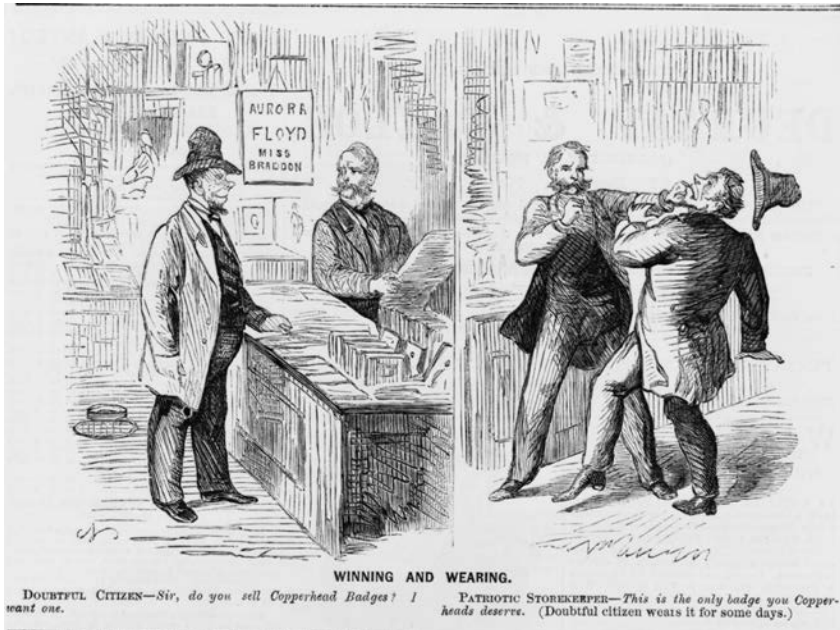# Copperheads or a Respectable Minority

Current Approaches to the Study of Civil War-Era Democrats

THOMAS E. RODGERS

In the election of 1864, some 45 percent of the Northern electorate voted against Abraham Lincoln. Despite three and one-half years of war and extensive efforts by Republicans to unify the North in support of the federal government's war policies, Lincoln's percentage of the vote and the partisan alignment were about the same as they had been in 1860. Rather than voters rallying around the president in a time of crisis, the North witnessed ever-intensifying political partisanship and animosity. Democrats saw the Republicans as cultural imperialists whose efforts to impose their views on everyone had caused secession and threatened freedom. Republicans saw Northern Democrats as having been abettors of the Slave Power conspiracy before the war; now, through partisan prejudice or consciously pro-Confederate positions, they posed

WINNING AND WEARING.

DOUBTFUL CITIZEN—*Sir, do you sell Copperhead Badges? I want one.*   PATRIOTIC STOREKEEPER—*This is the only badge you Copperheads deserve.* (Doubtful citizen wears it for some days.)

May 23, 1863, cartoon from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. A customer wanting to buy a badge to identify himself as a Copperhead receives an appropriate answer from a "patriotic" Republican store owner.

Courtesy, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

an impediment and threat to Lincoln's efforts to save the Union. Heated rhetoric spilled over into sporadic acts of violence across the loyal states.[1]

Nowhere in the North was political partisanship greater or more intense than in the Hoosier state. Democrats accused Republicans of being tyrants and would-be monarchists; Republicans accused Democrats of disloyalty and active conspiratorial involvement with the Confederacy. Men and women engaged in fistfights and brawls; some disputes ended in shootings. Both parties organized mutual protection militias and prepared for armed conflict. Union troops disrupted the state Democratic convention in 1863, and a battle between Democratic militia and federal troops in Sullivan County was avoided only when the troops were withdrawn at

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[1]Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (New Haven, Conn., 2002); Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York, 1977).

the last minute. The political drama in Indiana reached its climax in the Indianapolis treason trials held in the fall of 1864.[2]

Were Democrats actively disloyal during the war? Why did they so vehemently oppose Lincoln and the Republicans in a time of national crisis? In the late nineteenth century, historians tended to accept the Republican view of the situation: they had opposed Democratic disloyalty, including organized conspiracies, as part of their effort to save the Union. Twentieth-century historians writing during the World Wars similarly tended toward the Republican viewpoint. A more favorable view of Democrats began to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly with the publication of Frank Klement's *The Copperheads of the Middle West* (1960). Klement contended that Democratic disloyalty had been greatly exaggerated and that supposed conspiracy groups were largely fictions created by government officials. Klement reinforced his thesis in two other major books and at least nineteen articles, including pieces on all of the states of the Old Northwest. Major review articles on the Democratic party and the loyalty issue during the Civil War appeared in *Civil War History* in 1967 and in the *Indiana Magazine of History* in 1970. None has appeared since then. Klement's extensive body of work, based on exhaustive research, has assumed a dominant position on the subject.[3]

While a few state- and local-level studies have appeared over sub-

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[2]G. R. Tredway, *Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration in Indiana, Indiana Historical Collections*, vol. 48 (Indianapolis, Ind., 1973); Thomas E. Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era: West-Central Indiana, 1860-1866" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1991).

[3]Richard O. Curry, "The Union as It Was: A Critique of Recent Interpretations of the 'Copperheads,'" *Civil War History* 13 (March 1967), 25-39; Robert H. Abzug, "The Copperheads: Historical Approaches to Civil War Dissent in the Midwest," *Indiana Magazine of History* 66 (March 1970), 40-55; Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads of the Middle West* (Chicago, 1960); Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham & the Civil War* (Lexington, Ky., 1970); Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, La., 1984); Klement, "The Soldier Vote in Wisconsin during the Civil War," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 28 (September 1944), 37-47; Klement, "'Brick' Pomeroy: Copperhead and Curmudgeon," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 35 (Winter 1951), 106-113, 156-57; Klement, "Copperheads and Copperheadism in Wisconsin: Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 42 (Spring 1959), 182-88; Klement, "Middle Western Copperheadism and the Genesis of the Granger Movement," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38 (March 1952), 679-94; Klement, "Midwestern Opposition to Lincoln's Emancipation Policy," *Journal of Negro History* 49 (July 1964), 169-83; Klement, "Clement L. Vallandigham's Exile in the Confederacy, May 25-June 17, 1863," *Journal of Southern History* 31 (May 1965), 149-63; Klement, "Copperhead Secret Societies in Illinois during the Civil War," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 48 (Summer 1955), 152-80; Klement, "Carrington and the Golden Circle Legend in Indiana during the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History* 61 (March 1965), 31-52; Klement, "Economic Aspects of Middle Western Copperheadism," *The Historian* 13 (September 1951), 27-44; Klement, "Franklin Pierce and the Treason Charges of 1861-1862," *The Historian* 23 (August 1961), 436-48; Klement, "Civil War Politics, Nationalism, and Postwar Myths," *The*

sequent years, no one attempted a general study challenging Klement's conclusions until Jennifer Weber's *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (2006). Between Klement's first book and Weber's rejoinder, Joel H. Silbey's *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (1977) appeared as the primary general history of the party during the war. Silbey assumed Democratic loyalty and focused on the party's successes and failures as a loyal opposition during the 1860s. The purpose of this article is to examine and compare the works of Klement, Weber, and Silbey in an effort to suggest what has been settled and what remains to be done to obtain a fuller understanding of Civil War Democrats and the loyalty issue.[4]

The Copperheads of the Middle West provides the fullest expression of Klement's views on Democratic disloyalty and the political failure of the Copperheads. His other works (such as *Dark Lanterns*, published twenty-four years after his first book) maintain the arguments made in the 1960 work, which breaks down Civil War politics into two chronological components: the rise

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Historian 38 (May 1976), 419-38; Klement, "Sound and Fury: Civil War Dissent in the Cincinnati Area," *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 35 (Summer 1977), 99-114; Klement, "Ohio and the Knights of the Golden Circle: The Evolution of a Civil War Myth," *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 32 (Spring-Summer 1974), 7-27; Klement, "Rumors of Golden Circle Activity in Iowa during the Civil War Years," *Annals of Iowa* 27 (1965), 523-36; Klement, "The Hopkins Hoax and Golden Circle Rumors in Michigan, 1861-1862," *Michigan History* 67 (1963), 1-14; Klement, "Phineas C. Wright, the Order of American Knights, and the Sanderson Exposé," *Civil War History* 18 (1972), 5-23; Klement, "Vallandigham as an Exile in Canada, 1863-1864," *Ohio History* 74 (Summer 1965), 151-68, 208-210; Klement, "Exile across the Border: Clement L. Vallandigham at Niagara, Canada West," *Niagara Frontier* 11 (Autumn 1964), 69-73; Klement, "The Indianapolis Treason Trials and *Ex Parte Milligan*," in *American Political Trials*, ed. Michal R. Belknap (Westport, Conn., 1981), 101-137; Klement, "Catholics as Copperheads during the Civil War," *Catholic Historical Review* 80 (January 1994), 36-57.

[4]Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York, 2006); Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*. For examples of non-general studies see Tredway, *Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration in Indiana*; Joanna D. Cowden, "The Politics of Dissent: Civil War Democrats in Connecticut," *New England Quarterly* 56 (December 1983), 538-54; Arnold M. Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861-1865* (Teaneck, N.J., 1980); Robert M. Sandow, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* (New York, 2009); Robert H. Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face: Libertarian Political Violence and the Origins of the Militia Movement* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2009), 105-143 (mainly on Indiana); Churchill, "Liberty, Conscription, and Delusions of Grandeur: The Sons of Liberty Conspiracy of 1863-1864," *Prologue* 30 (Winter 1998), 295-303; Hubert H. Wubben, *Civil War Iowa and the Copperhead Movement* (Ames, Iowa, 1980); David E. Long, "Frank Klement Revisited: Disloyalty and Treason in the American Civil War," *Lincoln Herald* 97 (Fall 1995), 99-115; Long, "'I say we can control that election': Confederate Policy Towards the 1864 U.S. Presidential Election," *Lincoln Herald* 99 (Fall 1997), 111-29; Michael Kleen, "The Copperhead Threat in Illinois: Peace Democrats, Loyalty Leagues, and the Charleston Riot of 1864," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 105 (Spring 2012), 69-92; Thomas H. Smith, "Crawford County 'ez trooly dimecratic': A Study of Midwestern Copperheadism," *Ohio History* 76 (Winter/Spring 1967), 33-53, 93-95.

of the Copperheads (centering on the 1862 elections) and the Republican countersurge, as seen in the 1863 Ohio gubernatorial election and the 1864 elections across the Midwest. Klement opens the book with a discussion of a wide array of issues that were important to the rise of the Butternuts. The first was economic depression, as the closing of the Mississippi River disrupted trade, threw individuals out of work, and provided an opportunity for railroads to exploit midwestern customers. Sectional differences quickly arose between a largely agrarian Midwest and an industrial Northeast over tariffs, and later over a national banking system and other economic matters. While such differences were also rooted in each region's prevailing religious denominations, Klement viewed economics as the key point of contention. Other issues and events built upon this economic base of discontent: he suspension of the writ of habeas corpus; the threat, then actuality, of the abolition of slavery; the advent of a federal draft; and demoralizing Union battlefield defeats during the first two years of the war. Many immigrant voters, primarily Irish and German, flocked to the Democratic banner because of Republican anti-Catholicism and the fact that many former Know-Nothings had joined the party of Lincoln. Klement, however, thought that class was the most important factor in Catholic immigrant support for the Democrats—most of these German- and Irish-born voters were working men, hurt by the economic downturn and fearful of competition from freed slaves, who took out their resentments on the Republicans, the party of their employers and of emancipation. Klement summarizes the Copperhead movement as arising from "a tangle of economic, religious, social, personal, and sectional threads."[5]

Underlying this tangle was a broad, inexorable transition from a Jeffersonian agrarian America to a Hamiltonian manufacturing America. The transition was real and so were Democratic concerns about it. Klement thus suggested a liberal-rational voter model, in which voters respond logically to real events and conditions based on their economic and other vital interests. This assumption appears to be the basis for many of Klement's broad assertions about the mood of the electorate. When he states, for instance, that "discontent was rampant, and despair made inroads," he provides no cita-

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[5]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 1-36 (quotation 36); Klement, *Dark Lanterns,* esp. 1-6. Klement's views do not seem to have changed over time. Comments in the article "Catholics as Copperheads during the Civil War," published in the year of his death, appear to reiterate views on the Copperheads, disloyalty, and German and Irish Catholic Democrats presented in his 1960 work. The term Butternut was used interchangeably with the term Copperhead, especially in the Midwest, and will be so used in this article. On these terms see Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 33-35. The term War Democrat will be used for those who left the Democratic Party and joined the Republicans.

tion and does not limit such attributes to the members of a given party or to independent voters. Instead, he deduces them as logical, rational, and widely shared responses to the economic problems and battle losses early in the war. According to Klement, however, these rational responses did not, in and of themselves, cause the tremendous political upheaval and intense political animosity that characterized the Midwest during most of the Civil War. If real economic and class differences existed in America, they were neither deep nor profound. Klement looked instead to the nation's political parties. A properly functioning two-party system was one in which the parties represented the real, rational concerns and interests of their constituents, but also found common grounds and created compromises in which everyone ultimately benefitted. Unfortunately, Democratic leaders who were fearful for the survival of their party engaged in blatant partisan demagoguery, and the Republicans responded in kind. For Klement, the ultimate cause of the political upheaval in Indiana and the rest of the Midwest during the Civil War, therefore, was neither battlefield reverses nor economic differences, but was instead—to use the title of his second chapter—"Rampant Partyism."[6]

Klement appears to have followed the consensus school of historiography, prominent when he did much of the work on his book. According to this model, unscrupulous or deluded demagogues exaggerated political differences to the point that Republicans saw Democrats as treasonous minions bent on destroying the Union, and Democrats saw Republicans as would-be tyrants attempting to destroy democracy. Klement communicates his position with his choice of words as well as his arguments, filling the book with terms suggesting the irrational nature of the debate (what Richard Hofstadter called the paranoid style). Instead of describing voters as expressing values or beliefs, he often portrays them as expressing bias, prejudice, or bigotry, and being caught up in hysteria. Readers are told that editor Wilbur Storey "deserted mildness for madness" as he emerged as a leading Copperhead. Klement also makes frequent use of words such as "pretended"—politicians do not state, contend, or assert, but rather pretend—and "embittered"—this to describe someone acting out of irrational personal feelings rather than reasoned analysis. Brick Pomeroy, a leading Copperhead, is "embittered and impudent." In short, before Klement fully presents his arguments, he uses language to convey the irrationality of positions and individuals and

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[6]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 37-73 (quotation 73). On the liberal-rational model see Paul Kleppner, *The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979), 5-6.
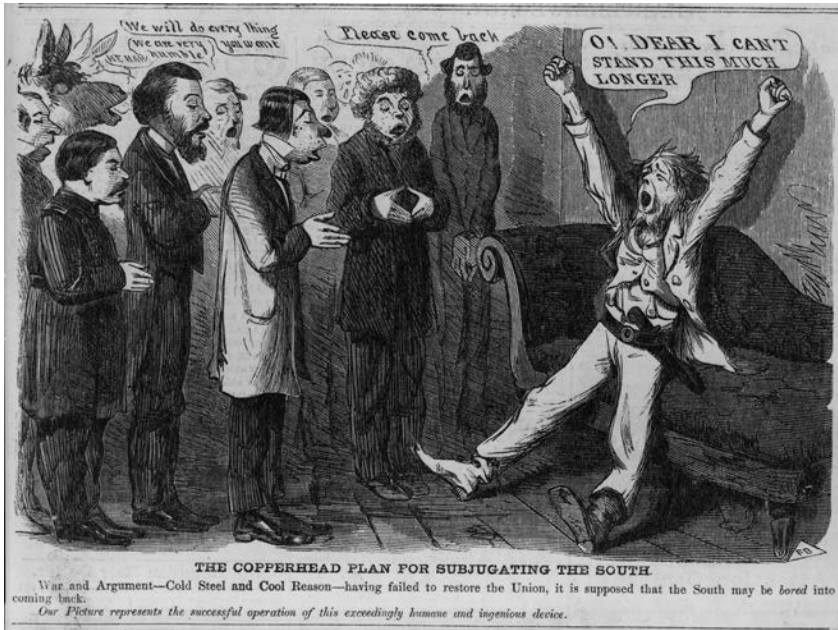
"The Copperhead Plan for Subjugating the South," from *Harper's Weekly*, October 22, 1864.
The cartoon depicts a delegation of conciliatory Northern Copperheads begging a bored
Southerner to return to the Union.

Courtesy, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

the duplicity of leaders. He asks his readers to dismiss explosive partisan-
ship—the result, not of real differences, but of rampant partyism.[7]

To reinforce his interpretation, Klement describes a rare exception to
irresponsible wartime politics. In 1863, a number of Butternut politicians,
including Clement Vallandigham, Daniel Voorhees, and George Pendleton,
personally intervened with their supporters, urging them not to oppose the
draft by acts of violence. "Advice of moderation from many Democratic
mouths," Klement wrote, "helped to keep the less learned and more emo-

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[7]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 87, 95 (quotations). On the consensus school, see
Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*
(Cambridge, England, 1988), 300-360. My characterization of Klement's work as consensus
history is complicated by two factors. First, in works published in 1976 and 1984, Klement con-
demned what he called consensus history, but he used the term to describe a situation in which
nationalism imposed one interpretive point of view on history (as after the Civil War when, he
asserted, the Republican view of wartime politics became the only view of the history profession).

tional within bounds." While this incident illustrated how responsible leadership could minimize social and political upheaval, even with an issue as disruptive as the draft, it proved a rare exception, in Klement's view, to the rule of rampant wartime partyism.[8]

Copperheads represented the irrational partyism of the Democrats. Butternuts created an electoral majority in the 1862 election by capitalizing on voters' demoralization, racism, and economic and constitutional concerns, and by portraying various actions of Lincoln, Republican governors, and the Republican-controlled Congress as evidence of a dire threat to democratic government. Klement provides quotation after quotation in which Democratic demagogues use terms such as despot, despotism, tyranny, dictator, dictatorship, and even "King Abraham the First." He reinforces his position by offering numerous examples of petty partisan actions: the tempest in a teapot over the Democratic-controlled legislature's reception of Governor Oliver P. Morton's 1863 state-of-the-state address; Ohio Republicans using redistricting to cause Vallandigham to lose his reelection bid for Congress; the puerile skedaddling of both Indiana and Illinois Republicans from their 1863 legislative sessions to stop Democratic majorities from passing legislation; and the unsuccessful attempts of the Democratic majorities in those two legislative sessions to gerrymander out of office as many Republicans as possible.[9]

The Copperheads began the North's descent into virulent, unreasoning, emotional politics, but the Republicans soon responded in kind by demagogi-

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I use consensus to mean a point of view in which differences existed among Americans of the past, but also in which divisions were not deep and Americans agreed on most basics. Differences could be exaggerated by the paranoid style. Consensus historian Richard Hofstadter defined paranoid politics as "a way of seeing the world and of expressing oneself" characterized by "heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy." Those exercising the paranoid style saw conspiracies aimed, not at individuals, but instead at "a nation, a culture, a way of life." Hofstadter held that "the paranoid style has a greater affinity for bad causes than good." His definition seems to fit Klement's portrayal of the irrational fears of both Democrats and Republicans during the Civil War. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York, 1965), 3-40 (quotations 3-5); Klement, *Dark Lanterns*, 6; Klement, "Civil War Politics, Nationalism, and Postwar Myths." A second problem is that the University of Wisconsin, according to Novick, remained one of the last bastions of the Progressive school of American history, and at the time Klement received his doctorate, the history department was resisting the consensus trend. Klement published "Economic Aspects of Middle Western Copperheadism," in 1951 and "Middle Western Copperheadism and the Genesis of the Granger Movement," the following year: in both he emphasizes economic factors, and much of the former piece became the first chapter of his 1960 book. Still, I would argue that over the course of the 1950s, Klement moved toward more of a consensus view. Kleen ("Copperhead Threat in Illinois," 76-77) has recently suggested a Progressive-oriented socioeconomic interpretation of Klement's 1960 book, but while some evidence may be found in its early pages, overall, Klement's work displays a consensus orientation.

[8]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 80-81 (quotation 81).

[9]Ibid., 37-72, 77-98, 100-101 (quotation 77).

cally, and effectively, using the loyalty issue. As Klement puts it, "partyism entered a new phase early in 1863," as "rank partisanship" led to a situation in which "partyism erupted with full fury, causing irreparable damage." The Republicans emerged as the victors in this confrontation for a number of reasons. They were, first, simply better organized. Union Leagues had not developed enough by 1862, Klement contends, to help much in that year's election, but in 1863 and 1864 these organizations and loyal publication societies proved adept at spreading Republican propaganda beyond the party's base—as Klement puts it: "The 'floating portion' of the population fell under their spell." A second factor in the party's dominance was the ability of Lincoln and the Republican governors to use their control over the army to convert Union soldiers to their cause. The army's pro-Republican opinions, expressed in army straw polls and by other means, were then used to promote civilian support for the party. Klement's discussion of the political manipulation of soldiers remains one of the most fascinating parts of his 1960 book and one of the few significant published discussions of this important topic. A third factor was changing economic conditions, as the depression of the early war period gave way to high labor demands and a prosperous economy. This shift also, of course, undermined Democratic demagoguery that had capitalized on the earlier hard times. A fourth factor was battlefield success. Klement puts special emphasis on the importance of Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in 1863 and victories on the eve of the 1864 elections at Atlanta, Mobile, and the Shenandoah valley. Military victories especially hurt Democratic efforts to push for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. The nearer military victory approached, the sillier and more extreme Democratic peace plans appeared. Klement dismisses these efforts, stating that "as they bid for votes, Democratic partisans often made ridiculous assertions. They pretended that peace and compromise were easy to attain." A fifth element was Lincoln's growing stature as a leader. As the president's acumen and judgment became more evident, Democratic charges of despotism seemed more ridiculous. Klement's sixth factor helping the Republicans was the zeal of "superpatriots" who "encouraged intimidation and even mob action." Finally, and very importantly, he stresses the importance of Republican assertions that Democrats were involved in treasonous, conspiratorial organizations. These assertions, though often untrue or exaggerated, gained credence at the time by exposés, arrests, and show trials, such as those held at Indianapolis on the eve of the 1864 elections.[10]
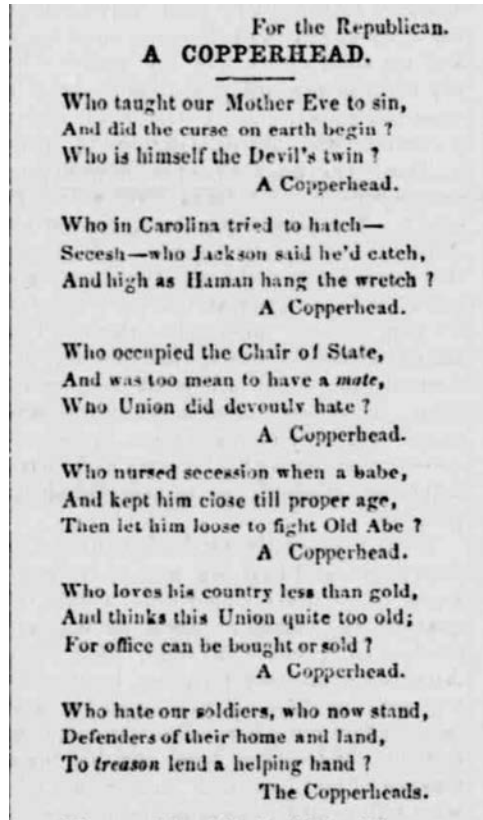
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[10]Ibid., 40-241 (quotations 40-41, 111, 211, 220). One of the few scholars to examine political manipulation of Union soldiers since Klement did his work is Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers* (Athens, Ga., 1998).

Through his two major books, Klement became known for his thesis that Republican charges of conspiracy were wildly exaggerated. For the present discussion, it is important to note how his analysis of conspiracy blends seamlessly into his broader discussion of rampant partisan politics. Republican charges were gross exaggerations or even fabrications. At least three times in his 1960 book, he uses the term "KGC bogeyman," as well as other dismissive phrases such as "secret society scarecrow." The 1864 report on disloyalty issued by Col. Henry B. Carrington, commander of the Indiana district, is described as rooted partly in "political prejudice," while the Republican charges concerning secret societies in general are "a political apparition" and "a figment of Republican imagination." In other words, Republicans greatly exaggerated differences among the midwestern electorate for partisan advantage, just as Democrats had done earlier. Each party was helped when swing voters found their partisan charges plausible. The Democrats were defeated in 1863 and 1864 because the changing situation made their positions on despotism and peace negotiations appear too extreme or even inane to most voters, while exposés made Republican charges of disloyalty seem plausible.[11]

Jennifer Weber's book, based on a dissertation completed under the direction of James McPherson, has several similarities to Klement's work but also some significant differences. The work offers a chronological narrative of the war with special attention given to Democrats. Like Klement, Weber uses a liberal-rational voter model. She shows, for instance, how overall Democratic success and failure fluctuated with economic performance, using a graph of gold prices to define fluctuations in the health of the economy. The worse the economy, she concludes, the more successful the Copperheads were at converting voters to their cause. Unpopular legislation concerning the draft and the suspension of habeas corpus similarly sent voters into the Copperhead ranks. Weber considers that the greatest factor in determining the Copperhead appeal was military success and failure. Defeats demoralized the public and shifted voters into supporting the Copperhead negotiated peace position, while victories shifted voters into the Republican ranks. Copperheads were also hurt by their lack of organization and especially by their rigid, reactionary views: they refused to accommodate the new realities of a market economy, the need for ending slavery, or the military necessity of many of Lincoln's wartime actions. In short, states Weber, "their refusal to deal with the complexity of the war and of governance nearly consigns

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[11]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 134-241 (quotations 140, 152, 155, 189, 202, 205).

For the Republican.

A COPPERHEAD.

Who taught our Mother Eve to sin,
And did the curse on earth begin ?
Who is himself the Devil's twin ?
                              A Copperhead.

Who in Carolina tried to hatch—
Secesh—who Jackson said he'd catch,
And high as Haman hang the wretch ?
                              A Copperhead.

Who occupied the Chair of State,
And was too mean to have a *mate*,
Who Union did devoutly hate ?
                              A Copperhead.

Who nursed secession when a babe,
And kept him close till proper age,
Then let him loose to fight Old Abe ?
                              A Copperhead.

Who loves his country less than gold,
And thinks this Union quite too old;
For office can be bought or sold ?
                              A Copperhead.

Who hate our soldiers, who now stand,
Defenders of their home and land,
To *treason* lend a helping hand ?
                              The Copperheads.

Marshall County [Indiana] Republican, September 29, 1864. The first six stanzas of the anonymous poem reproduce many of the charges that Republicans leveled against Anti-War Democrats, including support of secession and hatred of the Union and its troops.
Courtesy, Library of Congress, online at http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/

their ideas to the realm of fantasy." The military victories before the 1864 national elections finally brought home the vacuity of Copperhead positions, and the voters repudiated these views and those who advocated them so thoroughly that "most of the nation's leading Copperhead politicians simply faded into the background." In essence, when the economy faltered or the Union army suffered defeat, the public lost confidence in the war and the Copperheads were able to flourish. When the economy improved and Union forces won battles, the Butternut cause withered.[12]

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[12]Weber, *Copperheads*, xiv-xv, 1-12, 183-203 (quotations 6, 205).

If Weber's book resembles Klement's in its narrative approach, its liberal-rational voter model, and its themes of Copperheads acting irrationally and of events determining Copperhead success and failure, it also differs significantly in other respects. Rather than originating from the postwar consensus view of history, Weber's thesis is firmly rooted in the currently dominant McPherson-Foner interpretation of the Civil War—the war begins as a fight to restore the Union, but soon the Republican majority in the North and many men in the Union army begin to realize that the war must be about ending slavery and attaining a more inclusive concept of rights for blacks. According to this model, racial gains were made and the stage set for advances to come in the mid-twentieth century before reactionary forces in the late nineteenth century put the quest for civil rights on hold. If both the Republican Party and the Union army were evolving in this enlightened manner, and if Republicans were attuned to the new economic realities, it would be inconsistent for Weber to portray such rational people as acting on irrational fears of Democratic disloyalty and conspiracies generated by manipulative politicians. As for Democrats, while they might have held rational concerns over economic downturns and military defeats, their solutions for these concerns—rejecting inevitable economic and social change and advocating a negotiated peace when such a solution to the war was impossible—were utterly irrational. So, too, were their fears of Republican tyranny and their unreasoning, unrelenting racism. "By the end of the war," Weber tells us, "they seemed to occupy a bubble world that had little connection with the society that was emerging."[13]

Weber's portrayal of rational Republicans who understood new socio-economic realities logically leads her to question Klement's conclusions on the disloyalty issue in two ways. First, she emphasizes the large volume of discussions of Democratic conspiracies in government reports, in letters from private citizens to officials, and in letters between private citizens. She admits that some of the authors of these documents may have had over-

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[13]Ibid., 217. This combination of some rationality with irrationality appears in other passages in the book, as when Weber stresses that "the conservatives' fears had real foundation" (p. 4), only to shift, like Klement, to portraying Democrats as having been unrealistic and irrational, not having "recognized the magnitude of the emergency confronting the nation" (p. 6), and calling their plans for a negotiated settlement "utopian fantasies" (p. 14). James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988). Daniel Feller has described the McPherson/Foner interpretation as "nearly canonical in liberal academic circles." Daniel Feller, "Libertarians in the Attic, or a Tale of Two Narratives," *Reviews in American History* 32 (June 2004), 185. A good example of the use of the growing opposition to the slavery thesis can be found in Phillip Shaw Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (Lawrence, Kan., 1994).

heated imaginations or hopes of getting people they disliked into trouble, but she believes that descriptions of disloyalty and disloyal organizations are so ubiquitous in the primary sources that they must have had some basis in fact—that where there is so much disloyalty smoke, there must be some disloyalty fire. Second, she raises a fundamental question about Klement's contention that Republican officials generated hysteria about disloyalty. The correspondence of Illinois governor Richard Yates and other officials serves to demonstrate that numerous citizens were flooding officials with reports of disloyal activity. Weber would have strengthened her argument by emphasizing the fact that many of these letters were sent long before Republican office holders had made extensive efforts to propagandize the public on the loyalty issue. This timing problem is the major flaw in Klement's argument that Republican leaders manipulated irrational public fears of conspiracy. Unfortunately, Weber never addresses this problem, or the core of Klement's research on major conspiratorial organizations, or his evidence of government officials' fabrications.[14]

While Weber questions Klement's conclusions, she remains focused on her narrative and does not provide a sustained, precise critique of his work. She never addresses the core of Klement's research on major conspiratorial organizations, nor does she deal with his evidence of government officials' fabrications. She simply reports what she has found in her sources and suggests that Klement overstated his dismissal of disloyalty claims and exaggerated his contention that government officials created fears of disloyal organizations. Her brief, sometimes contradictory, comments sprinkled through the book, however, only vaguely define how Klement's position might be overstated or exaggerated. Early in the book, she states that "most Copperheads were not traitors…. Their efforts may have been misguided and at times damaging, . . . but the vast majority were loyal to the Union." Later in the book, however, she notes that while not all Sons of Liberty members were aware of the organization's Confederate connection, those who did not know were nevertheless plotting military action against Lincoln's administration if the 1864 elections were not fairly held. Even more confusing is her summary of Klement's views in *The Copperheads in the Middle West*: "In it, Klement contended that the Copperheads were mostly a fiction. As far as a political threat, he argued, they were mostly the product of fevered Republican imaginations." As outlined above, Klement did see the Copperheads as a political threat to the Republicans, but he discounted both the

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[14]On the correspondence of Yates and others, see Weber, *Copperheads*, 23-26.

extent and importance of the disloyal conspiratorial groups they formed or supposedly formed. Overall, Weber is primarily interested in asserting the rationality of Civil War Republicans, not in fully engaging Klement's body of research and his interpretations.[15]

Like Republican partisans, Weber argues, soldiers came to realize the importance of ending slavery and the need for most of Lincoln's war measures—a shift that she regards as vitally important to the outcome of the war in three ways. First, soldiers affected the home front by bombarding relatives and friends with letters denouncing Copperheads and supporting the Lincoln administration. Second, they strengthened the Republicans with their votes. Finally, and most importantly, their battlefield victories were the primary factor in motivating voters to reject the Copperheads. Ignoring Klement's pioneering work on the indoctrination of Union soldiers, Weber instead portrays their shifting views as rooted in a logical, rational response to their experiences serving their nation and witnessing slavery and its effects in the South.[16]

Beyond their points of disagreement, many of the interpretations shared by Klement and Weber hold serious problems. One is the great importance given to the effect of battlefield results on the fortunes of the Copperheads. Neither work provides a systematic correlation between battle victories and defeats and Democratic voting success and failure. While recent military defeats in 1862 are said to have played a role in Democratic victories in the fall 1862 elections, that year saw many Union victories, such as the captures of New Orleans, Nashville, and Memphis. More importantly, the three-pronged

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[15]Weber, *Copperheads*, 6-7, 10, 25, 128-29, 147-51, 166, 243 note 35 (quotations 6-7, 10). In his introduction to the book, James McPherson describes it as a correction to Klement (p. xi); Weber portrays her volume in the same way (p. 10), but she never systematically deals with Klement's imposing body of work. In this she is not alone. Churchill and Long, similarly, engage only part of Klement's work, looking for evidence in provost marshal reports (Churchill) and Confederate sources (Long) to suggest that there was more to the conspiracies. Neither, however, addresses Klement's work on fabrications and exaggerations and his overall placing of Republican charges within a paranoid style of politics. Ongoing research by Stephen Towne promises to address more thoroughly Klement's work, offering a critique of his interpretation and his use of some primary documents. Towne's initial findings were presented in Stephen E. Towne, "'Who can we trust if we can't trust Illinois!': U.S. Army Intelligence and the Effort to Convince Lincoln of the Danger of Insurrection in the Old Northwest," Fifth Annual Civil War Study Group Symposium, Springfield, Illinois, September 2012. See also Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face*, pp. 105-143; Churchill, "Liberty, Conscription, and Delusions of Grandeur"; Long, "Frank Klement Revisited"; Long, "'I say we can control that election.'"

[16] Weber, *Copperheads*, 2, 9, 67, 69-70, 78-79, 83-84, 101-102, 120-22, 183-85, 196-99, 217, 252 note 45. Weber also ignored the work on the political manipulation of Union soldiers in Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*.

Confederate fall offensive into Union territory was defeated and driven back by the Union victories at Antietam on September 17, at Corinth on October 2 and 3, and at Perryville on October 8. These victories came before the important electoral contests in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania held on October 14. In other words, the year was a mixture of success and failure, with the battles nearest in time to the elections being important victories. Klement attributes the major 1863 Republican win in Ohio to the July victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, but the big battle nearest the election was Chickamauga, where the Union army suffered a humiliating defeat. The troops retreated to Chattanooga, where the Confederates cut them off and laid siege to them—that siege was ongoing when the Ohio vote was held. Neither author attributes an impact on the election to this major Union loss. On the other hand, both sometimes err in assuming connections between battles, without supporting evidence. Weber, for instance, claims that the Union victory at Stone's River somehow boosted Union morale, but provides no evidence for the claim beyond the assumption that, for liberal-rational-model voters, victories boosted morale and defeats lowered it. If this was the case, why did Antietam and Perryville not boost morale? To make things even more confusing, Weber admits that the loss at First Bull Run actually led to a surge in patriotism and morale.[17]

Another problem that Weber and Klement share has to do with the dynamics of nineteenth-century politics, and can best be understood by examining Silbey's coverage of the subject in *A Respectable Minority*. His analysis is deeply rooted in the new political history, which originated in the early 1960s and borrowed extensively from the discipline of political science. Silbey seeks not only to understand what happened to the Democrats, but to use their experience to better understand how a minority party functions during a crisis such as the Civil War. He writes that his "emphasis is on context, situation, and strategy, not directly on personalities and dramatic events."[18]

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[17]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 25, 28-31, 40-42, 73-75, 127-30, 232-33, 239; Weber, *Copperheads*, 8-9, 34, 60-63, 68-69, 71, 76, 82, 118-22, 125, 165, 180-83, 202. Weber summarizes battles and the 1862 election: "Treated to a string of victories in the early spring, they saw the fortunes of the army sour in the late spring and over summer" (p. 71). She leaves out the battles in September and early October just before the elections. Perryville is not mentioned in the book. Weber mentions Chickamauga (p. 119) and says it boosted Copperhead hopes, but does not explain how it actually impacted the election. Klement does not mention Chickamauga at all. For other instances of historians emphasizing the political consequences of battle losses and victories see Paludan, *Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, 228, 284-85; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 560-61, 718, 773-80. For an excellent overview of Civil War battles see Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana, Ill., 1991).

[18]Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, xv.

One of the key concepts of the new political history is that voter behavior was shaped by long-term factors such as culture and religion, as well as by current events and issues. Thus, Silbey begins his study with the voter realignment of the 1850s and finds that, before the war began, Democrats already saw Republicans as a threat to their liberty. As he summarizes the Democratic view: "At heart, Republicans, as the Whigs before them, were centralizing, overbearing, Federalist-Tories, intent on destroying the liberties of the American people through the extensive intrusion of government power into the personal lives, conduct, and beliefs of individuals and groups within the Union." Silbey's approach clarifies the huge influence of party loyalty and ideology upon voters' perceptions. Republican suspension of habeas corpus, initiation of a draft, and other actions during the war did not create Democratic fears for their liberty; instead, they confirmed what Democrats already believed about Republicans. In Silbey's model, the Democratic conception of the Republicans was neither objective reality nor irrationality. Instead, it was a kind of subjective rationality, by which Democrats extrapolated their understanding of events and reality from the basic assumptions of their ideological viewpoint. Democratic fears of tyranny were "far from being merely highly charged in temper and irrational in content." Instead, "these expressed fears clustered together in a view of the world that was coherent to Democrats and sharply differentiated them in their approach to politics and government from the Republicans."[19]

By looking back prior to the war years to conceptualize the loyalty issue, it becomes evident that Republicans, similarly, viewed Democrats

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[19] Ibid., 3-29, 62-88 (quotations 25, 87). The perceived threat posed by Republicans is presented in detail in Joel H. Silbey, "The Surge of Republican Power: Partisan Antipathy, American Social Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War," in *Essays on American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860*, ed. Stephen E. Maizlish and John J. Kushma (College Station, Tex., 1982), 199-229. For a similar approach with a different formulation of Democratic ideology see Thomas E. Rodgers, "Liberty, Will, and Violence: Democratic Political Ideology in West-Central Indiana during the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History* 92 (June 1996), 133-59. Richard O. Curry has also emphasized continuity in Democratic ideology in his "Copperheadism and Continuity: The Anatomy of a Stereotype," *Journal of Negro History* 57 (January 1972), 29-36. For background on various aspects of the new political history see Robert P. Swierenga, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Voting, Values, Cultures," in *Religion & American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s*, ed. Mark A. Noll (New York, 1990), 146-71; Ronald P. Formisano, "The Invention of the Ethnocultural Interpretation," *American Historical Review* 99 (April 1994), 453-77; Kleppner, *Third Electoral System*, esp. 3-15; Richard L. McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York, 1986), esp. 29-63, 197-227; Allan G. Bogue, "The Quest for Numeracy: Data and Methods in American Political History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21 (Summer 1990), 89-116; Bogue, "The New Political History in the 1970s," in *The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca, N. Y., 1980), 231-51; J. Morgan Kousser, "Quantitative Social-Scientific History," in *The Past before Us*, 433-56.

through ideologically colored glasses. In the 1850s, Republicans believed that northern Democrats were disloyal participants with the southern planters in a Slave Power conspiracy to overturn the republic created by the Founders. Lincoln, for example, made this charge in his House Divided speech, in which he suggested that northern leaders such as Franklin Pierce and Stephen Douglas were co-conspirators with the southern planters. Any cogent study of Democratic and Republican behavior during the Civil War must therefore be rooted in a thorough understanding of the partisan imperative and party-based ideological views that existed before, during, and after the war. Each party offered to its supporters a subjective rationality, rooted in basic and long-held beliefs which were seen as being protected and advanced by the party.[20]

Silbey's study focused on the Democrats' wartime dilemma. Party members believed that the Republicans were tearing the nation apart as they attempted to impose their views, and Democrats wanted to stand firmly on their own ideological view of the republic and project this view into the political arena. This ideologically assertive approach to politics was problematic. As proponents of the new political history have discovered, voter turnouts were quite large in the mid-nineteenth century, and the vast majority of all voters remained strongly attached to one of the two major parties. The War Democrats who deserted to the Republican Party were a relatively small group; most voters stayed in their respective parties during the war. The vast majority of Democrats who remained with the party were united in their ideology, but a division arose within the party, according to Silbey, over tactics. As a minority party, the Democrats could only stop the Republican majority by gaining support of some conservative Republicans or others potentially alienated from Republican wartime policies. Silbey's Purist faction argued against making concessions to attract Republicans and pushed their ideological imperatives without dilution. The Legitimist faction wanted to downplay those aspects of Democratic dogma that would alienate potential Republican or independent supporters and emphasize only those elements that political converts might find attractive. The Legitimists wanted especially to portray their party as committed to the war effort. They insisted that defeating the South should come first, and negotiations on how to reassemble the nation should come second. The Purists, also loyal to the Union, believed that only negotiations and an armistice could

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[20]For Lincoln's speech, see Robert W. Johannsen, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (New York, 2008), 14-21. On Republicans and the Slave Power conspiracy see Michael Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York, 1978), esp. 51-52, 151-53,190-99, 202-203, 257-58.

bring about an end to the war and disunion. Conservative Republicans regarded the Purist view as unacceptable and those who held it as disloyal. This split within the party was evident in the 1864 presidential election, in which McClellan's nomination represented a win for the Legitimists, while the party platform represented a success for the Purist faction.[21]

At one point in his book, Silbey seems to flirt with accepting Klement and Weber's view that Copperhead/Purist extremism destroyed Democratic chances for electoral success. Later in the same chapter, however, he backs away from such an interpretation. Klement and Weber both contend that voters shifted to the Copperhead position when events, such as economic conditions or battle results, seemed bleak, but that changing conditions made their views appear increasingly irrational and they were repudiated in the 1864 elections. For Silbey, the partisan loyalty of the period precludes this kind of voter shifting. He also cannot blame Purist intransigence for Democratic failure, because what united conservative Republicans to their party was more powerful than what alienated them and, consequently, might attract them to the Democrats. Even if conservative Republicans could have concurred with Democrats on some points, the two groups disagreed on a whole range of issues, and the power of longtime antagonisms within a partisan imperative made any crossing of party lines extremely difficult. Therefore, the Legitimist tactics had no real chance of success.[22]

If the Democrats were the minority party and the Legitimist strategy to gain more voters failed, then how did the Democrats win the 1862 elections? Silbey provides a sophisticated, in-depth examination of election results and electoral dynamics that should be a starting point for any serious study of Civil War politics. In the mid-nineteenth century there were few independent voters. Therefore, the key to victory was how well each party motivated its constituents to turn out to vote. If both parties properly inspired their members, the minority Democratic party would lose. However, in many parts of the North, the Democrats were capable of winning elections if they were able to achieve a high turnout and the Republicans were not. This is what happened in many states in 1862. Republican policies on arbitrary arrests, the draft, emancipation, and economic policy fit perfectly with preexisting Democratic fears of threats to liberty and thus allowed Democratic leaders to motivate their constituents and to achieve an unusually high turnout for

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[21]Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 30-139. For an excellent overview of party competition and party loyalty, see Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838-1893* (Stanford, Calif., 1991).

[22]Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 158-76.
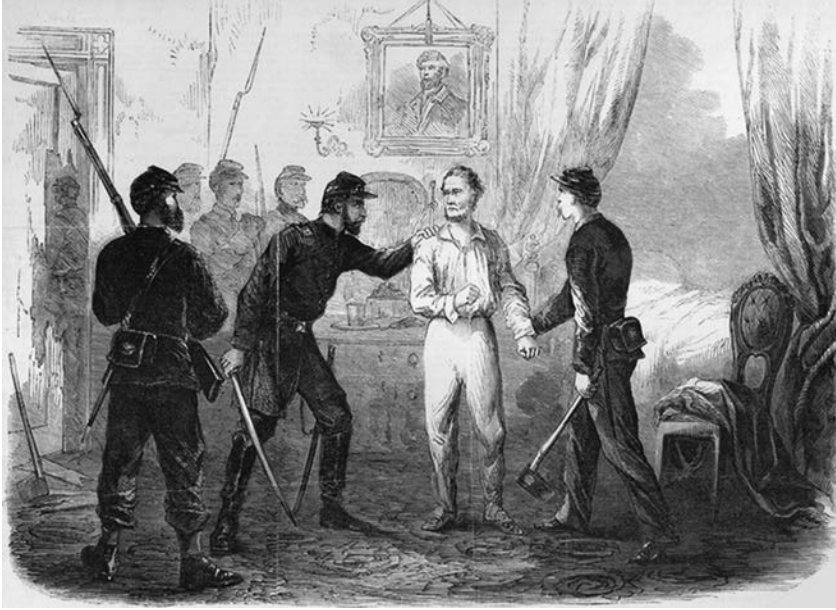
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 23, 1863. Ohio congressman Clement Vallandigham, an outspoken Anti-War Democrat, was arrested for violating General Order No. 38 which forbade public expression of "disloyal sentiments and opinions" intended to weaken the Union.

Courtesy, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

an off-year election. Republicans, meanwhile, experienced a typical off-year election decline, and this turnout differential resulted in Democratic victories in numerous contests. In 1864, both parties had a good turnout, and, since Republicans were the majority party, they won. Silbey's figures demonstrate that this 1864 Republican election victory was less of a repudiation of the Copperheads than Klement and Weber contend. McClellan received more votes in the states participating in the election than any other Democratic candidate up to that time. In the important electoral states located between Connecticut and Illinois, the Democratic percentage of the vote was slightly higher than in 1860. In other words, the Copperhead message resonated very well with the Democratic faithful and allowed the party to do about as well as it could do, given the electoral circumstances.

Copperheads continued to play a major role in the party after the war. Klement and Weber assumed that Copperheads were largely disgraced and repudiated by the 1864 results, without checking postwar elections to see

whether this was the case. The Copperheads continued their aggressive stance as Reconstruction became the focal point of ideological contention. This assertive approach enabled the Democrats to pull off an 1862-style turnout victory in 1867. In 1868, Horatio Seymour, the wartime Copperhead governor of New York, won the Democratic presidential nomination, and the Purists dominated the national convention. Although he lost to war hero Ulysses S. Grant, Seymour's outspoken wartime opposition does not seem to have hurt him, since he appears to have carried a majority of the white vote in the contest. Silbey summarizes postwar politics in this way: "The outstanding characteristic of Northern voter behavior in the post-Civil War years was that the voters had remained in their accustomed grooves as established in the aftermath of the realignment of the mid-fifties and reinforced by wartime experiences."[23]

If Silbey's work has a major weakness, it is not something in the book, but rather something omitted from it. Silbey writes an entire chapter on the Democratic problem with the loyalty issue without mentioning supposedly disloyal groups such as the Sons of Liberty, treason trials, government reports on disloyal activities, or mutual protection organizations. Silbey does not explain these omissions, merely noting in his introduction a recent positive historiographical shift in how scholars portray Democrats and citing Klement's 1960 book in a footnote as an example of the shift. Silbey's omissions, however, detract from his analysis in at least two ways. First, the book concerns the dynamics of being a minority party in wartime. Yet Democrats did not face vague or generic criticism for their lack of support for the war effort—they encountered exposés, show trials for treason, and arbitrary arrests of their leaders. Scholars need to address these extraordinary challenges if they want a full understanding of minority party dynamics. Second, Silbey should have attempted to explain the relationship between widespread, armed Democratic mutual protection societies and the democratic process. If Democrats were as competitive at the polls as Silbey's numbers indicate, why did they arm themselves for possible action outside of normal elec-

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[23]Ibid., 140-57, 177-245 (quotation 226). On the 1868 white vote, see David H. Donald, Jean H. Baker, and Michael F. Holt, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 2001), 609. In the last chapter of his 1960 work, Klement describes what happened to many of the leading Copperheads after the war and uses their success to claim that many of the charges against them were false and to tie Copperheads to later movements, such as the Grange. He does not, however, reconcile postwar success with what he sees as their utter repudiation in 1864. Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 242-68. On turnout in the Civil War era, see Thomas E. Rodgers, "Saving the Republic: Turnout, Ideology, and Republicanism in the Election of 1860," in *The Election of 1860 Reconsidered*, ed. A. James Fuller (Kent, Ohio, 2013), 165-92.

toral politics? Even if most secret organizations were neither very large nor actively disloyal (as Klement has contended), why did they exist? These questions needed and still need to be analyzed within the context of Silbey's otherwise outstanding book.[24]

Taken together, the works of Klement, Weber, and Silbey—along with suggestive materials in more narrowly focused works—provide the base from which future research on Civil War Democrats and the loyalty issue will build. Silbey offers an important corrective to Klement's and Weber's political narratives but does not directly address many aspects of the loyalty issue. Klement's rejection of widespread, treasonous Democratic activity during the war appears still to stand. However, Weber's book, as well as more specialized works by G. R. Tredway, David E. Long, and Robert H. Churchill, suggests that Klement may have overstated his unequivocal rejection of Copperhead disloyalty. If these works provide a starting point, the issues which they do not adequately address provide directions for future research: How did Civil War-era Americans understand the concept of loyalty; how were politics and armed organizations related; what was the nature of divisions within the Democratic Party; what was the role of localism in Democratic ideology; and what were the ideological perceptions of the Republican Party?[25]

Given the centrality of the concept of loyalty to the question of wartime Democratic behavior, it is surprising how little attention has been given to defining it. Most works on the subject—general or more limited—seem to assume that disloyalty consisted of one or more of the following: resistance to war-related laws such as the draft; armed militias opposing the actions of federal troops; individuals or groups willing to resort to armed resistance to defeat Republican rule; and opposition organizations that maintained contact with Confederates and contemplated the violent overthrow of state governments or federal control of Northern regions. Scholars have often portrayed these forms of disloyalty as irrational. Weber, as noted above, faults the Democrats for refusing to recognize the obvious necessity of most of the Lincoln administration's actions. Other modern scholars echo the charge of Civil War Republicans—vociferous Democratic opposition to Lincoln and

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[24]Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, xii-xv, 158-76.

[25]Tredway, *Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration in Indiana*; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face*; Churchill, "Liberty, Conscription, and Delusions of Grandeur"; Long, "Frank Klement Revisited"; Long, "'I say we can control that election.'"

Republican state administrations, combined with Copperhead insistence on a negotiated peace, gave aid and comfort to the enemy.[26]

How could Democrats insist they were not disloyal when it seems indisputable that their overt political actions gave hope to the Confederates, and when thousands of party faithful were involved in mutual protection groups organized and ready for armed insurrection against the government? The most promising direction for finding an answer is to examine how loyalty was understood in early America. Americans conceptualized their nation as an experiment in democratic-republican government—experimental because every republic or democracy known to history had fallen to some form of tyranny. The American experiment was designed to test whether a people could create a durable, long-lasting republic, and, in so doing, preserve their own liberty and prove to the world the feasibility of a stable, free society. The success of the experiment required not only an elaborate federal system of governments, but also the republican virtue of the people. The concept of republican virtue took myriad forms as it was mediated through various American cultural groups, but all of these forms included the necessity of putting the good of the society before individual interests, even up to the ultimate sacrifice of one's life to save the Founders' experiment. The experiment could be threatened by foreign powers bent on conquest and by internal subversion. The former needs no amplification, but the latter does. The political philosophy of republicanism that was widely held in the new nation assumed that the temptations of power would lead to an endless parade of would-be tyrants attempting to seize absolute power for themselves and to enslave the mass of the white population, stripping them of the self-determination that was the essence of American liberty. To prevent such tyranny, power was divided between state and federal governments, and within those governments power was divided between three co-equal branches. Ultimately, although the Declaration of Independence contended that all men were born with natural rights, Americans knew that only in the United States were such rights exercised. The republican virtue of the American people—their willingness to pledge their lives, their property, and their sacred honor—had established and would preserve their liberty. Internal subversion would, in some way, overthrow the checks and balances of republican government. The perpetrator might be a demagogue who rose to power by deceiving

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[26]See the works cited in footnotes 3 and 4, especially the two articles by Long, which emphasize Confederate connections and giving comfort to the enemy.

the masses or a cabal of elites within the government. Once tyrants held power, citizens could not be loyal to their government, which was not an end in itself, but a means to the end of liberty. Ultimately, an American's loyalty was to the goals of the Founders; to the concept of America as an experiment; and, above all else, to the preservation of liberty.[27]

In his remarkable analysis of Civil War soldiers, James McPherson found that many men on both sides proclaimed themselves to be fighting for republicanism and liberty, even though they might have differed on how to define these concepts. Many Northern soldiers (Republicans and War Democrats) declared that they were fighting to preserve the best government in the world—a government controlled by leaders representing their definitions of liberty and republicanism. Preserving the government thus safeguarded the liberty that was threatened by those—Confederate or Copperhead—who opposed it. For most Northern Democrats, the Republicans who controlled the government were the potential subverters of the American experiment. They thought this before the war and, when government policies seemed tyrannical, they flooded to the polls in 1862 to preserve the republic with their ballots. Loyalty to the American experiment meant that men of republican virtue would have to oppose the government—such opposition was not disloyalty, but rather fidelity to the Founders' ideal of liberty. This willingness to oppose the government may have been reinforced by localism, as some have suggested, but its ultimate source—the belief in liberty and republican virtue—was common to most Americans. In the 1850s, when Republicans had come to believe that the federal government had been subverted by the Slave Power they, too, had resisted the government. Some Republican state governments had sought to block the federal fugitive slave law with state personal liberty laws, and, in their dynamics, Massachusetts Republicans using mob violence to thwart enforcement of the law differed little from Hoosier Copperheads trying to block the operation of the draft by force.[28]

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[27]The summary of the American experiment is my own, but it has been influenced by a number of works, including the following: Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kan., 1985); Lance Banning, *Conceived in Liberty: The Struggle to Define the New Republic, 1789-1793* (New York, 2004); James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven, Conn., 1993); Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York, 2009), esp. 5-52; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face*, 27-55.

[28]As Klement notes, the Democrats made a clear distinction between the government and the Lincoln administration, but since the Republicans controlled the government in a practical sense one could not be opposed to one without opposing the other. Democratic expressions of loyalty,

Concepts of republicanism and republican virtue may also provide a framework for sorting out the divisions of the Democratic Party during the Civil War. Historians have used a wide array of labels to represent divisions within the party. Silbey uses the terms Purists and Legitimists for the factions that remained in the party, and War Democrats for the small faction that left and joined the Republicans. Weber uses Copperhead, conservative, Butternut, and Peace Democrat interchangeably, reserving the term War Democrat for the faction Silbey calls Legitimists. Klement uses Copperhead and Peace Democrat for those opposing the Lincoln administration policies most strongly, and conservative for other Democrats; however, the difference between conservative Democrats and Copperheads is not always readily apparent in his work. In my own study of wartime politics in west-central Indiana, I used conservative for a faction of Democrats associated with Jesse Bright who opposed important views of the Butternuts. Most use War Democrat for those who left the party, but Joanna Cowden uses this term for the group Silbey calls Legitimists. Most historians leave vague the relative size of factions; some, such as Klement and Weber, as noted earlier, see Copperhead ranks swelling and shrinking according to circumstances during the war and attracting independents as well as Democrats.[29]

With the exception of the War Democrats who left the party, almost all Democrats strongly supported their party at the polls, regardless of charges of disloyalty or the intensity of Copperhead rhetoric. Voting results support Silbey's contention that Democrats were ideologically united and undermine interpretations that Democratic factions were rooted in ideo-

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therefore, were directed to the government as the Founders had intended it to be. Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 2. Sandow gives more attention to loyalty as a contested concept. See Sandow, *Deserter Country*, 61-98. James M. McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York, 1997); Thomas E. Rodgers, "Billy Yank and G.I. Joe: An Exploratory Essay on the Sociopolitical Dimensions of Soldier Motivation," *Journal of Military History* 69 (January 2005), esp. 99-107; Rodgers, "The Hoosier Soldier in the Civil War," in *Indiana and the Civil War: Hoosier Voices Now,* 2011, http://www.in.gov/history/3991.htm; David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York, 1976), 131-39; Churchill, "Liberty, Conscription, and Delusions of Grandeur." Democratic rhetoric about the use of force appears much more serious when one understands the intensity of feelings in some areas. Nicole Etcheson provides a superb narrative account of just how virulent feelings became during the war in Putnam County, Indiana. Etcheson, *A Generation at War: The Civil War in a Northern Community* (Lawrence, Kan., 2011), 99-122.

[29]Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*; Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*; Weber, *Copperheads*; Cowden, "Politics of Dissent"; Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era," 378-487.

logical differences. If the vast majority of Democrats were ideologically united, Silbey's contention that factions were created by disagreements over tactics might prove efficacious.[30]

Another possible approach that assumes a common ideology is also rooted in republicanism. Historians need to establish the facts concerning the number of arbitrary arrests and other issues that so aroused Democrats, but they must also try to discern reality as it was defined by and seen through Democratic ideology. Democrats were motivated not only by what Republican officials actually did, but also by what they thought Republicans were going to do in the future. Virtually all Democrats saw the Republicans as a threat to liberty, but they disagreed over the imminence or severity of that threat. These differing interpretations may have given rise to factions and, consequently, to alternative political tactics.

Varying interpretations of the perceived Republican threat can be better understood ranged across a spectrum. At one extreme were Democrats such as Harrison Dodd who believed the threat was so great and so imminent as to require plans for revolution before the 1864 elections. Based upon Democrats' belief that secession, although wrong, had been prompted by Republican cultural aggression, it made sense for Dodd and his cabal to seek alliance with Confederates, whom they believed to be fellow victims. The next point on the spectrum included Democrats such as those who violently opposed the implementation of the draft in Indiana's second district, Holmes County, Ohio, and other places. Further along the spectrum would be the many thousands of Democrats who joined mutual protection societies. They saw a close enough threat to require organization for possible war and for protection from Republican and military mob violence, which had already led to the destruction of several Democratic newspapers. Finally, some Democrats thought that the threat evinced could be handled purely through normal political methods. It is important to note, however, that Democrats were serious when they made statements such as the following from an Indiana speaker in 1864: "Fellow Democrats, if we can't beat them at the ballot-box we can at the

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[30]Klement, Weber, and most other scholars cited in this article pay little attention to the faction—War Democrats—who left the party. Silbey provides an insightful analysis of the size and impact of this group (*A Respectable Minority*, 55-59), but also notes that what set them apart is unclear. If other Democratic factions were ideologically united, as Silbey suggests, it would be profitable to learn whether War Democrats had somehow become ideologically more compatible with the Republicans. For an attempt to follow this approach, see Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era," 432-45.

cartridge-box." Suspension of the 1864 elections would have erased factional differences, and unified Democratic convictions regarding the immediacy of the Republican threat and the need for armed revolution.[31]

In classical republicanism, politics and violence were both potential means for demonstrating republican virtue. Ricardo Herrera has described a strong relationship between citizenship and military service in early America. Vigilance against internal subversion could usually be carried out through the normal political process. However, just as the Founders had taken up arms in defense of liberty, every American male had to be willing to do the same to demonstrate that he was a son worthy of the Fathers. Thus, the organization of militias in some states, including Indiana, by both Democrats and Republicans can be seen as an extension, not a rejection, of politics.[32]

The republican duty to protect liberty at the ballot box has implications for voter turnout, the key dynamic in electoral success and failure. What motivated voters to turn out in large numbers during the Civil War? Authors have invoked economic dislocation, inflation, emancipation, the draft, and battle defeats or victories to explain shifting political majorities and resistance to the government. These general causal factors, however, created neither general dissatisfaction nor resistance. Republican-dominated counties rarely, if ever, resisted the draft, while many Democratic-dominated areas did. Many of the areas in which opposition to the government was greatest were areas least involved in the market economy, the most self-sufficient, and thus the least affected by economic dislocations. And, as already noted, battle defeats do not correlate with supposed defeatism. Silbey has shown that no evidence exists of significant shifting of voters from one party to another because of these general causes.

Historians also need to consider the evidence that is not there. In the 1860s, there were no government printed ballots—parties printed them. The vast majority of Northern voters lived in rural and small-town vot-

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[31]Quotation is by Hoosier Democratic editor Grafton Cookerly recorded in the *Parke County Republican*, August 17, 1864. On draft resistance, see Churchill, "Liberty, Conscription, and Delusions of Grandeur," 302; Kenneth H. Wheeler, "Local Autonomy and Civil War Draft Resistance: Holmes County, Ohio," *Civil War History* 45 (June 1999), 147-59. On attacks on Democratic newspapers in Indiana see Tredway, *Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration in Indiana*, 25-29. Michael Holt has noted a similar dynamic to southern secession—southerners did not wait for Lincoln to take actions against them, but instead left because of what they anticipated under Republican rule. Holt, *Political Crisis of the 1850s*, esp. 240-59.

[32]Ricardo A. Herrera, "Self-Government and the American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861," *Journal of Military History* 65 (January 2001), 21-52; Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era," 583-89; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face*, 27-93.

ing precincts in which they were well-known to the party officials at the polls. At the state and local levels, parties were led by networks of men who regularly communicated with each other about the political news from their precincts, including constituents' views on issues and potential candidates. If substantial, or even significant, numbers of Republicans or Democrats had deserted their party in a given election, party officials at the polls would have seen them asking for and voting the ballot of the other party. Such an unthinkable desertion of the faithful on a significant scale would have been noted in party leaders' private correspondence. If there are such letters, they are not recorded in the primary sources used in the works under review. Put simply, a liberal-rational voter model, such as that used by Klement and Weber, cannot explain the party-based differences in how voters responded to circumstances or the turnout differential in some elections.[33]

Another factor which affected turnout at the polls was that voters—from both parties—did not automatically know how to respond to events. While the ideological implications of some issues might have been obvious, others would have required the mediation of political leaders. In other words, leaders often had to explain to their constituents the party's ideological position on certain issues. If leaders espoused positions that did not exert a strong ideological pull on voters, turnout at the polls could be poor even if important issues were at stake. Many scholars, citing Democratic editorials and the positions of leaders including Stephen Douglas, have maintained that the North made a fairly united response to the war in 1861. In his study of Pennsylvania, however, Robert Sandow found that relatively few Democrats expressed their support for a united war effort by volunteering for the Union army. My own study found a similar situation in the Hoosier state. The elections held in 1861 often witnessed poor Democratic turnout, indicating that the party leaders and newspaper editors who supported northern unity and discouraged partyism had taken positions that did not resonate with their constituents. Leaders often did not readily understand connections between ideology and issues. For instance, in the Seventh Congressional District of Indiana in 1860, a variety of potential Democratic candidates made what amounted to tryout speeches around the district, and party leaders then evaluated

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[33]On voting practices, see Rodgers, "Saving the Republic"; Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1983), 305-311. On party leader networks, see Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era," 126-56.

voters' responses to both candidates and their positions. While such efforts were often effective, leaders may still at times have taken positions that did not fit with the tenets of party ideology. Poor voter turnout in 1861 suggests that leaders did not represent the feelings of most Democrats; in contrast, the large turnouts in 1862 suggest that the partisan rhetoric of that year expressed the views of most Democratic voters. Historians can use turnout as a tool to evaluate which party positions were political dead ends and which motivated and excited voters.[34]

Differences in voter behavior also factored into variable turnout rates. Each party was divided into core voters, who were motivated to turn out in almost every election to assert their party's vision of the country, and marginal voters, who needed more political stimulation. Presidential elections stimulated the marginals to turn out because the party that elected its candidate could claim national dominance for its ideological vision for four years. Marginals would turn out in off-years (such as 1862 for the Democrats) if the actions of the opposing party appeared to pose an unusually serious threat. Each party played off the other, and this interplay proved dominant in determining voter turnout. Issues were only important when placed within the ideological context of party competition—they were the occasion, rather than the cause of, voter motivation.[35]

Using the concept of republicanism as part of an analysis of Civil War politics, as suggested here, is not new. A number of authors who have dealt with the loyalty issue have incorporated republicanism into their analysis. Weber, for example, lists republicanism as a major influence on the Copperhead faction of the Democratic Party, while Churchill sees one variety of republicanism as a major ingredient in Democratic resistance in Indiana. Sandow uses the concept more pervasively and insightfully than others in his study of dissent in the Appalachian region of Civil War Pennsylvania. There are problems, however, with using the concept of republicanism—as suggested in this essay and as it has been used in the past—that need to be addressed. The first is the relationship between republicanism and party ideology. Weber contends that republicanism was

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[34]Robert M. Sandow, "The Limits of Northern Patriotism: Early Civil War Mobilization in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 70 (Spring 2003), 175-203; Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 30-61; Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era," 125-98, 537-71; Rodgers, "Republicans and Drifters: Political Affiliation and Union Army Volunteers in West-Central Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 92 (December 1996), 321-45.

[35]On core and marginal voters, see Paul Kleppner, *Who Voted? The Dynamics of Electoral Turnout, 1870-1980* (New York, 1982), 20-24.

the "philosophical underpinning" of Copperhead ideology, but does not specify whether it was also a belief of non-Copperhead Democrats. This leaves the relationship of republicanism to a general Democratic ideology unclear. To complicate things more, she notes that the Republican Party had also drawn upon the same ideology to motivate its constituents in the 1850s, raising the question of how diametrically opposed parties could hold the same core ideology. Many other Civil War historians, not just those dealing with the loyalty issue, also consider republicanism as a distinct and generally accepted ideology, but do not precisely define its relation to overall party ideology.[36]

A second problem has to do with the transmission and changing definition of republicanism. Articles and books on the Civil War era that employ the concept almost never discuss its transmission from the Revolution to the Civil War, perhaps because this issue is highly problematic. Some historians, such as Forrest McDonald, contend that republicanism already existed in multiple forms by the time of the Revolution. Many historians of the antebellum period insist that republicanism died out or became nothing more than a useful rhetorical device, reduced or replaced by a liberal, market-oriented ideology that promoted self-interested individuals incapable of republican virtue. Marc Kruman, who has made perhaps the only serious attempt to trace republicanism over the period from the Revolution to the Civil War, contends that it disappeared after the maturing of the second party system and then was revived during the Civil War in both the North and the South. However, he does not adequately explain how an ideology can be rejected and then re-embraced as a powerful motivation.[37]

A third problem, related to the first, is how Americans who all claimed to see the world through a republican perspective could react differently to

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[36]Weber, *Copperheads*, 4-22 (quotation 19); Sandow, *Deserter Country*, 9, 28-41, 103-106, 186-87 (endnotes 7 and 8). Churchill uses the term "libertarian ideology," but he seems to mean by this a form of republicanism. Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face,* 27-55, 107-143. On the definition of ideology used in this article see Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era," 597-624.

[37]Marc W. Kruman, "The Second American Party System and the Transformation of Revolutionary Republicanism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (Winter 1992), 509-637; McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, esp. 66-77; Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992), 11-38; Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North during the Second Party System," *Journal of American History* 77 (March 1991), esp. 1234-35; Baker, *Affairs of Party*; Earl J. Hess, *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress: Northerners and Their War for the Union*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1997); Holt, *Political Crisis of the 1850s*.

important issues and events—for example, the remarkably differing party reactions in Indiana to Gov. Oliver P. Morton's actions from 1863 to 1865. Morton refused to recall the Democrat-dominated legislature elected in 1862 despite the fact that no state budget had been passed; he proceeded to violate the constitutional limits on his power and to rule as a virtual dictator of the state. He subverted majority rule by refusing to compromise with or allow any power to be exercised by the elected representatives of the people and ignored constitutional restraints on the executive—the branch of government which republicanism held to be most prone to tyranny. Democrats cried out against the assault on republican ideals. Republicans, in contrast, supported Morton, who, without the backing of the Lincoln administration and some Republican-dominated counties in Indiana, could not have pulled off his one-man rule. In 1864, Republicans turned out in large numbers to show their support for the governor by reelecting him and electing a Republican-dominated legislature that excused all that Morton had done and paid all debts accumulated during his unconstitutional rule. How could Republicans—who accepted a general ideology of republicanism, according to so many Civil War historians—have condoned and supported Morton's acts?[38]

Until these problems are settled, Civil War historians cannot convincingly continue to use republicanism as they have in the past or as I have suggested in this article. The dramatic difference in Democratic and Republican reactions to Morton's wartime actions suggests that scholars should reject the view that republicanism was an ideology separate from party ideology and a concept understood in a common, not partisan, way by almost all Americans. Instead, historians could build upon Bernard Bailyn's insight that republicanism was pervasive in the Revolutionary era because the concept mutated and intertwined with various cultural and ideological beliefs. Republicanism can be seen, in this approach, as inextricably commingled with party ideology: the process of combining republicanism and party ideology led to the acceptance of those elements of republicanism most agreeable to other tenets of the party ideology and the rejection or profound modification of those tenets that did not fit. Just as both parties could use the word liberty and mean very different things, so, too, could they differ on the meaning of terms such as republican-

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[38]For background on Morton and his actions, see Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War* (1949; reprint ed., Bloomington, Ind., 1978), 128-268; Lorna Lutes Sylvester, "Oliver P. Morton and Hoosier Politics during the Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1968), 157-302.

ism, virtue, tyranny, and subversion. The idea that liberalism replaced republicanism may seem to fit some facts of the antebellum period, but large turnouts of male voters in the Civil War era, the enthusiastic military service of Republicans in the war, and the willingness of Democratic dissenters to risk arrest or even death to oppose what they saw as tyranny indicate that a profound sense of duty and obligation to the community and to the Founders did not die out in the antebellum period.[39]

If scholars are to understand fully Civil War Democrats and their loyalty or disloyalty, they need to resolve the additional issue of localism. Some works emphasize that many incidents of resistance took place in parochial, rural settings, in which clannish locals opposed outside interference. Localism, however, played a vital part in Democratic ideology. For example, in 1859, Stephen Douglas, perhaps the leading figure among northern Democrats, published an article in *Harper's Magazine* in which he described British violation of American localism as the central issue in the Revolution and a central tenet of the Founders' experiment. Democrats were engaged in an ideological battle to establish their vision of the American experiment in democratic-republican government, and localism was a vital part of their understanding of nationalism. How, then, can historians distinguish between resistance to national authority as an expression of parochial localism and as an expression and promotion of ideological localism within the Democratic concept of nationalism?[40]

The issue of localism is complicated by the cultural makeup of the Democratic Party. From the mid-1840s to the Civil War, the United States experienced a massive influx of foreign immigrants. An overwhelming majority of these new arrivals settled in the North, and a large proportion of them—especially those who were Catholic—supported the Democratic Party. If the battle between the parties was rooted in long-standing ideological battles over the American experiment, to what degree did immigrant voters understand what was going on? This question is especially germane

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[39]Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). On the sense of male duty and obligation in the Civil War era, see Rodgers, "Billy Yank and G.I. Joe."

[40]For Douglas's views on localism, see his *Harper's* article and his 1859 Columbus and Cincinnati speeches reprinted in Harold V. Jaffa and Robert W. Johannsen, eds., *In the Name of the People: Speeches and Writings of Lincoln and Douglas in the Ohio Campaign of 1859* (Columbus, Ohio, 1959), 58-172. For examples of historians emphasizing localism see Richard F. Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington, Ind., 2005), 128-221; Sandow, "Limits of Northern Patriotism"; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant's Face*, 122-30; Wheeler, "Local Autonomy and Civil War Draft Resistance."

to the issue of localism. Catholic immigrant enclaves in cities and in such places as the anthracite coal mines of Pennsylvania were sites of major opposition to the federal government during the war. These enclaves were neither remote nor isolated from the market economy, as were so many of the areas in which native-born Democrats offered resistance. Scholars often assert that immigrants who became Democrats did so to protect their native cultures from the larger society. The question is, did they intertwine localism and nationalism as the native-born did, or were they interested only in preserving ways of life they had brought from the old country? If most immigrants had no interest in the larger ideological battle to define America, they appear to represent a major division within Democratic dissent during the Civil War which needs to be more thoroughly studied.[41]

Finally, while this article has concerned itself primarily with Civil War Democrats, no study of that party or of the loyalty issue can ignore the Republicans, and in particular the question of how their party's ideology shaped their perceptions of opponents. Scholars might consider two potentially fruitful avenues of investigation: first, to understand the way in which Republican ideology influenced how party members conceptualized their opponents and influenced their willingness to see Democrats as disloyal. Since both sides saw the world through ideological glasses, it would seem inadvisable to privilege one vision above the other as more rational. Second, scholars should try to explain why Republican politicians' efforts to motivate their voters with claims of disloyal Democratic organizations had so little effect in 1862 and so great an effect in 1863 and 1864.[42]

Works by Klement, Weber, and Silbey, along with a number of local, state, and regional studies, have uncovered nearly all of the primary materials that are likely to be found concerning Civil War Democrats and the loyalty issue. Much of the work left to be done, therefore, concerns the interpretation of these primary sources. Any such interpretation will

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[41]For background on immigration and Democratic immigrants, see Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2002), 121-84; Frederick C. Luebke, ed., *Ethnic Voters and the Election of Lincoln* (Lincoln, Neb., 1971); Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-68* (Urbana, Ill., 1990), 70-165; Weber, *Copperheads*, 18, 57-58, 107-112; Sandow, *Deserter Country*, 58-59, 101-103; Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills*, 50-51, 129-31, 205-206.

[42]For an analysis of the relationship between Republican ideology and the loyalty issue, see Thomas E. Rodgers, "Dupes and Demagogues: Caroline Krout's Narrative of Democratic Disloyalty during the Civil War," *The Historian* 61 (Spring 1999), 621-38.

need to place Civil War politics in the context of ideological concerns that existed before, during, and after the war. Scholars need to understand that party success and failure revolved primarily around turnout; that a subjective rationality model of voting is better than the liberal-rational approach; that it is important to understand the subjective reality of each party as well as whatever objective reality can be identified; and that the nature of such concepts as republicanism, loyalty, and localism need to be explored and understood more deeply. Such approaches should lead to a better understanding of the tumultuous wartime politics of Indiana and other Northern states.