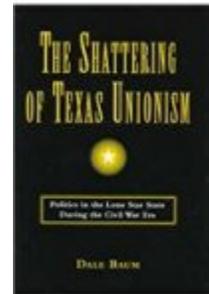


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Dale Baum. *The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999. xvi + 283 pp. \$37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-2245-7.

Reviewed by James L. Huston (Department of History, Oklahoma State University)
Published on H-CivWar (August, 1999)



The Eyes of Regression Are Upon Texas

Dale Baum's study of Texas politics confirms numerous current ideas in both American political history and in the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. He convincingly shows how American politics was affected by the activities of nonvoters, and that reactions to state or national policies often did not take the form of switching parties but of simply refusing to vote. Behind his analysis of Texas political behavior is a belief that a competitive two party system is essential for all interests to receive a hearing and protection of their rights. In this case, the "shattering" in the title is the destruction of the opposition to the Democratic party (the Union party) in the secession election of 1861 and in the first Reconstruction election of 1866. The one-party state was born in those elections as whites of all distinctions rallied behind the banner of white supremacy to thwart any alteration in the status of African Americans. The result in Texas was the same as in most other southern states: Reconstruction was a grisly tale of murder that only subsided when the Democrats seized political control.

If in the larger questions of the era Baum reinforces existing interpretations, he offers numerous revisions of current views on Texas history. The book commences with an analysis of the 1859 gubernatorial fight between Democrat Hardin R. Runnels and Unionist Sam Houston. This election was not a realignment nor was it a signal of swelling unionist sentiment. Instead Runnels, as incumbent governor, had angered people in his own party by failing to protect the frontier and by alienating partisans in North Texas. Houston capitalized on discontent within

the Democratic ranks because voters for Runnels in 1857 did not go to the polls in 1859. The important realignment came in the 1860 presidential election and especially the secessionist vote in 1861. Across all voting groups in Texas, support for the Democratic party and secession was massive—a white man's party had formed, the opposition to the Democracy had collapsed. However, during the Civil War, the older alignments of the 1850s appeared—at least in skeletal form—in voting for Confederate congressmen and for the governorship. The basic division appears to be that the Democrats drew most heavily from the East Texas-Houston area, where slaveholding was most prevalent, while the Unionists or opposition drew from the border region, North Texas where German settlements and wheat farming dominated, and South Texas (San Antonio) where Tejanos (Texas citizens of Mexican descent) distrusted the property-jumping tendencies of Anglo-Americans.

But even this frail partisan division did not survive the Civil War. In the gubernatorial election of 1866, whites swarmed to the Democratic banner while the Republicans were a small, unstable group of dissidents, drawing on some Germans and Tejanos. The difficulties of the Republicans became obvious under Congressional Reconstruction. The party was never able to form a true bi-racial coalition, and it kept fracturing into warring factions. Baum details the extreme violence exercised against the freedpeople by vigilante groups. Without federal intervention and support, the Republican party could not maintain itself, and so the Democrats "redeemed" the

state in 1874.

What will be most remarked about this book, however, will be its methodology. This is indeed political history written with a devotion to quantitative methodology—the New Political History has struck again. Unlike works in the 1960s and 1970s, Baum plunges into his voter transition tables and multiple regression analysis without going into detail about the methodology or the internal workings of the mathematical procedures. The book takes no prisoners on these matters: it charges ahead with the analysis and either the reader will understand it or the reader will not. For political historians who have not tried to obtain some knowledge of statistical methodology, this will be a difficult book.

But Baum's use of quantitative methodology pays off handsomely in several instances. First, he charts the changing voting coalitions in Texas between 1857 and 1869; he thus clears up several controversies among Texas historians (or at least gives them new fuel by which to stoke old fires). He charts the behavior of nonslaveholders, small slaveholders, and planters and how they differed in partisan choice. At least in Texas, if not in places like Georgia, the planters were Democrats and the small slaveholders were Unionists. He does find some ethnocultural differences in voting patterns, evangelicals being secessionists and liturgicals being unionist. Nonetheless, he cannot find class voting patterns and, like most historians of the period, decides that herrenvolk democracy was an undeniably strong element of the Old South. (As a small aside, Baum finds in his analysis of secession voting that slaveholding was the most potent variable for explaining the pro-secession vote, while wheat farming was the most vital variable accounting for anti-secession voting. I find this appealing: King Cotton and its lackey, Duke Tobacco, required the destruction of human rights in order to obtain wealth, whereas wheat producers relied only upon their own efforts and abstained from violence against others to earn wealth. The variables show it was aristocratic cotton versus democratic wheat—the plantation factory versus the individual yeoman farmer.)

Another telling area in which Baum's methodology produces startling results is in the analysis of fraudulent voting results. By using regression techniques on previous elections, Baum develops a means of estimating the likely voting results for counties given their past behavior (this is, I believe, a procedure pioneered by J. Morgan Kousser). Thus Baum can address the question of coercion in the presidential election of 1860 and the secession

vote of 1861, as well as fraud in the registration of black voters, the disfranchisement of white voters, and extent of intimidation in elections during Reconstruction. Baum finds the counties in which irregularities most probably existed and then he investigates them. These portions of the book—blow by blow accounts in numerous counties in numerous elections—is a tad bit tedious and one perhaps learns more about Texas counties than one ever wanted to know. As a general rule, Baum finds accounts of fraud and intimidation to be exaggerated or at times to be counterbalanced by frauds in other counties; he does name specifically those counties in which fraud ruled.

Most of Baum's conclusions are powerfully presented, and I have no doubt that they will endure. Nonetheless, there are a few matters that invite some questioning. No explanation is given for the unusual jump in the number of counties (the N of cases) between certain elections (59 in 1855-1857, 123 in 1860-61, from Table 2, p. 14). The number of cases is not unimportant in matters of regression procedure, and the strange way the number changes begs an explanation. Moreover, Baum has set the estimates of voter transition to logical limits (i.e., between 0 and 100 percent). When that is done, the reader has no way to evaluate the accuracy of the regression estimates and the reliability of the table itself. Not all tables in ecological regression are equal; and the only way to determine good estimates from bad estimates is by seeing those violations of logical bounds. Baum also makes a strong statement about the Disciples of Christ being anti-secessionist in 1861 and calls it "the most remarkable finding of the regression analysis" (p. 54). This may well be, but I have usually found in regression analysis that small denominations are not widely spread about in the units of analysis; they tend to be highly skewed variables that break all the rules of regression analysis and frequently produce horrendous residual plots and statistics. In Table 10 (p. 48), the Disciples of Christ account for 4.1 percent of the voting population and the variable has a standard deviation of 8.3 percent. I would be wary about placing an interpretation on this finding. Lastly, it would have been of immense value if the results of Baum's fraud analyses could have been summarized in tables.

As to Baum's proposed corrections of Texas history, I think I can leave that matter safely in other hands. Over the years I have become very much aware that Texas is a big state; more important, it contains an enormous number of colleges and universities. In almost each of those institutions resides an historian of Texas. They will much more incisively critique and carve up Baum's revisions of

the state's history than I could ever do. I am sure that the next meeting of the Texas Historical Association will be a lively one.

One feature of this book merits an especial note. During Congressional Reconstruction, Union commanders oversaw the disfranchising of ex-Confederate military and civilian leaders. The extent of disfranchisement in the southern states has always been a matter of some conjecture. In the case of Texas, General Joseph J. Reynolds conducted the proceeding, his records were subsequently lost, and myths arose as to its extent and fairness. So writes Professor Baum: "The manuscript returns are in the National Archives, where they are grouped by county, but not in any readily apparent order" (p. 204). And by using these records, Baum declares—probably definitively—that there were no discrepancies. Within the last decade, historians have found records previously untouched that have had profound influences on the writing of Civil War history: Michael Fellman (*Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri*

during the American Civil War (New York, 1989)) looked at manuscript records of Missouri guerilla warfare for the first time since they were collected, and Mark Neely (*The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York, 1991)) discovered the arrest records of Confederate sympathizers during Lincoln's administration. Anyone who believes that evidence is not crucial in determining historical controversies should be made aware of how much interpretation has changed in the Civil War era because of these previously unused records.

Dale Baum has written an important book that will be of great service to historians of American politics and general historians of the Civil War and Reconstruction period. The methodology is sophisticated, the conclusions amply supported, the revisions powerfully argued and substantiated.

Copyright (c) 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@H-Net.MSU.EDU.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-civwar>

Citation: James L. Huston. Review of Baum, Dale, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. August, 1999.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=3299>

Copyright © 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.