Chapter 1

Introduction

> The antagonism between town and country begins with the transition from barbarism to civilization, from tribe to state, from locality to nation, and runs through the whole history of civilization to the present day.
>
> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology

1.1 Introduction

Ever since democracy left the confines of the city-state, it has been characterized by conflicts between urban and rural dwellers. Hundreds of years later, after the industrial revolution and the dramatic growth of cities, this basic fault line still divides democracies. This book will show that in many countries around the world, political preferences and voting behavior are highly correlated with population density.

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation is that in settings ranging from U.S. to Iranian presidential elections, it is clear that issues related to religion and moral values are quite relevant in electoral politics, and urban dwellers tend to be more secular, tolerant, and what might be termed "cosmopolitan."

Moreover, on issues related to government taxation, public goods, and redistribution, in many societies the industrial revolution has created a legacy such that voters with the strongest preferences for activist government are concentrated in neighborhoods where dense, affordable housing was constructed for an industrial workforce of wage laborers in the era before the spread of automobile ownership. Even where the initial factories are long gone, the legacy of industrialization lives on in the built environment. The urban landscape of Boston triple-deckers or London council houses is home to low-income groups and minorities whose preferences on economic issues place them on the far left of the political spectrum. And quite aside from preferences that flow

from income or occupation, even wealthier residents of densely populated areas often appear to have greater demands for government-funded public goods and risk-sharing schemes than residents of sparsely populated areas.

Of course it is well understood that political preferences of individuals are not randomly distributed in space. In the parlance of spatial statistics, preferences are spatially correlated, and Waldo Tobler's (1970) so-called "first law of geography" rings true: "Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things." Any observer of politics knows intuitively that the correlation between the preferences of randomly drawn individuals in a society will probably be a function of the geographic distance between their residential or workplace addresses.

Yet if individual political preferences are spatially dependent in this way, and we observe an aggregate correlation between population density and preferences, the implications are potentially profound for countries like the United States and Britain that organize parliamentary representation around relatively compact, contiguous, equal-population winner-take all districts. A randomly selected urban resident would not only be more likely to possess leftist political views than a randomly selected rural resident, but if Tobler's simple claim holds true, the urban individual's nearest neighbor—say a resident of the same apartment building—is likely to have more similar political views than the nearest neighbor of the rural resident–perhaps someone living a mile away on a rural rout. In a very dense city, the urban leftist's 1000th nearest neighbor might still be spatially proximate and part of the same social milieu, while the 1000th nearest neighbor for the rural conservative may well be part of a completely different community: perhaps a college town, suburb, or even a small city.

As a result, when these individuals are aggregated into districts, a striking pattern can emerge: the most urban districts tend to be homogeneous and leftist, and the non-urban districts, while relatively conservative, tend to be more heterogeneous. When two parties compete with this type of underlying political geography, we can expect the party of the left to rack up more surplus votes in the districts it wins than the party of the right. To use a concrete example, while Democrats typically win more than 75 percent of the presidential vote in the 20 or so Congressional districts containing many of the largest cities in the United States, there is not a single districteven in rural Texasthat regularly provides such a large margin for the Republicans.

Indeed, this book will show that for much of the 20th century, in Britain and its former colonies, parties of the left have won more "surplus" votes in their dominant urban districts than have the parties of the right in their largely suburban and rural strongholds. As a result, in order to win 50 percent of the seats, leftist parties in democracies using single-member districts have typically needed to win more than 50 percent of the vote.

Electoral bias is an interesting question, especially for those who study electoral systems. But beyond

that small group, perhaps electoral bias should only be a concern for political operatives in leftist parties and election-night media pundits. If one buys into the median voter model—the dominant paradigm of the formal theory literature on electoral competition—it is not immediately clear that electoral bias should have any impact on policy. Yet this book suggests that the relative geographic concentration of the left matters not only for the translation of votes to seats, but under some conditions, also for the translation of preferences to policies. When we see that a very large number of votes goes to parties of the left in urban districts, perhaps this implies not only that they are more homogeneous than other districts, but also that the ideology of the far-left urban districts is further from the national median than that of the far-right rural districts. In this case, the political geography of urbanization would create an asymmetry in the distribution of preferences across districts. Due to the concentration of leftists in cities, voter preferences might be arranged across districts such that the ideology of the median voter in the country as a whole is to the left of the preferences of the median voter in the median district. If this is the case, under most plausible theories about how parties set their platforms and implement them once in office, policies would be pushed subtly toward the right, even if the parties of the left are able win elections and form governments.

Building on these ideas, this book documents some rather striking facts about the distribution of political preferences and voting behavior across winner-take-all electoral districts in industrialized societies. It shows that the urbanization associated with the industrial revolution created an economic and political geography that had profound implications for political competition throughout much of the 20th century. This book's arguments about the geographic distribution of preferences and partisanship help explain some of the troubles of labor parties in Britain and its former colonies in the early part of the 20th century, both in adopting winning platforms and transforming votes to seats. Moreover, it helps explain why the Democrats in the United States are good at winning control of the legislature but bad at assembling a workable legislative coalition to support a leftist agenda.

In short, the book introduces a rather provocative argument: because of electoral geography, small, compact winner-take-all districts in industrial societies have been quite good for parties of the right. Some version of this story has been around since the observations of Rydon (XX), Johnston (XX), and the classic treatment of Gudgin and Taylor (XX). Yet it has received remarkably little attention, and to my knowledge, this book is the first systematic cross-country theoretical and empirical examination of the phenomenon. The data presented in the chapters that follow reveal that electoral bias in the 20th century has overwhelmingly favored the parties of the right in industrialized societies with small majoritarian districts, though this effect has been steadily declining in recent years in some countries, most notably in Great Britain. At least since World War II, this

has had nothing to do with malapportionment (asymmetries in the population size of districts), and nothing to do with geographic asymmetries in turnout. Quite simply, it is driven by the fact that left-wing voters are more geographically concentrated than right-wing voters.

Moreover, this book moves well beyond previous literature by exploring the possibility that electoral geography also has an impact on policies. Ultimately, the geographic legacy of the industrial revolution might help explain the common observation that countries with single-member districts ended the 20th century with smaller welfare states and lower levels of redistribution than countries with proportional representation.

1.2 The Impact of the Industrial Revolution

1.2.1 The importance of the Industrial Revolution

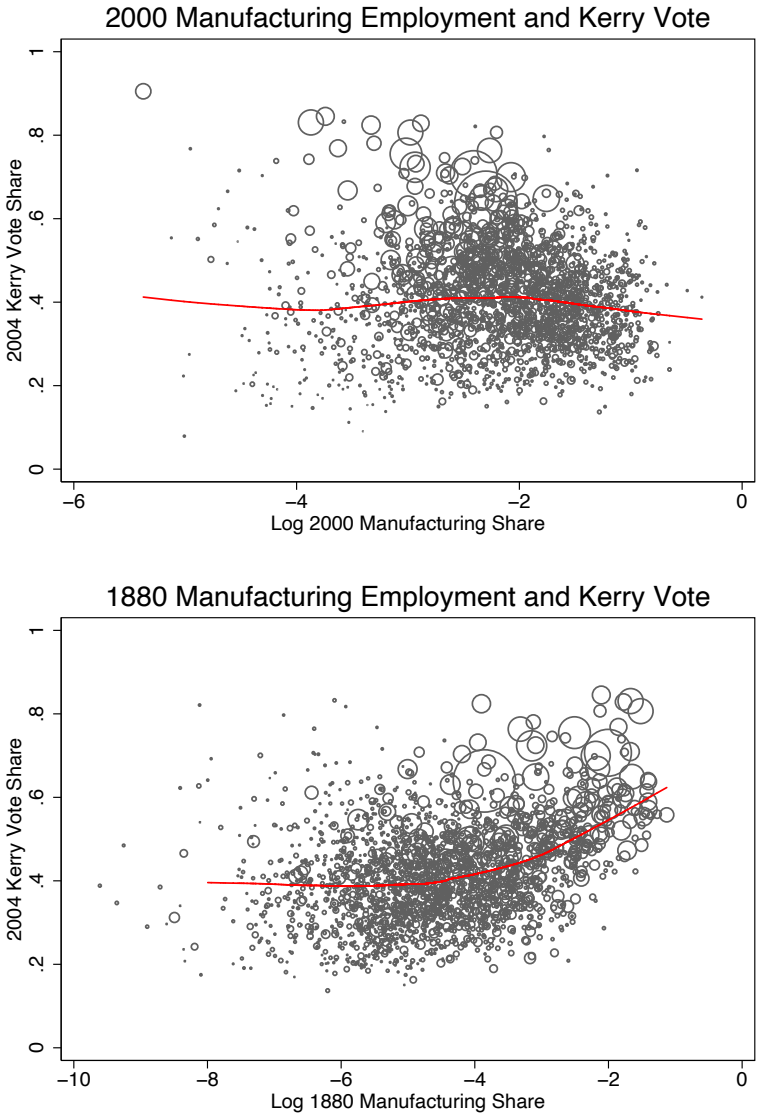
A key claim in this book is that long-lasting features of politics, including electoral rules and the nature of party competition, were shaped by the geographic patterns associated with the dramatic transformation of societies that occurred in the 1800s and early 1900s as part of the industrial revolution. Moreover, I argue that the industrial revolution is not ancient history. It shapes our everyday lives in ways that we seldom appreciate. The basic architecture of the built environment in which many of us live and work was laid out and constructed during an era of iron, steel, textiles, and steam. This book will argue that in industrialized societies, partisanship is distributed in geographic space even today in ways that were shaped directly by the urban form that emerged during industrialization.

At first glance, this might seem like an outmoded claim. Manufacturing employment and labor union membership have fallen off dramatically, and manufacturing and other heavy industry rarely takes place in the same physical location as in the heyday of the industrial revolution. In many countries, it is possible to identify a "rust belt" where urban agglomerations are littered with hulks of long-closed foundries and steel mills. The idea of an urban "proletariat" seems increasingly anachronistic, and by most accounts, class voting has been declining over time (Dalton XX). Moreover, our cities seem to have been transformed by suburbanization and the growth of so-called "edge cities" and exurbs that are of much more recent vintage. And very recently, some of the old industrial city centers have been reborn as centers of nightlife, culture, and consumption.

Indeed, the geography of manufacturing today seems to have nothing to do with the geography of electoral outcomes. The first panel of Figure 1.1 plots the county-level vote share of John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election against manufacturing as a share of total county-level employment in the 2000 census. The size of the bubbles in the graph correspond to the population size of the county in the 2000 census. In spite of Kerry's

fondness for appearing in a Carhart workingman's jacket and his firm support from Bruce Springsteen, his support was no higher in manufacturing counties than elsewhere.

Figure 1.1: County-level manufacturing employment and John Kerry's vote share in the 2004 presidential election



Yet the second panel plots the county-level 2004 Kerry vote against manufacturing employment in the census of 1880. The relationship is remarkably strong. The counties in which smelters, foundries, and mills were operating in the late 1800s constitute the electoral base of Democrats today, even though the smelters and mills of Ohio now operate only in Springsteen's historical ballads. By looking at the bubbles, one can also get a sense that the counties with the highest population, and also the highest population density, clearly favored

Kerry over Bush by very large margins. As we will learn, the geographic support distribution has a similar look for Labor parties in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK, as well as the Social Democratic parties of continental Europe.

What explains this? Does working-class solidarity linger, along with the pollution, in the air of Cleveland or Manchester? Rather than the air, this book looks for the answer in the bricks, mortar, wood, and concrete of the housing built for workers, and the larger patterns of urban settlement that emerged with industrialization. The industrial revolution ushered in a great migration associated with the development of large-scale factories and associated mining and shipping operations. Peasants, agricultural workers, and former slaves migrated to accept work as wage laborers in factories, docks, and mines. Because of the many advantages of co-location during this era, factories tended to be highly concentrated in space. In most of the burgeoning industrial agglomerations of the 19th century, workers had neither the time nor the resources to commute, and dense working-class housing was constructed in proximity to factories.

In North America, industrialization and the growth of cities went hand in hand, and both factories and working-class housing were constructed very close to transportation hubs like lake and ocean ports and railroad junctions, and these were often directly in the city centers. In Europe, where many cities were already relatively large before the industrial revolution, the factories and dense working-class housing were built on the outskirts of the cities in so-called “red belts” or satellite towns. Often, entire suburbs were dominated by a single firm, such as Siemensstadt outside Berlin and the Renault works in Boulogne outside Paris. A similar pattern can be found in the great cities of Latin America, which industrialized later. Moreover, in addition to transportation points, dense agglomerations of new factories and working class housing also sprung up in previously low-population regions around resource points, like coal or metal ore mines.

By the beginning of the 21st century, much of the manufacturing and mining activity of the 19th and early 20th centuries was long gone. Yet key features of the built environmentthat is, the large apartment buildings, terrace houses, triple-deckers, and workers’ cottagesdid not disappear. Even though jobs shifted to newer manufacturing enterprises and the service sector, from Detroit to London’s East End, the dense, affordable working-class housing associated with early industrialization continued to attract poor migrants. Moreover, a process of suburbanization, whereby high-income families took advantage of advances in transportation technology in order to live in lower density away from the crowded city centers, took hold virtually everywhere.

These basic features of urban form structured the rise of working class parties and the strategies they adopted in the early 20th century. This is the focus of Chapter 2. They also structured longer-term patterns of political competition in the period from World War I to the present, which are taken up in chapter 3.

1.2.2 Industrialization and the Geographic Dilemma of Electoral Socialism

While the colonies in North America and Australasia developed full male franchise (at least for white settlers) much earlier, elections in England and continental Europe were conducted with a much more limited franchise during the initial industrialization of the 1800s and early 1900s. Proportional representation was, at this point, still a rather fanciful idea, and elections were conducted through small, plurality districts.

Chapter two shows that as industrial workers gradually entered the electorate in Europe, they did so in a very geographically concentrated way. Often they were clustered within a relatively small number of dramatically under-represented urban constituencies. Given their tight, uncomfortable living quarters and often-inhumane working conditions, urban workers were ripe for mobilization by socialist political entrepreneurs. Once they gained the franchise, either through street protests or by gradually surpassing income and property requirements, the rapidly growing urban working class was able to elect representatives of the new socialist parties to parliaments. In so doing, they squeezed out the incumbent politicians from the old, established parties in the urban districts. In a few cases, like Scandinavia, these were the conservatives. But in many others, like Belgium and the Netherlands, they were the liberals that had initially pushed for the expansion of the franchise.

Guided by a simple model of partisan entry in a multi-jurisdiction system of political competition, chapter two explains how proportional representation emerged in Europe as a response of urban incumbents from the old parties who were fearful of losing their seats to socialists, and in some cases, as a response of geographically concentrated socialists who were dramatically under-represented under plurality electoral systems.

For the most part, proportional representation was a boon for the left. Though urban socialist incumbents were loath to give up the safe seats they had built up and cede authority to party leaders, PR had the long-term benefit for leftist parties and their supporters that it resolved the emerging geographic dilemma of the left that is at the heart of this book. If the base of the mainstream leftist party is highly concentrated in densely populated places, and that base is quite ideologically distinct from the rest of the country, the party occupies a precarious position with small winner-take-all districts. If it moves to the right in order to drive out centrist parties and form a legislative majority, it invites entry by a far-left party in the core urban districts. But if it caters only to its urban base, it runs the risk of winning huge majorities in its core districts while wining an insufficient seat share to form a legislative majority.

Proportional representation can resolve that dilemma. Under highly proportional forms of PR with large districts, a vote is a vote no matter where it is located in space, and as long as the districts are sufficiently large relative to industrial agglomerations, or there is a national upper tier for achieving overall proportionality, it simply does not matter if left-wing voters are more geographically concentrated than right-wing voters.

Yet a number of industrialized democracies did not switch to proportional representation in the early 20th century. Indeed, these are the countries that receive the lion's share of attention in this book. Why did these countries follow a different trajectory? More importantly for this book, if plurality electoral rules harm the left, why don't leftist parties adopt proportional representation when they have the opportunity?

When new socialist or workers' parties appeared on the scene in the era of rapid industrialization, chapter two reveals that there was a very common coordination problem among leftists. As workers' parties began to compete in the urban areas formerly dominated by liberals, they ran the risk that by failing to coordinate, they would hand districts to the minority conservatives. The need to coordinate with liberals was a thorn in the side of leftist parties throughout Europe, and chapter two argues that a desire to vanquish the liberals and dominate the left was an important part of the reason why some socialists began to favor the retention of plurality districts. The benefits of proportional representation were difficult to see: it would rescue the liberals and perhaps invite the entry of communists.

Moreover, another recurring theme of this book is that what is good for individual incumbents within a political party is not necessarily what is good for the party as a whole. We will see a number of instances in which the interests of left-wing voters, and even the collective interests of the party, would benefit from a switch to proportional representation, or at least a thorough redistricting, but reform is not consistent with the individual incentives of the party's legislative incumbents.

The rest of this book is, then, about the consequences over the next century of that fateful set of events in the early 20th century that left some countries with an old-fashioned, pre-industrial set of electoral institutions: Britain, Australia, Canada, the United States, France (off and on), and New Zealand (until the 1990s).

1.2.3 Cities and the Left in the 20th Century

The industrial revolution was important not only in creating an urban, industrial proletariat, and hence workers' parties, but also through its lasting impact on the built environment. Chapter Three reveals that a common pattern has emerged in many urban agglomerations around the world: the poor tend to live in higher density than the rich. Socialist and workers' parties emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the dense working-class districts, and in most cases their electoral base has been among the urban poor ever since.

Yet income and social class are only one part of the story. In many societies, even controlling for income, residents of large cities in the 20th century have been more likely to vote for parties of the left than suburban or rural dwellers. There are many plausible explanations for this, but chapter 3 uses survey evidence to suggest that a non-trivial part of this can be explained by the distinctive preferences of urban residents on non-economic

issues related to religious versus secular values. Indeed, a cleavage between secular cities and religious rural areas preceded the industrial revolution, and continues to be an important part of party competition in a large number of countries. Perhaps because of a non-economic issue dimension, many wealthy voters in Europe's fashionable cities, as well as the wave of young high-income voters that have reclaimed some of North America's 19th century city centers like Chicago, San Francisco, and Toronto, vote as reliably for the left as poor urban workers in Manchester or Cleveland.

Putting these facts together, chapter three makes the case that in industrialized societies, with some exceptions, the mainstream parties of the left are inescapably urban parties. Votes for the parties of the left tend to be highly concentrated in space in densely populated urban corridors.

To most readers, this will be intuitive and perhaps unremarkable. Yet some remarkable things happen when we consider that in some counties, legislative representation takes place through winner-take-all electoral districts that are drawn on top of this geography.

1.3 Distortions in Democratic Representation

1.3.1 The Geographic Roots of Electoral and Policy Bias

Building on some classic insights from British and Commonwealth political geography, chapter four argues that when compact and contiguous winner-take-all districts are superimposed on the urban geography of partisanship described in chapter three, the party of the left will be at a disadvantage in the transformation of votes to seats because its supporters are inefficiently clustered in homogeneous urban districts that it wins with large majorities, while votes for the right are more efficiently spread over moderately- and sparsely-populated districts. The chapter concludes with data analysis based on district-level results of elections from several countries since World War I.

Chapter 5 moves beyond the distribution of votes across districts, and focuses instead on the underlying distribution of political preferences. It explores a possibility initially raised in chapter two: perhaps an additional legacy of urban form in the shadow of the industrial revolution is that there is a long left tail in the distribution not only of votes across districts, but also in the distribution of median district preferences. Under this scenario, the difficulties of mainstream leftist parties are not limited to the transformation of votes to seats. Such parties would also face more strident internal divisions between ideological "purists" and moderates within the party, and chapter five lays out a logic whereby if the party must choose a single, uniform platform throughout the country, the urban "purists" can influence the platform in a way that makes it difficult for the party to win

majorities. This means that with plurality electoral districts, the party of the left might be at a long-term disadvantage not only because it occasionally loses elections in spite of winning a majority of the votes, but also because it finds it difficult to adopt a winning platform in the first place. Perhaps more important from a normative standpoint, chapter five also implies that with small, winner-take all districts, the policy platforms offered by political parties would veer to the right of the preferences of the national median voter.

However, chapter five also points out a silver lining of a left-skewed inter-district distribution of ideology for the mainstream leftist party. Unfavorable economic conditions, unpopular wars, or scandals might prolong the "time in the wilderness" for the left by leaving them with a platform that is too heavily influenced by the radical urban left. However, such events, when they work to the left's advantage, can lead them to pick up a relatively large number of seats to the right of the national median and give them a rather large majority if they are able to offer a competitive platform. With a left-skewed distribution, there is a relatively large density of seats just to the right of the national median, and hence within reach for the left during good times. Conversely, when the party of the right benefits from exogenous "valence shocks" that allow it to pick up districts to the left of the national median, their gains will be smaller because too many seats are out of reach in the left tail of the distribution.

In other words, with a left skew in the distribution of preferences across districts, the vote-seat curve may have a subtly different shape than commonly assumed. The left might be able to expect less than 50 percent of the seats with 50 percent of the vote, but when it achieves a larger majority of the popular vote than the right, it might expect to receive a larger "winner's bonus."

It is rather difficult to measure preferences at the district level, but chapter five concludes with some data analysis drawn from a combination of surveys and district-level demographic data. The estimates should be approached with caution, but they provide at least some preliminary evidence consistent with the claim that urban districts create a left skew in the distribution of political preferences across districts.

1.3.2 Implications for Party Competition in Majoritarian Democracies

The next three chapters take a closer look at the implications of the foregoing theoretical analysis. I make a distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems because parties in parliamentary systems tend to adopt a uniform national platform, whereas legislative candidates in a presidential system like the United States have considerably more leeway to deviate from the national platform.

In Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia, for much of the 20th century, Labor parties had to deal with contentious internal battles between radical trade unionists of the urban core and moderates who aimed to

capture the pivotal non-urban districts. In each country, this fissure led to the occasional formation of splinter parties. When Labor parties' platforms are captured by the representatives of the urban core, the party runs the risk of either a splinter party competing in the moderate districts, a prolonged "time in the wilderness," or both. Recently, with demographic shifts and the declining influence of labor unions, labor parties in each of these countries have successfully moderated their platforms in order to win the pivotal suburban constituencies, but in some cases this has opened the door to entry by new parties positioned to their left in the urban districts. Taken together, these implications of electoral geography help explain why Labor parties in countries with plurality districts have so often found themselves in the opposition in the 20th century, and when they do achieve success, it is generally accompanied by deep consternation and disillusion among leftists.

While apparently characterized by a similar underlying geography of preferences, the North American federations display different variations on the same theme. As first discussed in chapter 2, neither Canada nor the United States developed a successful socialist or workers' party in the early part of the century. Unlike their counterparts in the UK and New Zealand, the Canadian Liberals survived the industrial revolution and the growth of an urban working class. For much of the first part of the century, they were able to monopolize the left side of the political spectrum in an era without pronounced class politics. Eventually, however, after the Great Depression, they could not stave off entry on their left. But unlike Liberals in other industrialized countries, they were able to survive and even thrive by ceding the extreme left districts to the NDP and focusing on the center. Chapter 6 argues that this strategy was successful in large part because of the Liberals' unusual history of domination in Quebec. Chapter 6 also follows up on some of the book's key arguments by conducting separate analysis of the provinces, which provide useful variation in industrialization, urban form, and the geography of preferences.

Chapter 7 examines the United States. The lack of a parliamentary no-confidence procedure allows individual legislative candidates much greater flexibility to tailor their platforms to the preferences of their districts. There is rather strong evidence that the urban geography of the industrial revolution produced a left skew in the distribution of preferences across districts in the United States, but the implications for party competition are different than in the parliamentary systems. In parliamentary systems, the relatively large ideological distance between the industrial working class districts and the national median district created intense battles over the platform of the leftist party, which manifested itself sometimes in fissures and third-party entry, and at other times in the adoption of inefficient platforms. In contrast, in the United States, the geographic legacy of the industrial revolution is a party of the "left" that adopts an exceptionally broad and incoherent platform. Given the importance of incumbency bias, voting based on candidate characteristics rather than party label, and the

flexibility of party platforms in a presidential system, one must work a bit harder to conceptualize and measure electoral bias in the United States, but Chapter 7 demonstrates that underlying pro-Republican bias is quit stubborn in elections to both the U.S. Congress and the state legislatures of the industrialized states.

Nevertheless, chapter 7 also reveals that the "silver lining" of a left-skewed preference distribution discussed in Chapter 5 is especially beneficial for the Democrats. Given the greater platform flexibility associated with presidentialism, the Democrats are able to compete quite effectively in districts to the right of the national median, as evidenced by their tradition of victories in House districts that are carried by Republican presidential candidates. When the Democrats benefit from fortuitous events, such as economic distress or unpopular wars under Republican presidents, they can make impressive gains in "Republican" districts. The advantages of incumbency can then allow them to hold onto a share of these districts for a surprisingly long time.

Thus in spite of their excessively concentrated support base, the Democrats have managed to control the United States Congress for much of the post-war period. However, what is good for Democratic Congressional candidates may not be particularly good for voters with leftist preferences. If Democrats control the Congress, they preside over an unwieldy coalition of urban leftists, suburban moderates, and even some rural conservatives.

1.3.3 Implications for Policy in the Long Run

The precise manifestation of the geographic dilemma of electoral socialism is different in each country, but the leitmotiv is the same. The distribution of leftists across districts causes the left to have one, or some combination of the following problems: either they lose elections repeatedly with a platform that is too far left, fragment into rival leftist parties that suffer from a costly coordination problem, or win with platforms that are unrecognizable to the urban left.

An important counterfactual is to conduct elections with a single national district, either through a winner-take all executive election like the French or Latin American presidencies or an American gubernatorial election, or through proportional representation with a national upper tier.

In some cases, constitutional designers have provided a nice natural experiment by allowing the same people to be simultaneously governed under both institutions. This leads to the hypothesis that, for instance, American presidents, and in some large industrialized states, their governors and senators, are pushed to adopt policy platforms that are slightly to the left of the median among the legislators. Evidence to this effect is provided in Chapter 7. A related discovery is made in chapter 6: within state delegations, the Australian Labor party typically has better representation in the Senate, which uses statewide proportional representation, than the lower chamber, which uses single-member districts.

It is tempting to move beyond these quasi-experimental opportunities, and explore some bolder claims about the impact of single-member districts on long-term policy differences across countries. The difference in the policy profiles of countries that use SMD and countries that use proportional representation has been widely recognized in the literature (Iversen and Soskice XX, Jusko XX, Persson and Tabellini XX, others). The analysis in this book leads to the obvious question: what if Britain and its former colonies had adopted proportional representation in the early 20th century? What if Germany, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries had retained the systems of small, single-member districts with which they began the 20th century? Would the Anglophone countries have developed larger welfare states and more generous systems of redistribution? Would continental Europe have retained more of the elite-dominated policies that characterized the early 20th century?

Of course there is no way to address this question in a satisfactory way with the observational data that history has bestowed on us. Nevertheless, with a full retinue of caveats and warnings, chapter 8 engages in some cross-national analysis of redistribution and welfare expenditures, with the goal of moving beyond the usual ways of dealing with electoral rules in cross-county empirical analysis. Building on the analysis conducted earlier in the book, it builds various cross-national measures that attempt to serve as proxies for right bias in the translation of preferences to policies in a broader group of countries. It shows that controlling for a variety of other factors, these measures are associated with lower levels of welfare expenditure and redistribution. Though one should be very circumspect about making causal claims with such highly aggregate data and so few observations, the cross-country data appear to be more consistent with the political geography story told in this book than with other competing explanations.