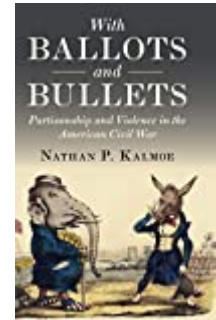


Nathan P. Kalmoe. *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Illustrations, tables. 260 pp. \$99.99, cloth, ISBN 978-1-108-83493-3.



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Published on H-Nationalism (March, 2021)

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Nathan P. Kalmoe's *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War* is a timely and pertinent analysis of what happens when one major party refuses to accept the outcome of a fair election: the real potential for violence along partisan lines. Kalmoe approaches the historical puzzle asking whether partisanship shaped elite and public outlook and action during the US Civil War and to what extent. He argues and finds that partisan politics played a significant role in the Union war effort, with divergent effects from Democrats and Republicans.

Kalmoe's book ultimately focuses on how political parties structure and organize politics for the elite and public, using the setting of the US Civil War as an exercise in how extensive partisanship motivates action and violence. Kalmoe argues that stable partisan identity of the public, coupled with party elite rhetoric regarding the war, explains much of the difference in how Democrats and Republicans acted during the war at the polls and in military service. In other words, "mass partisanship, guided by local and national leaders, was key

to mobilizing and sustaining mass warfare and determining the war's political outcomes in elections" (p. 6). Specifically, Kalmoe finds that partisan splits between Democrats and Republicans occurred in support for the war, recruitment, desertion, and (least surprising) voting behavior. However, Kalmoe emphasizes the stability in partisan identity and activity, finding that surprisingly few Democrats and Republicans were swayed by national casualties and important war events, contrary to many historical narratives.

Kalmoe's greatest contribution with his book is the template it provides for scholars on how to bridge the expanses between disciplines to contribute smart and meaningful scholarship. While this book addresses the history and historiography of the US Civil War, it also resides in the growing area of political science known as American political development. American political development seeks to synthesize political science and American history in a way that identifies causal political processes to explain historical events. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, Kalmoe of-

fers readers “broad inferences about the public,” which complement historical approaches (p. 214). Furthermore, Kalmoe gives novel quantitative analysis of the important participation and sacrifice of African Americans and women for the Union war effort, two segments of the population that continue to receive a disproportionately low amount of attention from both history and the social sciences in the literatures of the US Civil War and American politics. In sum, I commend Kalmoe for a shining example of how working across disciplines builds stronger scholarship.

To achieve his end, Kalmoe did a masterful job of leveraging unique data identification, collection processes, and analytical methods from history and social science. He pulled his data from a wide range of sources, including the American Civil War Research Database for comprehensive Civil War soldier records, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) for county-level election data, the US Census, and era newspapers. The most labor intensive, and likely useful to a range of scholars, was his effort to geolocate over one million Union soldiers by county to match county-level election data and his sample of twenty-four newspapers from the Union region to measure partisan communication.[1] Social scientists and quantitative historians must often be creative (and always thoughtful) in their data collection processes from historical time periods. As indicated earlier, Kalmoe provides a useful template for thinking about important and accessible sources of data to run statistical analysis to test inferences on historical phenomena, which ought to draw due attention.

The true strength of Kalmoe’s book lies within his theoretical argument to explain how, why, and to what extent partisanship shaped the public’s perceptions and actions around the US Civil War. In brief, he explains that political parties can mitigate or foment violence in democracies due to the durable partisan identity that individuals develop and maintain through their lifetimes and the cues

they take from trusted political elite. Kalmoe first defines partisan identity as “a social identity—an enduring, emotional attachment to a group with which we belong in which we see ourselves reflected, often strongly felt” (p. 31). Based on this identity, individuals looked to, most notably, similarly aligned local and national party leaders, who provided signals and cues on how to vote and support (or not support) the war. Republicans were unified in their support of the war because their fidelity to their country and party were aligned. However, Democrats had to contend with internal conflict of whether to support their country or their co-partisans in the rebellious states. This difference in alignment of allegiances created mixed signals for Democrats, which did not exist for Republicans, stunting Northern Democratic support for the war below the level of Republicans.

Kalmoe’s book leaves important opportunities for historians and social scientists alike to explore further. First, regarding the development of partisan identity for new parties, Kalmoe offers an incomplete explanation of how voters adopted such strong, durable bonds to the new Republican Party in just a period of six years. Political science literature related to partisan attachment emphasizes the long time period of socialization into a party by family, peers, events, etc. So how could these strong attachments form in the span of six years for the Republican Party? Kalmoe does try to approach this by arguing that political networks remained intact between the disintegration of the Whigs and coalescence with Free Soilers and Know-Nothings. Correlations show there is a relationship between aggregated voting patterns of pre-Republican voters from Whigs and Free Soilers. However, the evidence used does not go far enough to show the mechanisms that allowed for such strong partisan attachments to the fledgling Republican Party that lasted through the tumult of the war.

Next, Kalmoe emphasizes the role of Senator Stephen A. Douglas early in the war as he gave his

full support behind the Union before his untimely death in the war's first several months, which aligns with early support for the war from most Democrats, which fell with time. Future efforts can build on Kalmoe's overall findings to look at how specific Northern Democrats' signals kept Northern Democrats loyal in the early part of the crisis and who among the elite were responsible for waning support. His findings suggest a conditional relationship that some Northern Democratic elite were willing to put country first and continued to support the war effort, by signaling to Democratic voters and joining the military. Why do we see some Northern Democrats align themselves with country over party, and vice versa? Both statistical inference and biographical work on Northern Democratic elite would help to illuminate this difference.

Kalmoe's book focuses on political parties in the Union, leaving us to wonder what similar dynamics may have occurred in the rebellious states? There was not monolithic support for the Confederacy in the rebellious states; the extent of this support has not yet been thoroughly examined particularly by social scientists.[2] In particular, were former Southern Whigs similarly conflicted between fidelity to their fledgling Confederacy and their former Northern Whig colleagues. In other words, why and to what extent were former Southern Whigs willing to shrug off partisan loyalties with their Northern brethren and join with Southern Democrats?

Overall, *With Ballots and Bullets* is an excellent piece of scholarship that provides a template for the fusion of history and social science. Kalmoe builds on qualitative and historical accounts of the roles political parties played in the US Civil War with novel quantitative analysis and useful theory pulled from political science literature. He argues and finds that Democrats and Republicans diverged in their voting behavior and war support through the US Civil War and beyond, based largely on how the public reacted to cues and sig-

nals from trusted political elite. Republicans remained solidly committed to the war effort and Republican candidates. Meanwhile, Democrats were conflicted in supporting their country and their Southern Democratic colleagues, which created a divergence throughout the war in Democratic support for the Union. Future work by historians and social scientists would do well to build on Kalmoe's example of interdisciplinary work in merging the best qualities of disciplines to create a superior scholarly endeavor.

Notes

[1]. I found particularly interesting the data collection process from era newspapers to capture effects from the primary communication medium for political elite to the public. Kalmoe describes his data collection as a probabilistically selected set of twenty-four general interest English-language newspapers. He attempted to control for geography by selecting four newspapers from each of six Union regions, with paper selection weighted by circulation within each region. His newspaper sample included twelve Republican, seven Democratic, and five Independent newspapers. He then selected seven important dates during the war, and tracked stories based on military activity, call to arms, elections, etc. Through newspaper analysis, "Democratic war views dramatically shifted over time, in contrast with Republican pro-war consistency" (p. 60). Democrats sent mixed signals at the start of the war (some support, some opposed).

[2]. See Andrew B. Hall, Connor Huff, and Shiro Kuriwaki, "Wealth, Slaveownership, and Fighting for the Confederacy: An Empirical Study of the American Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 113 (2019): 658-73. They find that slaveowners tended to join the Confederate military at higher rates than non-slaveowners, all else equal.

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Citation: Michael A. Catalano. Review of Kalmoe, Nathan P. *With Ballots and Bullets: Partisanship and Violence in the American Civil War*. H-Nationalism, H-Net Reviews. March, 2021.

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