

Poli sci



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

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Blue v. Red: Forget the Accusations and Let™s Grab a Cup of Joe  
The colors of today™s American civil war are no longer blue and grey, but rather blue and red.

At least, that is what some political scientists believe. It is no great secret that Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill bicker like married couples, but do the people that voted for them feel the same way about each other? Many political scientists say the nation is facing a culture war, or rift of values, but this seems a bit extreme to me. Perhaps we are not facing a full-fledged culture war, but a modern cold war between party ideologies that have been convinced the other one is out to destroy America as we know it. But how do we know it? These United States are as malleable as gold and as multifaceted as a finely cut diamond. Over the years, our population has grown exponentially, along with the diversity within it.

Since now more than only rich, white, Christian males can cast a ballot at the polls, that variety is now evident in the polls. Women are more likely to vote democratically, as are minorities including blacks and Latinos (Ginsberg, ps. 176-184).

Money also plays a role in who votes how, but lack or excess of it leads to support of both parties for different reasons. Religious views, upbringing, education, and life experiences shape the political beliefs and voting practices of each person differently. What I am trying to say is that we are beyond the age of Federalists and anti-Federalists. The American population is composed of every kind of person and then some, creating a myriad of values and beliefs. Two colors, Red and Blue, are not

enough to cover the vast array of far-right conservatives, Catholic prolife Democrats, marijuana supporting Libertarians, leftist moderates who sometimes lean right, poor Republicans, conservative liberals and every other mix and paradox imaginable.

If America is in a culture war, then it is not party versus party ??“ it is every man for himself (or woman for herself, of course). There is no army except that of the individual. That being said, it is both very difficult and very lonely to be a human island. This is why people bond beyond the basic family unit and form tribes, communities, nations and cultures. People need the company, and especially the approval, of others. While no two people will agree on every issue down to minutest detail, somewhat like-minded people are able to find common ground with each other. Thus, the two-party system was born. According to chapter eleven of Fault Lines: Debating the Issues in American Politics, liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans are two entirely different beasts.

At least, their ideology is. The blue-coated donkeys are known to support government care programs, more progressive civil rights, and a looser fiscal policy than their Republican counterparts. Generally, the red-skinned elephant is known to uphold Anglican values, small government and a tight financial fist. These may be the cut and dry definitions of the two American parties, but they do not accurately represent the majority of the population. Extremists like Glen Beck and Bill Maher make for better news and better television than the average, slightly right or left American.

America is not in a culture war, but it is so much more entertaining for it to pretend it is. In Morris B. Fiorina's essay "What Culture Wars Debunking the Myth of a Polarized America", he asserts that the culture war is about as made up as the idea of an honest politician. In his opening statement, he explains that politicians and journalists hyperbolize differences between parties in order to garner support one way or the other. Journalists, Fiorina says, are just in it to establish newsworthiness.

The reason for this is that conflict is high in news value (Canon, p. 231). I support Fiorina's argument, because while American citizens feed off of media hype, they are just as unevenly centered as they ever were.

While it is never safe to put a lot of faith in statistics, nearly nine out of ten Americans say they support more moderate viewpoints (Canon, p. 233). Homosexuality, abortion, welfare, etc. "what most Americans are told are incredibly controversial issues" are actually extremely exaggerated in the media. Most Americans support abortion under certain circumstances, gay marriage is usually not at the top of most Republicans' to-do list, and many people have personal confictions about welfare. Only the most extreme ideologues on either side damn their opponents, leaving the rest of the nation to wonder if maybe their neighbor is a communist hippie nymphomaniac or a God-fearing money-grubbing bigot after all. James Q.

Wilson seems to support this theory that all Americans antler-locked with each other. In his essay, "How Divided Are We", he explains that while there is a narrow discrepancy among voting "since popular voting

began in the 19th century, scarcely any winning candidate has received more than 60 percent of the vote, and very few losers have received less than 40 percent(Canon, p. 235).

He believes that while it may not show up in the polls, American polarization is very real on a much deeper ideological level. Opposing groups almost demonize each other, seeing the other one as without morals or even common sense. Wilson explains that this division is not necessarily between just Red and Blue states, either. Within states, communities pit themselves against each other.

Wilson criticizes Fiorina for ??? inferring the views of individual citizens from the gross results of presidential balloting??? and calls his method ??? a questionable procedure??? (Canon, p. 237). I do not agree with Wilson, and believe he is looking too more into the issue than is actually there. I strongly support Fiorina??™s opinion on unknown moderation, or the fact that most Americans do not have extremist views but are told their neighbor does. Wilson??™s essay seems to be an attack on Fiorina??™s work, similar to the way Wilson explains politicians attack each other.

Further attacking Fiorina, but more discreetly now, Wilson goes on to say that moderation is on the brink of extinction, and the American people actually embrace it. They know media is intentionally conflict- driven, and the embrace it. FOX and CNN might as well be the saga of the Browns and the Steelers.

This intentional bias is not due to ignorance, says Wilson, but in fact education. As political awareness rises, so too does the severity of political

division. This is because someone with more knowledge and a higher interest in current events is more likely to be affected by the political ??? elites???, or the wealthy politicians (Canon, p. 242).

Once again, I am at odds with what Wilson. In the very same essay he highlights not just political elites??™ but medias??™ influence on the average voter. He says ??? the media contributes heavily to polarization,??? especially with regards to subliminal advertising (Canon, p.

240). This statement seems contradictory to me, because he is unintentionally supporting Fiorina??™s idea that polarization is just a smoke and mirrors show put on for entertainment. While Wilson??™s essay does have valid points regarding the influence of media and the role of education in politics, I feel his interpretation looks too far into the wrong places without addressing the real issue: America is puts on a polarized mask, but she is a pretty reasonable girl underneath. Fiorina points this out in his letter to Wilson, in which he very civilly rips his argument to shreds. He makes sure to mention that this essay threatened his previous respect for Wilson, which I find to be a bit catty, uncouth and unnecessary. His argument, however, was anything but petty.

He criticizes Wilson??™s superficial analysis of his essay, and goes on to explain that his analysis of voting included research on ideology. Finally, Fiorina explains to the reader (but more to Wilson), that there is a difference between the people choices and their positions. Their choices in candidates are polarized by nature ( independents do not win presidential elections),

while their positions on issue are, in fact, quite moderate. Fiorina offers a solution at the end, trying to steer away from his ravaging of Wilson.

He ends his letter with a hope for the future, a hope that ??? Americans are offered competent, pragmatic candidates??? who shed the elitist polarization he believes does exist at the top (Canon, p. 248). This wish is not likely according to John B. Judis??™ essay ??? Tea Minus Zero??? about the rise of the Tea Party Movement (haha, punny!). In his essay, Judis catalogs the grass-roots, almost Libertarian upshot of anti-big-government middle class Americans, who think those richer than them are thieves, and those poorer than them are mooches. Sarah Palin and Glen Beck are the darlings of the movement, as much as the rest of the nation may cringe when they hear their names. They support the ??? good ole??? values of simpler times, and think that this nation is now in a ??? period of social, economic, and/or moral decay???(Canon, p. 253).

The Tea Party Movement is a revival of the purest form of neoliberalism, and strongly believes in Capitalism??™s Invisible Hand ??“ if every man is for himself, it will work out for everyone. In fact, Judis goes on to say that if the economy does not get better, the movements likely to stay. Much to the chagrin of liberals, and even of conservatives who must bow down to an extremists force they would like to see stay back in Alaska.

Judis??™ essay was more descriptive than enlightening, but it is important to chronicle events as they occur. In light of the other two articles, it is easy to see the connection between the three. Fiorina??™s article says that America is not polarized but thinks it is, Wilson??™s believes America is polarized but

does not know just how much, and Judis??™ article says that America is not polarized save for a few extremist groups neither party likes very much. I support the first and third statements. Blue and Red often make a lovely shade of purple, and not just in swing states.

While there will always be discrepancies between the beliefs of members of political parties, there will always be arguments between spouses over who forgot to take the dog out. The culture war is fictional, but politicians and journalists are very good at getting their stories published, bought and believed.