

# The Art of the Compromise

Second Edition, Revised and Expanded

**RETURNING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY TO BETTER  
DAYS**



David L. Page, Ph.D.

Warped Minds Press

Knoxville, Tennessee

**The Art of the Compromise**  
**Second Edition, Revised and Expanded**

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First edition published in hardcover 2024.

Second edition (revised and expanded) published in paperback 2025.

**Library of Congress Control Number:** 2025921911

ISBN (paperback, second edition): 979-8-9906504-0-4

ISBN (hardcover, first edition): 979-8-9906504-1-1

ISBN (eBook, second edition): 979-8-9906504-2-8

**Warped Minds Press**  
Knoxville, Tennessee

*For my wife Lisa and my daughter Grace.*

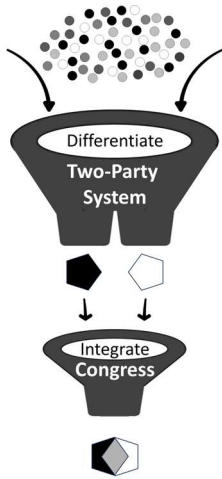


*“I have always figured that a half a loaf is better than none,  
and I know that in the democratic process you’re not going  
to always get everything you want.”*

—Ronald Reagan



### The Art of the Compromise



### The Tyranny of the Deal

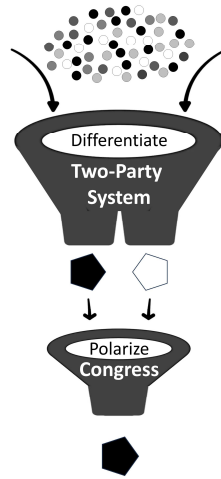


Figure 1. Conceptual models for the American political system. The left side illustrates optimal functioning, where differentiated interests are structured, integrated, and resolved through the Art of the Compromise. Policy emerges from shared understanding and institutional balance. The right side shows suboptimal functioning—what might be called the Tyranny of the Deal—where short-term bargaining replaces synthesis. Decisions are made outside the deliberative process, driven by transaction rather than transformation.

*Further Reading*

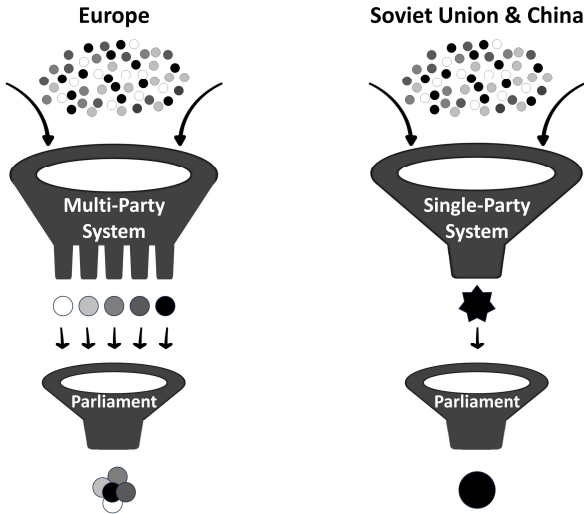


Figure 2. Conceptual illustrations of alternative political systems. The left model represents the European multi-party structure: high differentiation of viewpoints, but limited integration. Coalitions form after elections, often fragile and short-lived. The right model depicts a single-party system—such as the former Soviet Union or modern China—where integration is strong, but differentiation is suppressed. Debate is muted, dissent punished, and pluralism absent. Each system lacks the structural balance required for enduring synthesis.

# The Art of the Compromise

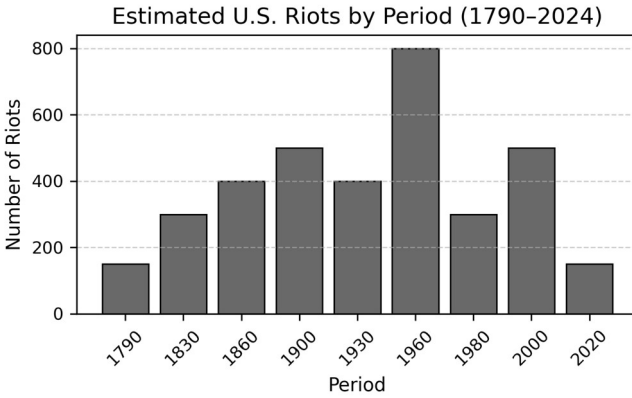


Figure 3. Estimated number of riots in the United States by historical period. Peaks align with major national crises: Civil War and Reconstruction (1861–1900), labor and racial tensions (1901–1930), and Civil Rights (1961–1980). Data source: (Gilje, 1999).

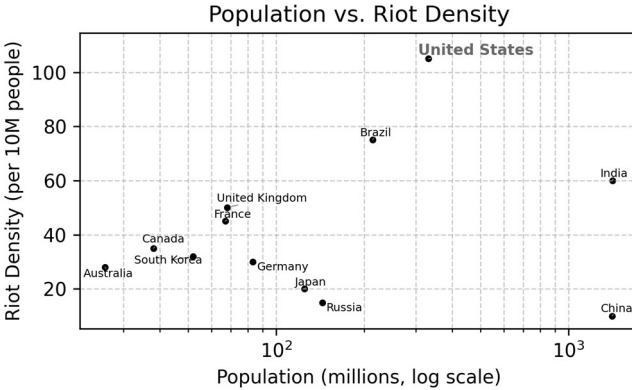


Figure 4. Riot density (per 10 million people per decade) compared to population. The x-axis is a log scale for improved visualization of the large populations in India and China. Data compiled from multiple sources (Fearon, 2003; Gilje, 1999; Marshall & Gurr, 2020; Sundberg & Melander, 2013).

Further Reading

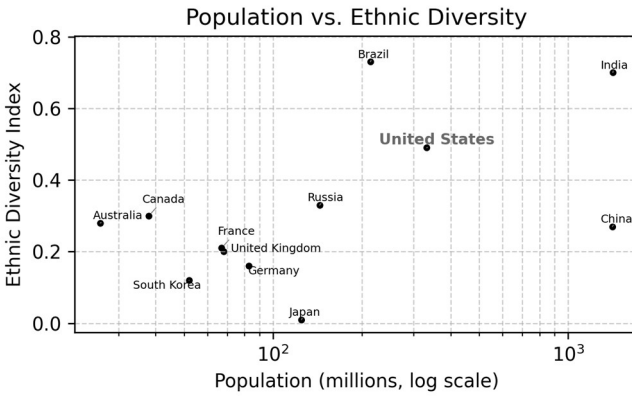


Figure 5. Ethnic diversity by population size across the selected countries. Data compiled from Alesina et al. (2003) and Fearon (2003). The U.S. has both a large population and ethnic diversity.

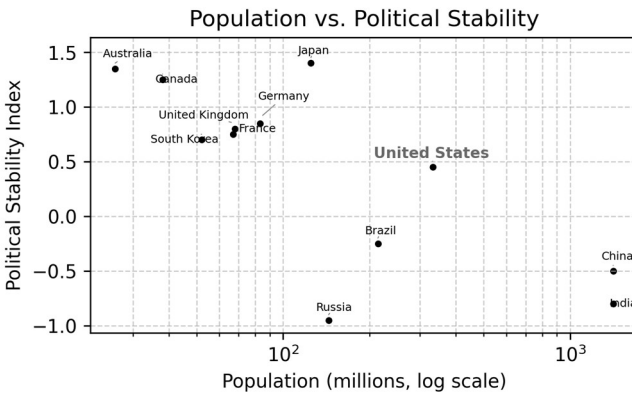


Figure 6. Political stability by population size across the selected countries. Data compiled from World Bank (2023).

## The Art of the Compromise

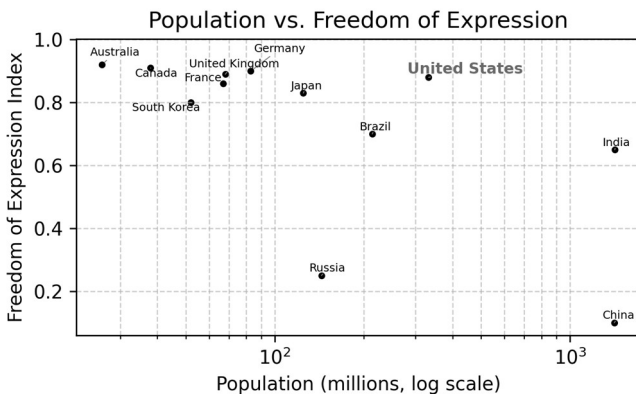


Figure 7. Relationship between population size and freedom of expression across selected countries. Data compiled from Coppedge et al. (2024).

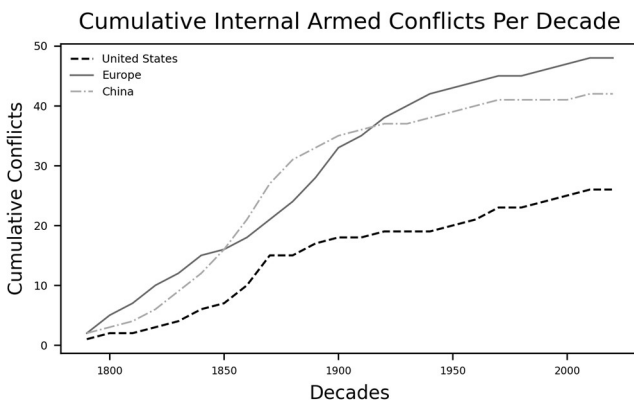


Figure 8. The cumulative total of internal armed conflicts within each region—the United States, Europe, and China—excludes wars fought outside the region, such as U.S. involvement in World War I or II. Data compiled from the Correlates of War Project (Singer & Small, 1994), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Pettersson & Öberg, 2020), and Clodfelter (2017).

## Further Reading

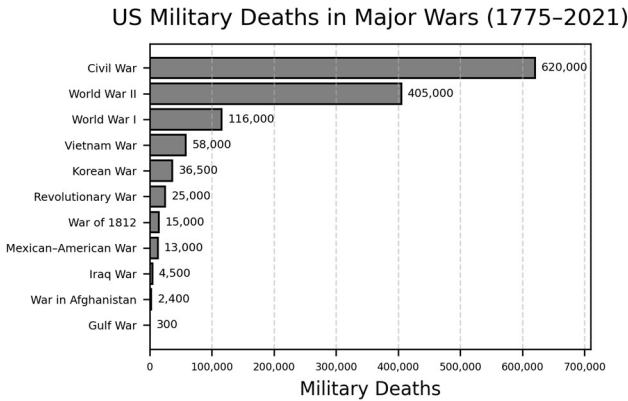


Figure 9. The Civil War remains the deadliest conflict in our history, claiming over 620,000 lives, more than both World Wars combined. That number represents more than just the scale of the war. That number also speaks to the strength of the idea of why Americans fought, why brothers would kill brothers. Data compiled from (2022).

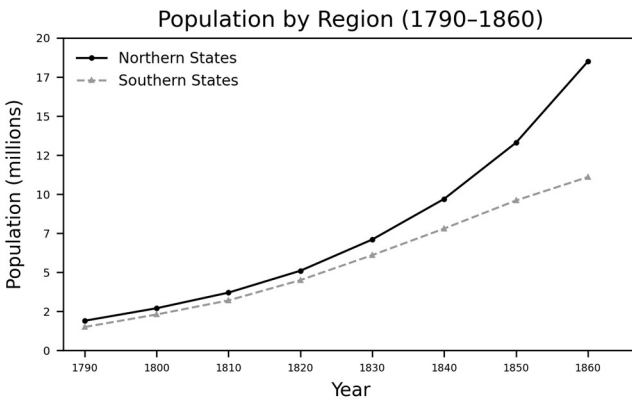


Figure 10. The South remained a minority in total population, and an even smaller minority in free population. Yet for decades, this minority controlled much of the federal government. Data compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1976).

## The Art of the Compromise

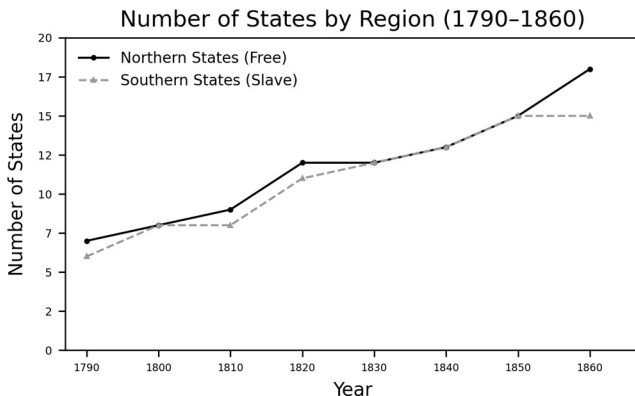


Figure 11. Number of Northern and Southern States. Early compromises, like those in 1820 and 1850, kept a regional balance in the Senate. But this equilibrium was temporary and increasingly untenable. Basic admission dates for states and their classification as free or slaveholding compiled from Leubsdorf et al. (2023).

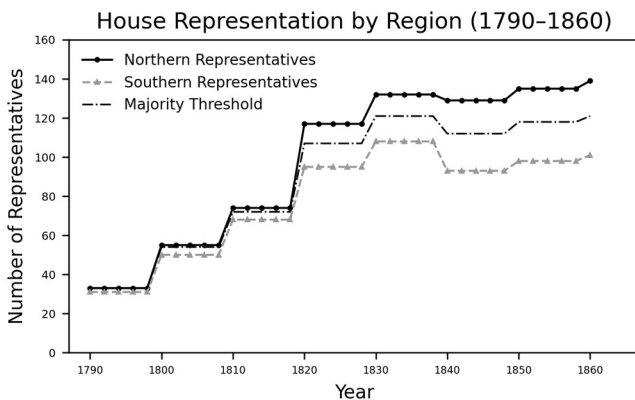


Figure 12. House Representation by Region. Despite structural advantages, the South could not hold its ground forever. The population growth of the North translated into political dominance in the House. Apportionment data and sectional alignment for antebellum Congresses (Martis & Rowles, 1989).

Further Reading

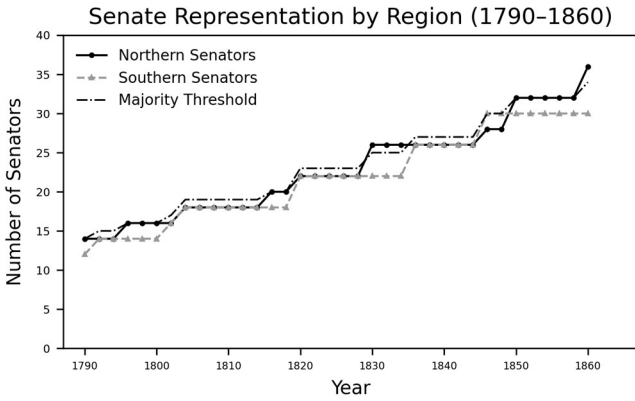


Figure 13. Senate Composition by Region. The Senate, once the South’s safe harbor with near equal representation split between the two regions, began to lean North. The game was changing, and the South knew time was running out. Apportionment of Senate seats by state and party, from which regional counts can be inferred (U.S. Senate, 2002).

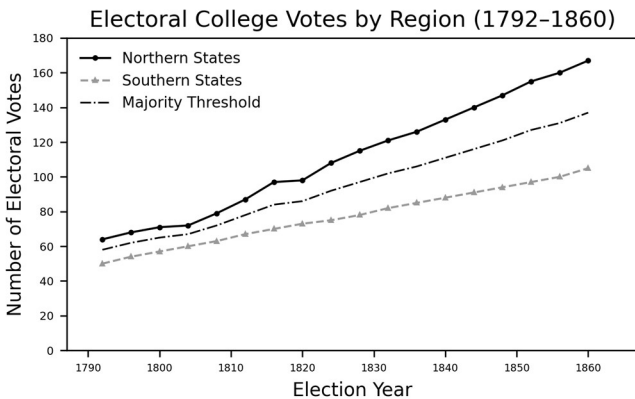


Figure 14. Electoral College Votes by Region. By 1860, the North had the numbers. The Electoral College was no longer a firewall, but rather a mirror of political reality. The primary source for official historical Electoral College vote distributions (2023).

## The Art of the Compromise

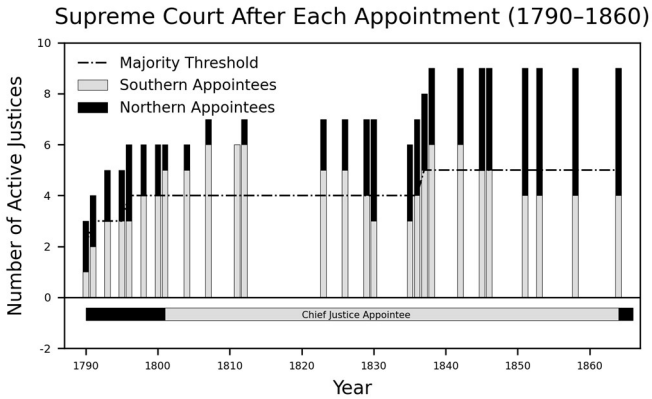


Figure 15. Supreme Court Justices by Region of Origin. Southern dominance in the judiciary reached its peak with Chief Justice Taney, spanning from 1836 to 1864. Yet that dominance was on borrowed time. Lincoln's presidency would change the Court's trajectory. Data compiled from Urofsky (1994).

## Further Reading

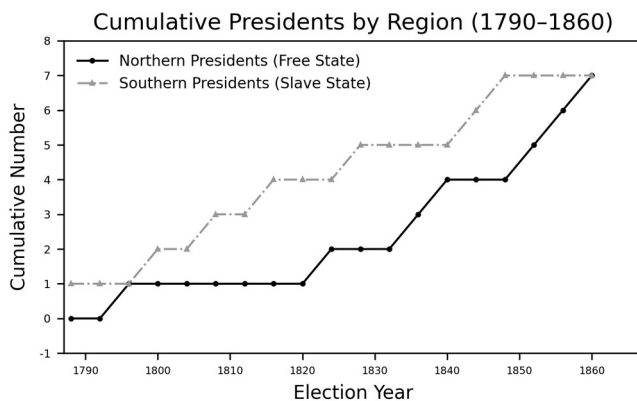


Figure 16. Presidents by Region. The presidency had long been a stronghold of the South. Lincoln's election brought parity—half from the North, half from the South. The cumulative importance of the presidency is one of trajectory rather than overall influence. Data compiled from Woolley and Peters (1999).

## The Art of the Compromise

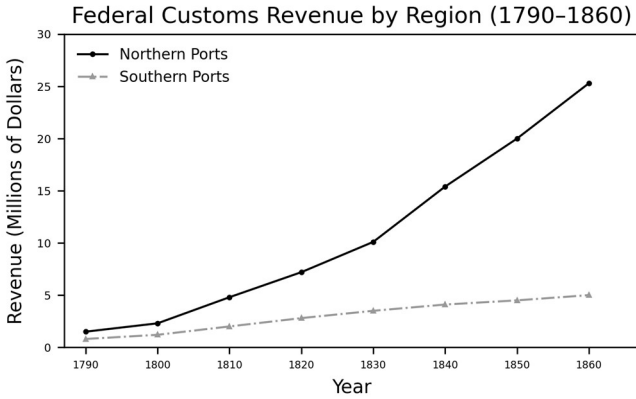


Figure 17. Federal Customs Revenue by Port Region. Federal taxes came primarily from tariffs at ports. Northern ports—especially New York—generated the lion’s share of revenue. Southern ports contributed far less, even as they demanded more political power. Data compiled from primary sources for customs receipts by major port cities (McCulloch, 1864) and Gallman for the economic context (Gallman, 1960).

*Further Reading*

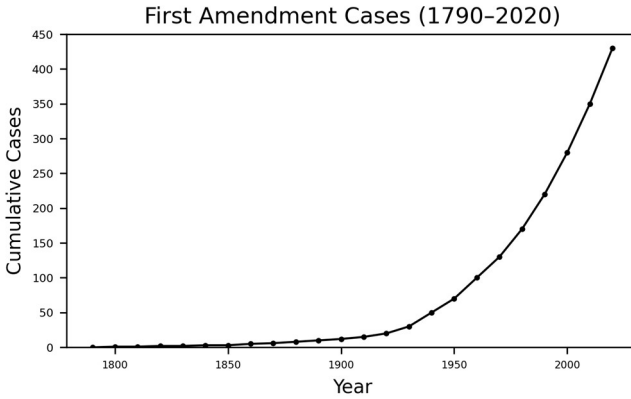


Figure 18. First Amendment Cases Reaching the Supreme Court. For generations, the First Amendment bound only Congress, but through the Fourteenth Amendment and the courts' incorporation, the amendment now binds each level of American government—not just the national but also the state and local governments (Perry, 2001). The steady rise in cases marks the moment the Union's promises truly became national—one Soul.

## The Art of the Compromise

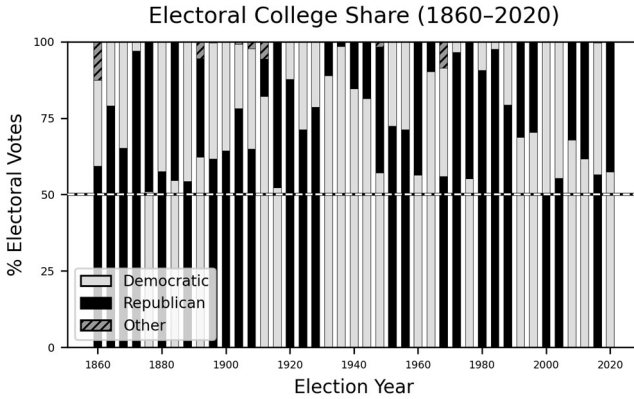


Figure 19. Presidential elections from 1860 to 2020 showing the Electoral College shares per candidate stacked vertically for each election. The largest vote getter is at the bottom, and the least is at the top. In each election shown, the winner secured more than 50% of the Electoral College vote, even in years when no candidate received a majority of the popular vote. This chart illustrates how the Electoral College produces a clear, decisive majority outcome where the popular vote might not. Data compiled from Kalb (2015) and Leip (2025).

*Further Reading*

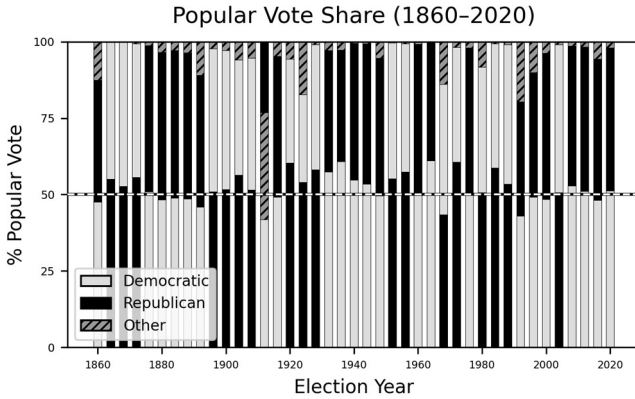


Figure 20. Presidential elections from 1860 to 2020 showing which elections resulted in a popular vote plurality (no candidate received more than 50% of the vote). The vertical bars are stacked by total votes, with the bottom bar representing the candidate who received the most votes. If that bar does not reach the 50% dotted line, then no majority winner exists. About one-third of these elections produced a President without a popular majority, illustrating how often the popular vote alone fails to deliver a clear mandate. Data compiled from Kalb (2015) and Leip (2025).

# The Art of the Compromise

## Presidential Pluralities and Inversions (1860–2020)

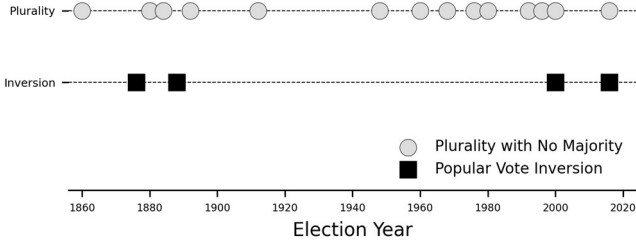


Figure 21. Presidential elections from 1860 to 2020 showing two key outcomes: when no candidate won a majority of the popular vote (plurality wins, top row) and when the Electoral College result did not match the popular vote winner (inversions, bottom row). The top row highlights elections where the President took office without most voters’ support. The bottom row shows the rare instances where the College overrode the popular vote. Together, these outcomes reveal how the Electoral College transforms narrow or split votes into a clear national result, grounded in a majority selection process.

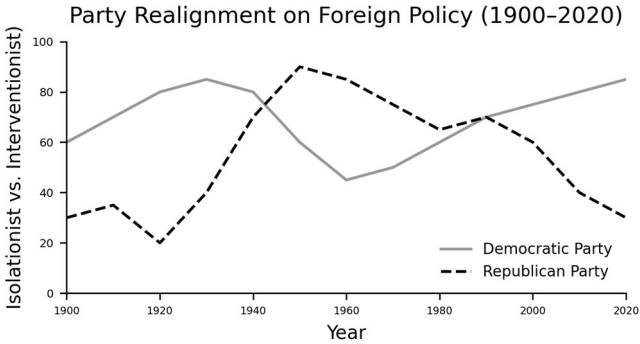


Figure 22. Party realignment on U.S. foreign policy, 1900–2020. Republicans shifted from isolationism to Cold War internationalism, then returned toward isolationist themes in recent decades. Democrats have largely held a multilateral, pro-engagement stance throughout. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019), Mead (2013), and Paterson et al. (1995).

*Further Reading*

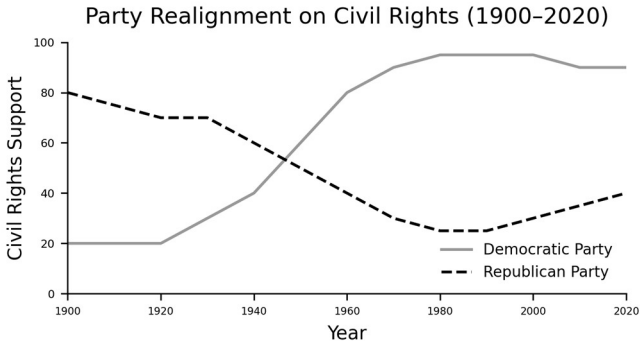


Figure 23. Party realignment on civil rights, 1900–2020. This chart traces how Democrats moved from defending segregation to championing civil rights, while many white conservatives shifted to the GOP. Data adapted from Sundquist (2011), Black et al. (2009), and Ginsberg et al. (2019).

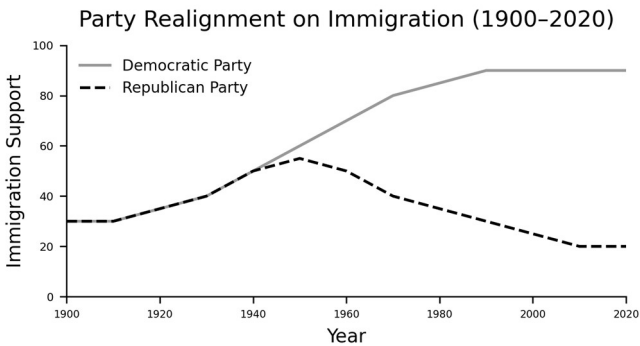


Figure 24. Party realignment on U.S. immigration policy, 1900–2020. Democrats shifted from early restrictionist positions to strong pro-immigration support, while Republicans moved from mid-century openness back toward restrictionism in recent decades. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019) and Tichenor (2002).

## The Art of the Compromise

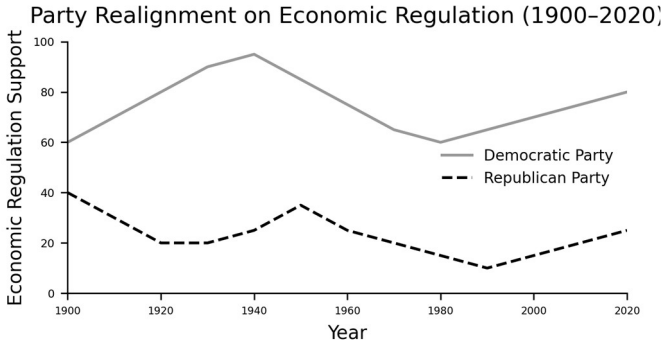


Figure 25. Party realignment on economic regulation, 1900–2020. Democrats historically backed progressive regulation, peaking with the New Deal, while Republicans shifted decisively toward deregulation and free-market policies after 1980. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019) and Skowronek (1982).

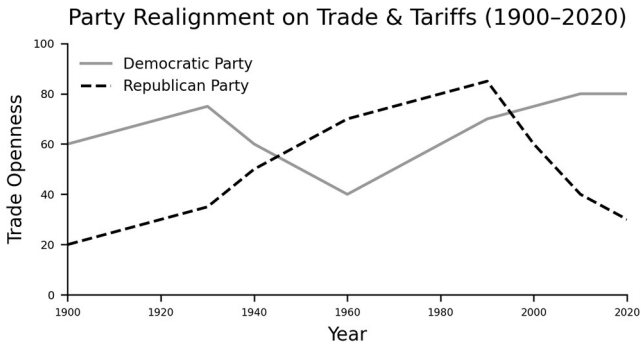


Figure 26. Party realignment on U.S. trade and tariffs, 1900–2020. Republicans shifted from early protectionism to mid-century free trade, then back toward protectionist rhetoric in recent decades. Democrats moved from promoting open trade for agrarian exports to supporting regulated free trade with labor protections. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019) and Irwin (2017).

Further Reading

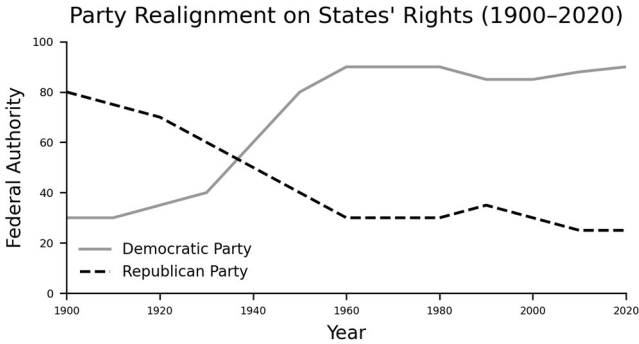


Figure 27. Party realignment on federal power vs. states' rights, 1900–2020. Democrats shifted from defending states' rights to championing strong federal authority, while Republicans moved from supporting federal supremacy during Reconstruction to defending states' rights from the New Deal onward. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019) and Sundquist (2011).

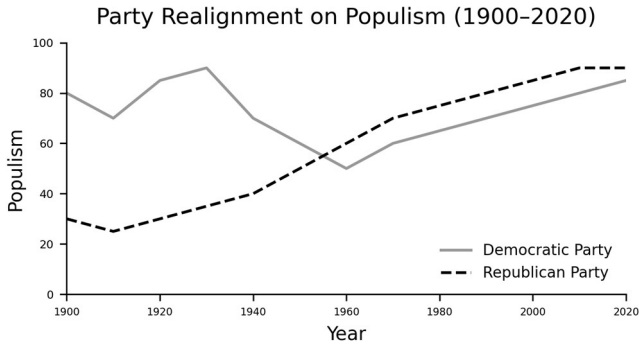


Figure 28. Party realignment on populism, 1900–2020. Democrats shifted from early populist roots to a mid-century elite focus, then revived progressive populism in recent decades. Republicans moved from representing business elites to embracing cultural populism in the late 20th century, culminating in the Trump-era surge. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019) and Kazin (1998).

## The Art of the Compromise

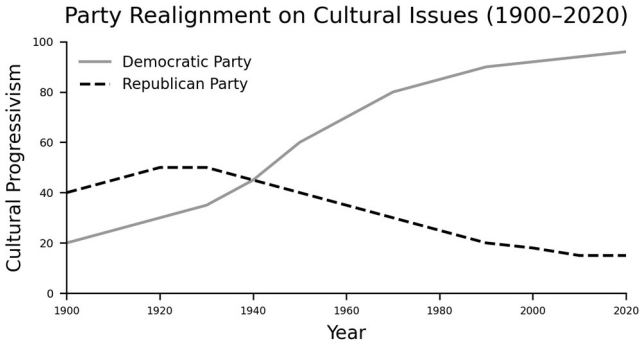


Figure 29. Party realignment on cultural issues, 1900–2020. Democrats shifted from traditionalism to strong progressivism on civil rights, gender, and identity. Republicans moved from early progressive reforms to a sustained defense of cultural conservatism. Data adapted from Ginsberg et al. (2019) and Kazin (1998).

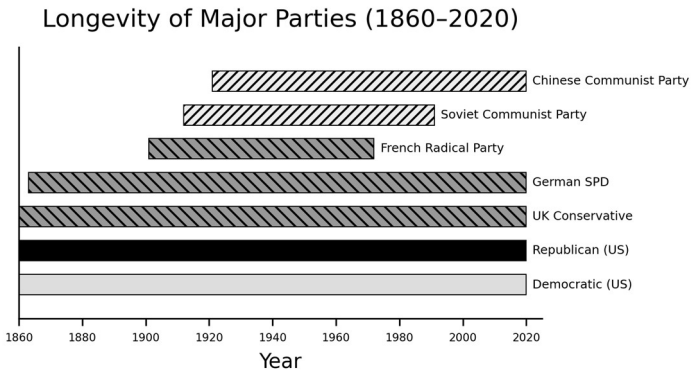


Figure 30. Longevity of major political parties across the globe from 1860 to 2020. This timeline compares the exceptional durability of the U.S. Democratic and Republican parties with major European and Communist parties, illustrating how only a few have maintained continuous dominance for over a century. Party dates adapted from Caramani (2017).

*Further Reading*

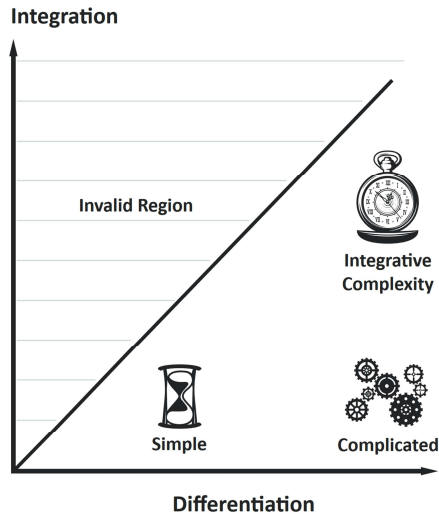


Figure 31. Visualization of integration (vertical axis) and differentiation (horizontal axis) for a timekeeping example. Limited differentiation and low integration lead to simple mechanisms like an hourglass in the lower left. Good differentiation with limited integration creates complicated arrangements, like a jumble of watch gears in the lower right. A well-differentiated and well-integrated system achieves true complexity, like a working watch in the upper right.

## The Art of the Compromise

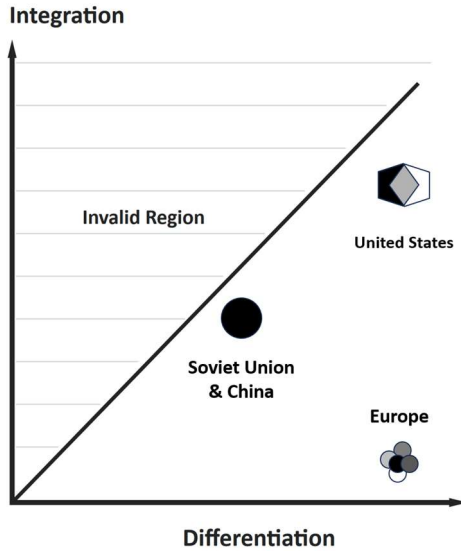


Figure 32. Visualization of integration (vertical axis) and differentiation (horizontal axis) for national systems of governance. The United States aims for high differentiation and high integration, placing it in the upper right: many voices, held together. China and the former Soviet Union sustain high integration but suppress differentiation, locating them in the middle left. Europe's multi-party systems maintain high differentiation but often struggle to integrate fully, placing them toward the lower right. A resilient democracy must be both well-differentiated and well-integrated, like a watch that keeps good time.

Further Reading

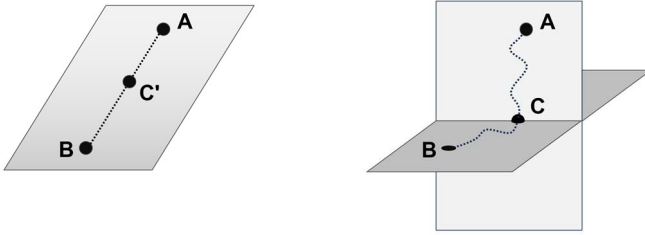


Figure 33. Two different compromise solutions between viewpoints **A** and **B**. On the left, **C'** shows a simple meet-in-the-middle compromise with little differentiation or integration. On the right, **C** illustrates a bi-sociated compromise, anchored in differentiated planes and integrated paths.

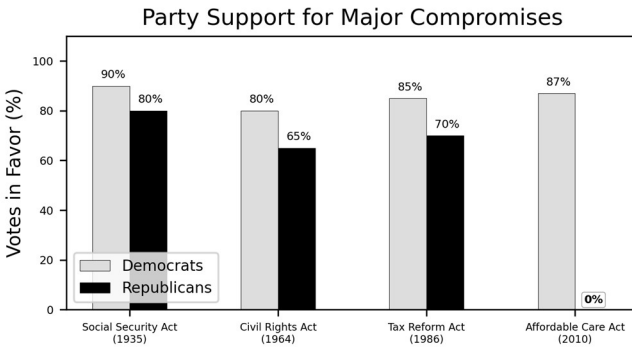


Figure 34. Party support for landmark laws: Social Security Act (1935), Civil Rights Act (1964), Tax Reform Act (1986), Affordable Care Act (2010). The first three laws represent bipartisan support resulting from bisociated compromises—*The Art of the Compromise*. Yet the final law represents a one-sided vote with no compromise—*The Tyranny of the Deal*. Data compiled from Caro (2002), Murray and Birnbaum (1988), and Obama (2020).

## The Art of the Compromise

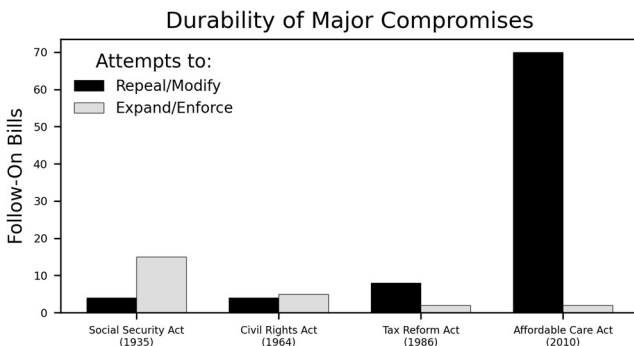


Figure 35. Follow-On Legislative Attempts: Erode vs. Expand Major Compromises. Major repeal or expansion efforts for the same landmark laws over time. Data drawn from Altman (2005), Altman (2012), Branch (2007), Murray and Birnbaum (1988), Steuerle (2004), Steuerle (2008), Klein (2020), and Congressional Budget Office reports.

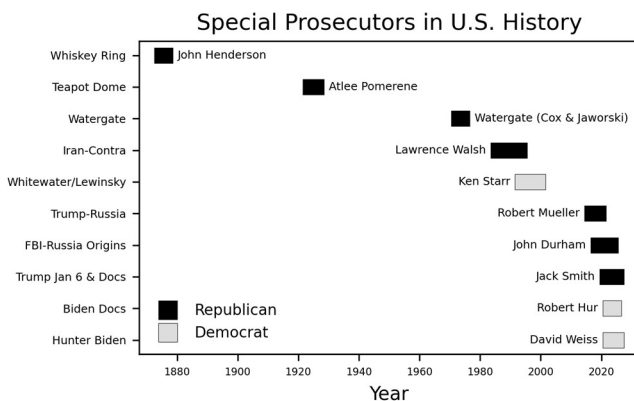


Figure 36. Special prosecutors and independent counsels in U.S. history (1875–2025). The timeline traces the duration and frequency of federal special prosecutors tasked with investigating political actors. Data compiled from publicly available records, including the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Archives, and major news organizations. Analysis informed by Mann and Ornstein (2006) and Morgan and Reynolds (1997).

## Further Reading



Figure 37. Moral Foundations Theory. Five Core Dimensions of Moral Intuition. Each horizontal axis represents one of the five foundations identified by Jonathan Haidt (2012). The diagram serves as a neutral template for introspection, political analysis, and understanding divergent value systems.

**Table 1. Types of Compromises and Examples.**

Type	Definition	Constitution	Congress
<b>Intersection</b>	Use only shared ground.	Bill of Rights	Social Security Act (1935)
<b>Conjunction</b>	Fuse both sides.	Great Compromise	Civil Rights Act (1964)
<b>Substitution</b>	Invent a new frame.	Electoral College	Tax Reform Act (1986)

# Further Reading

**W**HILE MANY BOOKS HAVE inspired the thoughts and ideas in this book, the titles below extend the ideas explored here—from bisociated compromise to political identity, from the roots of reason to the resilience of the Republic. These works appear in the Works Cited section but deserve repeating here, both for emphasis and for readers ready to continue the journey.

## **Bisociated Compromise**

*The Man Who Ran Washington* and *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* are case studies in bisociated compromise: the creative overlap of opposing worldviews forged into practical law. Baker mastered the deal not for its own sake, but to govern.

Baker, P., & Glasser, S. (2021). *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III*. Anchor.

Murray, A. S., & Birnbaum, J. H. (1988). *Showdown at Gucci Gulch*. Vintage.

## **Decriminalize Politics**

Many may not like Donald Trump, but the legal pursuit to jail Trump and other political actors has escalated to dangerous levels. These two books examine how shifting politics from the ballot box to the

### *Further Reading*

jury box threatens democratic legitimacy and invites retribution in place of persuasion.

Dershowitz, A. M. (2017). *Trumped Up: How Criminalization of Political Differences Endangers Democracy*. Bombardier Books.

Morgan, P. W., & Reynolds, G. H. (1997). *The Appearance of Impropriety: How the Ethics Wars Have Undermined American Government, Business, and Society*. The Free Press.

## **Revitalize Congress**

For those seeking a path back to a functional, deliberative Congress—one that rewards compromise over grandstanding—these books offer both diagnosis and roadmap.

Mann, T. E., & Ornstein, N. J. (2006). *The Broken Branch: How Congress is failing America and how to get it back on track*. Oxford University Press.

Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press.

## **Reason and Rhetoric**

These works are essential reading for anyone who seeks to practice integrative complexity. They help us understand the limits of our own reasoning before we seek to correct the reasoning of others—a critical step toward political humility.

Heinrichs, J. (2017). *Thank you for arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson can teach us about the art of persuasion*. Crown.

Lakoff, G. (2014). *Don't Think of an Elephant!* Chelsea Green.

Mercier, H., & Sperber, D. (2017). *The Enigma of Reason*. Harvard University Press.

## Community Engagement

As discussed earlier, Tocqueville recognized that American democracy grows from the ground up—in habits of association, not decrees from above. Putnam's *Bowling Alone* diagnoses what happens when those habits fade, and civic ties unravel.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster.

## Electoral College

These books clarify how the Electoral College, far from being a relic, functions as an engine of compromise—preserving geographic balance, party stability, and peaceful transfer of power through structured political conflict.

Alexander, R. M. (2019). *Representation and the Electoral College*. Oxford University Press.

Rosenblum, N. L. (2010). *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship*. Princeton University Press.

Ross, T. (2019). *Why We Need the Electoral College*. Gateway Editions.

## The Authoritarian Challenge

As China advances under a unified political system, America must rely not on unity of party but unity of purpose. These books highlight the stakes—and the need for bipartisan resolve forged through difficult compromise.

Mahbubani, K. (2020). *Has China Won? The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy*. Hachette UK.

Ringen, S. (2016). *The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century*. Hong Kong University Press.

Wong, C. H. (2023). *Party of One: The Rise of Xi Jinping and China's Superpower Future*. Simon and Schuster.

## Founding Fathers

These authors show that the Founders were not gods or saints, but masters of managed disagreement. Their legacy lies not in unanimity, but in the strength to argue, differ, and still unite.

Ketcham, R. L. (1990). *James Madison: A Biography*. University of Virginia Press.

Ricks, T. E. (2020). *First Principles: What America's Founders Learned from the Greeks and Romans and How That Shaped Our Country*. Harper Perennial.

Wood, G. S. (2017). *Friends Divided: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson*. Penguin.

## Riot and Rebellion

The American Republic was born in a riot. From the Boston Tea Party to Shays's Rebellion, from Watts to January 6, disorder has never been far from democracy. Riots test the boundaries of the First Amendment and the patience of a republic built on consent. They are not just eruptions of lawlessness—they are often signals that lawful systems have failed to absorb dissent. These books explore the uneasy relationship between protest and politics, and how rebellion, when properly understood, can warn, rupture, or renew. A nation that tolerates factions must also contend with their more volatile expressions.

Gilje, P. A. (1999). *Rioting in America*. Indiana University Press.

Snyder, T. (2017). *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. Ten Speed Press.

Graeber, D. (2013). *The Democracy Project*. Spiegel & Grau.



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