Political Polarization and our “Current Civil War”: What Drives It? What Can Be Done About It?

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It’s a bright, sunny day, perfect for the beach.
Your job this past summer: mobile hotdog vendor.

You

People

There is another vendor; you have a friendly rivalry

You

Rival

People

LAKE MICHIGAN
The rival moves to accommodate more customers...

What do you do?!
“That’ll show ’em!”

Let’s turn to party politics...
Let’s turn to party politics...

Ideological Positions within the Electorate

American National Election Studies

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Why are the parties more polarized, and less internally diverse?
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Reliance on fewer bigger donors...

Source: Open Secrets

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Gerrymandering...

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Gerrymandering...

When there is less competition between the parties in a congressional district, the “real action” takes place during the primaries!

Why are the parties more polarized, and less internally diverse?

Rival third parties face major hurdles...

Former Republicans and Democrats form new third U.S. political party
Why are the parties more polarized, and less internally diverse?

Meaning of “political ideology” has changed to cover a wider range of polarizing cultural values and beliefs …

Which statement do you agree with more?

America is a melting pot of cultures -- we should celebrate the contributions that immigrants have made!

OR

We must protect our common American cultural heritage!
Why are the parties more polarized, and less internally diverse?

Meaning of “political ideology” has changed to cover a wider range of polarizing cultural values and beliefs ...

Which statement do you agree with more?

Minorities who can’t get ahead are mostly responsible for their condition!

OR

Racial discrimination is the main reason why many minorities can’t get ahead these days!

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Which statement do you agree with more?

Homosexuality should be discouraged by society!

OR

Homosexuality should be accepted by society!
Why are the parties more polarized, and less internally diverse?

Meaning of “political ideology” has changed to cover a wider range of polarizing cultural values and beliefs ...

How might we reduce polarization?
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Political reforms?
- Roll back voting registration requirements? Compulsory voting?
- Independent commissions to draw congressional districts?
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- Roll back voting registration requirements? Compulsory voting?
- Independent commissions to draw congressional districts?
- Greater public financing of election campaigns?
- Change how Electoral Votes are allocated?
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Political reforms?
- Roll back voting registration requirements? Compulsory voting?
- Independent commissions to draw congressional districts?
- Greater public financing of election campaigns?
- Change how Electoral Votes are allocated?
- Allow voters to rank preferences?

How might we reduce polarization?

Media reforms?
- Loosen liability protections for large social media firms?
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Media reforms?
- Loosen liability protections for large social media firms?
- Automated “fact-checking” systems?

What about reforming ourselves?
- Consider not only what a candidate says, but how he or she says it...
- Pause before forwarding postings...
- Turn off the more inflammatory news programs, read more newspapers...
- Get out of our “bubbles”....
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YOUR THOUGHTS?