

IDEOLOGICAL REFLECTION OF THE REPUBLICAN FACTION OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR IN PERIODICALS OF LEFT-WING POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA FROM 1936 TO 1939

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ABSTRACT

The Spanish Civil War was a key conflict of the 20th century, marked by international nature and ideological diversity. This article examines how Lithuanian periodicals of left-wing parties reflected these ideological aspects from 1936 to 1939. Using S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan's Cleavage theory, the research reveals the diversity of Spanish political groups and the cautious stance of Lithuania's parties, whose publications were occasionally more radical in comparison but nevertheless showed limited support for Spanish Anarchism or revolutionary ideals.

Keywords: the Republican faction, the Spanish Civil War, periodicals of the First Republic of Lithuania, political groups, ideological cleavages.

INTRODUCTION

Spanish Civil War in one or another way involved many countries, including Lithuania. Its newspapers extensively covered the war and, given conflict's ideological nature, political groups in Lithuania responded accordingly through their periodicals. At the time, Lithuania was governed by President Antanas Smetona's authoritarian regime. Opposition newspapers faced censorship on internal issues but could discuss international matters relatively freely and were the only ones to openly support the Spanish Republicans.

In addition to traditional historical methods, the author applies Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan's Cleavage Theory, modified for this research (Lipset, Rokkan 1967, 1–64). The positions of political groups will be evaluated across four cleavage spectrums, which historically formed within national political systems, with one pole representing stability and the other – change (Fig. 1).

Positions will be assessed on a five-point scale, where 1 represents radical stability, 2 – moderate stability, 3 – neutrality, 4 – moderate change, and 5 – radical change. For better comparison, data will be presented in radar charts.

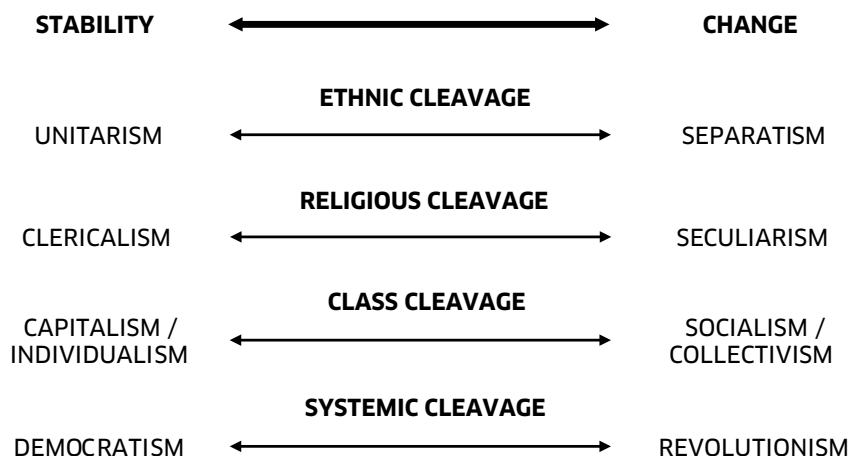


Figure 1. Cleavages of ideological conflict, adapted for analysis, based on the theory of S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan

1. attēls. Ideoloģiska konflikta šķelšanās, pielāgota analīzei, pamatojoties uz S. M. Lipseta un S. Rokana teoriju

THE SPANISH AND LITHUANIAN POLITICAL GROUPS

Despite Spain's long history of statehood, regional divisions led to complex relations with the central government. The Basques sought full independence, while the Catalans, also supporting regionalism and anarcho-syndicalism, were more moderate. Anarchists, the most radical Republican faction, strongly opposed central government's oppression. The two main governing parties of the Republican Spain, the Republican Left and Socialists, granted autonomy to the Basques in 1936, though likely for military aid (Jackson 1987, 10–19, 23, 28, 72–73, 165–166; Jones 1984, 85–88, 92–93; Fusi 1984, 192–199; Payne 2012, 9, 99, 217, 219; Bolloten 2015, 668). Spanish Communists advocated regional liberation but viewed these regions as part of the revolutionary process. After the May Days in Barcelona in 1937, Communists repressed Anarchists, calling Catalan autonomy flawed (Bolloten 2015, 680–681; Payne 2012, 156, 219, 225). Lithuanian parties held a pragmatic neutral stance. Similarly to governing Republican groups, in 1926 Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union and Social Democrats supported national minorities for coalition purposes (Tamošaitis 2014, 89; Blažytė-Baužienė 2014a, 453; Tamošaitis, Svarauskas 2014, 83–84; Astramskas, Gaigalaitė 1992, 65, 70). Meanwhile, Lithuanian Communists championed minority rights to destabilise the Nationalist Union's regime (Daulius 1937, 196–202; Švilpa 2007, 42–48, 122; Laurinavičius 2014, 465–466).

Most groups in the Spanish Republican faction were secular, though to varying degrees. Anarchists were the most radically anti-Catholic, attacking churches and religious communities. Left Republicans and Socialists shared this view but sought urgent separation of Church and State through legal means, tacitly supporting or ignoring anti-Catholic violence. Catalans, while limiting Anarchist violence, expropriated Church property and banned Holy Mass (Jackson 1987, 58–61, 289–291; Payne 2012, 13–15, 20, 116–117, 128; Sánchez 1987, 37, 61; Jones 1984, 90). Meanwhile Basques, deeply Catholic despite their separatist pro-Republican stance, preserved religious freedom and kept churches open (Fusi 1984, 184–186, 192, 198; Sánchez 1987, 74–75; Payne 2012, 116, 219). Communists, adopting a middle position, rejected Church influence but, since 1935, seeking Comintern's new cautious strategy of popular fronts, encouraged ending attacks to prepare for later Church-State separation (Preston 1994, 267; Payne 2012, 53; Bolloten 2015, 232–233). Lithuanian Communists shared this viewpoint, even seeking unity with Catholics against Fascism (Daulius 1937, 37–39, 48, 123–128). Lithuanian Peasants' Union and Social Democrats, also during their governance, supported secular policies similar to Left Republicans and Socialists, although more moderately (Svarauskas 2014, 280–287; Blažytė-Baužienė 2018, 162; Tamošaitis, Svarauskas 2014, 82).

Anarchists proposed radical socioeconomic policies, advocating for collectivisation and empowering trade unions to establish a classless society. Whilst Socialists were more cautious and called for gradual nationalisation, they aligned closely with Anarchist principles. Communists used harsh rhetoric on collectivisation and nationalisation but were more moderate in practice, seeking support from the middle class. Left Republicans, directly representing the same class, tolerated collaboration with the radical left while balancing it with stability (Preston 1994, 75, 163, 254–255, 267–269; Jackson 1987, 206–207; Bolloten 2015, 23–24, 232–333; Payne 2012, 13–20, 38, 48, 52–58, 97–101, 173–174, 217–222). In Catalonia, dominated by Left Republicans and Anarchists, collectivisation was implemented on a large scale, although protecting large landowners, meanwhile, the Basque region avoided mass nationalisation of major industries and banks (Fusi 1984, 182–184, 190; Jones 1984, 90, 101, 110; Payne 2012, 98–99, 219; Jackson 1987, 379). In Lithuania, Social Democrats initially advocated revolution, but later softened their stance favouring legal methods (Blažytė-Baužienė 2014b, 461–462; Astramskas, Gaigalaitė 1992, 63, 67; Laurinavičius, Svarauskas 2014, 449). Lithuanian Communists' positions resembled those of their Spanish counterparts (Daulius 1937, 38–40, 133–134, 175–176; Švilpa 2007, 51). The Peasants' Union also had strong agenda of social justice, but at the same time a weakness of targeting all groups, including large farmers (Tamošaitis 2014, 89–90, 92; Blažytė-Baužienė 2014a, 453).

Choosing between democracy and revolution, Anarchists and Socialists favoured the latter, rejecting parliamentary democracy, advocating violence to seize power and eliminate opponents, playing key roles in the 1936 revolution. The Republican Left adopted the term “revolution” for their reforms but remained cautious, collaborating with radical partners emphasising control over revolutionary processes. Communists partially used this stance to gain power through a nominally democratic government, a façade for the West, and also for this reason repressed Anarchists and anti-Stalinist Communists (Bolloten 2015, 22–26, 126, 232–233; Payne 2012, 8–21, 30–32, 47–53, 61–62, 80–102, 109, 150–151, 169–176, 221; Preston 1994, 267, 272; Preston 1984, 6–7; Graham 1992, 975–980; Jackson 1987, 17–18, 206). Catalan autonomists allowed revolution but limited it, resulting in less violence than in Madrid. In crass contrast, Basques rejected revolution, whilst also remaining sceptical of democracy (Fusi 1984, 183, 197–198; Jones 1984, 109–110; Payne 2012, 98, 109, 219). In Lithuania, Communists, despite the new tactics of the Comintern, remained the primary proponents of revolution, naming the popular fronts as another type of this process (Daulius 1937, 21–26, 38–45; Švilpa 2007, 51, 62). Peasants' Union and Social Democrats, particularly in the presence of autocratic regime, supported democracy, though the Social Democrats' commitment

was clearer (Tamošaitis 2014, 89, 91; Blažytė-Baužienė 2014a, 453; Blažytė-Baužienė 2014b, 461–462; Tamošaitis, Svirauskas, 2014, 76–77; Astramskas, Gaigalaitė 1992, 61).

LITHUANIAN PERIODICALS

The newspaper of the Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union, *Lietuvos žinios*, was one of the oldest and most popular in the country. It supported the Republicans, though at times with a degree of caution. Upon examining its content, the ethnic cleavage, as with other Lithuanian newspapers, was not a major focus. While the struggles of Catalans and Basques for independence were supported, this was often framed as means to aid Republicans against Nationalists (S. D., 1939, 1; *Lietuvos žinios*, 09.02.1937, 9; 27.02.1937, 4; 11.03.1937, 4; 29.04.1937, 1). The periodical was critical of the Church, but mixed this with other issues, stating it served the capitalists and opposed democracy. Similar criticism was also expressed by Lithuanian Communists and Social Democrats, but *Lietuvos žinios* also sought to analyse the reasons of such condition, as seen in article of prominent opposition politician Petras Leonas, and spoke of Church reform, not its restriction or abolition (Leonas 1937, 5; Wrza 1936, 3; Šimkus 1936, 5; Gallegos Rokaful 1937a, 3; Gallegos Rokaful 1937b, 3–4; Riebeling 1937, 5; *Lietuvos žinios*, 01.08.1936, 1; 26.10.1936, 3; 05.03.1937, 5; 23.02.1938, 10). Active discussions of social issues again often intertwined with religious themes, but overall, *Lietuvos žinios*, representing workers' interests, advocated social reforms, although not to an extent proposed by the Spanish Anarchists or Socialists (Wrza 1936, 3–4; Gallegos Rokaful 1937a, 3; Leonas 1937, 5; J. M. 1937, 3; S. D. 1937, 3; *Lietuvos žinios*, 18.05.1937, 5). Regarding systemic cleavage, from the onset of the conflict, the periodical strongly supported democracy, as seen in a reprinted interview with President Manuel Azaña. However, *Lietuvos žinios* ultimately recognised the low probability of democracy even on the Republican side and also sharply criticised revolutionary processes, particularly in Barcelona, suggesting that the newspaper was more anti-revolutionary than pro-democratic (Chamberlain 1936, 3; Wrza 1936, 3; *Lietuvos žinios*, 01.08.1936, 1; 05.08.1936, 1; 23.02.1937, 1; 05.05.1937, 2; 27.07.1938, 4).

Comparing *Lietuvos žinios* to the Peasants' Union, the newspaper more boldly expressed democratic ideas and advocated support for separatist regions than the party did for national minority autonomy. Regarding Spanish factions, the newspaper's stance, as indicated by the Lithuanian Communist and right-wing press, was most similar to cautious Communists, except for their more radical socio-economic ideas and stronger unitarism.

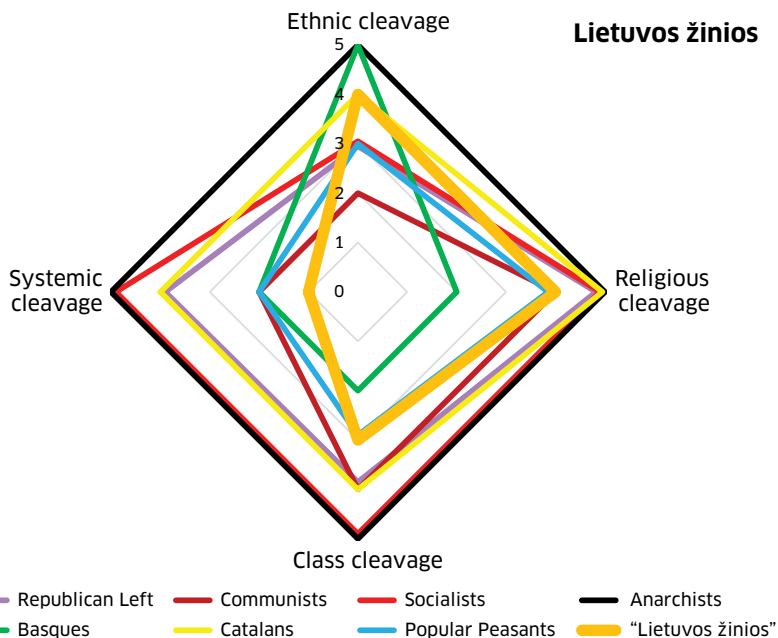


Figure 2. Comparison of positions of the *Lietuvos žinios*, the Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union and political groups of the Republican faction

2. attēls. "Lietuvos žinios", Lietuvas Tautas zemnieku savienības un republikāņu politisko grupu nostādņu salīdzinājums

Some similarities can also be found with the Republican Left, although their positions were more aligned with the Peasants' Union. Naturally, the most distant group were the Anarchists, primarily due to their revolutionary and socio-economic ideas (Fig. 2).

The Social Democratic press was also less active in its coverage of separatist regions, with Catalonia receiving more attention, notably due to reprinted memoirs by Andrius Bulota, a political radical who had joined Republican troops in the region. Despite Bulota's sentimentality, the press also critiqued the region for its anarchist tendencies, which it saw as hindering both the social movement and the Republic's interests (Bulota 1939, 281; Orūnas 1939, 65–66). The Social Democratic press again mixed the religious and socioeconomic criticism, expressing it moderately radically. The latter was discussed more extensively, emphasising workers' plight, land reform and criticism of landowners, capitalists and passive Western democracies (Rivera 1936, 16; Girbinis 1939, 22–25; Orūnas 1939, 65–66). The Social Democratic press was critical of the parliamentary regime as a solution, but in some instances it supported democratic ideals, affirming the Republic is fighting for them. However, the revolutionary model was supported most prominently, even more than Communist popular fronts (Smēliūnas 1939, 278–279; Rivera 1936, 16–17; Girbinis 1939, 22–25; Orūnas 1939, 65–66).

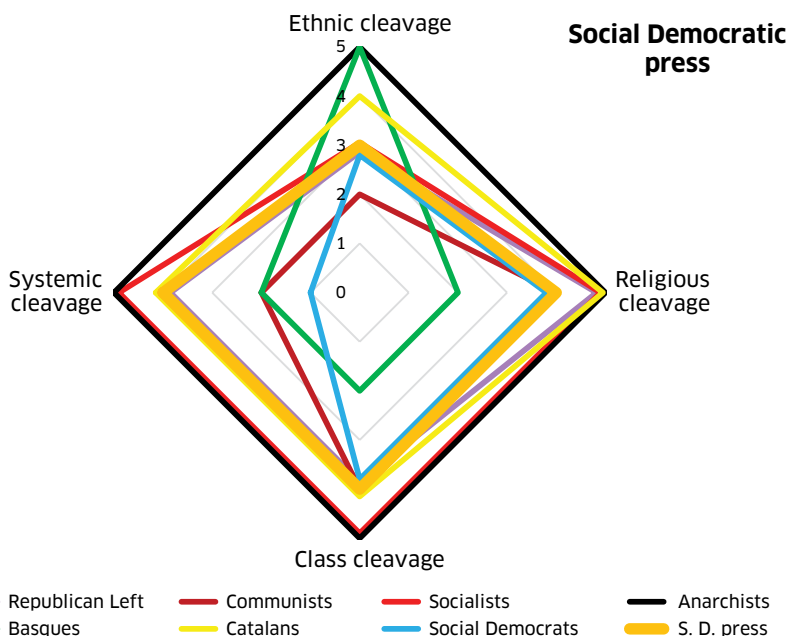


Figure 3. Comparison of positions of the Social Democratic press, the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania and political groups of the Republican faction

3. attēls. Sociāldemokrātiskās preses, Lietuvas Sociāldemokrātiskās partijas un republikāņu politisko grupu nostādņu salīdzinājums

The last aspect highlights a difference of the press from the Social Democratic party, which was more pro-democratic. This unusual support for revolution was also characteristic of the Left Republicans, whose position is most similar to the Social Democratic press, except for former's more intense criticism of the Church. Significant similarities can also be found with the Spanish Communists, though they were more moderate concerning revolution and separatism, bringing them closer to the Social Democratic Party. Meanwhile, the Socialists held more radical revolutionary and socio-economic views. Unsurprisingly, the groups most distant from the Social Democratic press were the conservative Basques and radical Anarchists (Fig. 3).

In the Lithuanian Communist press, autonomous regions were occasionally mentioned, particularly Catalonia, emphasising that the region is not seeking to separate from Spain. Following the events of 1937 in Barcelona, the press presented significant criticism of anti-Stalinist Communists, whom they labelled Trotskyists, although this was not accompanied by scepticism regarding separatism, as was the case with the Spanish Communists (Užkalnis 1936, 605–611; Silvan 1936, 42–43; Tiesa, 1938, 2). The press was critical of the Church but also criticised right-wing press reports about attacks on Catholics, claiming the faithful support the Republic and that after the war, Republicans will guarantee religious freedom, albeit at

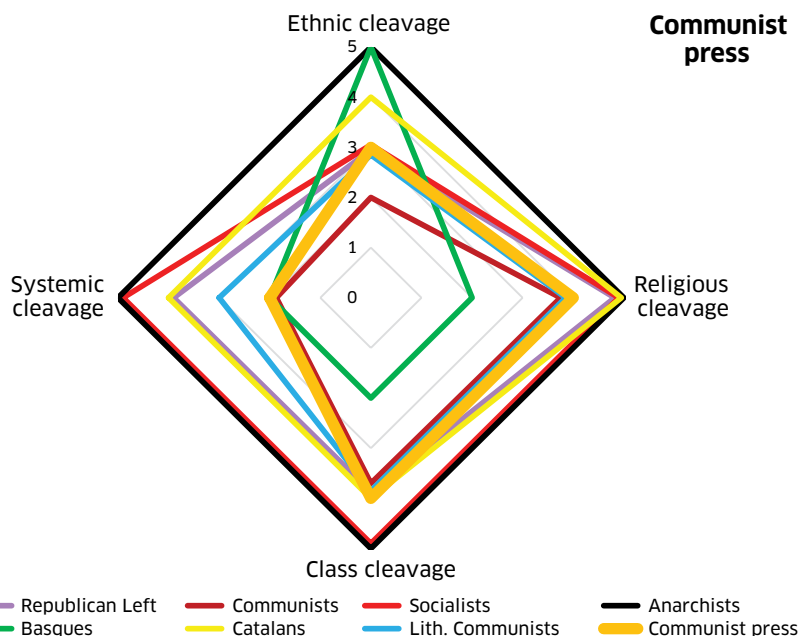


Figure 4. Comparison of positions of the Communist press, the Communist Party of Lithuania and political groups of the Republican faction

4. attēls. Komunistiskās preses, Lietuvas Komunistiskās partijas un republikāņu politisko grupu nostādņu salīdzinājums

the expense of the Church's political and economic power (Paleckis 1938, 154; Užkalnis 1936, 605–611; Tiesa, 1937a, 4). In line with the tactics of popular fronts, the Lithuanian Communist press frequently discussed socio-economic reforms, though with caution. It supported land reform but criticised anti-Stalinist Communists' demands for its implementation on small farms. This group was also condemned for opposing the middle class, which went against the strategy of Communist popular fronts (Užkalnis 1936, 605–611; Tiesa, 1937b, 4; 1937c, 2; 1939, 4). The same collision with anti-Stalinists prevailed while actively discussing revolution. When the Communist press reacted to ideas in the Social Democratic press about the international bourgeoisie as the cause of defeat, it argued the solution was popular fronts, which were never joined by other members of the Second International (Tiesa, 1936a, 2; 1936b, 2; Tiesa, 1939, 4).

Comparing the Lithuanian Communist press with its party, the only difference can be seen in the systemic cleavage – the party was more favourable to revolutionary ideas and, unlike the press, distanced itself from the general position of the Comintern. When comparing the press with Spanish groups, the Communists were naturally the closest, except for their more rigid unitarism. Once again, the most distant groups were the Basques and Anarchists (Fig. 4).

CONCLUSIONS

The research identified a wide range of Republican groups, with Anarchists and Basques as the most distant examples. In this context, Lithuanian parties appeared more moderate and were not comparable to the Anarchists or even the Socialists. Lithuanian publications occasionally expressed more radical ideas than their respective parties, except for the Communist press, which more closely adhered to the Comintern's official stance. This underscores the influence of news flow on press ideology, although Lithuanian publications were less radical than Spanish groups, and showed less support for Anarchism or revolutionary ideas. *Lietuvos žinios* reflected the position of less radical Communists and focused on a mixed critique of the Church and capitalism. The Social Democratic press aligned more closely with the Left Republicans, while Communist press naturally mirrored the stance of its namesakes. The press of both parties mostly discussed systemic and class-related issues. The research offers a new perspective on the comparison of Spanish and Lithuanian political groups, highlighting the varied responses of Lithuanian publications to this ideological landscape.

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REPUBLIKĀŅU PUSES SPĀNIJAS PILSONU KARĀ IDEOLOĢISKS ATSPUGUĻOJUMS LIETUVAS REPUBLIKAS KREISO POLITISKO PARTIJU PERIODISKAJOS IZDEVUMOS NO 1936. LĪDZ 1939. GADAM

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ANOTĀCIJA

Spānijas pilsoņu karš bija nozīmīgs 20. gadsimta konflikts ar starptautisku raksturu un ideoloģisku daudzveidību. Šajā rakstā aplūkots, kā Lietuvas Republikas kreiso partiju laikraksti atspoguļoja konflikta ideoloģiskos aspektus laika posmā no 1936. līdz 1939. gadam. Izmantojot S. M. Lipseta un S. Rokana šķelšanās teoriju, pētījums atklāj Spānijas politisko grupu daudzveidību un Lietuvas partiju piesardzīgo nostāju. To publikācijas dažkārt bija radikālas, taču izrādīja vien ierobežotu atbalstu spāņu anarhismam vai revolucionārajiem ideāliem.

Atslēgvārdi: republikāņi, Spānijas pilsoņu karš, Lietuvas Republikas laikraksti, politiskās grupas, ideoloģiskās šķelšanās.

KOPSAVILKUMS

Spānijas pilsoņu karš, viens no nozīmīgākajiem 20. gadsimta militārajiem konfliktiem, var tikt uzskatīts par koncentrētu tālaika politisko ideju kopu sadursmi. Republikāņi, tāpat kā viņu pretinieki, bija ideoloģiski daudzveidīgi un saņēma starptautisku atbalstu un kritiku, tostarp no Lietuvas. Raksta mērķis ir izpētīt, kā republikāņiem labvēlīgo Lietuvas politisko partiju periodiskie izdevumi atspoguļoja konflikta ideoloģiskos aspektus laika posmā no 1936. līdz 1939. gadam.

Veicot analīzi, vispirms apskatītas republikāņu politisko grupu nostādnēs, kā arī Lietuvas partiju – Lietuvas Tautas zemnieku savienības, Sociāldemokrātiskās partijas un Komunistiskās partijas – nostājas. Papildus tradicionālajām vēstures izpētes metodēm izmantota S. M. Lipseta un S. Rokana šķelšanās teorija, kas pielāgota pētījumam.

Pētījums atklāja dažādus republikāņu politiskos uzskatus, kā arī Lietuvas partiju relatīvo mērenību. Raksts atspoguļo, kā atsevišķi Lietuvas periodiskie

izdevumi atkarībā no politiskās piederības, reaģējot uz ārējiem apstākļiem, savus uzskatus vai nu radikalizēja, vai padarīja mērenākus. Tas arī izceļ preses ideoloģisko saskaņošanu ar konkrētām republikāņu politiskajām grupām un nozīmīgākās politiskās šķelšanās.