

Populists and elitists are the new categories that have replaced liberals and conservatives, says David Brooks, and he put me in the populist camp. About the same time, *The New Republic* ran a lengthy analysis saying that the tenor of *American Theocracy*, with its attacks on Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and such proved that I was no longer a populist but had become a Porsche and Pucci elitist. Apparently even the elitists need new dictionaries.

There is, to be sure, some utility in seeing a division between supporters of the more or less triumphant Washington status quo and those doubters, erstwhile liberals and conservatives alike, who increasingly disdain a failed bipartisan national leadership and its policy handiwork. But this is not a broad enough definition either—and perhaps there really isn't one. ■

**KEVIN PHILLIPS'S** *most recent book is American Theocracy: The Perils and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money, published in March by Viking Penguin.*

---

**James P. Pinkerton** The late Stephen Jay Gould quipped that the intellectual world could be divided between two camps, the “lumpers” and the “splitters.” Lumpers see commonalities, splitters see differences. Can things be sorted into a few broad categories, or do they need to be assigned to more specific and nuanced cubbyholes? Gould was mostly concerned with paleontology, but the same lumpers-splitters argument can be applied to politics: should we collapse all the variations of American thought into just two categories, liberal and conservative, or should we insist that, say, libertarian conservatives be held separate and distinct from conservative libertarians?

So long as there are just two political parties of consequence in America, it makes sense to use the familiar “lumping” terminology, which would have us aggregating lots of unlike folk into just two categories. And so liberals become synonymous with Democrats and conservatives, Republicans. Admittedly, there are exceptions, such as the effort of many self-proclaimed conservatives to save the political hide of Democratic Sen. Joe Lieberman, whose lifetime rating from the American Conservative Union is 17 out of a possible 100—wars do make for strange neobedfellows.

However, since the “splitters” make good points, too, we might note some key splits within the lumps:

Although it is true, lumpily speaking, that Republicans are the conservative party and Democrats the liberal party, it is also true that the two parties are split, top against bottom. Elite Republicans tend to be libertarian, as do elite

Democrats. Conversely, Republican regulars tend to be populist and conservative, and the same holds true for Democratic regulars.

Not that many elite Republicans, in other words, are passionately pro-life or pro-flag-burning amendment or anti-gay marriage. Indeed, the levels of cynicism and opportunism on such issues inside the Republican Beltway can only be called Nixonian. The real passions of top Republicans are reserved for such causes as tax cuts, free trade, and maybe a foreign war or two. And if the GOP elites are truly ahead of the curve, they embrace avant-garde ideas for Republicanizing immigrants.

Meanwhile, rank-and-file Republicans are far different. The folks closer to the base really are social conservatives, and yet at the same time they are suspicious, even hostile, toward imports and immigrants. And while grassroots GOPers still mostly support the Iraq War, they support it because it's a war in which our boys—strictly speaking, their boys—are fighting and dying, not because they dream of democratizing Kirkuk. It's their patriotic Jacksonian blood that's been fired up, not their world-historical Krauthammerian vision.

If the Republicans are divided between intellectual libertarians and instinctive traditionalists, so, too, are the Democrats.

Top Democrats believe in higher taxes—even if there's a chance that they, personally, will pay more—as well as national health insurance, more spending for infrastructure, and other Big Governmentisms. But it's the rare elite Democrat who will admit to being a socialist, or even a social democrat; most want to see the economy shift a little to the left, although not so much that the World Trade Organization is jeopardized. But what top Dems really believe in is personal freedom—freedom of reproductive choice, freedom to marry someone of either gender, freedom to print government secrets.

**“It's their patriotic Jacksonian blood that's been fired up, not their world-historical Krauthammerian vision.”**

Meanwhile, in the lower depths of the Democratic Party, lots of lefty—but also illiberal—ideas flourish. There are plenty of unionists who would not only support a Smoot-Hawleyish crackdown on trade but also support even a complete government takeover of their company in order to save their jobs. And the millions of downscale blacks, browns, and seniors who yearn for an unlimited expansion of the welfare state can count on the enthusiastic support of more millions of government employees. Yet at the same time, many of these Democrats, including minorities, are pro-life and

pro-traditional morality. Not a lot of gay-marriage advocates in Flint or Brownsville.

So that's how the two big lumps are subdivided. Mostly libertarian Republicans preside over a populist-conservative base on the Right, while on the Left, mostly libertarian Democrats preside over a motley crew—everyone from Luddite socialist Greens to what Europeans would call “right-wing social democrats,” a teeming mass united by little except, paradoxically, anti-libertarianism.

It should come as no surprise that many Americans feel out of place in this partisan-ideological typology. In recent decades, millions of white collars, especially in the North, have drifted into the Democratic Party, while tens of millions of blue collars have become Republican. Which is to say, the GOP has been the net winner in this shuffle. So no Republican should complain about the terminological status quo—at least not too much. ■

**JAMES P. PINKERTON** is a columnist for *Newsday* and a fellow at the *New America Foundation* in Washington, D.C. He served in the White House under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

---

**Justin Raimondo** In the 1920s, H.L. Mencken was considered a man of the Left due to his opposition to Prohibition and the cultural know-nothingism of what he mockingly called “the booboisie.” By the 1930s, however, he was being derided as a right-wing extremist by the New Dealers on account of his contempt for Franklin Roosevelt and his refusal to jump on the bandwagon for war. The same was true of Albert Jay Nock.

The idea of Left and Right is today being transformed: wars always do this, and the Iraq War (and whatever comes next, perhaps Iran) is no different. I am always astonished by references in the ostensibly “right-wing” media to my alleged “leftism.” For example, one Candace de Russy, writing in *National Review Online*, avers:

The extremist anti-war left is beside itself with rage against [*Wall Street Journal* columnist John] Fund and others who dare to challenge its domination of the academy, and in particular Middle East studies. See, for example, Justin Raimondo's diatribe against Fund, whom he labels ‘Yale's very own Torquemada,’ as well as against what he calls ‘the Fund-amentalist hate campaign’ against the Taliban Man. For good measure Raimondo goes on to attack the entire neo-con movement as a ‘perpetual motion machine of hate’ and David Horowitz as a ‘professional witch-hunter.’

To Candace and her confreres at *NRO*, anyone who opposes the neocon agenda is, by definition, part of “the left.” She probably doesn't know I'm a contributing editor of *The American Conservative* and author of *Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement*, but her abysmal ignorance is not limited to these easily missed facts: it is exemplified by the knee-jerk response of someone who doesn't care about facts at all and simply registers “for” or “against” on a number of litmus-test issues, of which the politics of the Middle East is perhaps the most important (from the neocon point of view). Are you against the war? Then you're a “leftist.” Do you breathe a word of sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian people? Then you're a terrorist-supporting “leftist”! End of discussion.

One big difference between the neocon “Right” and the Old Right of yore is that, in the former, there is no allowable dissent from the party line—and especially not in the realm of foreign policy. The doctrine of global interventionism is the central dogma in the neoconservative worldview, and anyone who crosses over into even vaguely ambiguous territory—e.g., Francis Fukuyama—is subjected to a withering volley of relentless attacks. There is a Soviet quality to these vituperations, perhaps a vestigial remnant of the neocons' leftist origins: recall that David Frum, the neocons' commissar of political correctness, in penning his long screed in *National Review* against Pat Buchanan, Bob Novak, and other antiwar conservatives and libertarians, including myself, ended his peroration with this:

War is a great clarifier. It forces people to take sides. The paleoconservatives have chosen—and the rest of us must choose too. In a time of danger, they have turned their backs on their country. Now we turn our backs on them.

There is to be no discussion, no debate, no opportunity for paleocon deviationists to make our case to the conservative public: the Frum-cons will close their ears and shield their eyes from the sight of our heresy. These people hold a Truth so pure that it cannot risk contamination—or endure examination.

Yes, war is a great clarifier. As the Bush administration sinks deeper into the Iraqi quagmire and the neocons plot another foray, this time into Iran, the geopolitical, financial, and domestic political consequences of our war-crazed foreign policy are all too apparent and whatever else one may say about them, what one cannot say—with a straight face—is that they are conducive to conservatism in any way, shape, or form. As, one by one, the pillars of our old Republic fall away—or are hacked to pieces—and the bloated grandiosity of an Empire rises above the ruins, real conservatives (and libertarians, such as myself) look on in horror—and are labeled “extreme leftists” for our trouble.