are used to avoid one election with unique issues. The years 2008–2016 are used to have five elections for each time period containing three presidential elections. There are considerable data, but these are numbers that parties look at.

There are nineteen states where Republicans made significant gains (D to R) from 1940–1948 to 2008–2016 *and* moved to being either majority Republican or close to it.[55] There are eleven states where the party has lost significant support (R to D) *and* moved to being consistently in the minority. There are also eighteen (stable) states where support for the party has remained relatively stable over seventy years.[56] Some are consistently supportive of the party, and some are consistently not. Some years those states have moved away from or to the party, but at the end of the seventy years these eighteen states remain where they were. The specific changes for individual states—1940–1948 averages, 2008–2016 averages, and number of times the state's Electoral College votes were won—are listed at the author's website.[57]

The important matter to a party is what states provide Republican Electoral College votes and seats in Congress. In the 1940s the nineteen D to R states provided very few of these. By 2008–2016 these states provided 78.8 percent of the party's Electoral College votes, 50.1 percent of the party's House seats, and 65.0 percent of its Senate seats. The base of the party fundamentally shifted. It lost support and seats in former areas of strength, and so the party was no longer tied to areas that had provided its base for decades. The party is now heavily dependent on the nineteen states where it gained strong support, and those states serve as a base from which to seek the majority.

Political Geography and Constituencies

Do these groups of states differ such that this shift matters politically? The issue of whether there are differences between states won by Democrats and Republicans has drawn disputes. Various scholars have argued that not only is there limited evidence of substantial change in public opinion about issues, but there are also limited differences between sets of states.[58] Some also argue that regional differences among states have steadily declined over time, casting doubts on arguments that America has become polarized across states and that there are deep differences among

states.[59] The argument has become an either/or debate of whether partisan support among states is polarized or not.[60]

These studies, however, miss the changes that have occurred in the Republican base. The states the party gained and lost differ in their economies, in their populations, and in the opinions that dominate. In the 1950s the Republican Party was more likely to represent states and districts that were more urban and had higher levels of education and income.[61] They now represent states and districts with lower levels of education and income and higher percentages of Whites.[62] They once represented the more prosperous states but now represent those not faring as well economically.[63] The correlation of state per capita income and education levels with Republican presidential percentages was positive during the 1940s and 1950s. By the 2000s it has become decisively negative.[64] The party has also come to represent states where those with conservative religious beliefs are a larger part of the population. This has brought them a constituency that believes their morals are from God and that seeks to use government to establish traditional social norms. The party now represents states dominated by Whites with fewer minorities and immigrants and resentment of the latter two groups. By many accounts Republicans have become a party in which many supporters, particularly the White working class, are falling behind economically, uneasy about social change, and alienated from the cultural direction of America.[65]

The geographical shifts since the 1940s–1950s have provided a new base of states and districts that support conservative Republicans. Those upset with economic, cultural, and demographic trends in the United States are turning to the Republican Party, and this shift is reshaping American politics.[66] It is a population worried that the America they knew is slipping away. This changed constituency has also changed conservatism, creating more concern with protecting an old social order. The party has, of course, not completely changed. It continues its commitments to limited government when it suits their agenda, freedom as the party defines it, capitalism, individualism, and personal responsibility. The close association with business and opposition to taxes and regulation persist, growing stronger in recent decades.[67] The major change is the greater attention the party gives to White working-class voters frustrated by the effects of economic and cultural change, conservative Christians, and gun owners.

State Groupings and Party Support

Republicans now dominate in nineteen states. That does not mean that they preside over homogeneous electorates within those states. Parties and candidates just need majorities. Winning by a large margin across

all states and districts in their respective strongholds might be nice, but it is often not the case. The winner-take-all nature of US politics allows a candidate to appeal to a sympathetic base within a state and win with percentages in the low 50s. A state or district does not have to be homogeneous for a Republican to win and present a conservative stance.[68] The issue for parties is whether they have a set of states where there is sufficient support such that their chances are very good to win the state or most seats within it. If so, that provides a base that shapes the policy positions of the party. Some elections may be close, and electoral tides (opposition to the Iraq War, opposition to the Affordable Care Act) may determine which way close elections go in a particular year, but parties focus on whether they have a solid geographical base to begin with.

How strong is support for Republicans within the groups of states? Has change brought the party an untouchable base such that party candidates win by large margins? Table 1.2 provides more detail on the relative degrees of support for Republicans by state grouping for 2008–2016 in presidential, Senate, and House races. The table shows the distribution of percentages won by Republican candidates within state groups across the eight years. Republicans do well in the nineteen states that have moved to them, but the electorate is not homogeneous within their base states and often does not overwhelmingly support them. There are cases where Republicans win with large margins, but many have closer races.

The average vote percentages for Republican candidates in the nineteen D to R states for 2008–2016 are in the mid-50s. *On average* they do not receive overwhelming support even in the states they win. States are diverse even when they consistently elect Republicans. Republicans do win most contests in the D to R states, but even in those states a substantial percentage of candidates receive less than 60 percent. They lose contests in those states, and particularly in the House where pockets of voters can elect the other party. In stable states the party does not fare as well, but they won enough of these states to win the presidency in 2016 and the Senate and House in some years. In the R to D states the party did not fare well at all. Nationwide the competition to control the national government is close.[69] The totals for outcomes for each office, to the left in the table, indicate that. What is important to Republicans is that some states are sufficiently supportive of Republicans to provide them with a clear base to begin that competition.

The issue of whether states are polarized or not is a false dichotomy and one without a clear definition as to what constitutes polarization and nonpolarization among the states. States differ enough in composition that Democrats dominate in R to D and Republicans in D to R

Table 1.2 Republican Party Success: Presidential, Senate, and House Races (2008–2016)

States	Total Races	Lost	Won	Average Vote Percentages	Distribution of Percentages		
					<50	50–59	60+
President							
R to D	33	33	0	38.3	100.0	0	0
Stable	63	41	22	45.1	69.8	25.3	4.8
D to R	57	4	53	57.2	31.2	52.6	33.3
Totals	153	78	75				
Senate							
R to D	38	31	7	38.3	92.1	2.6	5.3
Stable	67	39	28	48.0	64.2	17.9	17.9
D to R	70	10	60	57.0	20.0	40.0	40.0
Totals	175	80	95				
House[a]							
R to D	755	541	214	36.9	72.6	13.7	13.8
Stable	591	238	353	46.4	42.1	24.9	33.0
D to R	814	244	570	56.5	31.2	14.4	53.4
Totals	2,160	1,023	1,137				

Notes: Unlike Table 1.1, which excludes Alaska, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii, they are included here. No comparison with the 1940s is involved, and the focus is recent elections. For House elections, the results are only for November elections. For the Senate, the results are for elections held 2008–2016. The Senate results include special elections held in November.

states. Republicans know what their base is, and they know they must build on that. But they are also acutely aware that they must win many elections in stable states and even some close races in D to R states by appealing to their base plus some not committed to their party.

The transition in the Republican base has occurred because party leaders, conservative activists, and business assessed their situations and made decisions about what voters they might attract to create a majority coalition that would pursue conservative goals. They listened and made appeals to groups and interests within the electorate to win their votes. They proposed or endorsed ideas about how society should work. The next question is the nature of the electorate they have acquired.

Notes

1. Stonecash, *Party Pursuits*.
2. Lee, *Insecure Majorities*.

3. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, *Polarized America*, 1–32; Theriault, *Party Polarization in Congress*.

4. Mellow, *State of Disunion*; Karol, *Party Position Change*.

5. Hopkins, "The 2008 Election," 368–387; Hopkins, *Red Fighting Blue*.

6. Glenn Feldman, quoted in Maxwell and Shields, *Long Southern Strategy*, 1; Patterson, *Is the Republican Party*, 7.

7. Maxwell and Shields, *Long Southern Strategy*, 1–8; Lewis, *Too Dumb to Fail*.

8. Peters, *Insurrection*, xvi–21.

9. Douthat and Salam, *Grand New Party*; Olson, *Working Class Republican*; Buckley, *Republican Workers Party*.

10. Rae, *Decline and Fall*, 201.

11. Schickler, *Racial Realignment*.

12. Eberstadt, *A Nation of Takers*; Murray, *Coming Apart*; Brewer and Stonecash, *Polarization*.

13. Self, *All in the Family*.

14. Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*; Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*.

15. Robin, *Reactionary Mind*.

16. Brownstein, "GOP Increasingly Opposes"; Peters, "Why Did Republicans."

17. Hunter, *Culture Wars*.

18. Stepman, "'National Conservatives' Set Out"; Green, "The Nationalists Take Washington."

19. Sides, "Why Most Conservatives"; Douthat and Salam, *Grand New Party*, xiv; Grossman and Hopkins, *Asymmetric Politics*, 50–69.

20. Saad, "U.S. Political Ideology Steady."

21. Conover and Feldman, "Origins and Meaning," 617–645; Treier and Hillygus, "Nature of Political Ideology," 679–703.

22. Pew Research Center, "Political Polarization, 1994–2017"; Pew Research Center, "Partisan Divide."

23. Abramowitz and Saunders, "Ideological Realignments," 634–652; Abramowitz, *Polarized Public?*; Campbell, *Polarized*.

24. Hetherington and Weiler, *Prius or Pickup*; Mason, "Losing Common Ground," 47–66.

25. Mason, *Uncivil Agreement*; Iyengar and Krupenkin, "Partisanship as Social Identity," 23–45; Rauch, "Rethinking Polarization"; Pew Research Center, "Partisan Antipathy."

26. LaLoggia, "Republicans and Democrats Agree."

27. PRRI, "Fractured Nation."

28. Pew Research Center, "Political Polarization."

29. Abramowitz and Webster, "Rise of Negative Partisanship," 12–22; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, "Affect, Not Ideology," 405–431; Iyengar and Krupenkin, "Strengthening of Partisan Affect," 201–218; Edsall, "No Hate Left Behind"; Webster, *American Rage*.

30. Brooks, "Our Culture of Contempt."

31. Abramowitz, *Great Alignment*, 119–136.

32. This has also been called having a "fixed" worldview. Hetherington and Weiler, *Prius or Pickup*, 23.

33. Mason, *Uncivil Agreement*.

34. Abramowitz, *Great Alignment*.

35. Doherty and Kiley, "Key Facts About Partisanship."

36. Fiorina, with Abrams and Pope, *Culture War?*, 57–78; Fiorina, "Parties Have Sorted."

37. Bishop, *Big Sort*; Abramowitz, *Disappearing Center*.

38. Kennedy, Tyson, and Funk, "Americans Value U.S. Role."

39. Leonhardt, "Morning."

40. Hill and Tausanovitch, "Disconnect in Representation?," 1058–1075. An exception is the analysis by Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope of blue and red state averages for survey responses and voting results. They find limited differences. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, *Culture War? Second Edition*, 34–51.

41. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, *Culture War?*; Levendusky, *Partisan Sort*, 4–7.

42. Hopkins, *Red Fighting Blue*, 2–16.

43. Wilkinson, *Density Divide*; Gebeloff, "Border Between"; Wasserman, "Purple America"; Johnston, Manley, and Jones, "Spatial Polarization," 1047–1062; Florida, "America's 'Big Sort.'"

44. Mellow, *State of Disunion*, 171.

45. Kondik, *Long Red Thread*, 125; Kondik, "Six Decades."

46. Abramowitz, *Great Alignment*, 72–89.

47. The actual partisan percentages are used, not the percentage of the two-party vote. This approach has been used by Pomper, "Classification of Presidential Elections," 535–566; Burnham, "Insulation and Responsiveness," 411–435; Paulson, *Realignment and Party Revival*.

48. The Senate has only one-third of its seats elected every two years. Correlating vote percentages for thirty-three cases might be misleading, though they do follow the general pattern shown for the Senate. In this case, not a perfect solution to be sure, the numbers of Republican seats held within the state are correlated across time. The limitation of this, as with the House, is that there were only forty-four state delegations in 1900. This should be seen as a rough estimation of partisan continuity.

49. Stonecash, *Party Pursuits*, 36–41.

50. The 1968 election is unusual in that George Wallace received a substantial percentage of votes on a third-party line. However, he did not disrupt the pattern of relative support across states for the Republican presidential candidate, which is why the 1968 correlation with 1900 was still positive at .55.

51. Black and Black, *Politics and Society*; Black and Black, *Vital South*; Lublin, *Republican South*.

52. Reiter and Stonecash, *Counter Realignment*.

53. Glaeser and Ward, "Myths and Realities," 133.

54. Democratic vote percentages were disrupted in 1948, but not Republican vote percentages. Democrats included some language in their 1948 platform that was sympathetic to civil rights. That prompted Strom Thurmond, Democratic senator from South Carolina, to leave the convention and run as a candidate of the States' Rights Party. That took some votes away from Harry Truman in the South, but he did not alter Republican support levels and their continuity with the past.

55. These state groupings and years are chosen as follows. To assess change requires selecting a baseline. The years 1940–1948 are chosen because they are before civil rights issues affected Republican fortunes. There were state efforts to make civil rights issues prominent, but the issue was not yet creating national divisions. Democrats were hurt in 1948 when Strom Thurmond bolted the party and ran as a separate Democrat, but that did not affect Republicans. To avoid selecting years when change was already underway, the elections of 1940–1948 are averaged and used as a baseline for the starting point for Republicans. The presidential and House election results for these years have a strong relationship with 1900 results (Figure 1.1). With the average of 1940–1948 as a baseline, those results are compared to the presidential results for 2008–2016. Presidential results are used because presidential candidates lead party change and play a major role in defining the image of parties, especially in our contemporary politics in which the media give primary attention to

presidential candidates. They are also important because they must seek a majority in the Electoral College. They must assess the electorates across states and the concerns that dominate within states, which they might win, and then what combination might be enough to win a majority in the Electoral College.

Next is the issue of what criteria—what extent of change—should be used to group states regarding change. I use two criteria to classify states as moving Republican. The first is movement from the 1940s average to the 2000s average. A state must have moved toward Republicans in presidential elections by at least 10 percentage points and must also be won by the Republican presidential candidate to be seen as having moved to the Republican column. With a winner-take-all Electoral College, a state is worth appealing to only if it can be won. Close losses are of no help. It is not enough to go from 30 to 40 percent to see it as a part of a base. To classify a state as one the party loses, it must have declined at least 5 percentage points and be below 50 percent. It is not a loss to the Republican column if a state drops from 60 to 51 percent. It must average below 50 percent to be seen as a loss. States that do not fall into either category are classified as stable. They may be consistently part of the party's base or not, but they are not changing.

56. For the sake of a clear comparison over time of the same states, Alaska, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia are excluded. Alaska and Hawaii were admitted as states after the 1940s, and the District of Columbia was awarded Electoral College votes in 1964. The focus is on state changes so comparison cannot be made for these units.

57. https://jstoneca.expressions.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Appendices-for-The-Transformation-of-the-Republican-Party.pdf.

58. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, in *Culture War?*, assess differences between red and blue states, based on recent results. They compare red and blue states (33–56) and find some small differences but conclude the states are not really that different. A similar conclusion is presented by Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder Jr., "Purple America," 97–118; Levendusky and Pope, "Red States vs. Blue," 227–248.

59. Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder Jr., "Purple America." A similar argument is made by Sides, "Most Americans."

60. Abramowitz and Saunders, "Is Polarization a Myth?," 542–555 and particularly 548–549.

61. Glaeser and Ward, "Myths and Realities," 136.

62. Frey, "Trump Country"; Podhorzer, "Congressional Class Reversal."

63. As put by Harwood, "These Charts Show," following the 2018 elections, "Republicans represent the smaller, fading segment, while Democrats represent the larger, growing one, fueled by finance, professional services and digital innovation in diverse urban areas." This recent shift is also evident at the county level. In the 2016 presidential election Trump gained the most, relative to what Romney received in 2012, the greater the percentage of Whites without a college degree. Guo, "Yes, Working Class Whites"; Tesler, "Economic Anxiety."

64. Johnston et al., "2016 United States Presidential Contest," 369–388; Muro and Whiton, "America Has Two Economies"; Muro and Liu, "Another Clinton-Trump Divide."

65. Bageant, *Deer Hunting with Jesus*; Cramer, *Politics of Resentment*; Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*; Cox, Lienesch, and Jones, "Beyond Economics"; Sides, "Resentful White People"; Savage, "Justice Dept."; and Edsall, "Resentment That Never Sleeps."

66. Zito and Todd, *Great Revolt*.

67. Mayer, *Dark Money*; Hacker and Pierson, *Let Them Eat Tweets*.

68. Levendusky and Pope, "Red States vs. Blue," 240–241.

69. Lee, *Insecure Majorities*; Fiorina, *Unstable Majorities*.