



## *A Tale of Two Parties: Living Amongst Democrats and Republican Since 1952*

Kenneth Janda (New York: Routledge, 2021)



Chapter 1 justifies the book's title and establishes the book's purpose: to explain how much American party politics have changed from 1952 to 2020, during the author's lifetime. The chapter makes a case for stability in the American polity since its creation, emphasizing the two-party system's perseverance over time. It then reveals how competitive presidential elections have become since 1952. The chapter concludes by identifying major shifts in the party bases of Dwight David Eisenhower, the Republican candidate in 1952, and Donald J. Trump, the Republican candidate running for re-election in 2020.

Chapter 2 uses social identity theory to compare political party identifiers with sports fans, drawing extensively on sports research. It describes issues in measuring party identification in American National Election Studies voter surveys over the past seventeen presidential elections. The chapter explains how the concept of party identification relates to the concept of social identity. It portrays how voters identified with the Democratic and Republican parties from 1952 to 2020, how loyal they were to their parties in presidential voting, and whether they perceived any differences between the parties.

Chapter 3 discusses the limited role played in presidential elections by the two parties' national committees. It distinguishes between (a) a social group's party preferences and (b) that group's share of party identifiers. Social groups are like the party's "customers," and parties appeal differently to its customer groups. Because American parties lack formal members, party identifiers are like the party's "owners"; they constitute its *base*. Using (a) the percentage of a group that identifies with a party and (b) the proportion of its identifiers who come from that group, this chapter creates two new measures—Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration.

Chapter 4 reviews regional differences that were once great enough to cause civil war. Party differences persisted afterward for a hundred years; southern states voted solidly Democratic against a mostly Republicans in the north. In 1952, as whites in the South still voted for Democrats, its few Black voters still favored the party of Lincoln. As northern Democrats began to promote civil-rights legislation, they lost southerners to the Republican Party, which in 1972 started winning presidential votes in Southern states. I assess regional differences in the parties' bases using Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration scores.

Chapter 5 examines the relationship between political parties and voters' economic status. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American politics regularly pitted manufacturing interests against agricultural interests. The 20<sup>th</sup> century cast industrialists against labor. The 21<sup>st</sup> century enhanced the rise of the "information economy," which increased the roles of knowledge and service in employment. Traditional occupational classifications faded in importance and new occupations emerged. As survey organizations encountered difficulties in classifying voters by occupation, they stopped trying, instead asking about household income to measure economic status. Using Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration scores, this chapter shows that Republicans appeal more to and consist more of higher income groups than Democrats, and that the tendency has increased slightly since 1952.

Chapter 6 analyzes party identification by levels of urbanization. In 1952, more Americans lived in small towns and rural areas than in cities, and relatively few lived in suburbs. Party affiliation varied little according to level of urbanization then. By 2020, more Americans lived in suburbs than in small towns and rural areas. Republicans lost support in the most urban areas, while Democrats lost in the least urban. Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration scores reflected these developments.

Chapter 7 considers education as a base of party support. Since 1952, voters' level of education has changed more than any of the six social cleavages considered in this book. In 1952, over 60 percent of survey respondents only had a high school education. Those voters chose Democrat Adlai Stevenson over Republican Dwight Eisenhower for president. In 2016, when about 10 percent stopped at high school, those voting preferred Republican Donald Trump to Democrat Hillary Clinton. Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration scores are computed for educational groupings.

Chapter 8 evaluates religion as a social and political cleavage. In 1952, only 3 percent of ANES respondents failed to claim that they were Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. In 2020, over one-quarter of respondents declined to identify with any of those religions. In 1952, most Catholics and nearly all Jews were Democrats, and Protestants were mostly Republican. In 2020, the connection between religion and party identification weakened and became more complicated, as reflected in Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration scores.

Chapter 9 computes Equal Group Appeal and Party Base Concentration scores for Ethnicity. In the 1952 presidential election survey, interviewers classified respondents as white or Black by observation. Over 90 percent were observed to be white. In 2020, interviewers asked a series of questions to classify respondents as Non-Hispanic White (69 percent), Non-Hispanic Black (11 percent), Hispanic (12 percent), and other (8 percent). In 1952, 16 percent of the few Black respondents said they were Republican; in 2020 only 7 percent of many more Black respondents claimed that.

Chapter 10 analyzes the parties' ideological bases. Strictly speaking, political ideology does not qualify as a social basis of party support—as does income, education, region, urbanism, religion, and ethnicity. Those traits are defined by a person's place in society. Political ideology supposedly pertains not to sociology but to social psychology. Nevertheless, American political parties—especially in contemporary politics—respond to their ideological bases as much as to their social bases. In fact, this chapter argues that voters adopt ideologies to conform to their social and political identities as much as they adopt parties to match their ideologies.

Chapter 11 reviews the quantitative analyses reported in Chapters 4 through 9. It introduces “box and stem” statistical displays, a different way to summarize the analyses. It also analyzes party identification by combinations of ethnicity, religion, urbanization, and education. While the social bases of both parties have changed since 1952—sometimes flipping positions on social characteristics—the Democrats continue to be more diverse and Republicans more homogeneous.

Chapter 12 inquires into the nature of contemporary American political parties and speculates about their future in light of George Washington's warning of the “baneful effects” of political parties. At one time parties were defined by their policies, now they are distinguished by their composition. Some analysts have even compared political parties to tribes. The chapter concludes by evaluating American political parties against the model of “responsible party government.”

Chapter 13 offers an epitaph to Donald Trump's 2020 presidential campaign and a signal to the Republican Party. Seven decades of demographic change since 1952 produced a very different electorate in 2020. In 2016, Trump succeeded in squeezing out a victory by appealing to a declining plurality of white Protestants. Although losing the popular vote, he won the presidency by a majority of the electoral vote. By 2020, the electorates' demographics had shifted even further against him. Although the COVID-19 pandemic contributed mightily to his defeat, he inevitably was a victim of his own strategy: appealing to a diminishing electorate. The Republican Party's 2013 Growth and Opportunity Project feared that such a strategy threatened the party with its “last hurrah.”

“A pioneer of the modern social sciences offers a remarkable tale of how American political parties have developed over the past 17 presidential elections. He draws on his own experiences as a citizen, political scientist, student, and mentor, as well as analyses of nearly 70 years of data. Charting the evolving composition of the parties, Professor Janda shows how the social bases of the parties have changed and how social features, rather than ideology, have come to define the Democrats and Republicans. While this raises questions about how well responsible party government works, Professor Janda ends with an optimistic view of the future. This book is a social science masterpiece from which we will all learn.”

James Druckman, *Professor, Northwestern University*

“Kenneth Janda inventively examines survey data to uncover the extent to which Republicans and Democrats today are different from those in the 1950s. He documents changes as to how different groups identify with the parties as well as in which groups constitute the base of each party. Janda presents the numbers, but then he delightfully adds his own perspectives on these seven decades of politics. As to be expected, the answer is that there has been change in some of the sociological differences between the parties, but the surprise is how many have stayed the same.”

Herbert Weisberg, *Professor Emeritus, Ohio State University*

“Drawing upon social identity theory, Janda helps us understand why—at a time when the policy differences between the two parties have never been more stark—their support bases are driven more by social identity than by policy. With analysis covering the period from 1952 to 2020, the already-interesting story is made even more interesting with touches of autobiography and analogies from—believe it or not—the world of sports. In an era marked by hyperpartisanship, extreme polarization, and political tribalism, this is an entertaining and highly informative book that should be read by all serious students of American party politics.”

Robert Harmel, *Professor, Texas A&M*

“I loved this book. Full of engaging writing and personal insights, Janda takes us on a highly informative and highly readable tour of the evolving two-party system of the past seven decades. This book will be valuable to scholars and students of American political parties and political parties’ history, but its straightforward and accessible presentation should recommend it to an even wider audience.”

Steven Greene, *Professor, North Carolina State University*

“This is an excellent study of partisan identity, with important new insights into the nature of identity, the ways demographic bases of partisans’ identities have evolved over time, and especially, into how partisan identity relates to ideology. Janda draws on identity theory to develop the close affinity of partisan identity to team identification in sports, with fruitful results. Among other things, this helps him to develop the idea that parties largely cause ideology rather than the other way around. All that, and it is also a good read!”

W. Phillips Shively, *Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota*