

many legislatures have installed electronic voting machines, roll calls are infrequent in most countries. The many interviews that Carey cites on these issues are enlightening; they explain the extent to which legislators dissemble, the backbencher/leader conflict, and the informal ways in which party leaders control voting decisions.

In sum, Carey's book allows a reflection on roll-call voting and legislative accountability, and his data provide a useful comparative perspective. The data, however, are very scarce for most countries. This may be frustrating to voters and legislative watchdogs, but Carey is skillful in using that scarcity to teach us about the interplay of interests and institutions.

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The State of Disunion: Regional Sources of Modern American Partisanship by Nicole Mellow. *Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. 240 pp. Cloth, \$55.00; paper, \$25.00.*

Are regions important in understanding American politics? In *The State of Disunion: Regional Sources of Modern American Partisanship*, Nicole Mellow argues that regions are important because they are “largely responsible” (p. 3) for the state of party politics today. This is because regions can both direct the motives of politicians as well as determine the issues that they face.

Mellow focuses on three issues that influence party cohesion through regional interests. First, there is free trade. Starting in the 1950s, the Democratic Party found broad bipartisan support of free trade by linking the issue to the Cold War and by highlighting the mutual economic interests of the North and South. By the 1970s, the Republicans sought free trade through a bipartisan coalition of Western Republicans and Southern Democrats, while Pacific and Northern Democrats actively opposed it. Welfare reform is another issue that Mellow examines. Prior to the 1970s, a coalition of northerners from big cities and southerners were able to cobble together agreements that benefited each while including compromises to maintain the status quo with respect to racial issues. While trade and welfare were directly related to the material interests of regions, Mellow also examines abortion. Here, her evidence suggests that regional differences in the parties caused the change in framing and salience in partisan politics.

The picture that emerges is a complex world of preferences of voters and leaders interacting to form policies—we might call it politics. Preferences change as issues gain and lose salience through changes in local economies and through the reframing of issues. Mellow makes the important contribution that politicians (especially presidents and party leaders) are constantly looking for the right bundle of issues with which to win elections. As it turns out, region is a good shortcut or guide to identifying similar preferences of

groups of voters. Because congressional representation is based on relatively small districts, members of Congress tend to vote with their district if made to choose. Armed with this knowledge, leaders unite and divide along regional lines. The most powerful statement of the thesis comes in the final chapter of the book. Here, Mellow writes: “The key to building a successful and stable party coalition is to unite regions that are most easily linked, either because of similar histories or because of similarities in demography, economy, and ideology” (p. 171). Yet the broader the coalition is, the more vulnerable it is to having its cracks exposed and deepened by the opposition party.

Mellow argues that regions shape voters in profound ways. The mechanisms are beyond merely imparting culture and framing economic interests (p. 14). Despite the many important things that this work does, it falls short in proving this assertion. First, the hypothesis reflects the motivations of the individual voter, while the evidence presented focuses on legislative behavior. Second, the characterization of the evidence itself is equivocal. For instance, Mellow states that region “probably” had “an independent effect” on legislators’ positions on trade (p. 63). That particular conclusion is based on a multivariate regression of just 40 cases. Finally, the key concept of region would benefit from further development. Mellow defines regions in a way that is somewhat arbitrary. For instance, the “North” includes Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and the New England states. The theoretical justification for such a vast unit of analysis should be expanded upon if only to help explain the specific mechanisms of change that the region provides.

Despite these criticisms, Mellow’s work offers important insights into the development of the American party system and will help us understand its future. We should keep her thesis in mind as we observe the decline of the Republican Party and the expansion of the Democratic Party into new regions. It may be the case the current regional expansion of the Democratic Party back into the South and West may ultimately lead to its demise.

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Pews, Prayers, and Participation: Religion and Civic Responsibility in America by Corwin E. Smidt, Kevin R. den Dulk, James M. Penning, Stephen V. Monsma, and Douglas L. Koopman. Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2008. 296 pp. Cloth, \$44.95; paper, \$26.95.

The role of religion in American social and political life has been the subject of considerable discussion in recent years. Some observers argue that religion is at the foundation of American democracy, and should be fostered in the public square; others maintain that religion is pernicious, breeding intolerant absolutism, and should thus be generally discouraged and confined to the