APPENDICES
Dynamics of Political Instability in the United States, 1780–2010
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Appendix I. Constructing the Database

Database construction relied primarily on two methods: (1) digitizing and merging data collected by previous researchers, and (2) systematic searches of electronic media archives. Additionally, I consulted lists of various instability events posted on Wikipedia, but each event found through Wikipedia was checked against original sources.

The first source that I consulted was the database of political violence events in the United States between 1819 and 1968, compiled by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) (Levy, 1991). This team of investigators located violence events by searching a random subset of *Washington National Intelligence* from 1819 to 1850, and *New York Times* from 1851 to 1968. Political violence events were defined as those (1) involving an attack on an official or officials, and (2) an attack on an individual or group for political and social reasons (Levy, 1969: 86). I traced each incident to the original source article, and excluded several that did not match my definitions (for example, battles between Native Americans and the US Army during the Indian wars). I also excluded those for which I was unable to locate the original source, probably due to misreported newspaper date or page. The ICPSR database yielded 144 political violence events. To extend the temporal period of the ICPSR database I used Lexis/Nexis to search *New York Times* for the period of 1969 to 2010 for occurrence of the keyword *riot* in the headline. This search yielded 27 political violence events that fitted my inclusion criteria.

The second database, which yielded the greatest amount of material, was a set of index cards compiled by the historian Paul Gilje for his book on American riots (Gilje, 1996). These handwritten cards were first scanned and then entered into an Excel spreadsheet by my research assistant. The American Riots (AR) database comprises more than 4,000 entries. As noted in the previous section, Gilje's definition of riots includes, in my definitions, riots proper and lynchings. However, roughly three-quarters of riots in the AR database did not result in any fatalities, and I excluded such incidents. Furthermore, I excluded events occurring before 1780 (the AR database starts in the seventeenth century). Even after all this culling, the AR database yielded 1,060 instability events.

In addition to these two comprehensive databases I checked a number of secondary sources that focused on specific types of political violence, such as political assassinations (Kirkham, Levy & Crotty, 1970), race riots (Rucker & Upton, 2006), prison riots (Leeke, 1973), violence directed against Chinese Americans (Pfaelzer, 2007), and violence committed by militias and other antigovernment groups (SPLC, 2009).

With the exception of the ICSPR database (Levy, 1991), the sources discussed above did not search for political violence events in a systematic or randomized manner. For example, when constructing the AR database, it was not the intent of Paul Gilje to identify all riots (Gilje, 1996:183–184 and personal communication on August 13, 2010). For a variety of reasons, Gilje's list became less comprehensive as one moved towards the present. Thus, there are several biases affecting the probability of a violence event being identified by one of the sources, and therefore becoming an entry in the USPV database. Some biasing mechanisms are obvious, most notably the long-term trend operating to increase the number of events per unit of time recorded in the database. Between 1780 and 2010 the US population increased from four million to 300 million. More people means more potential rioters, terrorists, or other initiators of violence events. Even more importantly, the long-term increase in communications and a general increase in the number of news, reported by the media (as quantified by the average number of pages per newspaper, Levy, 1969), means that an instability incident is more likely to be reported today than in the nineteenth century. Additionally, because there is a long-term trend of decreasing interpersonal violence in human history (Eisner, 2003), it is also likely that a death-causing event is more likely to be deemed important enough to be reported now. There is no question that this long-term bias is present in the database, and it must be kept in mind when interpreting the analysis results in the next section. What remains to be seen is whether there are additional biases affecting shorter time scales, that of years (or 5-year intervals, to be precise) and of a human generation (25–30 years).

As a check on the AR database, I ran a computerized search of the electronic database *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Hartford Courant* (http://www.proquest.com). I chose *Hartford Courant* because it was the only newspaper that was digitized by ProQuest to the beginning of my period, 1780 (the ProQuest coverage actually goes even further back in time to 1764 and ends in 1985). I searched for any incidence of the term *riot* in the citation and abstract of *Hartford Courant* articles and then read the original article to determine whether the incident described fitted my criteria of a political instability event. This search yielded 310 data points.

Finally, because killing rampages constitute a novel form of an instability event not adequately covered by pre-existing databases, I constructed a sample by searching *New York Times*, using the electronic databases ProQuest and Lexis/Nexis. I searched for an occurrence of "rampage" or "massacre" or "shooting spree" or "killing spree" in the article title or lead paragraph from 1945 to 2010 and then read the article to determine whether it fit my inclusion criteria. As stated above, I excluded any rampages associated with criminal activities, family disputes, or perpetrated by a current or former inmate of a mental institution.

Appendix II. Dynamics of Key Structural-Demographic Variables

This appendix provides the details on the proxy variables used to document the fluctuations of key structural-demographic variables in the USA between 1780 and 2010.

Labor Oversupply, Proxied by the Proportion of the US Population born outside the Country

During the early decades of the Republic the immigration rate was at a very low level, so that before the 1830s less than two percent of the population was born outside the country (Figure 1). This changed dramatically around 1840. Repeated pulses of massive immigration arrived in America roughly every generation until the 1920s. The first peak c. 1850 almost doubled the rate of population growth. As a result, between 1860 and 1920 the proportion of foreign-born Americans fluctuated at the level of nearly 15 percent. Following the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924, however, immigrant inflows rapidly subsided, and during the 1930s the net flux briefly reversed its direction, with emigrants outnumbering immigrants.

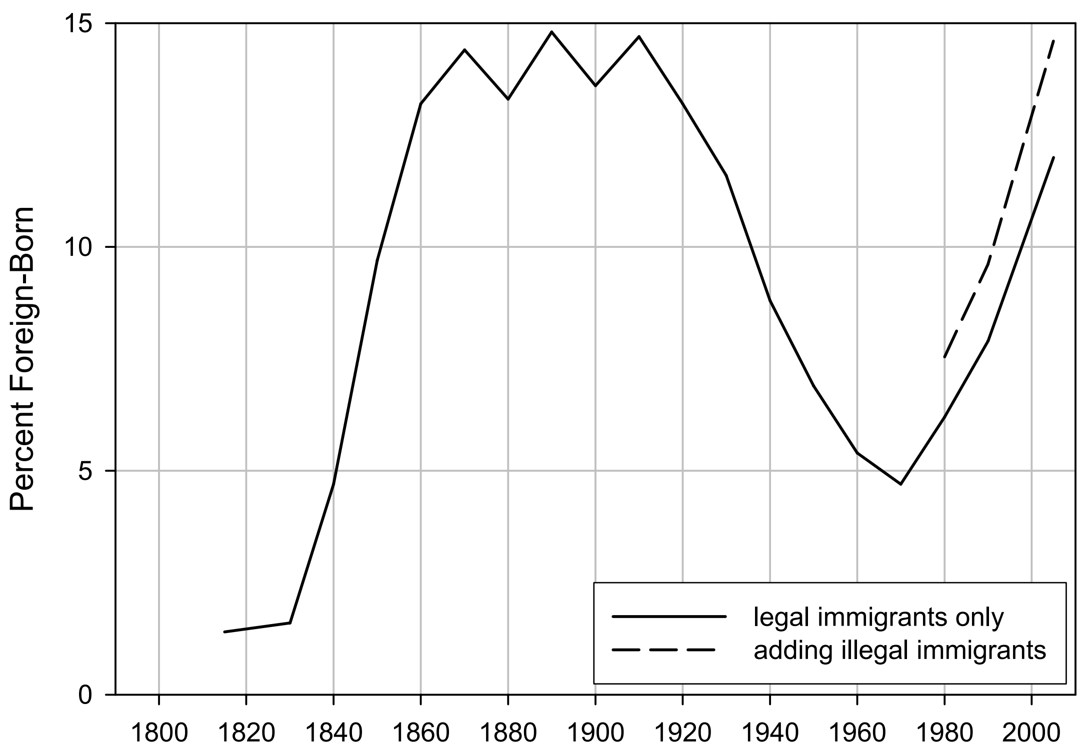

Figure 1. Immigration. Proportion of population that was born outside the U.S. Based on the data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The second period of high emigration began after World War II. After the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the National Origins Formula legislated in 1924, the proportion of foreign-born Americans began increasing again.

Note that the solid line in Figure 1 reflects only legal immigration. Including estimates of illegal immigration suggests that the proportion of population born outside the U.S. reached the late nineteenth century levels by 2005 (the broken line in Figure 1).

Immigration fluxes, thus, fluctuated dramatically, and in a cyclical fashion. Waxing and waning of immigration was due to a combined effect of both “push” and “pull” factors. The pull factors were due to a complex interplay between social structure and social mood dynamics within the U.S., and will be discussed in later chapters. The “push” factors, on the other hand, are easier to understand. Before the twentieth century, eastern coast of North America received immigrants almost exclusively from Europe. European population went though periodic boom and bust cycles, recurring roughly every two-three centuries (Turchin & Nefedov, 2009). Massive population growth in the eighteenth century, during the integrative phase of the last complete secular cycle, was succeeded by the disintegrative phase (c.1780–1870), also known as the Age of Revolution. During the first half of the nineteenth century overpopulation and political instability induced large numbers of people to look for better conditions in the New World. Most notable population flows into the U.S. originated in Ireland as a result of the Great Potato Famine (during the 1840s), and from Germany after the Revolution of 1848. When the Russian Empire started slipping into the crisis towards the end of the nineteenth century (Turchin & Nefedov, 2009: Chapter 9), eastern Europe became the major source of immigrants into the U.S.

The second immigration wave was fueled by the global population explosion of the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, Europe ceased to be the dominant source of immigrants, who came instead from all over the world. Mexico, being located on the same continent, provided the lion’s share of immigrants (and particularly, of illegal immigrants).

In summary, the period of 1780–2010 saw two (more precisely, one and a half) secular oscillations in the labor supply. The first wave began in the 1840s as a result of massive immigration supplemented by a very high rate of natural increase (between 2 and 3 percent per year). This wave ended when both immigration and population growth rates subsided after 1920. The second wave began with a baby boom of the 1950s and 1960s. After 1965 the main driver of change was again immigration. We are currently (2010) in the middle of this second wave.

Price of Labor: the Wage/GDP Ratio

What was the effect of these oscillations in labor supply on the living standards? The most common way to measure living standards is the real wage (nominal wage divided by the consumer price index). There are some problems with this measure, because it is sensitive to the composition of the basket of consumables, which has changed dramatically from 1780, when the USA was an agrarian country, through the industrialization period of the nineteenth century, followed by the evolution of the post-industrial economy during the twentieth century.

An alternative approach to measuring the economic bargaining power of the working population is to consider how well worker wages did in comparison to GDP (for a similar approach to the case of eighteenth-century England, see Angeles, 2007). The question is, what proportion of economic growth translated into increased incomes for workers, and how did this quantity change with time? This question can be approached with an index constructed by dividing the annual wage by per capita GDP (usually, but misleadingly, referred to as the "per capita income"). Furthermore, because the unemployment rate could change quite dramatically, we need to multiply the ratio by the proportion employed. Unfortunately, quantitative estimates of unemployment become available only from 1890 on. Accordingly, before 1890 I simply used the ratio of wage to GDP per capita unadjusted by proportion employed. Comparison for the period after 1890 indicates that the long-term pattern of the dynamics of these two indices is essentially the same; the main difference is that adjusting for unemployment reduces the fluctuations due to depressions (declining GDP during a depression artificially inflates the share going to workers).

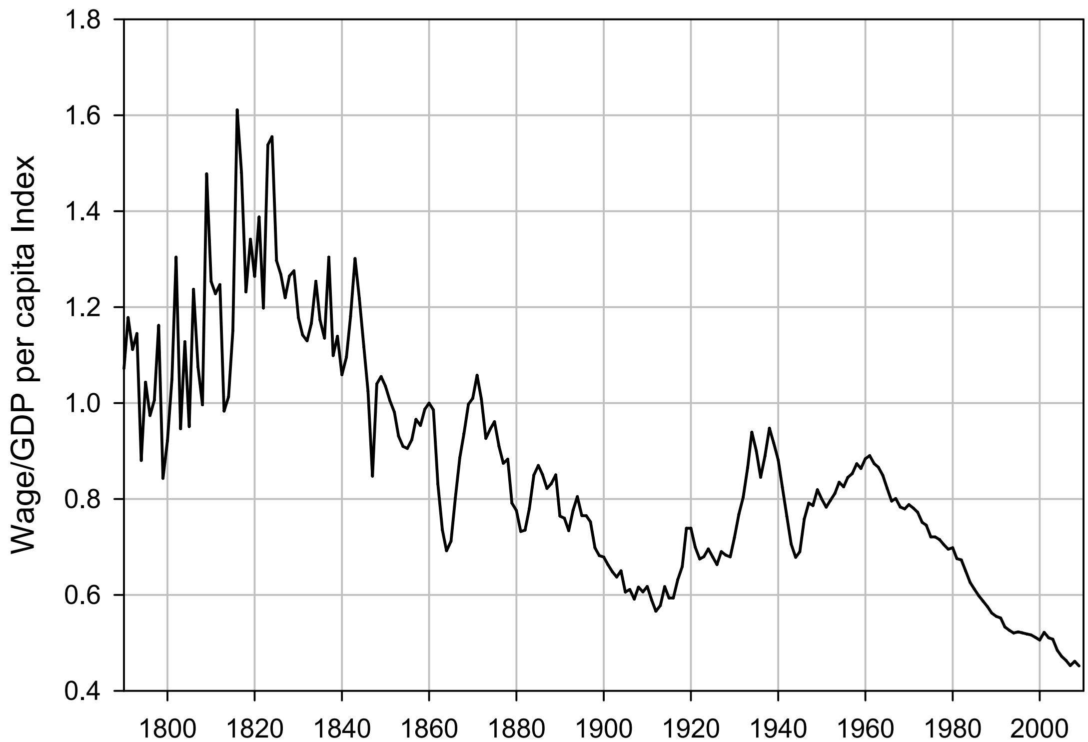

Figure 2. Wage/GDP ratio for blue-collar workers (index, 1860 = 1). Calculations by the author based on data from MeasuringWorth (Officer, 2010).

Abstracting away from short-term fluctuations caused by recessions (of which the most violent was induced by the Great Depression), we observe that the wage/GDP ratio increased to 1820, declined to 1910, again increased to 1960 and went into the final decline from 1960 on (Figure 2). Note that the two periods of increase correspond well to the periods of low immigration, while decline periods are associated with high immigration.

Biological Well-Being (Health), Proxied by Average Stature and Life Expectancy

Average height is one of the most sensitive indicators of the biological well-being of a population (Fogel, 1986; Komlos, 1985; Steckel, 1995). Physical stature is determined by the balance between nutritional intakes and demands made on the organism by the environment during the first twenty years of its life. The most important aspect of nutrition is the energy intake, but diet quality (availability of fresh vegetables, for example) also affects stature. Environmental demands include prevalence of disease (fighting off infection requires energy) and how much work children and adolescents are required to do (again, heavy labor has to be compensated by higher energy inputs). All factors determining stature are affected by the economic status of the individual (or, rather, his/her parents). Most obviously, greater income translates into greater quantity and quality of food. Income also buys better medical services, frees children from the necessity to perform heavy labor, and affects health in a multitude of other ways (e.g., a beach vacation allows the organism to replenish its stocks of vitamin D). Thus, average height of a population provides highly useful information in addition to purely economic measures.

In the eighteenth century the Americans were the tallest nation in the world (Komlos & Baur, 2004). Average height of native-born Americans continued to increase until the cohort that was born in 1830. During the next 60 years, however, it plunged by more than 4 cm (Figure 2). Because adult height is determined by environmental influences during the first twenty years, in order to estimate the timing of this turning point, we need to add 10 years (the midpoint). Thus, between approximately 1840 and 1900 the biological standard of living in the U.S. was declining. After the turning point of 1900 and until 1970 (that is, before the cohort born in 1960), the trend was highly positive. During this period the average height increased by a remarkable 9 cm. After 1970 steady and robust improvements in the biological well-being ceased.

The dynamics of life expectancy provide another confirmation of the pattern revealed by the stature data (Figure 2, broken line). This is not surprising, because at the individual level there is a strong positive correlation between life expectancy and stature, except at very extreme heights (Fogel, 2004). These two measures provide complementary views of biological well-being. Whereas height is affected by conditions during the first two decades, life expectancy averages over the whole duration of an individual life. Thus, a man born in 1790 (the turning point for the life expectancy curve in Figure 2.5) could have his life shortened by dying at the age of 59 in the great cholera epidemic of 1849, which carried away up to 10 percent of the American population (Kohn, 2001:356). Thus, in order to directly compare the two curves, life expectancy needs to be shifted forward by some unknown period, which is probably related to half the life expectancy, or roughly 30 years. Thus, upward and downward trends in the life expectancy are broadly consistent with the periodization suggested by the stature data.

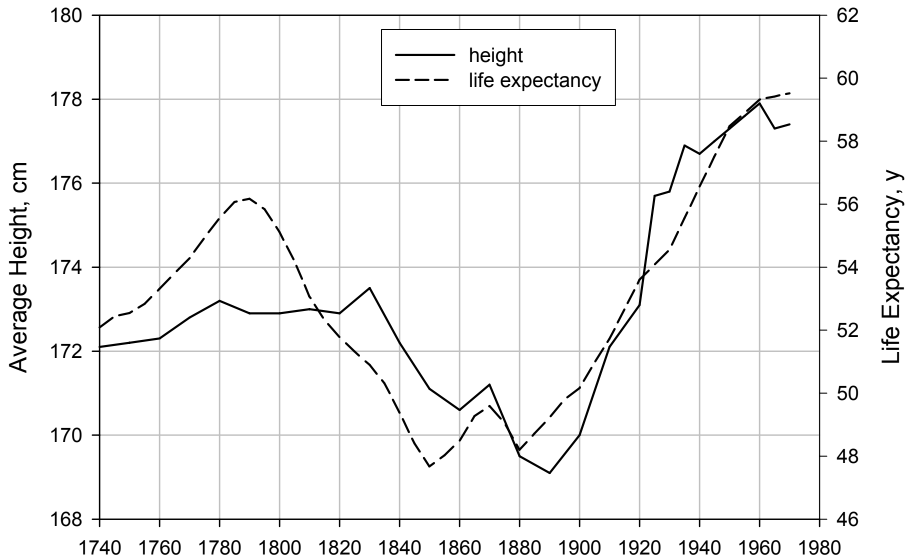

Figure 3. Biological proxies of well-being: average population height of native-born American men and life expectancy at 10 years of age. Both curves are plotted for cohorts by the year of birth. Data sources: Tables Bd653-687 and Ab704-911 in *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Carter et al., 2004) and (Fogel, 1986).

Wealth Inequality, Proxied by the Ratio of the Largest Fortune to the Median Wage

The dynamics of economic inequality since World War I are relatively well understood. Between 1920 and 1980 economic inequality in both the income and wealth declined. The decade of the 1940s, when the distribution of both wealth and income became much more evenly distributed is sometimes referred to as the "Great Compression" (Goldin & Margo, 1992). The share of the national wealth held by the riches one percent of households declined from a high of 44 percent in 1929 to a low of 20 percent in 1979 (Figure 4). In the last three decades, however, wealth inequality has been growing, although it has not yet reached the same level as during the early twentieth century (Figure 4).

Due to lack of good national data on wealth distribution before World War I, the dynamics of wealth inequality cannot be traced with the same precision. European visitors, such as Alexis de Tocqueville (1984), stressed the equality of economic condition among the Americans. One estimate, supporting this contention (Jones, 1977: Table 8.1), puts the proportion of wealth owned by the top one percent in 1774 at 16.5 percent (see the dotted line in Figure 4).

In our previous work we used the "method of extreme values" to trace the dynamics of inequality for periods for which detailed data on the distribution of wealth are not available (Turchin & Nefedov, 2009). This approach works as follows. For each generation-long period (ideally 25 years or less) we identify the largest privately held fortune (excluding those held by rulers). This kind of information is usually available for many periods ranging from the Republican Rome to the early modern France, because the contemporaries usually had a good idea of who was the wealthiest individual, and roughly what was the size of his (or her) fortune. This estimate provides us with the location of the very tail of the wealth distribution. It next needs to be scaled with respect to some measure of the median wealth or better income, because in many historical societies, characterized by a very wealthy minority and destitute majority the median wealth was zero or even negative. For example, 84 percent of economically active inhabitants of New York City in 1856 owned no personal or real wealth (Beckert, 2001:19). For this reason, we scale the largest fortune by the annual wage of some typical nonelite individual.

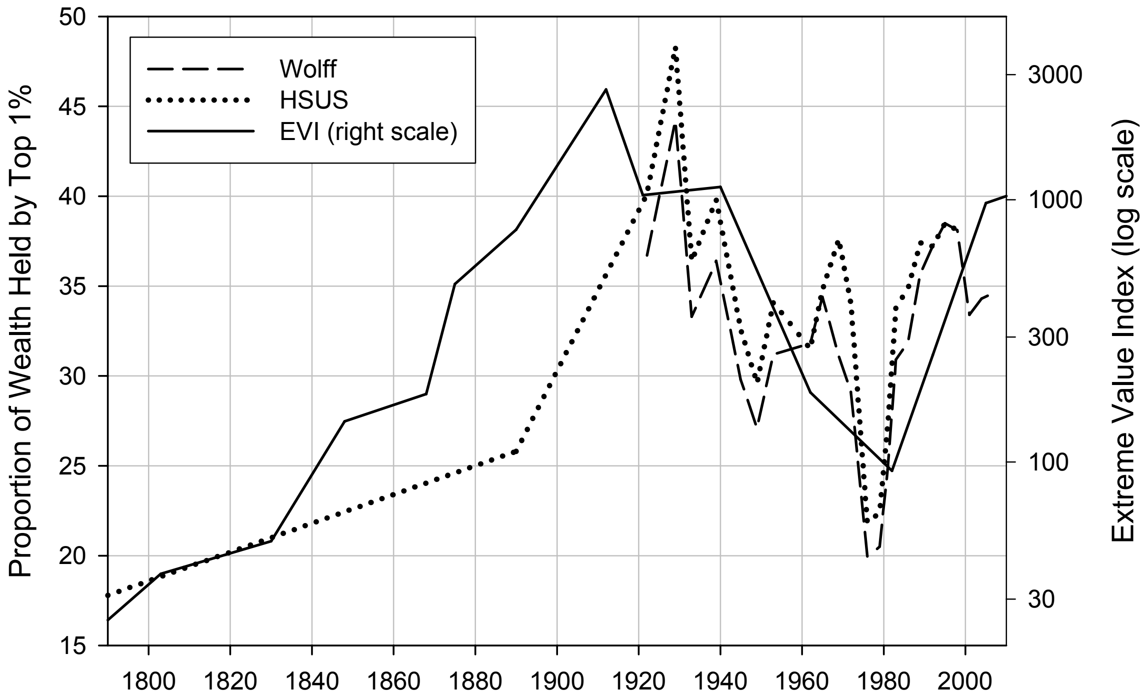

Figure 4. Dynamics of wealth inequality in the U.S. Broken line: the proportion of total wealth held by the top one percent (Wolff, 1996; 2010). Dotted line: an alternative estimate of the proportion of total wealth held by the top one percent (HSUS). Solid line: the Extreme Value Index (the largest U.S. fortune divided by the median annual wage).

One possible objection to the Extreme Value Index (EVI) is that it relies on a single number, the size of the largest fortune, which could make this proxy overly sensitive to stochastic fluctuations. However, our primary focus is not on the precise number, but rather on the *scale of magnitude* of maximum fortunes (thus, Figure 4 graphs the logarithm of the EVI). For example, during the 2000s the wealth held by Bill Gates was of the same order of magnitude as that of Warren Buffett; in fact, Buffett briefly occupied the number one position in 2008.

To calculate the EVI for the United States, I start with the list of the wealthiest American individuals compiled by Kevin Phillips (2002) and scale it with the wage data of Officer and Williamson (2009). Plotting the resulting Extreme Value Index (EVI) together with other measures of inequality (Figure 4) we observe that during the twentieth century it indicates the same pattern: decline towards 1980 followed by rapid increase. The difference between peaks (1912 versus 1929) is due to the fact that the EVI misses 1929, when wealth inequality was greatly inflated due to the runaway growth of stock prices (which crashed in October of 1929). Another difference is that the EVI smoothes out shorter-term fluctuations, which is not a problem for our purposes, because we are interested in long-term movements of inequality. Now that we have assured ourselves that the approach works reasonably well, we apply it to the pre-1900 period.

Table 1. Largest Fortunes in the U.S., 1790–2005. Source: (Phillips, 2002), supplemented by the Forbes Magazine for 2010**.** Wage data is from (Officer & Williamson, 2009). All data are in the nominal dollars (unadjusted for inflation).

Year	**Name**	**Largest Fortune**	**Annual Wage**	**EVI (Ratio × 1000)**
1790	Elias Derby	1 mln	40	25
1803	William Bingham	3 mln	80	38
1830	Stephen Girard	6 mln	120	50
1848	John J. Astor	20 mln	140	143
1868	Cornelius Vanderbilt	40 mln	220	182
1875	Cornelius Vanderbilt	105 mln	220	477
1890	William H. Vanderbilt	200 mln	260	769
1912	John D. Rockefeller	1 bln	380	2,632
1921	John D. Rockefeller	1 bln	960	1,042
1940	John D. Rockefeller	1.5 bln	1,340	1,119
1962	John Paul Getty	1 bln	5,420	185
1982	Daniel Ludwig	2 bln	21,600	93
1992	Sam Walton	8 bln	31,260	256
2005	William Gates III	46 bln	47,840	972
2010	William Gates III	54 bln	52,300	1,033

We observe that until 1830 the scale of the largest fortune grew at a rate that only slightly exceeded the growth rate of wages (Table 3.1). Over these four decades the EVI doubled. After 1840, however, the wages largely stagnated, while the size of the top fortune exhibited a runaway growth. In particular, between 1830 and 1875 the Index grew ten-fold and over the following four decades it quintupled again. In the early twentieth century, when top fortunes first reached, or exceeded one billion dollars, the trend changed. After 1912 it was the size of the largest fortunes that stagnated at the level of 1–2 billion dollars, while wages increased by two orders of magnitude, so that by 1980 the Index returned to the pre-1840s levels.

Intraelite Competition and Conflict, Proxied by Political Polarization in the Congress

Usually the processes of intraelite competition, conflict, and fragmentation is difficult to study with quantitative methods. It is fortunate, then, that political scientists Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal (McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal, 2006) recently published the results of their analysis of voting patterns in the U.S. Congress that quantify polarization among the American political elites.

The logic underlying the approach to quantifying political polarization, first proposed by Poole and Rosenthal (1984; 1997), can be explained as follows. All members of Congress are characterized by a different position on a liberal-conservative spectrum. The voting record of a very liberal senator, for example, will get high ratings from such liberal interest groups as the Americans for Democratic Action or the United Auto Workers. A very conservative senator, on the other hand, will score low in the ratings of these liberal interest groups, but high with the American Conservative Union or the National Taxpayers Union (McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal, 2006:4). Conservatives and liberals will occupy extreme positions on the political spectrum, and the space between them will be filled with moderates. A measure of political polarization, used by Poole and others, is the distance between the *average* scores of the Democrats and the Republicans, calculated for each Congress (that is, every two years). For early American history (before these two parties crystallized) we can use the distance between average scores of the two major parties that dominated the Congress.

The analyses of McCarty et al. (2006) focus on the results after 1879, but they have posted the raw data (DW-NOMINATE scores for the First to the 111th Congresses) on the Web and thus we can extend their time series to 1789. The dynamics of the Polarization Index for the House of Representatives and the Senate are very similar. However, the Senate trajectory, especially for the early period, when the estimates were based on a small number of senators, is much noisier and thus I focus on the House.

The House trajectory also shows great volatility for the early period (pre-Civil War). This is partly due to the smaller number of Representatives (overall, between the 1st and 111th Congress the sample size increases seven-fold), and partly due to the instability in the party system. Thus, the transition periods from the First to the Second (the 1820s) and from the Second to the Third party systems (the 1850s) may introduce a degree of measurement noise in the trajectory.

Despite these potential complications, long-term dynamics of political polarization in the USA are reasonably clear (Figure 5). Political polarization declined from moderately high levels around 1800 to a very low value in the 1820s. This decline in partisan bitterness is known as the Era of Good Feelings, roughly coinciding with the presidency of James Monroe (1816–24) (Howe, 2008). After 1830 polarization increased, reaching a peak c.1910. This result suggests that the period between c.1850 and 1920 was characterized by a very high degree of fragmentation among the political elites (Figure 5). During the 1920s, however, the political elites pulled together, and during the New Deal and World War II the degree of polarization reached a minimum. The three post-war decades were also characterized by relatively consolidated elites. During this period there was a broad degree of overlap between the liberal-conservative scores of Democrats and the Republicans in Congress (Poole & Rosenthal, 1984: Figure 8). However, during the 1970s the overlap shrank, the polarization surged, and by 2003 a large gap developed between the Republican and Democratic distributions (McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal, 2006: Figure 2.10). In summary, there were two low polarization periods, 1815–1850 and 1930–1980, and two high polarization periods, 1850–1930 and 1980–the present (Figure 5).

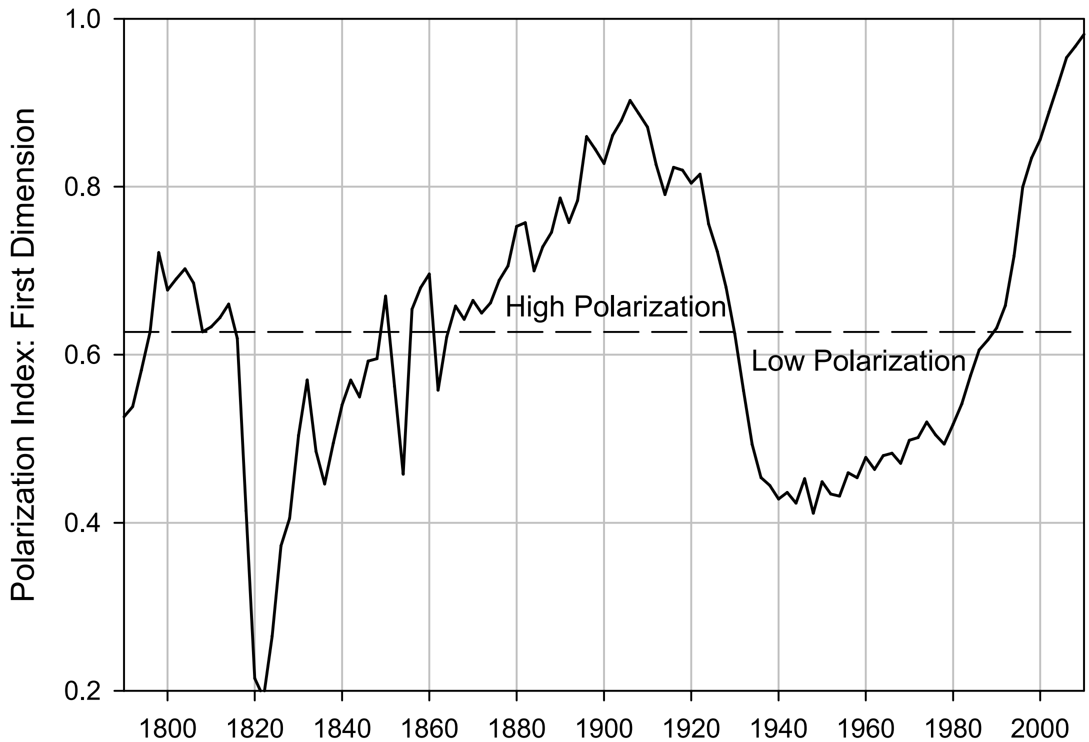

Figure 5. Political polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–2009. Raw data source: VoteView.com (http://voteview.com/downloads.asp, downloaded on Jan. 3, 2011).

Summary of the Dynamical Patterns

The structural-demographic theory assumes that such variables as popular well-being, elite overproduction, and political instability are part of a dynamical system, that changes in one variable affect the dynamics of others. The dynamics predicted by the theory are long-term, secular, cycles, during which different variables change in recurrent and, to a certain degree, predictable ways. More specifically, for the variables/proxies considered above theory predicts that oscillations in political instability should be positively correlated with labor oversupply, elite overproduction, and intraelite conflict, while the correlation with economic and biological measures of well-being should be negative. We do not expect a perfect correlation, due to measurement and process noise, as well as time lags affecting some feedbacks between variables. Nevertheless, if the feedbacks postulated by the theory are strong enough, we expect to find statistically significant correlations with correct signs.

To test this prediction, I linearly detrended and then scaled all variables to the same mean (zero) and variance (one). The instability variable is the log-transformed number of people killed in instability events per 1 million population per 5 years (Figure 3b in the main article). The health variable is the average of the stature and life expectancy series. Figure 6 plots the scaled variables together (because measures of well-being are expected to correlate with other negatively, the figure plots *inverse* wage/GDP and health variables). Visual inspection of the graph suggests that all variables are part of a single dynamical complex inasmuch as they tend to wax and wane together. A more formal analysis with cross-correlation functions confirms this (Figure 7). All cross-correlations between instability and the other five variables at lag 0 are of the correct sign and statistically significant, ranging in values from 0.44 to 0.68. However, the cross-correlation functions (CCFs) also suggest that there are significant lags characterizing the relationship between the five variables and instability. Because the time step in the data is 5 years, CCFs peaking at lags 2–4 suggest that time delays are on the order of 10–20 years.

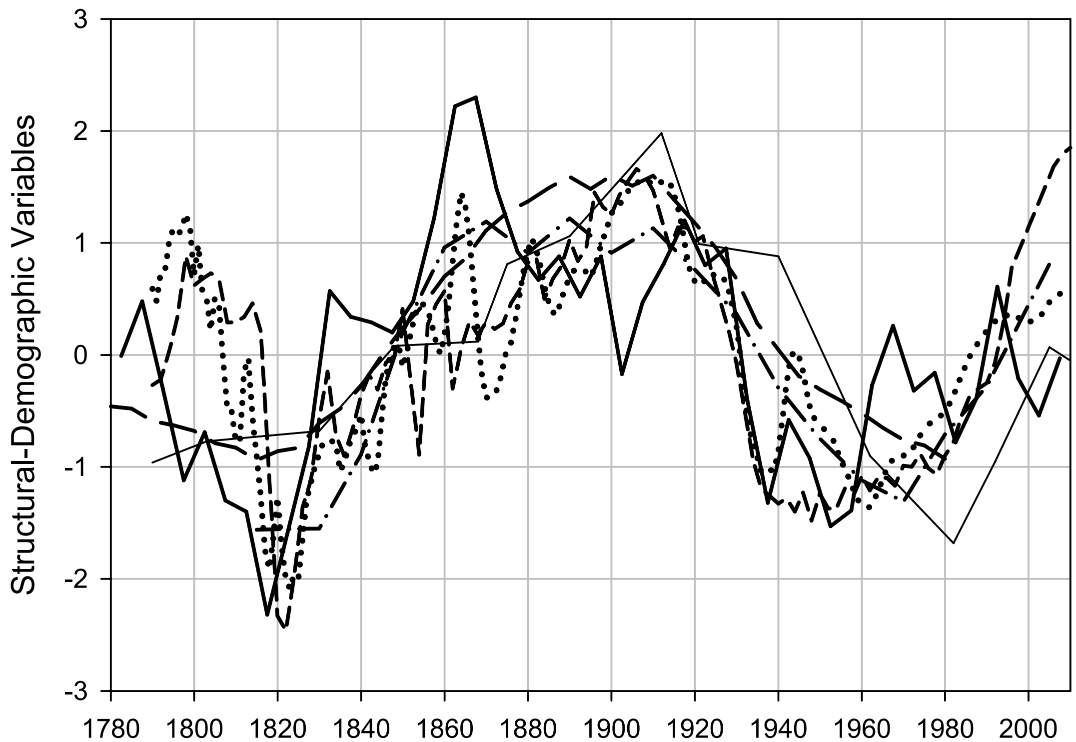

Figure 6. Dynamics of main structural-demographic variables in the USA: instability (thick solid line), immigration (dash-dot line), the inverse wage/GDP ratio (dotted line), inverse health (long-dash line), inequality (thin solid line), and polarization (short-dash line).

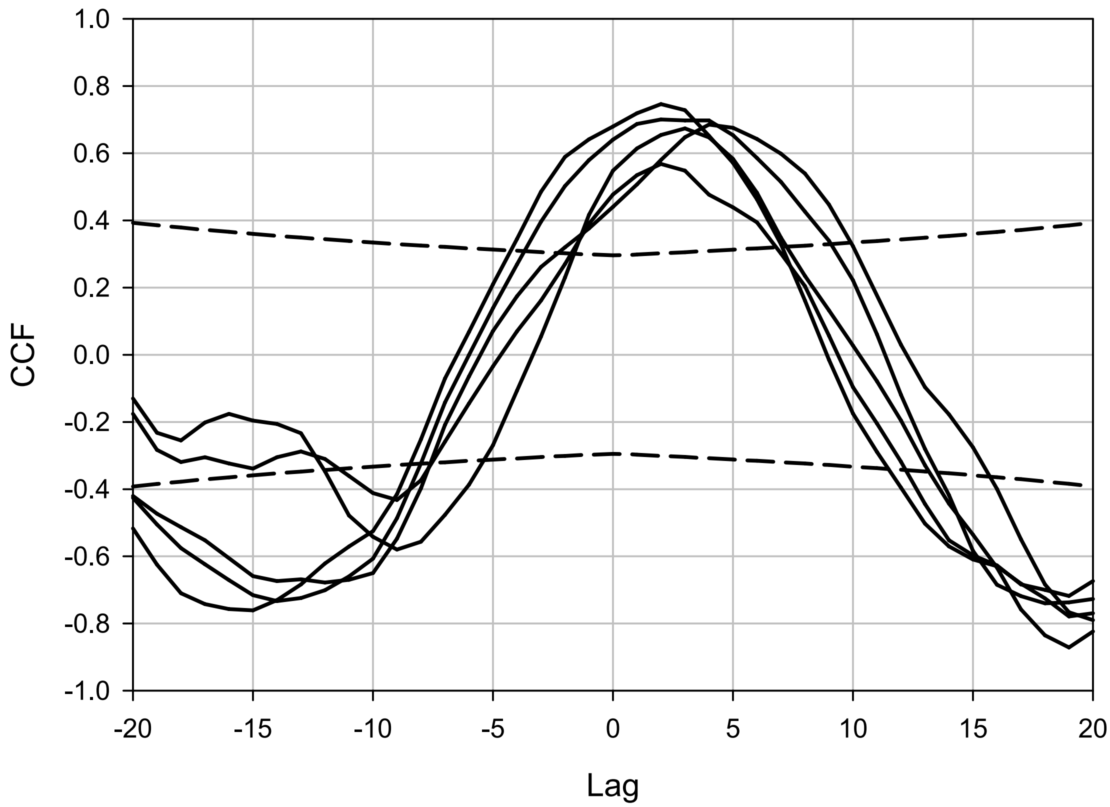

Figure 7. Cross-correlation functions between instability and five structural-demographic variables.

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