

Partisan Realignment: Voters, Parties, and Government in American History. By Jerome M. Clubb, William H. Flanigan, and Nancy H. Zingale. (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Library of Social Research, Vol. 108, 1980. Pp. 311. \$18.00, cloth; \$8.95, paper.)

This important book redirects "attention away from the role of electoral change and toward the control of government and the role of political leadership in understanding the phenomenon of partisan realignment" (p. 16). Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale see two problems in the conventional measurement of realignments by decreases in the correlations between voting patterns in the same areas in adjacent elections. The first is that correlational analysis "has overemphasized differential change and neglected across-the-board shifts in the level of party support" (p. 74). The second is the more fundamental criticism that major historical realignments cannot be identified "solely on the basis of examination of shifts in popular voting patterns" (p. 161). The authors seek to improve our understanding of partisan realignments through an expanded conception of electoral change and complementary historical analyses of partisan control of national institutions, partisan control of state governments, and partisan changes in Congress. Thanks to the extensive data holdings of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, they were able to test their expectations against an unparalleled series of annual observations spanning more than a century of American political experience. The book is thus sweeping in scope as well as penetrations in conceptualization.

The book makes two major contributions to conceptualizing partisan realignments. The first supplements the conventional view of realignment as "the differential shifting of social and geographical bases of support" (pp. 49-50) with the simple notion of "across-the-board" electoral shifts toward one of the parties. The authors introduce an analytical technique (inspired by the analysis of variance) that distinguishes between the two types of voting changes. Whereas conventional correlational analysis cannot unambiguously classify the 1932 election as a "realigning" election when compared to voting patterns in 1928, the authors' technique marks 1932 "as the most impressive realignment for both parties during the entire period reconsidered" (p. 91). But the change in voting in 1932 was due almost entirely to an across-the-board surge in favor of the Democratic Party rather than to a major reordering of group support for the two parties.

The second conceptual contribution comes from focusing on governmental performance *after* a possible "realigning" election. Only the three elections of 1860, 1896, and 1932 produced (1) unified control of the presidency and Congress

for translating votes into seats that were favorable to the majority party. Moreover, these three realigning elections were also associated with favorable shifts to the majority party in the states, measured by gubernatorial votes, partisan control of state governments, and duration of partisan control. Finally, the authors note that Congress as an institution experienced high rates of turnover in the 1860, 1896, and 1932 realignments and showed cyclical increases in party distinctiveness in congressional voting, especially in the House.

In sum, the authors argue that lasting partisan realignment occurs only (1) when elections result in party control of governmental institutions and (2) when the governmental leaders act in a way that credits their performance in the eyes of the voters. The role of parties is crucial in their view. "On the occasion of infrequent partisan realignments, public pressure on elected officials becomes much less ambiguous; during these periods, political parties reveal unaccustomed unity of purpose which bridges the diverse agencies and levels of government" (p. 39). Addressing the future of political parties in the United States, the authors find the parties' health shaky but see hope for recovery. The key to party revitalization, and thus partisan realignment, is effective action by the governing party.

Partisan Realignment was written before the 1980 election. One wonders how the authors would analyze the election and the governmental aftermath. The correlation between the Democratic vote for president by state in 1976 and 1980 was an amazing 0.93. This would certainly not signal a realigning election according to the conventional view, but 1980 could qualify as such in the authors' conception due to the across-the-board surge *away* from Carter by about nine percentage points in each state. Thus the electorate was properly "reactive" to unsatisfactory government performance. The victorious Republicans control the White House, the Senate, and, with support of conservative Democrats, have effective support in the House. The inference I draw from the authors' analysis is that conditions are ripe for a "partisan realignment" *if* Reagan's policies should appear to work.

Although *Partisan Realignment* is heavily historical in its treatment of voters, parties, and government, it deserves to be read for its contemporary relevance as well. It is not without faults, however. After a while, the scores of squiggly time-series lines begin to lose their attraction, and the authors claim to see some patterns that tired readers will readily grant. No doubt, some readers will vigorously challenge the contention that partisanship in the 1800s can be analyzed according to the model of party identification emerging from survey research during the last quarter-century. But these are minor difficulties that should not obscure the value of this book for understanding the political significance of partisan realignment in American history.

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