that the numbers, as Baum has used them, do not lie. The majority of Texas' voters, when they chose to go to the polls, made it first and foremost a slave state until 1865 and a southern state during Reconstruction.

Randolph B. Campbell
University of North Texas


The central thesis of Gerring's engaging book is that American political parties have, and historically have had, consistent ideological differences of no lesser average magnitude than those in putatively more ideological European settings. Gerring sets out this argument of substantial ideological distinctiveness along both comparative and historical dimensions. From a comparative perspective, Gerring concludes that the two major American political parties are about as different from one another as the two leading parties in any other system are. In essence, the author limits the range of comparison not to all parties, but to those parties that consistently get the largest share of the vote. By this comparison, he argues, the U.S. party system is as ideologically distinctive as any other.

He also argues from a temporal perspective that the American parties, though having consistently clear differences with each other, have held different positions across different eras. Gerring traces a Whig/Republican lineage and a Democrat lineage, using 1828 as the starting point of a competitive party politics. He discovers two major periods of Whig/Republican ideology. One, from 1828 to 1924, stressed order, nationalism, morality, antipopulism, and the role of government, especially at the federal level. Traces of a Hamiltonian vision of society can be detected in this outlook. From 1928 to 1992, Republican appeals shifted from social order and elitism to a neoliberal agenda and a populism of the right.

The Democrats during this same time frame underwent an additional ideological transformation. Gerring refers to the 1828–1892 period as the Jeffersonian era, in which the fundamental emphasis of the party's appeals lay in civil society, anti–statism—especially anti–federal government—pre–industrial agrarianism, the preservation of liberty, and the perpetuation of racism. By the time William Jennings Bryan came to the forefront, the Democrats' appeals were about to be transformed. The party's appeals then began to emphasize populism and a form of class conflict (parasites versus producers), as well as a rehabilitation of the state as an entity able to confront the otherwise uncontested power of monopolists. In this view, the New Deal was less the beginning of a political ideology than the capstone of it. In Gerring's formulation, this second Democratic political epoch lasted from 1896 to 1948. Harry
Truman, he concludes, was the last populist Democratic president who employed the rhetoric of conflict between the working people and big business interests as a campaign tool. The period between 1952 and 1992 is seen as the latest transformation of the Democrats’ political appeals, an era in which inclusiveness and the search for social harmony replaced the more flamboyant rhetoric of populism and class conflict.

The author adds a chapter on the 1996 presidential election that places the Democrats within their most recent tradition but is less clear about the Robert Dole campaign, which harkened back to earlier appeals of nationalism and moral virtue but, in the end, hinged its electoral prospects on the issue of tax cuts, a distinctive element of neoliberal appeal.

Gerring limits his analysis to the rhetoric of presidential campaigns and to the speeches of presidents. This tactic substantially narrows the range of variability likely to be found within each party’s set of appeals and, indeed, may limit the breadth of interests represented by each of the parties and the degree of overlap between them. It may have the effect of making the parties look more different in certain eras than would be the case if the congressional wings were included. In other eras, possibly including the present, the differences between the congressional parties might be even greater than those between the presidential nominees.

The author especially wants to show that the American parties, despite the absence of a socialist model, have had consistent and powerful differences in ideas and are not merely responding to constituencies, interests, or even broad social forces. They are, in fact, proactively shaping the political environment, and they have been doing so for a long time. However, Gerring cannot decisively show that ideological strains are more important than any other factor, or that parties enjoy the relative autonomy that he ascribes to them, mainly because his focus is on rhetoric and ideas (ideological differences by definition) rather than on behavior. Moreover, Gerring overlooks the possibility that the process of constructing coalitions helps to create ideology. The fact that labor became available to a Democratic coalition in the 1930s could help explain the appeals of the New Deal to it.

In a perceptive and sophisticated appendix to the book, however, Gerring argues that explaining changes in party ideologies is an indeterminate theoretical task, inasmuch as there are more possible explanatory routes, all of which have something to do with the outcome, than cases of transformation (at least as he defines it). In this regard, readers of Gerring’s eloquent volume will want to contrast his emphasis on the descriptive dimensions of party differences with the more theoretical work of Aldrich.¹

If Gerring did not venture to deliver a more theoretical book, it seems less because he is unaware of the importance of theory than that he is uncertain about his capacity to demonstrate empirically the superiority of one modality of explanation over another (see especially the book’s appendix). It also is likely to be the case that Gerring thinks his major points are important enough, namely, that the American party system is neither peculiar nor bereft of ideas. The parties have been, and continue to be, battle stations for distinctive, if evolving, political ideas.

Bert A. Rockman
University of Pittsburgh


Perhaps no sub-field of American history has been more recast by the assault on disciplinary barriers than the study of religion. During the last generation, denominational and institutional emphases have given way to the detection of spirituality enmeshed within the political, social, and cultural dimensions of the past. As Stowell reminds us, though, this methodological shift has proceeded unevenly, often producing more promise than insight. Recent highly acclaimed overviews of the Civil War era take little notice of religion, he tells us, and the recent outpouring of fine scholarship on religion in the postwar South has tended to focus narrowly on the experiences of particular ethnic, denominational, or regional groups. In *Rebuilding Zion,* Stowell moves a giant step closer to a broader understanding of the role that religious faith played in the wake of Union victory by defining “religious reconstruction” as the “process by which southern and northern, black and white Christians rebuilt the spiritual life of the South” (7).

Stowell identifies three primary categories of believers—emancipated slaves, northern whites, and southern whites. All shared an evangelical bent and a providential understanding of history; they even found a measure of common ground in their mutual disdain for President Andrew Johnson. But here the similarities ended. Informed by divergent interpretations of God’s intentions for the defeated Confederacy, each group embarked on religious reconstruction in ways that soon brought them into conflict.

Freedmen immediately and persistently sought autonomy in church life, largely eschewing the paternalistic offers of guidance and protection from both their ex-masters and their liberators. Probably no other effort by ex-slaves paid such lasting benefits as this rapid exodus of freedmen from biracial churches to establish their own religious institutions. Northern evangelicals in the South (or “religious scalawags,” as Stowell calls them) saw both black and white natives as an open mission field