

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE TEA PARTY MOVEMENT



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Summary

This thesis will examine and explain the background and structure of the Tea Party Movement and discuss whether the Tea Party Movement is a party or a movement. Does it constitute a superficial change or has there, as some claim, been a more permanent change in the American society and electorate in favor this movement's attitudes and goals? The thesis will also look more closely at its performance in the 2010 mid-term elections as well as afterwards through 2011. Has the Tea Party Movement lived up to its promises and visions, or has the political reality of Washington turned out to be too big an obstacle for making a tangible difference in American politics? These questions are both interesting and important to investigate more closely.

Among the conclusions of this thesis are that the Tea Party Movement does not fulfill the criteria for being a party. As such, it does fulfill the criteria for being a social movement. However, the Tea Party Movement of today is predominantly an Astroturf movement that also is an affiliate right-wing branch of the Republican Party. Nor is there an independent group of "Tea Party-politicians" in the House of Representatives after the 2010 mid-term elections. However the Tea Party Movement does have an impact in Congress in that the election of a number of conservative Tea Party Movement-endorsed candidates ensures that the Republican political agenda does not move towards the center of American politics, but rather towards the right-wing conservative side of the Republican political spectrum. An interesting finding of the thesis is that the "new" mass media has been vital to the Tea Party Movement's formation and subsequent growth.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
THANK YOU	3
ABBREVIATIONS	5
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, SOURCES, AND METHODS	6
INTRODUCTION	6
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	8
SOURCES AND METHODS	23
CHAPTER TWO: POPULISM AND THE TPM	28
A BRIEF HISTORY OF POPULISM	28
THE EVOLUTION OF THE TPM	30
THE POPULARITY OF THE TPM	35
THE DEBATE SURROUNDING THE TPM	38
CHAPTER 3: THE 2010 MID-TERM ELECTIONS	47
THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS	47
THE STATE ELECTIONS	48
STRUCTURAL REASONS BEHIND THE TPM IMPACT	59
CHAPTER 4: THE TPM IN CONGRESS	65
THE TEA PARTY CAUCUS	65
CONGRESSWOMAN MICHELE BACHMANN	66
CONGRESSMAN ALLEN WEST	71
CONGRESSMAN MICK MULVANEY	75
TPM IMPACT IN CONGRESS	79
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	83
PARTY, MOVEMENT OR REPUBLICAN AFFILIATE	83
REMAINING QUESTIONS AND A FINDING	91
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY & WEBSITES	96

Abbreviations

TPM	Tea Party Movement
R	Republican
D	Democrat
TP	Tea Party
FW	FreedomWorks
OCDB	Our Country Deserves Better
TPE	Tea Party Express
TPN	Tea Party Nation
TPP	Tea Party Patriots
AFP	Americans For Prosperity
R&S	Rasmussen and Schoen
S&D	Street and DiMaggio
M&Z	McSweeney and Zvesper

Chapter 1: Introduction, Sources, and Methods

Introduction

In the history of American politics third parties and social movements have occasionally emerged on the political scene, often with a lot of noise and attention. More often than not they have shortly thereafter died away quickly and quietly. 2009 saw the birth of the Tea Party Movement, which arrived upon the scene with a lot of commotion. It represented a protest against current government and politics, and aroused a lot of attention and debate in American society. One of the questions surrounding the Tea Party Movement (hereafter TPM) has been whether it represents an independent third party, a social movement, or if it is in fact a branch of the Republican Party.

In his book *Politics* Andrew Heywood defines and discusses the terms “political parties” and “social movements.”¹ He defines a political party as “a group of people that is organized for the purpose of winning government power, by electoral or other means.” What he claims differentiates parties from other groups is that parties “aim to exercise government power by winning political office,” they are “organized bodies with formal ‘card-carrying’ membership,” parties most often have a “broad issue focus,” and they are to some degree “united by shared political preferences and a general ideological identity.”²

A social movement on the other hand, he defines as a form of “collective behaviour in which the motive to act springs largely from the attitudes and aspirations of members, typically acting within a loose organizational framework.” Card carrying membership is replaced by “a level of commitment and political activism,” and there is a certain level of “intended and planned action in pursuit of a recognized social goal.” He further describes “new” social movements as opposed to the “traditional” social movements. Among the differences are that the new social movements attract more educated and affluent people, they focus more on “quality of life” issues than on social advancement, they emphasize “decentralization and participatory decision-making,” and practice a more “innovative and

¹Andrew Heywood, *Politics* (2nd ed., New York, 2002).

²Heywood 2002: 248.

theatrical form of protest politics.”³ This thesis will use Andrew Heywood’s definitions of political parties and social movements in the attempt to place the TPM within the correct political category.

Since its emergence the TPM grew quickly in popularity among some segments of voters, and in the 2010 mid-term elections several TPM or TPM-endorsed candidates were on the congressional ballot. In turn, a number of these were elected to both the Senate and the House of Representatives as Republicans. A small number of these, such as Michele Bachmann, also tried to position themselves as potential Republican presidential candidates for the 2012 election.

The TPM claims to be politically independent. Its supporters are both from the Republican and the Democrat camp, although a majority seems to belong to the Republicans.⁴ Ideologically their primary agenda is “fiscal responsibility, limited government and deficit reduction.”⁵ The background and reason for its rise and consequent popularity is seen to be the economic crisis in the US and the growing disenchantment of the public with the politicians in Washington, and what they are able, or often unable to accomplish.⁶ Some scholars hold that the TPM represents something new and unprecedented. They claim that unlike earlier third parties or social movements the TPM is here to stay because there has been a permanent change in the American electorate. Others see it as a passing or as an Astroturf movement that will die out in its own course.⁷

Whatever the correct interpretation turns out to be, the TPM has become a very visible actor in the political landscape. Its followers as well as members of Congress representing TPM or endorsed by TPM are outspoken, both in criticizing other politicians and the current system, as well as in promising how they themselves will work to change the political system and current politics if given the opportunity. And some of these congressional members in fact now do have this opportunity after the 2010 mid-term elections.

This thesis will examine and explain the background and structure of the TPM and discuss whether the TPM is a party or a movement. Does it constitute a superficial change or has there, as some claim, been a more permanent change in the American society and electorate in favor the TPM’s attitudes and goals? The thesis will also look more closely at its performance in the 2010 mid-term elections as well as afterwards through 2011. Has the TPM

³Heywood 2002: 284-285.

⁴Scott Rasmussen & Douglas Schoen, *Mad as Hell* (New York, 2010), p.15.

⁵Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 10.

⁶Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 37, 55.

⁷Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 2, 5, 18.

lived up to its promises and visions, or has the political reality of Washington turned out to be too big an obstacle for making a tangible difference in American politics? These questions are both interesting and important to investigate more closely.

Review of Literature

Several books about the TPM have been published during the past two years. The authors have different backgrounds including journalism, politics, and academia, as well as different reasons for writing about the TPM. Some write to further the cause of the TPM, while others take a more critical angle in their work. In choosing background material for this thesis the focus has been on trying to cover both authors with different backgrounds and authors with different agendas in order to get an as complete picture as possible of the debate surrounding the TPM and gain a good understanding of what it is really about.

Rand Paul has written the book *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* with Jack Hunter. Rand Paul is a so-called “Tea Party politician” who won the U.S. Senate seat from Kentucky in the 2010 mid-term elections. He is the son of Congressman Ron Paul who made a bid at the presidency in 2008, and was also in the running for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination.⁸

The reason behind choosing this book is that it was written by a politician who is also a TPM supporter. This is established in the opening lines of the book where recites the words he spoke after winning the Kentucky Republican primary in spring 2010: “I have a message from the Tea Party, a message that is loud and clear and does not mince words. We’ve come to take our government back.” The book thereby provides an “insider” TPM view of American society and politics. As a Senator the author is also actually in a position to be heard and to influence political processes and outcomes, something that makes his views all the more interesting. His familiar background is of additional interest because of his many years of political experience through his father’s career. All in all the Rand Paul book should give the reader good insight into the TPM views and policies.

⁸ <http://www.ronpaul.com/> (04/10/2011).

The first part of the book is biographical. Here Rand Paul tells his own story about his way to the Senate. He describes how the establishment tried to stop him, while the TPM in the end helped him secure the election. The second part of the book is used to explain and defend his own as well as the TPM's political philosophy. He looks more closely at Constitutional Conservatism, foreign policy, government intervention, Social Security and fiscal spending, explaining his own views on these issues and outlining possible solutions.⁹

Regarding the TPM Rand Paul is very adamant that it is in fact a grassroots movement

The Tea Party sprang in each state de novo. It wasn't created by a network. It wasn't created by a billionaire. It came from the people. It has no single leader, is often adamantly against leadership and threatens the power structure of both political parties.¹⁰

He rejects the notion that the TPM is Astroturf and created by the Republican Party, referring to the fact that "the entire GOP establishment wished that my campaign and the Tea Party would just go away."¹¹ He also refers to Rasmussen and Schoen and their description of the TPM's independence, power and popularity in order to strengthen his argument. The Rasmussen and Schoen book *Mad as Hell* is in fact one of the books used as background material in this thesis, and will be described subsequently.

In the chapters regarding the different political issues Paul explains his view of the Constitution, and how he feels that the federal government has "drastically overstepped its constitutional boundaries."¹² He sometimes refers to or quotes the Founding Fathers in defense and support of his views. According to Paul, the Founding Fathers would not approve of the USA PATRIOT Act, which he calls an "unconstitutional government intrusion."¹³ He also quotes Thomas Jefferson to prove that he would be against today's huge debts and deficit spending as well as increased taxation.¹⁴

Rand Paul's agenda in writing this book is to promote his own values and views on how the United States should be run today. As background material he uses factual

⁹Rand Paul, *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* (New York, 2011).

¹⁰Paul 2011:11.

¹¹Paul 2011: 15.

¹²Paul 2011: 127.

¹³Paul 2011: 124.

¹⁴Paul 2011: 223, 231.

information and numbers that he then interprets and explains in line with his political viewpoints. The unique contribution of the book is that it provides a TPM insider's view of current politics. In addition it familiarizes the reader with the TPM and what it stands for. The book is well written, and appears to be a personal account seasoned with small anecdotes. Rand Paul comes across as a sympathetic and knowledgeable man who explains and defends his views well. It is easy to follow and understand the reasoning behind his political assessments although one might not always agree with the conclusions.

Scott Rasmussen and Douglas Schoen have written the book *Mad as Hell: How the Tea Party Movement is Fundamentally Remaking our Two-party System*. Scott Rasmussen is the founder of the polling firm Rasmussen Reports, and a commentator on FOX, CNBC and CNN. Rasmussen Reports have been accused of favoring Republicans in polls, as well as of underpolling the Democrats and Barack Obama. Douglas Schoen is a moderate Democrat who is co-founder of the political polling firm Penn, Schoen and Berland, and also a writer and commentator for among others the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post* and Fox News.

This main reason for choosing this book is the interesting claim that is made in the title, namely that the TPM is remaking the two-party system in the United States. The combination of an author whose polling firm has been accused of favoring Republicans and an author that is a Democrat is also interesting in that this seemingly might provide the reader with a balanced account and view of the TPM and the claim in question. In addition both authors are political commentators and thereby likely to be well acquainted with the American political landscape.

In the introduction Rasmussen and Schoen state that “the Tea Party movement has become one of the most powerful and extraordinary movements in recent American political history.”¹⁵ In support of this claim they refer to several surveys and polls regarding the degree of TPM identification and support in the American electorate.¹⁶ Further, they promise to provide the “first comprehensive explanation” of the Tea Party phenomenon, and to show that it is grassroots, misunderstood by politicians and media, and has unprecedented support and power to influence American politics. They thus reject several of the negative opinions and views about the TPM that have appeared among politicians and in the media.¹⁷

¹⁵Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 1.

¹⁶Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 2.

¹⁷Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 5.

The authors go on to define and describe populism both in terms of the historical context and in order to define and explain populism as a phenomenon. They emphasize three factors that they see as important in characterizing American populist movements, namely that they are found on both sides of the political spectrum, they represent “a mass movement against the elite,” and they are instigated and driven by crisis.¹⁸ This coincides with the definition of populism given by the Swedish professor in North-American Studies Erik Åsard in his book “*Janusansiktet*” (“The Janus Face”) which is an in-depth study of American populism. While he concedes that the term populism has many different definitions and interpretations he has found some common factors that he claims can be used to characterize American populism in general. Among these are that populism is a form of anti-elitism, that it is driven by the masses, and that it is instigated by a dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.¹⁹

Rasmussen and Schoen also explain the difference between right-wing and left-wing populism, and claim that the Tea Party populist revolt represents something “fundamentally different than what has come before it in size, scope, influence, and future impact.”²⁰ According to the authors, earlier populist movements were elite-driven by people like Huey Long and F. D. Roosevelt, while the TPM is a “bottom-up movement,” making it more representative of the common man.²¹ The TPM is also more inclusive than earlier movements in that it unlike its predecessors includes all three strands of conservatism, namely economic conservatism, small-government libertarians, and social conservatism.²²

Further they claim that because of public dissatisfaction with the current state of the nation, the TPM is “here to stay,” listing several social factors that have contributed to this “*unprecedented crisis in confidence*.”²³ According to Rasmussen and Schoen there has developed a great divide between mainstream Americans and the political elite based on a difference in “attitudes and beliefs” that is independent of political party lines, creating new alliances in the political landscape.²⁴

The main body of the book discusses the TPM specifically and how the authors see its role as a populist movement, building on the arguments laid out in the previous chapters. The authors look at the history of the TPM, and important characters and events. Among others,

¹⁸Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 38-40.

¹⁹Erik Åsard, *Janusansiktet*, (Stockholm, 1994), p.16-18.

²⁰Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 37.

²¹Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 42-49.

²²Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 51.

²³Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 53.

²⁴Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 81-109.

they refer to Ron Paul and his reenactment of the Boston Tea Party in 2007 in order to protest against increased federal spending under President Bush as an important point of departure for the current TPM.²⁵ They present the current structure and important players in the TPM, grouped into organizations, individual organizers, symbolic leaders, and the base, emphasizing a diffused base as the driving force behind the movement.²⁶ Consequently they look to the future of the TPM, discussing its relationship to the GOP, its influence in the Senate election in Massachusetts in 2010, and possible influence and endorsements of future congressional candidates (referring to the 2010 midterm-elections).²⁷

Finally they discuss populism on the left more in-depth, from the nineteenth century up until Obama today.²⁸ The authors also take a closer look at the role of the media in today's politics. They claim that a change in the media has played an important part in making the TPM possible, namely by the emergence of more TV channels and of the World Wide Web, as well as by a change of content in the media outlets. According to the authors the "new" media is much more partisan and hard-edged than traditional mainstream media. Also, the abundance of news sources enables people to seek out the content that is most consistent with their own views. Rasmussen and Schoen hold that these factors have worked favorably for the emergence and growth of the TPM.²⁹ Another important factor in the rise of the TPM is what they see as the poor performance of President Obama, which has brought right-wing populism back on the offensive. Among what they see as his biggest mistakes is that Obama has "opted for an overreaching government approach" and that he does not have a clear policy agenda.³⁰

The authors' conclusion is that the electorate has realigned itself across partisan borders as a protest against current politics in Washington, and that the TPM is "here to stay." They also list a number of issues that the TPM should deal with in order to become a more powerful player in the political landscape, like decimating extreme elements within the organizations and becoming a more "cohesive coalition."³¹

The book *Mad as Hell* is an interesting analysis of the current political situation in the United States. All through the book the authors use extensive polls and surveys, results from online focus groups, interviews, and quotations as sources for their political analysis, and as

²⁵Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 110-143.

²⁶Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 144-168.

²⁷Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 169-197.

²⁸Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 198-223.

²⁹Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 224-258.

³⁰Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 259-273.

³¹Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 275-302.

support for their arguments and conclusions regarding the role of the TPM as an important factor in current American politics. Their use of polling data that they crosscheck with information from different sources makes their arguments seem very persuasive and believable. The allegations made in the introduction are repeatedly supported and confirmed throughout the book. Rasmussen and Schoen seem to want to understand and get to the bottom of the Tea Party phenomenon, as well as try and place it in a historical context.

There is a lot of interesting information to be gathered from the numerous polls and surveys presented in the book, and the authors clearly demonstrate that there is a big gap between the politicians and the population in general and also that the public is not satisfied with Washington's performance. Based on these polls they also conclude that the TPM has a big following and support in the general population. However, one should not take all their conclusions at face value. Polls and surveys can be "doctored" depending on the question asked and the choice of answers given. One should therefore be somewhat critical of their general validity. There is no reason to doubt the information and views of the people who have been interviewed, but the authors only quote people who are dissatisfied with the government and on some level support the TPM, while critics of the TPM have not been given a voice. All in all the book appears somewhat one-sided, and it ultimately comes across as one long defense of the TPM. This makes their initial statement in the title of the book, as well as their arguments throughout the book, less plausible.

The book *The Whites of Their Eyes - The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* written by Jill Lepore takes on a different angle in its scrutiny of the TPM. The author is a professor of American history at Harvard University and a staff writer at the *New Yorker*. She has also published several renowned books on different historical topics.

This book was chosen because it was written by a professional historian from an academic point of view. It aims to put the battle over how to interpret the Constitution into a historical context. *The Whites of Their Eyes* also represents a counterbalance to the earlier described books, both in the author's background and in her approach to the matter at hand. This makes it an interesting contribution to the debate surrounding the TPM.

All through her book Jill Lepore compares and ties the past together with the present. She focuses on three different points in time, namely the 1770's, the Bicentennial in the 1970's, and the current situation. Her main theme in the book is the interpretation of the Constitution at these points in time, and she explains how different groups have always used the Revolution to suit their own means and interpreted it to fit their own narrative.

One of the main issues in the book is how the TPM uses and interprets the Constitution to support their cause. In her prologue Lepore makes the following statement with regard to the TPM:

To say that we are there, or the Founding Fathers are here, or that we have forsaken them and they're rolling over in their graves because of the latest, breaking political development – the election of the United States' first African American president, for instance – is to subscribe to a set of assumptions about the relationship between the past and the present stricter, even, than the strictest form of constitutional originalism, a set of assumption that, conflating originalism, evangelicalism and heritage tourism, amounts to a variety of fundamentalism.³²

She wants her book to be an argument against historical fundamentalism, claiming that the TPM is historically fundamentalist because it believes that a part of the past, namely “the founding,” is “ageless and sacred and to be worshipped.”³³ In her view historical fundamentalism is defined by the belief that “certain historical texts,” like the Constitution, are to be read quite literally and are “sacred texts,” that the Founding Fathers were “divinely inspired,” and that the academic study of history is “a conspiracy” and “blasphemy.”³⁴

All through the book Lepore tells the story of the American Revolution during the years from 1770 to 1776. She describes important events, protests and battles in the Boston area, and she tells the personal stories of several of the important characters of the Revolution like Jefferson and Madison as well as of some “ordinary” Bostonians. Through letters, conversations, publications, and historical references she depicts the attitudes, beliefs, and worries of these people in their time, showing that these characters had differing views on important issues like slavery, taxation, the wording of the Constitution, and the relationship to the British. Simultaneously she refers to and describes conversations with people, mostly “Tea-Partiers”, who she has encountered in the Boston area during her research for the book as well as to her attendance of several TPM rallies and meetings held in the Boston area during the same period of time. In this way she demonstrates how the TPM uses the American Revolution in its rhetoric and as a basis for its arguments about how the country

³²Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes* (Princeton, 2010), p.15-16.

³³Lepore 2010: 16.

³⁴Lepore 2010: 16.

should be run. This also illustrates how certain events, or parts of events, in history are remembered and used, while others are forgotten or ignored.

The author also looks into the controversy over the Bicentennial for the American Revolution in the 1970's. This was in the era of the Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements, and there was a lot of disagreement over what to celebrate and how to celebrate depending on how one viewed the Revolution and interpreted the Constitution. In this context she refers to the originalism debate of the 1970's and to several controversial Supreme Court decisions like *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, illustrating how the different sides used the Revolution in defense of their points of view.³⁵

Throughout the book Lepore makes the argument that the Founding Fathers had no way of foreseeing what society would look like in the future and that it therefore is wrong to adhere literally to the wording of the Constitution. In her opinion the Constitution is a “living” document that can and must be adjusted to present conditions, thereby rejecting originalism which holds that “the intent of the framers is knowable and fixed and the final word.”³⁶ In support of her view she sites Thomas Jefferson answering a question on how the framers would have dealt with the interpretation of the Constitution several years after its passage:

This they would say to themselves, were they to rise from the dead: laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of preceding age a wisdom more than human.³⁷

She claims that the question “What would the founders do?” therefore is irrelevant and unanswerable.³⁸

In support of her assertion that the TPM is historically fundamentalist she gives several examples of speeches and quotes from its members and followers. One follower who is interviewed extensively all through the book is quoted as saying “I want to replace the current political establishment, get all the incumbents out and replace them with fiscal

³⁵Lepore 2010: 118-119.

³⁶Lepore 2010: 112-113.

³⁷Lepore 2010: 113.

³⁸Lepore 2010: 124.

conservatives who will abide by the constitution.”³⁹ She also quotes Sarah Palin at a Boston rally in April 2010: “Nah, you know, we, we’ll keep clinging to our Constitution, and our guns, and religion, and you can keep the change” (in reference to Obama’s campaign promise of “change”).⁴⁰

Lepore also briefly refers to the scholarly debate over how to present and explain history itself. She acknowledges that there has been a lack of a “narrative synthesis”, but that this is no excuse for the “far right’s American history – its antihistory” which in her view was “outside of argument.”⁴¹

The unique contribution of Jill Lepore is her professional study and knowledge of American history and her ability to put the present into a historical context. She has detailed knowledge of the American Revolution and of several of its key players, as well as of several unknown, but interesting characters. She demonstrates the paradox of how opposite groups have used the revolution through the years to support their cause. Both the Union and the Confederacy, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, the segregationists and the Civil Rights Movement have all claimed to be upholding the legacy of the Revolution and the Constitution.⁴²

Jill Lepore gives a very interesting account of the Revolution and makes a convincing argument that the Constitution should not be regarded as absolute. She is very critical of how the TPM uses the Constitution and the Founding Fathers in support of its cause in this regard. She does not however look any further at the TPM and what it stands for besides its “Constitutional Conservatism.” This makes her criticism of the movement somewhat one-sided. Her constant leaps in time through the book ties the past nicely together with the present, but can also be a bit confusing. Her account of the Revolution and the Constitution as a historian gives a very valuable contribution to understanding history. Nevertheless she should recognize that most people do not have her historical schooling and background and thereby not always the ability to assess and evaluate historical events in the “correct” historical context.

Like *The Whites of their Eyes*, the book *Crashing the Tea Party: Mass Media and the Campaign to Remake American Politics* takes a critical angle in its scrutiny of the TPM. This book was written by Paul Street and Anthony DiMaggio. Street is an independent journalist, historian, and policy adviser who has published both popular and academic work and written

³⁹ Lepore 2010: 43.

⁴⁰ Lepore 2010: 137.

⁴¹ Lepore 2010: 96.

⁴² Lepore 2010: 23.

several books. DiMaggio is an author who has written books focusing on subjects like the mass media and social movements, and is also a teacher of U.S. and Global Politics at Illinois State University. Both men identify with progressive forces on the left.⁴³

What makes this book interesting is the fact that the authors have combination of both journalistic and academic backgrounds, which gives them a diverse starting point and experience base when exploring the TPM. Also, the book promises to uncover new information about the TPM, and to show how the mass media reporting and commentary has influenced the public opinion about the said movement.⁴⁴ According to the authors there has been “too little systematic and comprehensive investigation of it as a social, political, and ... media phenomenon,” claiming that their book is the “first systematic, investigative, and scholarly analysis of the 2009-2010 Tea Party phenomenon.”⁴⁵

In the prologue the authors make the argument that the TPM is “AstroTurf, largely manufactured by right-wing Republican operatives, and supported by the usual group of right-wing billionaires.”⁴⁶ They also claim that “the contemporary Tea Party owes its existence and relevance largely to the corporate media,” and that its “significance has been magnified far beyond its actual numbers, and its real character has been grossly misrepresented to the American public.”⁴⁷

They go on to present the TPM in general, and like Jill Lepore draw the lines back to the Boston Tea Party in 1773 as well as demonstrate how earlier protest movements have used the Boston Tea Party in support of their cause.⁴⁸ They take a closer look at how the TPM presents itself, as well as how the media depicts it in a positive light, - an image that they outright reject. They claim to have discovered the true nature of the movement, which they describe in very unflattering terms:

The real Tea Party phenomenon discovered here is relatively well off and Middle American (not particularly disadvantaged), very predominantly white, significantly racist, militaristic, narcissistically selfish, vicious in its hostility to the poor, deeply undemocratic, profoundly ignorant and deluded, heavily paranoid, wooden-headed, and overly reliant on propagandistic right-wing news and

⁴³ Paul Street and Anthony DiMaggio, *Crashing the Tea Party: Mass Media and the Campaign to Remake American Politics* (Boulder, 2011), p.23.

⁴⁴<http://www.paradigmpublishers.com/Books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=280225> (31/10/2011).

⁴⁵ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 5,25.

⁴⁶ Street & DiMaggio 2011: viii.

⁴⁷ Street & DiMaggio 2011: viii.

⁴⁸ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 2.

commentary for basic political information.⁴⁹

Throughout the book the authors elaborate and explain the reasons behind these allegations. In their opinion the main appeal of the movement lies in that the TPM is “selling popular rebellion” in uncertain times.⁵⁰ They also point to three important factors in American politics that in their view have contributed to making the TPM possible, namely that the political climate in the U.S. has moved to the right, the rise of “right-wing” media, and the “paranoid style in American politics.”⁵¹

Like Rasmussen and Schoen they look at the origins of the current TPM, mentioning many of the same individuals. They do in fact refer to the book *Mad as Hell* several times during *Crashing the Tea Party*. However, they reject many of the assertions made by Rasmussen and Schoen as far too strong, among others the proclamation that in late summer 2010 “the Tea Party movement became the most potent political force in American politics.”⁵² Street and DiMaggio also discuss who the TPM supporters are and what they believe. They refer to polls and surveys that show that in fact a very small proportion of Americans are active TPM members, as in attending meetings or donating money. Again they refer to Rasmussen and Schoen, rejecting their claims that “fringe elements make up only a small minority of the Tea Party’s mainstream supporters” and that “the public is closely aligned ideologically with the Tea Party”, supporting their disagreement with polls and surveys.⁵³ According to the authors most TPM supporters and members are “super-Republicans” in that they support and vote for the Republican Party. They also claim that the main part of TPM arrangements are produced by billionaires and by organizations that are funded by the Republican Party, like the Koch brothers and FreedomWorks.⁵⁴

The “birther” theory that Obama is not an American citizen is one of several examples of what the authors see as the paranoid style in American politics in general, and among the TPM in particular.⁵⁵ Other illustrations of this assertion are the accusations that Obama is Marxist and socialist, that left-wing radicals control both the media and academic institutions, and that black people, immigrants, and the poor are to blame for TPM supporters’ troubles.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 9.

⁵⁰ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 44.

⁵¹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 15-17.

⁵² Street & DiMaggio 2011: 3.

⁵³ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 54-61.

⁵⁴ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 47, 69-72.

⁵⁵ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 95.

⁵⁶ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 101-104.

Street and DiMaggio partly blame this as well as their general ignorance on the TPM supporters' adherence to the right-wing media.⁵⁷ They also refer to and support Jill Lepore in her criticism of the TPM movement as "anti-historic", and like Lepore quote several of the Founding Fathers to show that they were against the Constitutional Conservatism that is so central in the TPM agenda.⁵⁸

The authors also look more closely at the TPM as an Astroturf, mass-mediated phenomenon. In their view, the reason the TPM is perceived as a grassroots movement is because the media has falsely portrayed it as such. They claim that most of the TPM leaders are part of the Republican establishment, and the main goal of both leaders and local representatives is to return Republicans to Congress.⁵⁹ They especially name the FOX network as protagonists for driving the TPM forward and spreading misconceptions to the public about the nature of American politics.⁶⁰

Finally the authors assess the 2010 mid-term elections and the prospects of a progressive revival in the near future. They see the success of the TPM and the Republican Party in this election as a result of the recession and the failing popularity of the current president. However, they reject the notion that being a TPM endorsed candidate guaranteed electoral success, and instead point to campaign contributions as being a decisive factor. Still, they commend the TPM for their ability to speak to the public and mobilize the voters.⁶¹ Looking to the future, Street and DiMaggio mention the emergence of labor protests in a few states in early 2011, but feel that the progressive left has a way to go before they are able to mobilize as a viable countermeasure and alternative to the TPM.⁶²

Throughout the book the authors support their claims and allegations with polling numbers, survey results, quotes and facts as well as views and insights from several historians. During their research they have also attended TPM rallies, events, and meetings, and corresponded and held discussions with TPM members.⁶³ Street and DiMaggio present a compelling case against the TPM's supposedly grassroots origins. Their reason for writing the book is clearly to be a counterweight to the right-wing media, and also to show the public that the TPM is not what it is made out to be, neither in that media nor in the media as a whole. In addition, they want to raise the progressive left to stand up and become a viable

⁵⁷ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 121-122.

⁵⁸ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 116-121.

⁵⁹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 130-136.

⁶⁰ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 138-141.

⁶¹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 145-163.

⁶² Street & DiMaggio 2011: 163-182

⁶³ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 25.

alternative to the right-wing forces currently running strong in American society. They are sometimes overly clear in their language, leaving the reader with no doubt as to how critical they are of the TPM in general and of its supporters.

A strength in their analysis is that they do not embrace Obama and the Democratic Party as doing everything right. On the contrary, the authors are critical of the “centrist” fashion in which they feel Obama and the Democrats have handled the running of the nation for the past three years, claiming that this has both helped the TPM gain support and been a disadvantage for the left progressive side. They do however defend Obama and the Democrats from many of the allegations made against them by the right-wing side, for instance that the Democrats are solely responsible for the budget deficits and that the stimulus packages have had no effects, using numbers and historical facts to support their assertions.⁶⁴

The polls and surveys are as above mentioned convincing background material in this analysis. However, the same objection can be made as against Rasmussen and Schoen, -that this material can to a certain extent be manipulated through the kinds of questions and answers that are provided. Their defense of Obama and the Democrats is also very persuasive, but it is a known fact that budget, economy and employment numbers can be interpreted very differently by opposite political sides. In addition, their depiction of the TPM can be accused of being one-sided and too generalized in the presentation of their views and values.

The book *Key States, High Stakes: Sarah Palin, the Tea Party, and the 2010 Elections* is a collection of scholarly essays that examines Senate elections in the 2010 mid-term elections where Sarah Palin or the TPM had a possible impact on the outcome. The book was edited by professor of Political Science at the University of Georgia Charles S. Bullock, III. He also contributes with prologue and conclusion in the book. The essays are written by political scholars who analyze sixteen individual races in an objective manner.

The book aims to evaluate whether Palin or the TPM had any impact in the chosen Senate elections, and if so, just how much impact did they have. The essays look closer at the campaigns, the key players, and the final results. The states in question are New Hampshire, Delaware, Nevada, California, Florida, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Colorado, West Virginia, New York, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois, Washington, and Connecticut.

In his introduction Bullock describes the background and conditions in the United States at the time leading up to the mid-term election. He claims that both historical patterns

⁶⁴ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 121-122.

and the political conditions favored the Republican Party, naming Obama's loss of popularity, the healthcare reform, and the stimulus package among the decisive factors.⁶⁵ He further looks at the overall results and how the Republican Party gained many seats, explaining that the analysis therefore focuses on "three forces active in promoting GOP candidates – the Tea Party, Sarah Palin, and, working to elect conservative Republican senators, South Carolina senator Jim DeMint."⁶⁶ He goes on to describe these three forces more closely, noting that "the Tea Party seemed, at times, more interested in the ideological purity of candidates than in their electoral prospects."⁶⁷ He also explains how the decentralization of the TPM makes identifying the TPM endorsed candidates somewhat difficult, but has finally been able to identify a total of 175 candidates – for Senate, House and gubernatorial races.⁶⁸

In the essays the authors describe the different Senate races. Some also look closer at the contests for the House in states where the TPM did have some impact. The essays take a closer look at factors like the candidates, the campaigns, the Republican primary elections, the general elections, the political climate, and the demographics in relation to TPM endorsements and political activity.

There are some general conclusions that can be drawn from these essays and the authors' findings and analysis.

- The TPM had more impact in Republican primaries than in the general elections.
- The TPM had little impact in already strong Republican states.
- The TPM had more influence in House races than in Senate races.
- The TPM was able to mobilize voters on the Republican side.
- TPM engagement lost the Republicans some Senate seats.

Overall the authors seem to be in consensus that the TPM influence in the general elections was somewhat overrated by the media. In their view the Republican success was just as much a result of political factors like high unemployment and weak economic growth.

In his conclusion Charles Bullock sums up the TPM impact in the general elections, noting that they supported five unsuccessful attempts to take Democratic Senate seats, that their candidates were successful in three Senate races, and that they often backed "long shot"

⁶⁵ Charles S. Bullock, III, "The 2010 Elections", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p.1-2.

⁶⁶ Bullock 2011: 4.

⁶⁷ Bullock 2011: 5.

⁶⁸ Bullock 2011: 6.

candidates. He also claims that the TPM by their involvement in fact lost the Republican Party three Senate seats. In his view many of the Republican candidates would have been elected even without the TPM involvement. However, he concedes that the TPM did have an effect on voter turnout, and that their engagement may have pushed several Republican candidates further to the right.⁶⁹

Compared to the previously described literature “Key States, High Stakes” emerges as a neutral and low-key account of the TPM impact on the 2010 mid-term elections. The authors abstain from making biased comments in attack or in defense of the candidates or of the TPM groups mentioned and the assessments of the election outcomes seem very well based on factual information and numbers.

As earlier mentioned the literature chosen as background material for this thesis comes from very different sources using dissimilar methods and having different angles. *Mad as Hell* and *Crashing the Tea Party* use much of the same type of sources, namely polls, surveys, interviews and factual information. They also use both qualitative and quantitative methods in answering their research questions, using polls and numbers to present a general picture, while using interviews and factual information to look more closely at specific cases and characters. Their conclusions however, end up at completely opposite sides of the scale. The essay collection *Key States, High Stakes* also operates on two analytical levels as it uses both numbers and factual information as sources. The numbers as in election results and demographics are analyzed quantitatively to give an overall picture and background, while factual information about specific campaigns, candidates and elections are analyzed in a qualitative manner to give an in-depth picture of the specific conditions in each state.

Rand Paul’s book *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* is a more personal account, and he uses his eloquence and logic to try to persuade the reader of the assets of his political views. His sources are factual information as well as his personal views, which are used to present a qualitative in-depth account of what he sees as the problems in society as well as possible solutions to these problems. Jill Lepore also takes a qualitative approach in order to answer her research question. She takes on three points in time and looks very closely at certain events and characters using historical accounts and contemporary factual information and interviews as her sources.

Each of the described books comes to logical conclusions based on the background material they have chosen to use. But as the review of the literature shows, the different

⁶⁹ Bullock 2011: 211-224.

authors and scholars come to very divergent conclusions. Rand Paul and Rasmussen and Schoen view the TPM in a very positive light, while Jill Lepore and Street and DiMaggio are very critical of the same group. *Key States, High Stakes* on the other hand is a more neutral scholarly assessment of the TPM performance in the 2010 mid-term elections. This can most likely be attributed to the choice of background material like polls, surveys, interview objects and quotes, the interpretation of this material, as well as the starting point and final aim of the authors. Seen in isolation, each book makes a convincing case of its assertions and claims. However, when one assesses the big picture, the diverging conclusions make several of the books appear somewhat one-sided or biased and not totally convincing. The most unbiased book appears to be *Key States, High Stakes*. The authors of the different essays have written neutral accounts of the numerous campaigns and elections that are described, and present convincing conclusions as to the TPM influence on the different outcomes.

Sources and Methods

The research question and goal of this thesis consists of examining the background and structure of the TPM, discussing the nature of the TPM as a political entity, as well as assessing how significant an impact the TPM has really had. Andrew Heywood's definitions of political parties and social movements as described initially in this chapter will be used as the theoretical foundation when attempting to place the TPM as a political entity based on its history, structure and performance. Is the TPM a political party or a social movement, or is it neither? The abovementioned books will be used as source material and as base for discussion. The thesis will also draw on material found on the Internet, such as newspaper articles, Congressional records, and official and personal TPM sites and accounts. The sources will all be critically assessed, and the reliability of material found on the Internet will be thoroughly checked.

The second chapter will look more thoroughly at the historical context of third party and populist movements, and present the TPM and its origins, background, organizations, members and profiles. This will be evaluated up against Andrew Heywood's theory on parties and movements in order to discuss the political nature and identity of the TPM. It will also be attempted to understand and explain the TPM popularity in relation to trends and

conditions in American politics and society as well as discuss the debate and the arguments surrounding the TPM that have come to light in the source literature.

The next chapter will take a closer look at the TPM and the 2010 mid-term elections in terms of campaigns, endorsed candidates, decisive factors and election results. There will also be a discussion of the possible structural reasons behind the TPM performance in these elections based on chosen political theory. This material will be evaluated against the theory on political parties and social movements in the further discussion of the TPM and its real political identity.

The fourth chapter will evaluate the TPM performance after the mid-term elections and through 2011 and look more specifically at three TPM-endorsed members of Congress, namely Michele Bachmann, Mick Mulvaney, and Allen West. Their political views will be examined and compared to their performance in Congress with regard to sponsorship of bills, voting records, public announcements and other relevant issues. This information will also be evaluated with regard to their political role and whether this is consistent with the TPM being a political party or a social movement as defined by Andrew Heywood.

The concluding chapter will draw final conclusions based on the foregoing chapters. It will answer the questions asked in the introduction, and also assess the validity of the different authors' claims that were presented in the book review. The conclusion will also look into the future of the TPM, and suggest possible areas for future research.

The overall goal of this thesis can be described as what Charles S. Ragin calls "interpreting culturally or historically significant phenomena."⁷⁰ The TPM is a social phenomenon in contemporary America that has had an impact on the American society, both on the political discourse as well as in the form of political representation. As to the use of methods, and how the sources will be handled there are several different approaches to choose from. Ragin identifies three different research strategies, namely qualitative research, comparative research and quantitative research.⁷¹ Laurence W. Neumann on the other hand identifies three main possible research strategies as positivism, interpretative social science and critical social science. Quantitative research, or positivism, is based on the study of a few common factors in a large number of cases to be able to establish patterns and universal laws, and in turn make predictions about the future.⁷² Qualitative research, or interpretative social

⁷⁰Charles R. Ragin, *Constructing social research, The Unity and Diversity of Method* (Pine Forge Press, 1994), p.32-33.

⁷¹Ragin 1994: 33.

⁷²Laurence W. Neumann, "Ch.4: The Meanings of Methodology", in *Social Research Methods*, (Allyn & Bacon, 2000), p. 66,85.

science on the other hand, is based on the in-depth study of a few cases to be able to” interpret significance”, “give voice” or “understand and describe meaningful social action.”⁷³ These are the two main methods that will be used for this thesis.

With regard to the qualitative method, parts of the research question in this thesis requires a degree of flexibility, in that some of the data and results gathered during the research period are neither measureable in terms of numbers and quantities, nor are they predictable. This is relevant when examining the background and structure of the TPM as well as when looking more closely at individual views and performances. The research question may also lead to new angles of research in order to obtain relevant data, or the need to emphasize or go more deeply into certain parts of the thesis over others. This coincides with the criteria Sigmund Grønmo lists for qualitative research.⁷⁴ He also emphasizes the importance of completeness in the gathering of data, and holds that the goal of the analysis is to achieve an as complete understanding as possible of specific conditions.⁷⁵ This is an important part of what this thesis aims to do with regard to the TPM.

The quantitative research method is also valuable as a tool for this thesis in that it can be used to discover patterns and causal laws that describe causes and effects.⁷⁶ This is helpful when researching the TPM for instance in connection with poll numbers, election results, demographics, and voting records, which all represent a small number of variables or features across a large number of cases.⁷⁷

When looking at the background and structure of the TPM the books *The Tea Party Goes to Washington*, *The Whites of Their Eyes*, *Mad as Hell*, and *Crashing the Tea Party* will all be used as the main background material. When looking more closely at the history and structure of the TPM as well as at key players, organizations, and their rhetoric, as well as the possible reasons for their popularity the qualitative method will be put to use. The quantitative method will be employed when examining the different polls and surveys as to the extent of TPM support and popularity in the general public and the public’s views on different issues. The qualitative method will also be used when discussing the debate and the differences of opinion surrounding the TPM as it appears in the source literature and in public regarding both a textual and content analysis.

⁷³Ragin 1994: 52.

Neumann 2000: 85.

⁷⁴Sigmund Grønmo, *Kvalitative metoder i samfunnsforskning* (Universitetsforlaget, 1998), p.73-74.

⁷⁵Grønmo 1998: 89,93.

⁷⁶Neumann 2000: 67.

⁷⁷Ragin 1994: 49.

The main source when assessing the 2010 mid-term elections will be the book *Key States, High Stakes*. Both methods will also be used in this chapter of the thesis; the quantitative method when looking closer at the actual numbers and results from the election, and the qualitative method when looking behind the numbers at the factors that may have contributed to the different election results, as well as the TPM impact on the mid-term election results.

The next part of the thesis that aims to explore what the TPM has actually accomplished after the mid-term elections will also make use of both research methods. Congressional voting records will be examined in a quantitative manner in order to compare TPM issues to TPM votes. On the other hand, the method best suited to assess the overall performance of the TPM as well as to look at a small number of TPM-endorsed representatives more closely will be the qualitative method.

There are however, certain pitfalls to avoid when doing qualitative research. One of the criticisms of this method is that it focuses too much on “micro-level, short-term settings” at the expense of a “broader and long-term context”.⁷⁸ Another danger is that one cannot be sure of the motives of the social researcher; it could be that the researcher is trying to put terrible events or groups of people in a different, more favorable light, or to further a specific cause.⁷⁹ This is demonstrated by the differences of opinion and conclusions found in the source literature. The flexibility of this method may also result in the gathered data being very diverse, and this in turn may lead to differing interpretations, and thereby limited relevance.⁸⁰ A final danger is that the presentation of the material may be too complex and hard to follow because the large amount of data gathered about a small number of cases.⁸¹ In spite of these limitations to the qualitative research this thesis will still make use of this method and try to avoid these pitfalls.

The quantitative research method also contains certain dangers. One criticism has been that it “reduces people to numbers” and fails to “deal with the meanings of real people and their capacity to feel and think.”⁸² Another danger is that the material gathered may be somewhat superficial because the questions asked for instance in a poll have to be somewhat uniform and keep to a minimal common ground in order to cover a large number of units or

⁷⁸Neumann 2000: 76.

⁷⁹Ragin 1994: 53.

⁸⁰Grønmo 1998: 83.

⁸¹Grønmo 1998: 97.

⁸² Neumann 2000: 66,76.

categories.⁸³ The quality, or lack thereof, of the polls or surveys is of course also a possible weakness in this type of research method and for this thesis.

The goal of using a combination of these methods in this thesis is to draw on the strengths of each method to gain an overall understanding of the TPM and its followers, its views, its role, and what it has accomplished, as well as gain a deeper understanding and knowledge about certain issues and people that are important to this movement. This again will provide the best possible base of information to evaluate against the chosen theoretical definition and ultimately answer the research question in the best possible manner.

⁸³Grønmo 1998: 83.

Chapter two: Populism and the TPM

A brief history of populism

In their book *Mad as Hell* Rasmussen and Schoen describe the TPM as being a populist movement.¹ Characteristically, populist movements or parties are seen to support the common man against the “corrupt” elites.² Populism has a long history in the United States, and includes movements, parties, and politicians from different areas of the political spectrum that have been more or less successful on a national scale.³

One of the earliest representatives of the populist tradition in American politics was the seventh American president, Andrew Jackson. He was against government interference in the economy because this would “take money away from the little people and give it to the elites.” Among other efforts he closed down the national bank and paid off the national debt.⁴ In the eighteen nineties left-wing populist uprisings because of the question of free silver and the agrarian discontent with their economic conditions led to the creation of the *People’s Party*, also known as the *Populist Party*. The Panic of 1893 and the following economic recession resulted in even greater popularity for this party, and in 1896 they nominated William Jennings Bryan as their candidate in the upcoming presidential election. The Democratic Party also nominated Bryan, who lost the election to the Republican candidate William McKinley. After this defeat the People’s Party slowly faded away from the political scene.⁵

The aftermath of the depression in the nineteen thirties saw the emergence of several populist characters and movements. Two of the most prominent populist leaders of this period were Father Carl Coughlin and Senator Huey Long. Father Coughlin was a right-wing conservative, and used his popular radio program to attack communism, the banking industry,

¹ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 19.

² Heywood 2002: 354.

³ Asard 1994: 13.

⁴ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 42.

⁵ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 205-206.

as well as the Roosevelt administration and its New Deal policies.⁶ In the presidential election of 1936 he supported his own candidate, William Lemke, who ran for the *Union Party*. The outcome of the election was a disaster, as Lemke only received two percent of the popular vote. After the election Coughlin became increasingly radical in his opinions, praising both Hitler and Mussolini, and his popularity waned until he withdrew from public life in the early nineteen forties.⁷ Senator Huey Long on the other hand represented left-wing populism. He advocated higher taxes on the wealthy and redistribution of wealth to even out disparities in income, as well as government spending on social programs and public projects.⁸ In 1934 he founded the organization *Share Our Wealth Society*, which he claimed had reached more than four million members the following year. A 1935 poll suggested that Long was supported by eleven percent of the public, a number that could make him an influential factor in the upcoming presidential elections. However, he was assassinated in September of 1935, and his organization soon thereafter died with him.⁹

In the nineteen sixties central as well as controversial issues in the American society were the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights question. Once again several populist politicians made themselves visible in the political landscape, the most prominent being Barry Goldwater, George McGovern, and George Wallace.¹⁰ Barry Goldwater represented the populist right and was in favor of bombing North Vietnam and against President Johnson's war on poverty. He lost the presidential election in 1964 to incumbent president Johnson by a large margin.¹¹ On the other side of the scale George McGovern represented the populist left, and was anti-war and in favor of social welfare. He lost the Democrat Party presidential nomination to Hubert Humphrey in 1968, as well as the presidential election in 1972 to Richard Nixon.¹² George Wallace was the governor of Alabama and very much in favor of segregation and the Vietnam War, and against the welfare system as well as any growth of the federal government. He ran as a third independent candidate for the *American Independent Party* in the 1968 presidential election, and made a respectable showing, winning ten million popular votes, equaling thirteen point five percent of the total. In 1972 he withdrew from the presidential election after being shot and paralyzed from below the waist.¹³

⁶ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 43.

⁷ Åsard 1994: 85-89.

⁸ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 208.

⁹ Åsard 1994: 67-71.

¹⁰ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 44.

¹¹ George Brown Tindall & David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, (6th ed., New York, 2004), p.1115.

¹² Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 44-45, Tindall & Shi 2004: 1158.

¹³ Tindall & Shi 2004: 1128-1129 1158.

During the following two decades politicians like Ronald Reagan (R), Walter Mondale (D), and Michael Dukakis (D) tried to appeal to the more outer-wing, populist segment of their potential voters. In doing this, they were able to keep many of the populist elements on both sides of the political scale within the Republican and Democrat parties. This changed in the nineteen nineties with the appearance of populist politicians like Pat Buchanan, Ralph Nader, and Ross Perot. In the 1992 presidential election Perot ran as an independent candidate and won nineteen percent of the popular vote by advocating smaller government and disgust with the reigning elite in Washington.¹⁴ Buchanan represented the populist right and unsuccessfully challenged George Bush in the republican presidential primaries in 1992, as did Bob Dole in 1996, focusing on illegal immigrants and the communist threat.¹⁵ Nader represented the populist left and ran as an independent candidate in several presidential elections during the past two decades, advocating among other issues redistributionist policies and campaign finance reforms.¹⁶

The Evolution of the TPM

Several factors have had an impact on the American society during the last decade, and once again led to a sense of crisis among the American public. The most significant factor is the economic crisis of 2008, and the governments' inability to deal with this in a manner that would protect the average American citizen. To the contrary, the crisis led to very difficult economic conditions for millions of American households. In addition, people were angered by the economic bailout packages given to multiple business companies such as banks and automakers. Also, the already high unemployment rate was further enhanced by the outsourcing of millions of jobs. These factors and more have led to a high degree of public discontent with the President as well as with the government and politicians in general.¹⁷

¹⁴ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 45-46.

¹⁵ <http://buchanan.org/blog/biography> (22/03/2012).

Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 46.

¹⁶ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 46.

Tindall & Shi 2004: 1235.

¹⁷ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 56.

This situation provided a very good breeding ground for a populist movement, a crisis as well as public dissatisfaction. Many hold that a current populist uprising has manifested itself in the form of the TPM, something that will be discussed further on in this chapter. However, what is beyond doubt is that the TPM has become a very visible actor in American society and politics during the past four years. The origin of the TPM is somewhat unclear, as it did not start up as one distinct organization. There are however, a couple of events that are believed to be significant in the TPM evolution. The first of these events took place in 2007 on the two hundred and thirty-fourth anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. Congressman Ron Paul hosted a fund-raising event in Boston in connection with his 2008 presidential campaign, where he re-enacted parts of the Boston Tea Party in order to emphasize his political standpoints of less taxation and smaller government. Consequently he called all his presidential rallies “Tea Parties.”¹⁸

The next event said to be significant for the TPM took place on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange in February 2009. CNBC business commentator Rick Santelli criticized the economic policies of the Obama administration, calling for a revival of the Boston Tea Party. Within the next twenty-four hours his speech was all over the Internet, and numerous “Tea Party” web sites were created in support of his sentiments.¹⁹ On Tax Day, April fifteenth, hundreds of “tea parties” were held around the country, protesting against everything from taxation and government intervention and spending to the national budget and reduction of states’ rights. During the summer and autumn of 2009 local Tea Party (TP) groups were established all around the country. Several local and national TP events and rallies took place, many focusing on the proposed Health Care Reform. These protests were led by different TP groups, as well as by right-wing political organizations. The participants were vocal, angry and visible, many dressing up in revolutionary garb and effects.²⁰ The TPM was starting to become a visible actor in the political world.

It is important to understand that the TPM is not one distinct organization. It does not have a national headquarter or a national leader. Nor is it registered as a political party. Rather, the TPM is comprised of a number of individually organized local TP groups, symbolic leaders, national organizations and individual organizers. These do not necessarily share the same specific goals or the same particular grievances. What they do have in common however is that they belong to the right-wing side of the political spectrum and

¹⁸ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 35-36.

¹⁹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 34.

²⁰ Lepore 2010: 3-6.

harbor a deep dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in the United States. The overarching principles of the TPM can be said to be smaller government, deficit reduction, and a stricter adherence to the principles laid out in the Constitution.²¹

Although the TPM has no national leader, there are still some individuals that are regarded as symbolic leaders for the movement. One of the most well known is Sarah Palin, Republican vice-presidential candidate in the 2008 presidential election, then Governor of Alaska. During the campaign she often appealed to the right-wing populist segment of the voters, drawing both a lot of attention and a number of supporters.²² Since then she has stepped down as Governor but continues to be active as a politician. She has spoken at several TPM rallies and has been active endorsing candidates both for the 2010 mid-term elections as well as for the Republican presidential primaries in 2011 and 2012. She also runs her own political action committee and works as a political commentator for FOX Broadcasting.²³ Her right-wing political views continue to uphold her as figurehead for the TPM. Another well-known symbolic TPM leader is Congresswoman Michele Bachmann. She calls herself a “Constitutional Conservative” and founded the first Tea Party Caucus in the House of Representatives in the summer of 2010. One of her main political issues is to repeal the Obama administration’s Healthcare Reform Bill, which in her view represents an “uninhibited growth” of government.²⁴ This thesis will look closer at her congressional work with regard to typical “TPM-issues” in Chapter four.

Several national organizations have ties to the TPM in that they share many of the same causes and views, and also through alliances and shared events. There are too many to mention here, but a few of the most significant will be briefly described. Former Republican House majority leader Dick Armey chairs the organization *FreedomWorks* (FW). This organization is dedicated to fighting for less government, lower taxes, and more freedom to the people. They have trained thousand of volunteers who work as a “grassroots army” to further these causes. In a 2010 interview president Obama called them “the first organizational mechanisms to bring Tea Party folks together.”²⁵ Another organization worth mentioning is *Our Country Deserves Better* (OCDB). OCDB was formed in 2008 as a political action committee to work against the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama. It also spent a lot of money on ads supporting Sarah Palin. In addition, OCDB launched the *Tea*

²¹ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 7, 145-146.

²² Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 153-156.

²³ <http://www.sarahpac.com/> (25/3/2012).

²⁴ <http://bachmann.house.gov/> (25/3/2012).

²⁵ <http://www.freedomworks.org/> (23/3/2012).

Party Express (TPE), which is responsible for bus tours around the country, rallies, and election endorsements on behalf of what they see as “Constitutional Conservative candidates.” Their main causes are similar to FreedomWorks’.²⁶ A third Organization is *Tea Party Nation* (TPN). Their focus is the individual freedoms they see as given in the Constitution. The TPN has sponsored several big events in the name of the Tea Party.²⁷ The *Tea Party Patriots* (TPP) is a grassroots organization formed in 2009 as a protest against the government’s fiscal policies of bailouts and stimulus packages. They provide tools and training for local TP groups in order to help them shape the direction of the country. Their main causes are fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free market economics.²⁸ The last group to be mentioned in this context is *Americans For Prosperity* (AFP). This organization was founded in 2004 by billionaire David H. Koch. Its main mission is to engage and educate citizens “about economic policy.” AFP has sponsored several TP causes and events, as well as allied themselves with several local TP groups.²⁹

There are also some individual organizers that are worth a mention, in that they have made a tangible impact on the TPM. One of these is the actress Keli Carender. In 2009 she used her blog to organize a protest rally against president Obama and the stimulus package, which she called “the porkulus.” This is regarded as one of the first TP events. Since then she has been a very visible figure at several TP events and rallies. Another is Joe Wierzbicki who works as national coordinator for OCDB and has a background in public relations. He has been described as the “architect behind the TPM.” The last person to be mentioned here is the libertarian Eric Odom. He is an Internet marketer who is responsible for several websites and organizations that all support different TP-related causes. He has also been involved in organizing TP events.³⁰

In addition to individuals and organizations, the TPM also enjoys the support of different types of media that work to further the TPM causes. On the cable network FOX News Glenn Beck promoted the *912 Project* as a way for Americans to take their country back to the feeling of solidarity and unity experienced by many on the day following 9/11. On September the *912 Project* organized the Taxpayer March on Washington, an event that gathered a large number of people, including a lot of TPM supporters.³¹ Glenn Beck is a

²⁶ <http://www.teapartyexpress.org/> (23/3/2012).

²⁷ <http://www.teapartynation.com/> (21/3/2012).

²⁸ <http://www.teapartypatriots.org/> (21/3/2012).

²⁹ <http://www.americansforprosperityfoundation.com/> (21/3/2012).

Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 150.

³⁰ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 150-153.

³¹ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 125-128.

well-known member of the right-wing media. On air he makes no secret of his partisan and conservative views, criticizing President Obama and appealing to much the same segment of the public as the TPM. Another well-known right-wing media champion is radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh. On his radio shows he too is very critical of the President, and speaks to conservative Americans. The Internet has also been an important factor in spreading the TPM message to a large number of people, through blogs, websites, and social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter that have been put to effective use.³²

An important part of the TPM is of course the local TP groups and the TPM supporters. Polls and surveys regarding the demographics of the TPM “congregation” return different numbers regarding the percentage of people who feel sympathy with the TPM, who agree with the TPM, who are supporters, members, or activist depending on the questions asked and who asked them. Some facts can however be deduced from these polls. At least a quarter of the public agrees with the TPM, around twenty percent support the TPM, and between five and ten percent see themselves as activists. The interesting thing here is to look at the demographics of the supporters and the activists. Different polls all show that they are generally better educated and wealthier than the average American. They are also predominantly male, Caucasian, middle-aged and Protestant. In addition they are mostly Republican or Independent, and a large number describe themselves as conservative. All these descriptions are in comparison to the general public. So although the TPM enjoys a certain following in the general public, it is evident that the TPM does not represent a cross-section of the population as a whole.³³

From the information that has been presented about the TPM this far it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions about its political nature. In his theory about parties and movements Andrew Heyward holds that a party is organized for the purpose of winning governmental power, whereas a movement acts in pursuit of a recognized goal. Further, his theory says that a party is an organized body with card-carrying membership with a broad issue focus, while a movement has a loose organizational framework and a more narrow focus on what issues to pursue. Finally his theory holds that members of political parties share political preferences and a general ideological identity, whereas a movement shows a collective behavior in which the motive to act stems from the attitudes and aspirations of the members. Regarding membership, it is clear that the TPM has a loose organizational

³² Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 247-256.

³³ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 45-50.

Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 156-160.

structure, and no card-carrying membership requirement. Many of its supporters and activists belong to different organizations, and some to none at all. Also, the TPM does not have a specified broad issue focus. There are some overarching issues that the TPM-affiliated organizations as well as activists and supporters can be said to have in common, but the main focus issues differ from organization to organization. Besides, some political areas like for instance foreign policy, military, and defense, are seldom given much attention in the different issue manifests. These facts all support the notion of the TPM as a movement. In addition the TPM supporters and activists identify themselves both as Republicans and Independents, and even a small number as Democrats. They can therefore not be said to belong to the same ideological identity. However, they can be said to have a number of common attitudes and aspirations that motivate them to participate in the same movement. The TPM also fits some of the descriptions given about a “new” social movement as opposed to a traditional one. The TPM rallies where a number of participants often dress up in revolutionary garb is indeed an innovative and theatrical form of protest. In addition the TPM focus on “quality of life” issues like for instance individual freedom and the right to life. Regarding the political aspirations of the TPM, this will be further discussed in Chapter three.

The popularity of the TPM

As mentioned earlier in this chapter conditions in society have laid the ground open for a new wave of populism. And the TPM has been successful in filling this window of opportunity with their specific brand of populism. In this context it is interesting to try to identify the conditions that have led to this situation, as well as attempt to explain why they have worked in favor of the TPM.

In 2008 the United States experienced an economic crisis that came to affect the lives of millions of Americans. This crisis had many consequences and among other things wages stagnated, many people lost their jobs, and as a result of this many people also lost their homes. The crises also affected the business society, and many companies were brought to the edge of bankruptcy. In one attempt to rectify the situation then President G. W. Bush gave economic help to the insurance and financial services organization AIG and also created

the TARP program. President Obama continued this policy with among other efforts bailouts of the auto industry and an economic stimulus program. These acts did not however help the average American much in their economic struggles. Many were infuriated by the fact that the government spent billions of dollars on helping out big companies that were in their view in part to blame for the economic situation in the first place, while the average citizen was receiving little or no economic help from the government in the middle of losing their jobs and homes. Many also felt that the government was not mandated by the Constitution to intervene in the economy to the extent that they were doing.³⁴

There were also other factors that contributed to the situation mentioned above. Among these was globalization that had led to outsourcing of jobs that in turn also affected the American job market. Income inequality was at its highest level since 1917. The Obama administration Health Care Reform led to a lot of controversy among both politicians and the public. The public deficit kept on increasing. Also, President Obama had promised “change” in 2008, but the change had not been for the better in the eyes of many “average” Americans.

The economic crisis led to a political crisis. In part because of the lack of government response to their economic struggles, large segments of the public lost faith in the politicians and the government, and many felt that the government was no longer in touch with ordinary people. Instead they felt that because of the government’s bailouts and economic stimulus plans the government was more interested in serving the needs of big businesses and the elite. Many came to see the “American Dream” as a dream that was no longer within reach due to the economic and political conditions in society.³⁵ The whole situation was of course more complex than what is recited here, but this at least gives an overview of some of the conditions that contributed the most to the 2009 populist renaissance.

These factors provided a prime situation for the transpiration of a populist reaction. This reaction could have come from both the right-wing side and the left-wing side of the populist spectrum. However, it was the TPM that emerged as the populist alternative and it grew in numbers and support since early 2009. One of the reasons for this is according to Street and DiMaggio that there was no viable left-wing populist alternative that was able to counter the right-wing offensive and provide an alternative to the TPM. They also claim that the Democrats failed to stand up against the right-wing “extremists” and to denounce them in order to try and guide as well as keep on to the electorate.³⁶

³⁴ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 20-21.

³⁵ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 20-25, 53-85.

³⁶ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 125.

Another likely reason for the popularity of the TPM is that it was a Democrat president and government that led the country during the most of the economic crisis and its consequences, and it would therefore not be unnatural that the disgruntled electorate would turn to alternatives at the other side of the political spectrum, in this case the TPM on the right-wing side. Also, as a majority of TPM supporters and activists were originally self-declared Republicans or Independents it was therefore more likely that they would support the right-wing alternative when the situation of a possible populist uprising arose.

A third possible reason is the American Dream and the mentality that lies behind it. The United States has been viewed as a place where it is possible to work one's way up from two empty hands to a life in prosperity without the help of others. The fact that the government helped out several companies financially went against this mindset and in addition provoked a lot of people who lost what they had worked for all their life because of the financial crisis. Some felt that the possibility of upward mobility in society was lost. Also, the government intervention went against the view of many Constitutional Conservatives who think that government should adhere strictly to the wording in the Constitution, and that an increase of government intervention into the economy or into the lives of the American people for instance through the Health Care Reform is thereby not in accordance with the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution. This also contributed to parts of the electorate turning against the current president and government.³⁷

There are some other factors that are worth mentioning as part of the explanation behind the success of the TPM. The TPM were very effective in exploiting the general public discontentment. They offered solutions like deficit reduction, a more limited government, and a stricter adherence to the Constitution that were the opposite of how the current administration was handling the situation. They appealed to the core of the American soul, using the Constitution and citations from the Founding Fathers to legitimate and underscore their views and proposed solutions.³⁸ This attracted many of those who felt that the country was headed in the wrong direction. The TPM was also able to draw some supporters from the Democrat base of the electorate. Part of the Democrat electorate was disappointed in President Obama and how he had handled the economic crisis both in relation to big

³⁷ Paul 2011: 109.
Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 23.

³⁸ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 117.

businesses and to the average citizen. Their discontentment in turn made them turn to the TPM.³⁹

In addition the TPM was helped along by the visible and popular right-wing media like FOX News, FOX radio, *New York Post* and the *Washington Times*. Their content and news coverage is highly partisan, constantly criticizing the Democrat administration while emphasizing the virtues and advantages of conservative, right-wing politics and policies.⁴⁰ This is in line with the political environment as a whole, which has become both more partisan and polarized in the past ten years. This has often resulted in a less effective Congress where the different parties have been less able or willing to compromise and cooperate in order to find political solutions. Street and DiMaggio claim that this is in part because the Republican Party has moved further to the right while they hold that the Democratic Party have not moved leftwards in the same manner.⁴¹

These are several of the most important reasons for the success of the TPM. These reasons clearly indicate a change in the American society, both in the electorate, in the political climate, in political rhetoric, in the media, and in the mentality and outlook of the American public. Rasmussen and Schoen claim that the success of the TPM represents a wide reaching and permanent shift in the American political landscape, but at this point that is too early to conclude.⁴²

The debate surrounding the TPM

As described in the first chapter the background literature contains and presents very different views on the TPM with regard to its nature, its credibility, its supporters, and its views and values. This gives a good representation of the overall debate surrounding the TPM. Rasmussen and Schoen (hereafter R&S) claim that the TPM is genuinely grassroots and is definitely a bottom-up movement that rose as a reaction to government politics and policies. Although they do concede that organizations mentioned earlier like the TPE, FW, and OCDB, as well as well-known individuals like Dick Army, Glenn Beck, and Sarah Palin

³⁹ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 159.

⁴⁰ Street & DiMaggio 2010: 16, Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 165, 247-248.

⁴¹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 15.

Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 162-165.

⁴² Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 29.

are involved with the TPM, they still hold that the TPM is driven by the people and has developed with the help of social media, blogs and private websites. Right-wing media like FOX News has just been a facilitator, not an initiator. To support this claim they refer to their polls, which according to their interpretation show that the TPM in 2010 represented one third of the electorate, as well as to rally turnouts. In their view the TPM has been derided and belittled by the media and the elites, and unrightfully described as Astroturf.⁴³

And this is just the description Astroturf Street and DiMaggio (hereafter S&D) use regarding the TPM all through their book. Their views are quite the opposite of R&S and they characterize the TPM in very negative terms, calling them among other things racist, narcissist, ignorant, and fundamentalist. They also refer to R&S and claim that their assertions regarding the TPM's strength are far too strong. In support of their claim that the TPM is indeed Astroturf they refer to organizations like FW, TPE, AFP, and OCDB that according to S&D are responsible for producing and organizing the main part of TPM related events as well as involved in funding and organizing parts of the TPM. They claim that these organizations are partly organized and sponsored by large corporations and by the Republican Party. They further mention individuals like Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann, and Dick Armeey who are public and symbolic leaders within the TPM, pointing to the fact that have ties to the Republican Party, also claiming that they have ties to corporate America. In their view this is evidence that the TPM is in fact not grassroots, but manufactured by the Republican Party and big corporations "top-down", not bottom-up, in order to pursue and promote republican and corporate interests. They do concede that at the TPM might have started up as a partly grassroots movement, but hold that it was soon taken over and led on by the before mentioned interests. In support of their claim that the TPM is Astroturf they also point to the many TPM meetings and rallies that they attended during their research and how the message and rhetoric was "uniformly consistent" across all these events with regard to both language and ideology. In their view this must be the result of a central unit that has the overarching control of the whole movement, supporting their description of "top-down" organization.⁴⁴

Both R&S and S&D present their cases with a lot of supporting information in the form of interviews, polls, factual information, and personal observations. Read separately one is inclined to be persuaded by each of the books. However, when all the information presented is taken jointly into account, the picture becomes much more unclear. What can be

⁴³ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 1-7, 146-160.

⁴⁴ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 3, 12-15, 44-47, 72, 130-138.

deduced is that there are a number of “ordinary” people who do support the TPM and use their spare time to work for their local TPM organizations. The disagreement is over the role of the organizations like OCDB and AFP, and the TPM-connected individuals like Sarah Palin and Dick Armey. They are beyond a doubt connected to the TPM, but the question is to what extent and with what amount of influence. These organizations have helped organize and sponsor several TPM rallies and events and it therefore not improbable that they have a certain influence over what causes to promote and how to promote them. All these organizations have their own agendas. OCDB is a political action committee and also responsible for the TPE, and AFP was started by billionaire David H. Koch, so neither of these can be characterized as being grassroots in their origin. FW is dedicated to training grassroots activists. Also, Palin, Bachmann, and Armey are public figures with former and present connections to the Republican Party and are not representative of the average grassroots activist. As both these organizations and these individuals have money and connections it is highly probable that they do have a significant influence on the causes and the direction of the TPM.

One should however not underestimate the contributions of activists like Keli Carender and Eric Odom, or the local TPM supporters and group initiators. They seem to have played an important role in the formation of the TPM. However, it seems that as the TPM caught on and gained supporters and attention on a national scale, organizations and individuals like those mentioned above attached themselves to the TPM both because they had the same basic standpoints and also saw it as way to better promote and gain attention for their own causes. In turn they have gained a considerable influence in the TPM because of their means and connections. The grassroots “army” is still a part of the TPM, but in effect the TPM is now probably directed by national organizations and public individuals, and can as such be characterized as Astroturf.

Another question that has raised considerable debate is whether the TPM is in fact an affiliate of the Republican Party. According to R&S the TPM is not a Republican “offshoot.” They support this claim with polls that show that the TPM is made up from Independents and political newcomers in addition to dissatisfied Republicans as well as polls that show that TPM supporters have both Democratic (thirteen percent) and Republican (fifty-seven percent) party affiliations, in addition to a number being Independent (twenty-eight percent). Their polls also show that between twenty and thirty percent of the TPM supporters voted for Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Based on these facts they draw the conclusion that the TPM is a non-partisan movement. They do however concede that the

TPM supporters were overwhelmingly likely to support Republican candidates in the 2011 mid-term elections, an election which will be further discussed in the next chapter.⁴⁵ Rand Paul supports the notion that the TPM is not a part of the Republican Party, claiming that the TPM is equally critical to both leading parties, and that it consists of a growing number of Independents. He also refers to the Republican Party's failing support of his senatorial campaign as evidence that the Republican Party and the TPM are two different entities.⁴⁶

S&D are in total disagreement with this point of view. They claim that the TPM in addition to being Astroturf is "partisan Republican to the core." In their view the Republican Party has engineered TPM populism because they want to gain the votes of "middle- and working-class" Americans in order to win the next election (in 2012). To back up this assertion they claim that the TPM has concentrated their criticism and blame for the current state of the nation solely on the Democrats and their policies and neglected to mention or criticize the Republican role in the build-up to the current economic crisis. They also refer to several TPM meetings that they attended where the main agenda was returning the Republican Party to power in the 2010 mid-term election. As further evidence of their claim they point to several polls and surveys that show that two thirds of TPM supporters always vote Republican, a majority of TPM supporters look favorably upon the Republican Party, upon George W. Bush, or identify themselves as Republican, and four fifths would vote Republican in the 2010 mid-term elections. They also point to the fact that most of the TPM endorsed candidates in the 2010 election ran as Republican candidates, not as Independents, in support of their assertion.⁴⁷

Both R&S and S&D refer to polls that show that a majority of the TPM supporters do have a Republican party-affiliation. Within the Republican Party there can be found many degrees of conservatism, and as the TPM's overarching principles are similar to the views of the more conservative wing of the Republican Party their party affiliation is not surprising. However it seems that many of the TPM supporters are very intent on being regarded as just that and not as Republicans, and R&S explain this with the fact that they are dissatisfied with the Republican Party and its politics and therefore have distanced themselves, and instead want to be seen as TPM supporters. This does not change the fact that when it came to the 2010 mid-term election most TPM supporters voted for TPM-endorsed Republican candidates. Another important point is that several Republican politicians like Palin and

⁴⁵ Rasmussen & Schoen 2011: 6-16, 28.

⁴⁶ Paul 2011: xii, 15.

⁴⁷ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 10-11, 62-65, 134-135, 142-143.

Bachmann are connected to the TPM. Also, an organization like OCDB was started as a political action committee to work against Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election, and in addition it supported Sarah Palin as vice-president, and can as such certainly be said to have worked in favor of the Republican Party. Based on these facts there are clearly strong ties between the Republican Party and the TPM. Although many TPM supporters certainly are dissatisfied with parts of the Republican Party's political agenda and try to distance themselves from the Republican Party, they must be aware of which party stands to gain from their vote. Of course as the TPM is not a registered party the TPM supporters do not have the possibility to vote directly for the TPM. They could however have chosen to work towards registering the TPM as a third party or chosen not to vote at all. Instead most supporters chose to vote for candidates within the Republican Party in the 2010 mid-term elections. Therefore their strong claim of non-partisanship does not seem very credible. An interesting question to ask would then be whether the TPM is trying to "infiltrate" the Republican Party or whether the Republican Party is using the TPM to reach out to a certain group of voters that otherwise was doubtful. This question will be further addressed in the concluding chapter.

Another interesting debate issue is the view and the interpretation of the Boston Tea Party, the Constitution, and the Founding Fathers. Rand Paul claims that the TPM is the Boston Tea Party of today based on the argument that both "tea parties" protested "arrogant" governments. He also refers to the Founding Fathers in support of his political views, citing Jefferson in support of spending cuts, smaller taxes, and less government intervention, citing James Madison in support of less foreign intervention, and citing Benjamin Franklin in support of his resistance to the Health Care Reform.⁴⁸ Also, many TPM supporters want the Constitution to be read literally, and hold that the government is not entitled to any other powers than those specifically given in the Constitution. Jill Lepore on the other hand rejects the notion of any similarities between the two "tea parties." She claims that while the Boston Tea Party was a protest against "taxation without representation", the current TPM cannot make the same statement because President Obama was elected with fifty three percent of the popular vote, and therefore disgruntled voters cannot claim that the government does not represent the people. Regarding the Constitution she cites Jefferson who said that "laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind" as proof that the Founding Fathers did not hold the Constitution as a document to be followed literally into the

⁴⁸ Paul 2011: 5, 191, 193, 223, 231.

infinite future. In her view those who are intent on following the Constitution word by word are to be regarded as fundamentalists. She also points to the fact that the Constitution and the Founding Fathers through the years have been used by both for and against causes like health care, the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Act, depending on the angle one chooses to take when interpreting it.⁴⁹ S&D agree with Lepore in that the two “tea parties” are dissimilar in that the Boston Tea Party was a protest against tyranny as well as an attempt to create better living conditions while the current TPM is dedicated to “the preservation of the existing social and political status quo.” They also refer to and agree with Lepore in her description of the TPM’s view of the Constitution as historical fundamentalism. Regarding the TPM’s view of the Health Care Reform as unconstitutional they counter this with Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, which says that the federal government is responsible to “provide for the general welfare,” which in their view mandates the government to implement social welfare programs. In addition they refer to James Madison as a supporter of federal government’s “implicated powers,” Thomas Jefferson as an instigator of taxation of the wealthy, and both as opponents of unlimited capitalism and free markets, also pointing to Supreme Court decisions that have ruled in support of government activities and decisions beyond their “enumerated powers.”⁵⁰

It is evident that there is great disagreement over what was the real intent and views of the Founding Fathers, as well as over the interpretation of the Constitution. Jill Lepore demonstrates this very well when she describes how the Constitution through the years has been used by opposites sides of the same causes. How one reads and interprets the Constitution and the intent of the Founding Fathers depends a lot on one’s personal views and political inclination. However, the Constitution was written more than two hundred years ago in a different society, and its authors could not have known what society would look like and what challenges and problems lay ahead centuries into the future. Their meanings and utterances were based on the conditions in society at that time. Also, the different citations and references to the Founding fathers show that they had differing views, and that they were humble and sometimes uncertain with regard to the standpoints they took on the different issues. Therefore it does not seem realistic to read the Constitution literally and claim that one should abide by the exact wording of the Founding Fathers at the present time. Words written more than two hundred years ago should not dictate a government governing under very different conditions today. On the other hand, if one reads the Constitution as a guiding

⁴⁹ Lepore 2010: 7, 21-25, 113, 193.

⁵⁰ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 38, 117-121.

document and adjusts it to the conditions in today's society, it does provide a very good foundation and guideline for the governing body. With regard to the Boston Tea Party Jill Lepore seems to make the most valid argument. The people who dumped the tea in 1773 were protesting against the British and the fact that they were making decisions in Parliament that were affecting the American people without the Americans having any representation there or any way of being heard. President Obama on the other hand won fifty three percent of the popular vote and consequently represents the majority of the American people. In a democracy like the United States everybody has a chance to be heard through his or her vote, and the majority wins the election. The minority of the voters from 2008 and the voters who have changed their political allegiance since 2008 as well as the TPM supporters will get the opportunity to make their voice heard in the next presidential election in 2012. That is how a democracy works. America as of 1773 was not a democracy whereas America of 2012 is.

The final debate issue to be discussed here is the plausibility of the TPM's view on several political issues as well as contradicting views of the TPM itself. S&D refer to conversations with TPM supporters, citations from Sarah Palin and other well-known TPM personalities, and right-wing media like FOX News where they voice opinions like that President Obama has raised taxes, that his is the most "left-wing presidency in American history," that President Obama is a socialist and a Marxist, and that global warming does not exist. S&D repudiate these views with facts. They point out that the Democrats have in fact lowered the taxes for the majority of the American people. Regarding a left wing-presidency they hold that President F. D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies in the nineteen thirties and president L. B. Johnson's creation of the Medicare and Medicaid programs in the nineteen sixties were a much greater expansion of government intervention and of the welfare state than President Obama's Health Care Reform and thereby represented a much more left-wing orientated politics. To counter the allegations of President Obama being Marxist and socialist, they point to the fact that the President has helped and promoted capitalist interests with the economic bailouts and stimulus packages, and also that he has not been a protagonist for worker's rights, but instead "abandoned reforms" regarding workers and unions. As to the question of global warming they counter this with the consensus among scientists that global warming is indeed taking place, and that the results may be devastating.⁵¹ S&D blame these misconceptions among TPM supporters on ignorance and paranoia.

⁵¹ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 104-111, 122.

On the question of how the TPM is regarded, R&S and S&D have very contradicting views. R&S claim that the TPM is not racist, pointing to polls showing that the TPM is ethnically diverse and that there are TPM endorsed African-American representatives in Congress, blaming this misconception on a few fringe elements that have been very vocal and expressive at TPM events.⁵² S&D take the completely opposite view, among other things pointing to the same expressions of racism at TPM events as described by R&S as the actions of fringe elements, and as evidence of racism within the TPM. In addition they refer to a 2010 survey that shows that TPM supporters to a larger extent than the general public harbor unfavorable views of African-Americans in terms of their intelligence, trustworthiness, work moral and other personal traits. They also point to their observations of the TPM's negative reaction to the "Ground Zero Mosque" and a poll that shows that fifty nine percent of TPM supporters were unsure of whether President Obama was a U.S. citizen.⁵³

It is not a novelty in politics that people with different party affiliations have very differing views on a number of issues. This clearly comes to the surface regarding the TPM where the supporters have different interpretations and solutions with regard to the problems and issues facing the nation compared to for instance people with a more left-wing political affiliation. In short, for right-wing populism the solution to problems is less government, while left-wing populism regards more government as the best solution.⁵⁴ One cannot say that one view is wrong and the other is right, in a democracy everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion and to voice this opinion through elections. How far to the left one regards President Obama as being depends on one's own political standpoint. As to the President being a socialist, this can be a question of interpretation because in the mind of for instance a Conservative Constitutionalist every government action regarding welfare beyond what is directly spelt out in the Constitution can represent socialism. However, it is not in the best interest of democracy to twist or misrepresent facts. The facts are as S&D present them in their book that President Obama has lowered taxes for the majority of the American people, and that scientists do agree that global warming exists and represents a danger to the world. As to the President being a Marxist this seems to be stretching things a bit far as the President has not given any indications that he wants a Marxist-like state where the power lies in the hands of the workers. If this were his wish he would for instance not have helped out corporate America financially. These are of course not the views of every supporter of the

⁵² Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 9-10, 14.

⁵³ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 79, 81-83, 92, 95.

⁵⁴ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 21.

TPM, but some supporters and prominent TPM individuals have been known to voice such opinions, and S&D do have a point when they blame this on ignorance.

Regarding the debate over whether the TPM is racist, this is not an easy question to decide. R&S downplay the role of the racist elements within the TPM, however they do concede that in order to become more powerful the TPM must address and get rid of these fringe elements.⁵⁵ S&D blatantly hold that TPM is racist. The answer probably lies somewhere in between. Not all TPM supporters are racist, and there does exist a number of African-American politicians like Allen West and Tim Scott that identify themselves as part of the TPM, as well as a number of African-American TPM supporters. Still, according to several polls it does seem that a larger percentage of the TPM supporters than of the public in general do harbor certain racist viewpoints, and even R&S concede that racism is one of the challenges for the TPM in the future. The next chapter will examine the 2010 mid-term elections, which became the first real test of how the public viewed the true nature of the TPM.

⁵⁵ Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 297.

Chapter 3: The 2010 Mid-term Elections

The Mid-term Elections

The mid-term elections in 2010 became the first real test of the TPM's influence in American politics. The historical patterns were on the side of the Republican Party. Only three times in the past hundred years had the president's party gained any seats in Congress at the mid-term elections. In addition, conditions in society as described in Chapter two with a difficult economic situation as well as the declining popularity of the President favored the Republican Party. And the mid-term elections did indeed result in a partisan shift in Congress. The Democrats lost sixty-three seats in the House and thereby lost the majority while they managed to hold on to their majority in the Senate despite losing six seats to the Republicans.¹

The so-called "TPM-candidates" in these elections can be somewhat difficult to identify. They all ran on the Republican ticket. Some identified themselves as TPM-candidates as in running for office on behalf of the TPM, thereby separating themselves from the Republican Party, while other were TPM-endorsed candidates as in Republican candidates endorsed by the TPM. (This candidate designation will be used in this sense for the remaining part of the thesis). The lack of a central organization or a formal party to which they all belong also makes the identification of these candidates more difficult. In the book *Key States, High Stakes* Charles S. Bullock, III identifies nineteen aspiring Senate candidates and one hundred and forty-five aspiring House candidates that were either TPM-candidates or endorsed by the TPM. TPM-connected Sarah Palin on the other hand is identified as making a total of seventy-five endorsements for House and Senate, of which she and the TPM had only fourteen in common.² These classifications will be used as a basis when this chapter takes a closer look at the elections in some selected states, both at the campaigns, the primary elections, and at the general elections primarily for Senate, in addition to a few other selected

¹ Bullock 2011: 1-4.

² Bullock 2011: 6-7.

aces, in the attempt to assess how much of an impact the TPM had on the election results. The impact of Sarah Palin's endorsements will also be assessed in the elections where this is an additional factor. Subsequently some of the possible structural reasons behind the TPM impact and performance will be assessed based on the theories of Dean McSweeney and John Zvesper in their book *America Political Parties*.

The State Elections

The first state to be considered in this context is **Delaware** and the election for the congressional Senate seat. Early on this race for an open seat was seen to be a match between Chris Coon (D) and Mick Castle (R). Coon was not very well known among the electorate, and the moderate Castle was seen to stand a good chance at the general election. When the conservative Christine O'Donnell (R) first entered the race for the Republican nomination in March of 2010 she was not left much chance of winning. However during the summer she received the endorsements of several TPM-groups, of conservative organizations, and later on she was endorsed by Sarah Palin. The TPM was also active in criticizing Castle in public. The attention helped O'Donnell with her campaign and her fund-raising, and in addition the TPE and the OCDB sponsored a number of ads aimed at defaming Castle. In the Republican primary election she beat Castle, winning with fifty-three percent of the vote. When it came to the general election she continued to be supported by the TPM, by conservatives, and by Palin, but when it was revealed that she had made controversial statements about religion and science in the past she was ridiculed by the media, and she finally lost the election to Coons who got fifty-seven percent of the votes.³

The TPM was very active in the Delaware Senate election, especially in the period before the Republican primary election. The TPM seemed very intent on having O'Donnell elected as the Republican senatorial candidate instead of Castle, and its backing, financial and otherwise, does seem to have been one of the deciding factors in O'Donnell's favor as the balance of the primary race only changed after the TPM, conservative groups, and Sarah Palin

³Daniel C. Reed, "Sacrificing Electoral Viability for Electoral Purity: Christine O'Donnell and the Delaware Senate Race", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p. 25-35.

got involved. However it does seem that they all had more focus on ideology than on electability, as Castle early on was regarded a likely victor in the general election. Still they backed right-wing conservative O'Donnell who although she had a strong appeal to the right-wing public like the TPM supporters, had a much more narrow appeal to the public in general than the more moderate Castle. In effect the choice of O'Donnell as the Republican candidate more than likely lost the Republicans a seat in the Senate. The fact that the TPM backed O'Donnell can also be seen as an argument against the viewpoint that the TPM is an affiliate of the Republican Party with regard to the debate discussed in the previous chapter.

In **Nevada** incumbent Senator Harry Reid (D) faced the challenge of a Republican candidate. Reid was also the majority leader in the Senate and was considered to be vulnerable due to the unpopularity of the President. The Republican primary had three main contestants. The favorite was among many considered to be Sue Lowden who was both well known among the voters and had sound campaign financing. Sharron Angle was the most conservative of the candidates and also regarded to be the candidate least likely to beat Reid. However, when she was endorsed by the TPE this gave her popularity a boost, and she won the primary with forty percent of the vote. Leading up to the general election she was also endorsed by Palin. During her campaign she focused on criticizing Reid, and only appeared on television in ads or in conservative talk shows, claiming that the mainstream media held a bias against her. She lost the election to Reid by fifty to forty-five percent of the vote.⁴

Also in Nevada the endorsement by the TPM before the primary seems to have been a deciding factor in favor of their endorsed candidate's primary victory, but thereafter it lost the Republican Party the general election. This is supported by polls that indicated that Lowden had an early lead over Reid. Neither did the later endorsement by Palin have the desired effect. Unlike in Delaware however, the TPM endorsed candidate in Nevada did not receive financial support from the TPM in any form. Once again this seems to be an instance of the TPM supporting the most conservative candidate instead of the most electable one, putting ideological considerations first, and in the process losing the Republicans another Senate seat.

The TPM was popular in **Florida** with numerous local groups, and the state even had an official political party named the Florida Tea Party that ran their own candidates in some of the Florida elections. The Florida Tea Party was not popular among the TPM however, as many wanted the TPM to remain a grassroots organization, and also were unsure about the real motivation behind the formation of the party. In the end none of the party's candidates

⁴ Ted G. Helen, "Nevada: The Tea Party Takes On Harry Reid But From The Wrong Angle", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p. 39-48.

won any elections. The TPM on the other hand did have an influence in several elections. The Senate election was a three-way contest between Rubio (R), Kendrick (D), and Crist (Ind.), a former Republican who had turned Independent in fear of losing the Republican primary to Rubio. Rubio was endorsed by TPM as well as by Palin, and was popular among the voters in general, finally winning the general election with forty-nine percent of the vote. Sarah Palin and the TPM also endorsed several candidates in the elections for the House, and four of these won their races by beating incumbent Democrat candidates, namely Webster, Adams, Southerland, and West. Allen West thereby became the first African-American congressman from Florida since Reconstruction.

The TPM and Sarah Palin seem to have had a considerable impact in the Florida elections as their endorsements created a lot of attention and momentum for the candidates in question, although Rubio was also the preferred candidate of the Republican establishment. One of the reasons for their success in this state can probably be found in the poor economy of Florida. Florida had the fourth highest unemployment rate and the second highest foreclosure rate in all of the United States, and this provided for a very disgruntled electorate. They were not satisfied with the politicians' performance in Washington, and this generated a large and active TPM, which in turn persuaded many to vote for the TPM endorsed candidates.⁵ So it is safe to conclude that the TPM and Palin influenced the Florida elections although they might not have been a deciding factor, as Rubio was a favorite among the entire Republican electorate in Florida.

In **Kentucky** long time Republican Senator McConnell was set to retire, and the primary election became a contest between his endorsee Trey Grayson and self-proclaimed TPM-candidate Rand Paul. Grayson was regarded a moderate and the preferred choice of the Republican Party, whereas Paul made no secret of his affiliation to the TPM. He had been active at TPM rallies and had given the TPM a face and a voice nationwide, speaking up against the "Washington establishment." Another reason for Rand Paul's national recognition was that his father was long-time congressman Ron Paul who had also made a bid for the presidency in 2008 through the Republican primaries. The connection to his father's donors and political network helped Rand Paul to build an effective organization to assist him in the bid for the Senate seat. He also received the endorsement of Sarah Palin, and won the

⁵ Susan A. MacManus with the assistance of David J. Bonanza and Mary L. Moss, "Florida: A Plummeting Economy, Tea Parties, and Palin Give GOP a Clean Sweep", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.65-77.

primaries with fifty-nine percent of the vote. He went on to beat Jack Conway (D) in the general election with fifty-six percent of the vote.⁶

Rand Paul's association with the TPM was a contributing factor in his election victory. However, he entered the race as a "tea partier" with his own well-functioning campaign organization, and was not as dependent as candidates like Angle and O'Donnell on the attention or funding of the TPM during his campaign, as it was already in place. The association to his father and the advantages he drew from his father's network and resources were probably just as important factors in his victory, along with his anti-establishment message that hit the right political cord among unhappy voters, despite the opposition he met from the Republican establishment.

In **Wisconsin** incumbent senator Feingold (D) faced the Republican candidate Ron Johnson. Johnson was a political newcomer who had attended several TPM rallies and also had adequate financial resources to fund his own campaign. Before the Republican primary the front-runner candidate had been the well-known moderate Richard Leinenkugel, but for reasons somewhat unclear he chose to withdraw from the race before the primary election. Johnson, who actively sought the endorsements of local TPM-groups in support of his candidacy, then became the party's first choice, and subsequently won the primary election. However, the TPM was divided in their view of Johnson. Some local TPM-groups thought that he was not conservative enough, and chose not to endorse him. In the campaign leading up to the general election he downplayed typical TPM-issues and focused on more uncontroversial areas. This, in addition to an unimpressive campaign by Feingold finally won him the Senate seat by a margin of one hundred thousand votes.⁷

In Wisconsin it seems that the TPM had the most impact before the primary election. Johnson asked for and received endorsements from a number of TPM groups and this helped him secure the primary election. However, leading up to the general election it looks as if Johnson tried to reach out to a broader audience of voters by avoiding controversial issues and thereby downplaying his ties to the TPM. Whether this was done on purpose is difficult to say. But this tactic does seem to have helped him and the Republican Party take the Senate seat away from the Democrats.

Another state where the TPM enjoyed a great deal of popularity was **Colorado**. Polls showed that the state's support for the TPM was well above the national average. In the open

⁶ Joel Turner and Scott Lasley, "Randslide: Tea Party Success in the Establishment's Backyard", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed. Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.79-88.

⁷ Geoffrey Peterson, "The Accidental Tea Partier", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p. 91-98.

seat race for Senator the Republicans were up against Democrat Michael Bennet. The Republican primary election became a contest between establishment favorite Jane Norton and the outsider Ken Buck. Ken Buck was endorsed and also received funding from the TPM, including an endorsement by FW. Despite several unfortunate statements, his inexperience compared to Norton, and the fact that he was viewed as quite extreme, he still managed to win the Republican nomination. Although still endorsed by the TPM, leading up to the general election Buck tried to present himself in a more moderate light. However he continued to give statements to the contrary, and ultimately lost the election to Bennet.⁸

It is clear that the TPM endorsement and funding of Buck was a decisive factor in the nomination process and helped him win over the original favorite candidate Norton. In the general election the TPM endorsement was not enough to secure him the election. To the contrary his very conservative view on a number of issues seems to have worked to his disadvantage. Had he succeeded in moderating himself like Johnson in Wisconsin maybe the outcome would have been different. This is another example of the TPM supporting the most conservative, but not the most electable Republican candidate. It is also possible that this contributed to the Republican Party losing the Colorado Senate seat.

In **New York** there are several elections that are interesting to take a closer look at in terms of TPM influence. In the Republican primary regarding the open race to become governor the initial favorite was Rick Lazio. TPM-endorsed candidate Carl Paladino only received eight percent of the vote at the party convention, but went on to gather the thirty thousand signatures he needed to get on the gubernatorial ballot. With the support of the TPM he was able to close the gap on Lazio and win the nomination with sixty-two percent. However he went on to suffer from a number of unfortunate statements and incidents during his campaign, and was an easy match for the Democrat contender Cuomo who became governor with sixty-one percent of the vote.

In the special election for the Senate the not so popular incumbent Senator Gillibrand (D) faced Republican Joe DiGuardi. The TPM endorsed DiGuardi had finished last on the ballot at the Republican convention and like Paladino had to gather signatures to get on the final ballot for the Senate race. Also like Paladino, he managed to close the gap and win the nomination. And finally, like Paladino, he lost the Senate seat to Gillibrand who got sixty-two percent of the vote.

⁸M. Jean Kingston, "Colorado: The Centennial State Bucks the National Trend", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.113-122.

The TPM was more successful with its endorsements in some of the House contests. In the thirteenth District TPM and Sarah Palin-endorsed candidate Michael Grimm was able to win the nomination and then take the House seat away from incumbent Democrat McMahan. In the nineteenth District incumbent Democrat Hall lost his seat to TPM-endorsed candidate Nan Hayworth. The history repeated itself in the twenty-fifth District where TPM-endorsed and Sarah Palin favorite Ann Marie Buerkle secured the Republican nomination with the help of these endorsements as well as additional funding. She beat incumbent Democrat Maffei with seven hundred votes in the general election.⁹

Beyond a doubt the TPM and Sarah Palin had significant influence in the Republican nominations mentioned above. However the history seems to repeat itself in that the TPM-endorsed candidates often are more ideologically pure than electable. Another fact that seems to emerge as somewhat of a pattern is that the TPM-endorsed candidates are often less experienced than their opponents, both regarding campaigning and public conduct. This also contributes to their lack of electability. As to Paladino and DioGuardi, their nominations most likely contributed to the Republican Party losing the general elections, maybe especially in the case of DioGuardi. The TPM and Sarah Palin did have a degree of success in New York as they managed to get at least three of their endorsed candidates elected into the House of Representatives. Their endorsed candidates for Governor and Senator were not as successful, probably due the factors mentioned before regarding their electability.

In **New Hampshire** the Republican primary election for the open Senate seat in the end became a contest between the conservative Kelly Ayotte and the even more conservative Ovide Lamontagne. Ayotte was the establishment-favored candidate and was also endorsed by Palin as one of her “Mama Grizzlies,” while a number of local TPM groups endorsed Lamontagne. Lamontagne’s lack of funding was a drawback compared to Ayotte’s well-run campaign, although in the end he lost the election to Ayotte by only seventeen hundred votes. Ayotte went on to win the general election by a large margin.¹⁰

In this election Sarah Palin seems to have had more influence on the final outcome than the TPM. Ayotte’s strength was that while she was accepted by the establishment of the Republican Party and was not a controversial candidate, she was also accepted by the TPM because of her conservative standpoints on many issues. TPM did therefore not put its best efforts behind getting Lamontagne elected as Republican senatorial candidate, although it

⁹ Costas Panagopoulos, “The Empire Strikes Back: The 2010 Elections in New York, in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p. 137-147.

¹⁰ Dante J. Scala, “Mama Grizzly Nearly Trapped: New Hampshire’s Republican Senate Primary”, in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.13-23.

seems that he was their favored candidate. Evidence of this is that none of the national TPM organizations mobilized on his behalf with any endorsements or funding. The endorsements and help of only local TPM groups was not enough to secure the victory against the favorite.

With its high unemployment rate and serious recession, **California** like Florida seemed like a state that would be susceptible to the message of the TPM. In the Republican Primary Sarah Palin endorsed favorite Carly Fiorina, a conservative who campaigned actively for the support of the TPM. TPM on the other hand endorsed Chuck DeVore. Fiorina won the primary election, but like all other Republican candidates for office in California lost the general election, in this case to incumbent Democrat Barbara Boxer.

The TPM does not seem to have had much influence in the California elections. They did endorse Republican candidates, but were not very visible or active in the political landscape. It is interesting to look at why the TPM did not succeed as well in California as in Florida, two states that at the outset seemed to suffer from similar predicaments. Still, the Democrat Party continued to be the main actor in Californian politics despite the severe conditions of the economy and in the state as a whole. One of the explanations can be found in the fact that the voters in the two states seemed to focus on different issues. While voters in Florida focused mostly on economic issues, environmental policy was a central question among Californian voters. Many favored the more restrictive, environment-friendlier policies of the Democrat Party, especially among the well-educated and wealthy voters. This segment of voters constitutes a larger percentage of the California electorate than in the nation as a whole. Immigration policy was also important to the California voters, which is not surprising considering that the state has a large population of immigrants. This factor also favored the more immigrant-friendly Democrat policies. It is therefore probable that the difference in voting pattern between Florida and California is largely due to demographic differences.

In the state of **Pennsylvania** the TPM had considerable more success with their endorsements and activities. The moderate Arlen Specter was the incumbent Republican Senator, but switched to the Democrat Party in 2009. In the Democrat primary election he lost the nomination to the more liberal Joe Sestak. This left the Republican nomination open for the conservative Pat Toomey, endorsed both by Palin and by the TPM, and he went on to beat Sestak in the general election with fifty-one percent of the vote.¹¹

¹¹ Stanley P. Berard, "The Pennsylvania Senate Race: Toomey's Time", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.101-111.

In Pennsylvania there was never much contest about the Republican nomination after the exit of Specter, and neither Palin nor the TPM can therefore be said to have had any decisive influence. Toomey was acceptable both to the TPM and to the Republican Party; therefore the TPM did not have to mobilize on his behalf. The TPM was more active leading up to the general election and used their influence in order to try to mobilize the Republican voters. With this activity they most likely helped Toomey secure the Senate seat as he only won with a two percent majority.

West Virginia is regarded as a solid Democrat state, and the Democrat nomination for the open Senate seat, social conservative Governor Joe Manchin III, was seen to stand a good chance at the general election. The Republican nominee was John Raese who described himself as a right-wing conservative. Raese reached out to the TPM and was endorsed by both TPM and by Sarah Palin. This was however not enough to win him the general election, and despite an at times close race the Senate seat went to Manchin with fifty-three percent of the vote.¹²

The TPM was not able to influence the outcome of the general election for the Senate in West Virginia despite their close collaboration with Rease. One probable reason is the strong historical Democrat sentiment in this state, a factor that is difficult to change overnight. As a result the TPM was not able to mobilize a very large part of the electorate. Another likely factor is that as a social conservative in his view on issues like abortion and gun control Manchin was not as offensive a candidate as a more liberal Democrat would have been to the more conservative part of the electorate. In addition he managed to distance himself from the not so popular President Obama.

In the state of **Washington** the TPM tried to influence the Republican primary by endorsing Clint Didier, who also received the endorsements of Sarah Palin and Congressman Ron Paul. However, this was not enough to help him win, and he lost the nomination to Dino Rossi. Before the general election Rossi did receive some endorsements from the TPM, but in the end lost to incumbent Senator Patty Murray (D). It seems that although this state did have a number of active TPM groups they were not visible or active enough to influence any part of the election process, in spite of the pragmatic move of switching their endorsements to

¹²Robert Rupp, "The 2010 West Virginia Senate Race", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.125-132.

the Republican primary winner when their own first choice for senatorial candidate lost the nomination.¹³

The last elections to be briefly discussed in this context are in states where the Republican Party did take the Senate seat away from the Democratic Party, but where the TPM apparently had little or no impact. One example of this is in **Arkansas**. Here the incumbent Senator Lincoln (D) lost the general election to John Boozman (R). The TPM did not have a strong or active organization in this state, and they seem to have had little or no impact on neither the primary nor on the general election. The same pattern can be seen in **Indiana**. In the general election Dan Coats (R) beat Bard Ellsworth (D) in the contest for the open Senate seat previously held by a Democrat. This was also the case in **Illinois** where Mark Kirk (R) won the open ex-Democrat Senate seat by beating Alexi Giannoulias (D). In this state however, candidates endorsed by the TPM defeated four incumbent Democrats in the races for the House seats, showing at least some activity on behalf of the TPM.¹⁴

These election results can most likely be attributed to some of the factors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In mid-term elections it is very usual that the President's party, in this case the Democrat Party, loses seats in both the House and in the Senate. This trend has been evident for many years, and has never been dependent on other factors like a third party or the influence of a popular movement. The state of the nation, for instance in terms of the financial situation, foreign involvements, and the popularity of the sitting President, has been a deciding factor for large parts of the electorate when it comes to casting the vote at the mid-term elections. The financial crises as well as the low popularity of President Obama are thereby important reasons for the loss of the Democrat Senate seats in these three states.

The elections discussed here are just a small part of the total picture. Many elections have been omitted in this context as the TPM was not equally visible, strong, or active in all of the fifty states. What has emerged through this discussion is that the TPM had more success in the primary elections than in the general elections. The TPM supported primary winners in Delaware (O'Donnell), Nevada (Angle), Florida (Rubio), Kentucky (Paul), Wisconsin (Johnson), Colorado (Buck), New York (DioGuardi), Pennsylvania (Toomey), and West Virginia (Raese.) Only four of these went onto win the general election, namely Paul, Johnson, Toomey, and Rubio. In addition the TPM endorsed the winner of the Senate seat in

¹³Edward Anegon and David Nice, "The 2010 Washington U.S. Senate Race: Two Familiar Faces and Two Potential Wild Cards", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.189-196.

¹⁴Andrew Dowdle and Joseph D Giammo, "Arkansas: The Kettle That Didn't Whistle", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.153-188.

Utah, namely Mike Lee (R). In New Hampshire, California, and Washington, the candidates endorsed by the TPM lost the primary election. Sarah Palin also endorsed the winners Toomey, Paul, and Rubio, as well as the losers in Delaware, Nevada, and West Virginia. In addition she endorsed the winners of the Senate elections in New Hampshire (Ayotte) and Arkansas (Boozman), and the loser of the Senate elections in California (Fiorina). The TPM also had a degree of success with their endorsements in the House races. Its endorsees won most of their primary elections, while the success rate in the general election was around thirty-six percent. These candidates had the most success in districts that had only been in Democrat hands for the past two or four years.¹⁵

Some of the success of the TPM-endorsed candidates in these elections, as well as of the Republican Party as a whole can certainly be attributed a factor mentioned earlier, namely the typical trends in voting at mid-term elections. It is however a fact that the Democrat Party's loss of seats in 2010 mid-term elections by far exceeds the average loss for the ruling party at mid-term, with a loss of sixty-three to an average of twenty-three point nine seats in the House, and a loss of six to an average of three point eight seats in the Senate.¹⁶ This indicates that there were more forces at work than just voting trends.

Another factor mentioned before is the serious state of the American economy as well as the low popularity rating of President Obama. The Democrat electorate was disillusioned with the President, and some chose to vote Republican, while others abstained from voting. Also a number of Independents and "swing voters" chose to support the Republican Party in order to send a message to President Obama. In addition Republican voters were motivated to vote in larger numbers than usual because of the possibility of winning the majority both in the House and in the Senate. So prior to the 2010 mid-term elections, the Republican Party had a clear advantage and momentum that in turn manifested itself in the election results.

A final driving force behind the Republican success in the mid-term elections was most probably the activities of the TPM. The TPM was vocal and visible and was able to energize and mobilize the right-wing conservative part of the electorate to take an active stand against President Obama, both within and outside the Republican segment of the voters. Its activities and rallies created attention and interest, and reached both old and new voters. Its message hit home among the many that were dissatisfied with the state of the nation and were afraid of losing their jobs and their homes. The TPM also put its force and resources behind a

¹⁵Charles E. Bullock, III, "Conclusion: Evaluating Palin, the Tea Party, and DeMint influences", in *Key States, High Stakes*, ed., Charles S. Bullock, III (Lanham, 2011), p.218-219.

¹⁶ Bullock 2011: 221.

selection of the Republican candidates in the mid-term elections. As recently discussed, some of these candidates were successful while others not so.

The reasons behind the degree of TPM impact in the different states are complex, and many have been mentioned in the discussion of the state results. In some states the TPM was successful in appealing to the conservative right-wing voters, while in others not. One of the reasons behind occasional lack of success is that in some states the TPM chose to focus more on the ideological purity of the candidate than on the electability. Examples of this can be found in Delaware (O'Donnell), Nevada (Angle), Colorado (Buck), and New York (DioGuardi). In these states the TPM probably lost the Republican Party a Senate seat, as the preferred candidate of the Republican Party stood a much better chance of winning the general election. Another reason is that a number of the TPM-endorsed candidates were quite inexperienced on the political arena and made mistakes that their political opponents were able to use to their own advantage, like in the cases of O'Donnell and Buck. Differences in demographics also accounts for the degree of the TPM's success with its endorsements. Two states like Florida and California with seemingly similar serious economic conditions delivered very different election results, much due to the difference in the composition of the citizenry with regard to ethnic origins, and also because of different electorate focus. Also, in some states the TPM was neither strong nor visible in the political landscape, the local TPM groups often consisting of few and politically inexperienced members. This was probably due to the political sentiment of the state in question as it was easier for the TPM to establish itself and gain supporters in a traditional Republican state like Kentucky or Utah. The political sentiment of the specific state also affected how much of an impact the TPM had on the elections regardless of its size or strength. A state that tended to be a swing state at elections, or where the Democrat victory in the past election had been narrow like in Florida or Nevada was probably likely to be much more susceptible to the message of the TPM than a state that was a traditional Democrat stronghold like California.

Much of the same reasoning can be applied when it comes to analyzing Sarah Palin's impact on these elections. She was a figure, however controversial, that was visible in the campaigns and able to mobilize voters. Her influence in the different states also depended on the electability of the candidate as well as on the political sentiment in the specific state. Many of her endorsements were successful, especially with the help of her "Mama Grizzly" endorsement theme that gained a lot of attention and promoted a number of female candidates. She can also be said to have been more tactical with her endorsement than the

TPM in that she often held back her endorsements until she saw which way the electoral wind was blowing, giving her a higher endorsement success rate than the TPM.¹⁷

S&D present an additional factor that they claim had a great deal of influence on the election outcomes, namely the candidates' amount of campaign funding. According to their findings among the candidates endorsed by the TPM who raised more than the average amount among Republican candidates, a majority of fifty-five percent won their House elections. The TPM-endorsed candidates who raised less than the average all lost their elections. In their view this shows that campaign funding was an important factor in the mid-term elections and that the status of being a TPM-endorsed candidate did not enhance a candidate's chances in the elections unless he or she had enough campaign funds to match the other candidates. If they did, they had about equal chances of winning a House seat. S&D also reject the claim R&S make in their book *Mad As Hell*, namely that the realignment of the electorate that was evident in the 2010 mid-term elections represents a lasting shift in public opinion and in the electorate. S&D on the other hand explain the election results with the usual trends in the mid-term elections as discussed earlier, with a disgruntled public, and with a candidate's access to campaign funding, claiming that the realignment therefore is temporary only, as these factors have never been static.¹⁸

What the authors do agree on is that the TPM invigorated the Republican electorate and contributed strongly to the high turnout of Republican voters compared to the Democrat voter turnout. The TPM managed to create interest and involvement in the mid-term election to a much larger degree than either the Republican or the Democrat parties were able to do. This turned out to be an advantage for both establishment-backed Republican candidates and for the TPM-endorsed Republican candidates.

Structural Reasons Behind the TPM Impact

In their book *American Political Parties* from 1991, Dean McSweeney and John Zvesper describe the two-party system in the United States and discuss why it is difficult for a

¹⁷ Bullock 2011: 6-7, 218-222.

¹⁸ Street & DiMaggio 2011: 148-152.

political third party to make any lasting impression on American politics.¹⁹ They also discuss what they see as the decline of the party system and possible reasons behind this development. Their theories on these topics will now be used in a brief discussion that draws parallels to the contemporary TPM and looks at some of the possible structural reasons that contributed to the political environment that facilitated the growth and the appeal of the TPM and also its impact on the 2010 mid-term elections.

Many TPM supporters do not want the TPM to be registered as an official third party. One of the reasons might be that political third parties through history have not fared well, never being able to form a lasting entity to challenge the two major parties in the U.S. McSweeney and Zvesper (hereafter M&Z) hold this down to a number of reasons, many of which are institutional. The executive office can only be held by one party. Therefore a coalition government is not possible, and a small party would lack this incentive as well as the possibility to participate and influence government, an opportunity that exists in several other countries like in Norway. Also, laws regarding campaign funding and ballot appearance favor the two major parties by setting high requirements regarding the number of votes that automatically qualify for these provisions. Current examples are Carl Paladino and Joe DioGuardi in the New York mid-term elections, who running as TPM-endorsed Republican candidates not supported by the party establishment had to gather thousands of signatures in order to get on the primary ballot. The single member constituency system also makes it more difficult for a third party to gather the majority needed to win seats. In addition, the regulation of the primary elections late in the nineteenth century took a lot of power away from the party leaders and opened the primaries up to a wide range of people, thereby removing some of the incentive for founding a third party. This can be recognized in the 2010 mid-term elections where TPM-endorsed candidates as well as TPM-candidates ran on the Republican ticket despite not being supported by the Republican establishment.

The authors also mention some “socio-cultural influences” they claim have made third party formations less usual in the United States than in several other countries. They point to the fact that the American society has been plagued by much less conflict and division than many of its counterparts. The U.S. did not have a state religion, an aristocracy, or a monarch; factors that have led to much conflict in many countries around the world. Also the lack of a class system or socialism has contributed to less conflict and fragmentation, and thereby also to less need among the electorate to express its dissatisfaction through the formation of a third

¹⁹ Dean McSweeney and John Zvesper, *American Political Parties*, (New York, 1991).

party.²⁰ Socio-cultural conditions have changed somewhat through the years in that some of these factors are not as prevalent or important in twenty-first century's society as they were a hundred years ago. Still, these conditions have affected American political culture and created a political tradition that does not favor third parties

In the instances where third parties have had some degree of success M&Z ascribe this to the failure of the major parties to address important issues, failure by the major parties to adopt policies that appeal to a large number of voters, failure of the major party in office, a lack of attractive candidates, or a national crisis. In contemporary United States at least two of these factors are present in the eyes of many voters, namely the failure of the party in office as well as the national economic crisis, something which according to these theories could make a third party possible under the current conditions in the U.S. However, the institutional factors mentioned by M&Z are in effect also of today, and do not provide for an easy environment in which to found an official third party. As the TPM has not chosen to register as an official third party this issue will not be discussed any further in this context.

As a consequence of the difficulty in succeeding as an official third party M&Z claim that:

Proponents of new issues and group interests can seek to mobilize within the existing parties to mould them to their priorities rather than create new organizations. Alternatively, existing third parties can invade major party primaries as a more plausible route to power than competing against them.²¹

With reference to the 2010 mid-term elections discussed earlier, the situation described here by M&Z can easily be transferred to describe the TPM today, both in the instance of the TPM as a social movement and of the TPM as an existing, although not official third party. The TPM can definitely be said to have mobilized within the Republican Party to further its priorities, like a group, and also at least to have affected its party primaries, like an existing third party. Looking at the 2010 mid-term elections some candidates called themselves TPM-candidates as opposed to being Republicans. This speaks in favor of the TPM being a third party that tries to invade major primaries. All the TPM-candidates in addition to the TPM-endorsed candidates ran as Republican candidates although not always with the support of the

²⁰ McSweeney & Zvesper 1991: 82-87.

²¹ McSweeney & Zvesper 1991: 84.

Republican establishment. This on the other hand speaks in favor of a group that tried to mobilize within an existing party.

It does appear that there is no clear consensus within the TPM about the real nature of its political entity. Regarding the numerous local groups and many national organizations that make up the TPM as well as its decentralized nature this is not surprising. The background literature gives the impression that the local TPM activists see themselves as standing outside either of the two major parties, a situation they want to preserve in the form of a grassroots organization in order not to end up as part of the Washington establishment. The national organizations on the other hand seem to be less preoccupied with the grassroots theme and non-partisanship, and more interested in influence and cooperation with Washington. But despite the heterogeneous nature of the TPM it looks as if the local groups and the national groups pulled together in the 2010 mid-term elections in order to get both the TPM-candidates and the TPM-endorsed candidates elected to be able to exercise political power and influence above the grassroots level. As all of these candidates ran on the Republican ticket, the TPM supporters had no choice but to simultaneously vote for the Republican Party whatever their political affiliation might be. Of course, the TPM-candidates did have the opportunity to run as Independents or form a third-party-alternative, but none chose this possibility. This testifies to the fact that the TPM-candidates as well as the people who voted for them did not see the association between the Republican Party and the TPM as overly problematic.

The fact also remains that the TPM is not registered as an official third party. And due to its decentralized and loose organizational framework, its narrow issue focus, and lack of a general ideological identity as put forward in Heywood's theory as well as the apparent lack of a common wish within the TPM to become a political party it seems safe to once again conclude that the TPM as of today is not a political party, whether registered or not, and thereby also not a third party that tries to invade a major party as in the theory of M&Z. The more relevant question seems to remain whether the TPM is an independent grassroots organization that seeks to mobilize within the existing Republican Party, or in fact a right-wing branch of the Republican Party. A closer scrutiny of three specific members of the Tea Party House Caucus in the next chapter will hopefully shed some more light on this question.

M&Z further discuss what they see as the decline of the party in the United States since approximately nineteen sixty-five. They describe both what they see as the evidence of the decline as well as the structural reasons behind the decline. As to the evidence of decline one of their arguments is that the parties since then have attracted fewer activists. And it does seem that the TPM was able to attract activists to a much larger degree than any of the two

major parties, energizing and mobilizing people that otherwise would not have made their opinions heard. They also hold that the parties play a smaller role at elections having been replaced by candidates' organizations. This is in line with the findings of S&D with regard to the importance of a candidate organization's campaign funding as opposed to the lack of importance regarding the candidate's degree of party affiliation or loyalty. Also, the strong visibility and presence of the candidates as opposed the parties in the media is further evidence of this. Further they claim that the parties now have less control over the primaries, as the deciding body now primarily is the voters as opposed to the party elite fifty years ago. This can be seen in the fact that several of the party-establishment favorites like Jane Norton (Colorado) and Mick Castle (Delaware) lost the primary election to TPM-endorsed candidates. They also argue that the voters have become less partisan and more volatile in their voting patterns, being more influenced by short-term influences than by long-time party loyalty, and being more concerned with the appeal of a candidate than by his party affiliation. This is evident in the 2010 mid-term election results when compared to the 2008 presidential election results. Millions of voters changed their vote in 2010 due to factors like President Obama's loss of popularity, and the attractiveness of many of the TPM-endorsed candidates' messages. They finally point to the recurring situation of divided control in both federal and state governments which makes it more difficult for one party to rule strictly by its own principles as well as the increasing number of sub-committees in Congress that has spread the power to decide among an increasing number of people on behalf of the party elite. These factors cannot be specifically tied to the TPM, but still have contributed to the political climate of dissatisfaction with the major parties and Washington that made the TPM possible.²²

They go on to mention several structural factors that in their opinion have contributed to this situation of party decline. They point to the American post-industrial society in which the living standards have increased and people have become wealthier, and thereby less inclined to partake in party activism on behalf of better social conditions. The economic crisis could have countered this situation and led to an increase of activism in the electorate of the two major parties. Instead the TPM was able to capitalize from the crisis and activate parts of the electorate on their own behalf. Also, the rise in mass communication in the form of computers and television has enabled candidates to use these channels to promote themselves, making them less dependent on the party apparatus to spread their message.

²² McSweeney & Zvesper 1991: 180-184.

Mass-mailing and the FOX Network are prime examples of TPM-endorsed candidates using the “new” mass media to their advantage. Further, they mention incidents like the Vietnam War and Watergate that have led many voters lose confidence in Washington and in the politicians. More current examples are the Whitewater scandal and the Iraqi War, incidents that have also contributed to a loss of confidence in the two major parties among the electorate as a whole. The TPM with its often “new” and thus inexperienced candidates was not tarnished by such allegations, giving many TPM-endorsed candidates an electoral advantage as well as giving the TPM momentum and credibility. M&Z go on to mention reforms regarding access to the primaries and regarding campaign finance that have given more power to the individual candidate, and reduced the influence the party elites. As recently mentioned this benefited the TPM-endorsed candidates who were able to enter races despite not being supported by the establishment and also those who were able to raise the necessary campaign funds, as well as of course any other candidate with adequate funding. The transition to more single-member constituencies, and thereby smaller areas to cover, has also made it easier for a candidate to run his or her own campaign and rely less on the party apparatus, a fact that also benefits any candidate with access to enough funds. Finally, they point to new generations of voters providing for new expectations, and the much more candidate-centered campaigns of current American politics. These are factors that affect all candidates, but most likely gave the TPM-endorsed candidates an advantage as proponents of a message that was somehow novel and different from the two major parties’ more mainstream campaign rhetoric. In addition the TPM was successful in creating a lot of attention and visibility for many of their favored candidates.²³

The theories of M&Z have here been applied to the current situation in U.S. politics and society. And based on these theories it is evident that there were structural conditions present in U.S. society during 2009 and 2010 that contributed to the rise of the TPM. The technological revolution, the political reforms, the loss of confidence, and the new generation of voters all contributed to the political climate that facilitated the formation of the TPM.

²³ McSweeney & Zvesper 1991: 184-198.

Chapter 4: The TPM in Congress

The Tea Party Caucus

The Tea Party Caucus was founded by Michele Bachmann in the summer of 2010. By the end of the Congress term the Caucus had a total of fifty-two members. The start of a new Congress term in January of 2011 meant a “reestablishment” of the Caucus, and as of April of 2012 the Caucus consisted of sixty-six members. According to its website the Caucus is “issue-based in nature, promoting the principles of fiscal responsibility, limited government and strict adherence to the Constitution.” It sees itself as being a means for ordinary Americans to make their voice heard to the members of Congress, rather than being a “mouthpiece of the Tea Party.”¹

The Caucus’ level of activity has varied, much due to the program of its leader Michele Bachmann, who among other commitments during the autumn of 2011 was occupied with making a finally unsuccessful bid for the position of Republican presidential candidate in the 2012 elections.² This chapter will take a closer look at three of the members of the Tea Party Caucus, namely Michele Bachmann who represents the sixth District of Minnesota, Allen West who represents the twenty-second District of Florida, and Mick Mulvaney who represents the fifth District of South California. Each member will be presented by a short biography in order to provide some background material regarding his or her education, experience, views, and political careers. Their Congressional work and voting records will then be examined with regard to five specific policy areas, namely Homeland Security, Immigration, Economy and Budget, Environmental Issues, and Health Care in order to try and assess whether their political performances in Congress are consistent with their own views as well as what the TPM stands for, or if they have acted in more pragmatic manner and followed the political mainstream.

¹ <http://teapartycaucus-bachmann.house.gov/about-me> (25/4/2012).

² <http://www.minnpost.com/dc-dispatches/2011/10/bachmanns-house-tea-party-caucus-quiet-capitol-hill> (25/4/2012).

Congresswoman Michele Bachmann

Michele Bachmann was born in nineteen fifty-six. She worked as federal tax litigation attorney until she entered the Minnesota Senate in 2000. In 2006 she won the seat for the sixth District in the U.S. House of Representatives as the first Republican woman from Minnesota ever. As just mentioned she formed the House Tea Party Caucus in 2010. Prior to her re-election in the 2010 mid-term elections she was endorsed by Sarah Palin as one of her “Mama Grizzlies.” In Congress she is a member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the Financial Services Committee. She and her husband have had twenty-three foster children in their care, and the well-being of foster and adopted children is one of the issues closest to her heart. Otherwise her primary issues are tax reduction, smaller government, and a stricter adherence to the Constitution, calling herself a “Constitutional Conservative.” These issues clearly coincide with many of the goals of the TPM. One of her main single causes has been the repeal of the Health Care Reform, or Obamacare, which in her view represents an unconstitutional expansion of government intervention.³ She is an active member on social medias like Facebook and Twitter where she actively and often explicitly advocates her own views and efforts, for instance with regard to the before mentioned Health Care Reform.

Regarding fiscal policies Michele Bachmann has very clear views on what should be done to improve the American economy. In her view the American tax system is too complicated, and should be revised in order to provide “simplicity, fairness, and efficiency.” She holds that tax reduction for the middle-class would lead to a better economy and more jobs. She is also in favor of less taxation and less regulation for small businesses. In Congress she has introduced as well as cosponsored several bills that would lead to tax relief for many Americans, like the End Tax Uncertainty Act of 2010 that among other things would “prevent pending tax increases, permanently repeal estate and gift taxes, and permanently repeal the alternative minimum tax on individuals.”⁴

Bachmann is very critical of President Obama’s stimulus bill of 2009 (the American Jobs and Recovery Act) and claims that it is a failure that has not created or saved the jobs it originally promised, but that to the contrary a million jobs has been lost in the past three

³ <http://bachmann.house.gov/Biography> (25/4/2012).

⁴ <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr86> (26/4/2012).
<http://bachmann.house.gov/Issues/Issue/?IssueID=2869> (26/4/2012).

years.⁵ She also voted against TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) that was instigated under President George W. Bush in 2008, claiming that she could find no mandate for this program in the Constitution and therefore chose to follow her principles as a Constitutional Conservative rather than follow her party. Further she holds that the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 that among other things provides consumer and investor protection, ends bailouts, and provides for better oversight as well as transparency and accountability with regard to big businesses constitutes an expansion of government and will ultimately cost trillions of dollars. She was also one of the leading opponents in Congress of raising the debt ceiling in 2011, claiming that the solution was rather to cut spending and taxes. In addition she has voted for terminating the Home Affordable Mortgage Program, and voted against modifying bankruptcy rules to avoid foreclosures as well as against several proposed economic, bailout, and stimulus packages. On all of these issues she has voted in line with the large majority of Republican Congressmen and women. Bachmann is a strong proponent of a balanced budget and has cosponsored the Balanced Budget Amendment that would make it much more difficult to present and approve a budget that is not balanced unless there are very special circumstances present.⁶

With regard to economic issues Michele Bachmann seems to follow her principles when it comes to casting votes, even to the extent of going against her own party. She votes against most bills and acts that would lead to increased government spending or regulation of the economy, often referring to the lack of mandate for these measures in the Constitution. Her views and votes are also clearly in line with the view of the TPM as to smaller government, less taxes, and strict adherence to the Constitution. One exception can be found in the case of the Omnibus Appropriations Act Amendment that gave additional billions to anti-recession stimulus spending in 2009. While most House Democrats voted yes, the Republicans were divided with a hundred and three votes in favor and sixty-five votes against.⁷ Bachmann voted in favor of this act, which is not in line with the TPM viewpoint of no more bailouts.

When it comes to Homeland Security Bachmann believes in a strong national defense. In her view both the military and the intelligence community must be provided with the

⁵ <http://bachmann.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=281230> (26/4/2012).

⁶ http://banking.senate.gov/public_files/070110_Dodd_Frank_Wall_Street_Reform_comprehensive_summary_Final.pdf (26/4/2012).

http://www.ontheissues.org/House/Michele_Bachmann_Budget_+_Economy.htm (26/4/2012).

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php> (27/4/2012).

⁷ http://www.ontheissues.org/HouseVote/House_Votes.htm (26/4/2012).

necessary funds to defend the United States and continue the war against terror.⁸ She criticizes the Obama administration for declaring that the war on terror is over, a statement she sees as absurd.⁹ In her view defense spending is not a significant factor behind the size of the deficit as some people claim, pointing to the research that shows that defense spending constitutes only five percent of the Gross Domestic Product. She sees the U.S. as a “nation at war” that therefore should uphold the current level of investment in Homeland Security.¹⁰

Regarding legislation on Homeland Security Bachmann generally has voted against acts and bills that would lead to more oversight of the intelligence community as well as more control over the use of electronic surveillance, voting in line with most of her Republican colleagues.¹¹ The question of whether her views and votes are compatible with the TPM view on Homeland Security is not easy to answer. TPM-endorsed Senator Rand Paul is of the opinion that every part of the federal budget should be object to necessary cuts, including the defense budget.¹² A quick survey of the websites of organizations like TPE, AFP, and FW as well as other TPM-related websites does not give any substantial information about the TPM’s view on this matter. However it is possible to deduce from its position on the issue of government spending that the TPM would probably be in favor of reducing costs also with regard to the defense budget, and that Michele Bachmann’s view on this matter thereby is not quite in line with the TPM.

On the issue of immigration Michele Bachmann has strong views on how the government should deal with this policy area. She does not want the millions of illegal immigrants already in the country to be given amnesty, nor does she want them to receive any kind of welfare benefits. Instead she wants to offer visas to highly skilled workers whose skills are needed in American businesses. She is also in favor of strengthening border security and building a fence on the entire border against Mexico in addition to passing more legislation that contributes to securing the United States’ borders as well as an effective enforcement thereof. In her view this would be to the advantage of the American job market. In 2011 Bachmann cosponsored a bill that would ensure that illegal aliens would not receive any money from the Social Security system.¹³

Also on the topic of immigration a survey of TPM-related websites does not give very much information about how the TPM views this issue. However, what comes to light is that

⁸ <http://bachmann.house.gov/Issues/Issue/?IssueID=2864> (26/4/2012).

⁹ <http://bachmann.house.gov/News/DocumentPrint.aspx?DocumentID=293361> (30/4/2012).

¹⁰ <http://bachmann.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=240190> (30/4/2012).

¹¹ <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php> (27/4/2012).

¹² Paul 2011: 131-134.

¹³ http://www.ontheissues.org/2012/Michele_Bachmann_Immigration.htm (27/4/2012).

the TPE supported the 2010 Arizona law on illegal immigration that many called the “broadest and strictest immigration measure in generations” in the entire U.S.¹⁴ Also the Illinois AFP on its website speaks up against California offering in-state tuition to illegal immigrants.¹⁵ It is therefore not unreasonable to believe that the TPM’s view on immigration is similar to the standpoints of Michele Bachmann. This is also consistent with the TPM’s view of a stricter adherence to the Constitution and thereby to the laws of the U.S. that also encompass immigration laws. In addition spending money on social security and education for illegal immigrants can be said to contradict the TPM principle of less government spending.

The issue of energy and energy independence on the other hand is an area where the TPM has been much more visible regarding their views, as has Michele Bachmann. She is a firm believer in less regulation of energy production and exploration of areas that are currently off-limits due to environmental considerations. The goal as she sees it is to become self-sufficient with regard to oil and gas production. She also wants to explore alternative sources of energy, but has little regard for climate science, which she calls “unknown, scarcely even knowable—as well as riddled with its own academic corruption.” Her views are reflected in her votes in Congress. Like most of her Republican colleagues in Congress she consequently votes against any legislation that is intended to regulate greenhouse gases, promote alternative sources of energy, or remove oil industry subsidies, while voting in favor of the expansion of oil drilling areas.¹⁶

Michele Bachmann and the TPM are very much on the same wavelength in questions regarding energy and the environment. The TPM is in favor of less regulation of energy production as well as in favor of lower consumer costs. The TPM’s stand on these issues is also consistent with its wish for less government regulation. In addition a number of TPM supporters believe that that global warming does not exist as mentioned in Chapter two.

The final policy area to be explored as to the views of Michele Bachmann is the Health Care Reform (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act), or Obamacare as it is popularly called. She has very strong views on this legislation, calling it unconstitutional and immoral, as well as “the largest entitlement and spending program in our country’s history.”¹⁷ She has been a staunch advocate for the total repeal of this legislation, her main arguments

¹⁴ <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/supportarizonaimmigrationlaw/> (27/4/2012).

¹⁵ http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/24/us/politics/24immig.html?_r=1 (27/4/2012).

¹⁶ <http://americansforprosperity.org/111610-state-tuition-illegal-aliens> (27/4/2012).

¹⁶ <http://bachmann.house.gov/Issues/Issue/?IssueID=4318> (27/4/2012).

¹⁶ http://www.ontheissues.org/2012/Michele_Bachmann_Energy_Oil.htm (27/4/2012).

¹⁷ <http://bachmann.house.gov/Issues/Issue/?IssueID=2863> (28/4/2012).

being that Obamacare is a job killer, that the government is not authorized to make health care decisions on behalf of the American people, and that Obamacare will be devastating to small businesses and to the American economy. Consequently she has voted against any legislation regarding Obamacare or legislation intended to extend health care in any form to American citizens, as well as in favor of any legislation that would reduce Obamacare or other health care entitlements, as has most of the Republican members of the House of Representatives.¹⁸

The Health Care Reform is also one of the most important causes for large segments of the TPM. Like Bachmann, the TPM views this legislation as an unconstitutional expansion of government intervention and regulation, as well as something that will lead to increased government spending and thereby an even larger deficit, thus encompassing three of the most important issues for the TPM. Many Americans have questioned the constitutionality of Obamacare. The issue has been taken all the way up to the Supreme Court of the United States in a case that challenges the “constitutionality of the individual mandate provision of the Affordable Care Act.” Hearings on this matter were held in March of 2012, but as of the time of writing the Supreme Court Ruling is still pending.¹⁹

From a review of Michele Bachmann’s stand on these five selected issues it appears that her views and votes are very much in line with the TPM in most instances. However, she has been a vocal and visible Congresswoman since 2006 and has advocated and voted in support of the same primary issues for the past six years. She has not adapted or changed her views in order to make them compatible with the TPM philosophy. It seems that she was a “tea-partier” before its time, finding a common base with the TPM when it emerged in American politics in 2009, and thereafter becoming one of its most visible spokespersons. What also emerges as an interesting fact is that on most issues her votes are the same as of the majority of Republican House members, which raises a question about where the ideological line between the TPM and the Republican Party is to be drawn. On the other hand there are only two ways to vote on any issue apart from abstaining, namely for or against, and based on the right-wing nature of the TPM and the right-left polarization of American politics it is highly probable that a TPM-endorsed member of Congress would vote like the average Republican. A second question then arises about the real impact and nature of the TPM in Congress, which will be further discussed at the end of the chapter.

¹⁸ http://www.ontheissues.org/2012/Michele_Bachmann_Health_Care.htm (28/4/2012).

¹⁹ <http://www.supremecourt.gov/docket/PDFs/11-117%20Cert%20Petition.pdf> (28/4/2012).

Congressman Allen West

Allen West was born in Atlanta, Georgia in nineteen sixty-one. He received a master degree in political science before he went on to serve in the U.S. Army for twenty-two years, retiring in in 2004. He served in combat zones like Iraq and Afghanistan and received numerous honors for his efforts. From 2005 to 2007 he worked as a civilian adviser to the Afghan army. In the 2010 mid-term elections he ran for a seat in the House of Representatives to represent Florida's twenty-second District. After raising the second largest amount of money among all congressional candidates as well as being endorsed by the TPM he won the congressional seat, becoming the first Republican African-American to represent Florida in Congress in more than a hundred years. In Congress he is a member of the Small Businesses and the Armed Services Committees. He is also a member of the Tea Party Caucus. He describes himself as a proud conservative and American Patriot, traits that clearly are in line with the principles of the TPM. One of his main causes is a strong alliance between the U.S. and Israel.²⁰ Like Bachmann, he is active on social medias like Facebook and Flickr where he advocates conservative issues and openly criticizes president Obama and the current administration.

In matters regarding the economy Allen West has very clear views on what has to be done. He is in favor of tax cuts as well as a flat tax rate, which in his opinion would eliminate many of the possible loopholes and exemption possibilities in the current tax legislation. He is also an advocate for better conditions for small businesses in the form of less taxation and less regulation. In addition he wants to reduce government spending, claiming that Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are the biggest reasons behind the size of the U.S. national debt.²¹ His work in Congress has reflected his views, and he has sponsored a bill regarding tax credit for small businesses, as well as cosponsored legislation that is in line with his views on fiscal policies. He has also voted in favor of any measures that would reduce government spending as well as taxation both for ordinary people and for small businesses. Like Bachmann, he too voted in favor of terminating the Home Affordable Mortgage Program, but unlike her, he voted in favor of raising the debt ceiling.²²

²⁰http://west.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4082&Itemid=300113 (29/4/2012).

²¹http://west.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4108&Itemid=300141 (29/4/2012).
<http://www.allenwestforcongress.com/home/> (29/4/2012).

http://www.ontheissues.org/FL/Allen_West_Budget_+_Economy.htm (29/4/2012).

²²<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/thomas> (29/4/2012).

Allen West's voting pattern is similar to his Republican colleagues', which is not surprising regarding his conservative political nature. West's view of the role of government in the economy is also in line with the principles of the TPM. Like the TPM he advocates less spending and less regulation, and like Bachmann he has supported the Balanced Budget Amendment. He also a supporter of the Cut-Cap-and-Balance Pledge, which is sponsored among others by numerous TPM organizations and is a symbolic plea to members of Congress to work for cuts in spending, caps on spending, and a balanced budget.²³

Being a former career military West has very clear views on Homeland Security. He claims that America is at war, and that the country needs to stay on the offensive. He also wants to strengthen the intelligence community and keep up a strong national defense, claiming that "President Obama is dramatically weakening our defense capabilities."²⁴ He is however not a stranger to the idea of cutting the defense budget where possible as he introduced a bill in Congress that reduced parts of the defense budget, a bill that was passed unanimously.²⁵ He has also sponsored and cosponsored several bills pertaining strengthening the national defense as well as securing veteran's rights.²⁶

Also in the area of Homeland Security Allen West has cast his votes similarly to the other Republican members of Congress, voting for legislation that would give the intelligence community more operational freedom. With regard to the TPM it does seem that he like Rand Paul is willing to make to reductions in the defense budget where possible, and thereby more in line with the TPM principle of reducing government costs than Michele Bachmann. However it is possible to deduce that he would be against any cuts that would reduce the strength of the national defense, making his position on these matters a delicate one to balance.

Illegal immigration is in West's opinion partly to blame for many of the ills in the American society. He holds that illegal immigration affects "economy, jobs, national security, crime levels, education, and healthcare."²⁷ Therefore he claims that strong measures must be taken in order to correct this in the form of a stronger enforcement of federal laws regarding immigration, and more resources to strengthen the border patrol, which in his view is mandated by the Constitution. He is a cosponsor of the Birthright Citizen Act, which

²³ http://www.ontheissues.org/FL/Allen_West_Budget_+_Economy.htm (29/4/2012).

²⁴ http://west.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4086&Itemid=300120 (29/4/2012).

http://west.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4087&Itemid=300121 (29/4/2012).
<http://www.allenwestforcongress.com/issues/> (29/4/2012).

²⁵ <http://www.allenwestforcongress.com/about/> (29/4/2012).

²⁶ <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/thomas> (29/4/2012).

²⁷ http://west.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4085&Itemid=300119 (29/4/2012).

would give American citizenship to anyone born in the U.S. who is the child of U.S. citizens, of a lawful resident, or of an alien working for the U.S. military. As of the present the Constitution says that anyone who is born or naturalized in the U.S. is a U.S. citizen, regardless of the status of the parents. This act would if passed take citizenship rights away from children born in the U.S. of parents that are illegal immigrants or illegal workers. The irony is that Allen West who uses constitutionality to strengthen his arguments regarding immigration in cosponsoring this act supports a direct challenge to the same Constitution.²⁸

Allen West's views on immigration regarding a stronger enforcement of the laws are the same as of many of the Republicans in Congress. However his opinion that more resources should be spent to this effect would mean more federal expenditures, which is the opposite of the TPM principle of less government spending. In defense of his view is the fact that as he blames illegal immigration for costly problems like unemployment and crime, the reduction of these problems through the initial extra federal funding would in the long run mean money saved for the federal government. As this is the most likely interpretation of his reasoning based on his presentation of his views, he can in that case be said to be in tune with the TPM principles after all.

Like Bachmann, West is very intent on the idea that the United States should be self-sufficient with regard to energy supplies. He is in favor of removing regulations concerning energy development, and of developing and putting to use all the possible energy resources in the U.S. including oil, gas, coal, nuclear energy, as well as alternative energy sources like wind and solar energy. In his view this would also provide thousands of jobs and reduce the cost of energy for the ordinary citizen.²⁹ With regard to environmental legislation Allen's track record is somewhat mixed. He has cosponsored the Open Fuel Standard Act of 2011 that is designed to ensure the manufacturing of more environmental-friendly vehicles with regard to fuel. On the other hand he has also cosponsored the Energy Freedom and Economic Prosperity Act that is designed to repeal earlier given tax credits for developing and using alternative and environmental-friendly energy sources.³⁰

West is also very critical of President Obama's handling of the Keystone XL Pipeline. The pipeline was planned for transporting tar sand oil from the Canadian border, through six American states, all the way down to the Mexican Gulf. It was a very controversial project, especially among environmentalists who claimed that the pipeline was a hazard to the

²⁸ http://house.ontheissues.org/FL/Allen_West_Immigration.htm (29/4/2012).

²⁹ <http://www.allenwestforcongress.com/issues/> (30/4/2012).

³⁰ <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php> (30/4/2012).

environment. The project needed a presidential permit, but was rejected by President Obama in January of 2012.³¹

On most energy and environmental issues Allen votes in line with his fellow Republican congressmen and women. Although he did support more environmental-friendly vehicles and thereby supported government regulation of this issue, his general position on the subject is similar to the TPM in terms of less regulation, lower costs, and self-sufficiency when it comes to the development of future energy sources.

The final policy area to be discussed in this context is once again health care. Although that he concedes that he supports certain parts of the Health Care Reform, he is still generally against it, claiming that it “over-rides the authority of the federal government.” In his view the law also contributes to a higher unemployment rate because of the provisions in the law that say that small businesses have to buy health insurance for full-time employees if the number of employees exceeds fifty. He claims that this leads to businesses choosing to stay small as well as preferring to hire part-time help. He also holds that the requirement that all Americans have to purchase health insurance is unconstitutional.³²

Regarding health care legislation, West is a cosponsor of the proposed law that would repeal the entire Health Care Reform. He has also voted in favor of any measures that would weaken parts of the current health care law, voting in line with his Republican colleagues.³³ It appears that also on the issue of the Health Care Reform Allen West is in total agreement with the TPM point of view, both with regard to the alleged unconstitutionality of the act as well as with regard to the costs to society.

However, the fact that the self-proclaimed conservative West is in tune with the TPM on all of the above issues should not come as a surprise as he was endorsed by the TPM before the mid-term elections, and also is a member of the Tea Party House Caucus. Like Bachmann he has been a visible and vocal member of Congress, sparking controversy with many of his statements and strong opinions. As was also the case with Bachmann, his voting pattern on the discussed issues is consistent with the Republican voting pattern in the House of Representatives. This once again raises the question of the where the line is to be drawn between the Republican Party and the TPM, and also of the degree of impact the TPM in fact has on Congress.

³¹ <http://stateimpact.npr.org/texas/tag/keystone-xl-pipeline/> (30/4/2012).

³² http://west.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4083&Itemid=300117 (30/4/2012).

³³ http://www.ontheissues.org/FL/Allen_West_Health_Care.htm (30/4/2012).
<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php> (30/4/2012).

Congressman Mick Mulvaney

Mick Mulvaney was born in Virginia in nineteen sixty-seven. He attended law school and went on to practice law. Later on he switched careers to the homebuilding and real estate business, and then to restaurant operations. In 2006 he won a seat in the South Carolina House, and progressed to the South Carolina Senate in 2008. In the 2010 mid-term elections he won the congressional House seat for the South Carolina fifth District after being endorsed by the TPM, including by FreedomWorks. In Congress he serves on the House Budget Committee and on the Joint Economic Committee. He is also a member of the Tea Party Caucus. Mulvaney describes himself as a believer in the Constitution and in a limited federal government that “safeguards our personal freedoms.” Issues that are important to him are business, jobs, and economy. Like Bachmann and West he too uses social medias like Twitter and Facebook to communicate with voters, although he is not as outspoken in his opinions as the other two representatives in these medias.³⁴

As just mentioned, one of the most important issues to Mick Mulvaney is the economy. He is adamant that the bailouts, deficit spending, and borrowing have to stop. To that effect he has cosponsored a Balanced Budget Amendment and voted in favor of bills that would cut spending, budgets, and taxes.³⁵ He also has a solution to counter the rising unemployment rate, namely to reduce federal pay, repeal Obamacare, better the conditions for small businesses, and avoid raising taxes.³⁶ In addition he has voted in favor of terminating the Home Affordable Mortgage Program, and like West supports the Cut-Cap-and-Balance Pledge.

Mulvaney was like Bachmann among the Republican members of Congress who voted against raising the debt ceiling, and has also cosponsored a Joint Resolution on Debt Limit of January of 2012 that disapproved of the President’s increase of the debt limit.³⁷ On most economic issues Mulvaney has voted like his Republican colleagues. However he has not been afraid to cast his votes in line with his conservative views on the issues, even if this has meant going against the Republican mainstream. In July of 2011 he was one of only eighteen

³⁴ http://mulvaney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=24&Itemid=332 (30/4/2012).
<http://www.mulvaneyforcongress.com/issues-2/role-of-government/> (30/4/2012).

³⁵ http://mulvaney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36:budget&catid=11:issues (30/4/2012).
http://mulvaney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=41:jobs-economy&catid=11:issues (30/4/2012).

³⁶ <http://www.mulvaneyforcongress.com/issues-2/jobs/> (30/4/2012).

³⁷ http://house.ontheissues.org/House/Mick_Mulvaney_Budget_+_Economy.htm (30/4/2012).

House Republicans who voted against their own Republican House speaker John Boehner's deficit-reduction and debt-ceiling plan, because it did not "take the sufficient action needed to secure our nation's financial future."³⁸ Nor has he been afraid to use humor or satire in order to draw attention to what he sees as President Obama's broken campaign promises, like when he introduced the Keeping Promises to Taxpayers Act, or when he offered President Obama's budget for 2013 up for a vote in the House. Together with several other conservative Republicans he also returned one point four million dollars from an unspent office fund to Speaker Boehner to underscore the fact that "the money wouldn't automatically be used to pay down the deficit," which in his opinion would be the correct thing to do.³⁹

The economy is a very important issue to Mick Mulvaney, and he has been very active in this political area. He evidently has very conservative views when it comes to the economy, and these views are very much in line with the TPM principles of less government spending and regulation. His activity and votes can be said to have been more in line with the TPM than with the Republican Party in that he has failed to support the party when it in his view has not been conservative enough in its policies.

With regard to Homeland Security Mulvaney sees terrorism as a very real threat after 9/11, and holds that the armed forces must receive the necessary funds in order to be trained and equipped adequately. In his view the security of U.S. citizens is first priority, and a strong national defense must be in place.⁴⁰ Mulvaney is also concerned about the PATRIOT Act and its possible effects on the individual liberties of U.S. citizens, but has still voted for an extension of this act that he claims was necessary in order to give the intelligence community the same possibilities regarding wiretaps as the criminal community already had access to. However, he is clear on the fact that he would vote against the act immediately if he thinks that citizens' rights are being violated.⁴¹

Mulvaney has cosponsored legislation that would only allow terrorists to stand military trial, and has voted against legislation that would let the military arrest and detain indefinitely U.S. citizens suspected of cooperating with terrorist organizations.⁴² This is in

³⁸ <http://www.nationaljournal.com/south-carolina-gop-delegation-sticks-together-against-boehner-bill-20110729> (1/5/2012).

³⁹ <http://thehill.com/capital-living/new-member-of-the-week/221559-rep-mulvaney-wields-satire-against-president-obamas-budget-tax-policies> (1/5/2012).

⁴⁰ http://mulvaney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=42:national-defense&catid=11:issues (1/5/2012).

⁴¹ http://mulvaney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39:homeland-security&catid=11:issues (1/5/2012).

⁴² http://www.thepoliticalguide.com/Profiles/House/South_Carolina/Mick_Mulvaney/Views/Homeland_Security/ (1/5/2012).

line with the general Republican vote. As to his views on the subject of Homeland Security the observation can be made that his attitudes regarding the funding of the military can be said to go against the TPM principle of less government spending. However, with regard to this subject he has also said that one must eliminate “waste and fraudulent spending,” which then again would reduce government spending, which is in line with the TPM.⁴³ Concerning his vote in favor of extending the Patriot Act, this extension only affected the individual rights of suspected terrorists, not of ordinary U.S. citizens. Thereby it cannot be said to have affected individual freedom as given by the Constitution, and is therefore not in conflict with TPM principles.

On the issue of immigration Mulvaney feels that there are several things that have to be addressed in order to solve the problems surrounding illegal immigration. In his view the borders have to be secured physically, not just by law, in the form of fences, border patrols, and use of technological aids. In addition the immigration laws have to be enforced all over the country, not just on the border, and all job applicants should be checked with regard to their citizenship. Also, all those with travel or work visas should be “kept track of.” In 2008 Mulvaney was the primary cosponsor of a South Carolina immigration bill that was similar to the strict Arizona immigration bill of 2010 mentioned in connection with Michele Bachmann.⁴⁴

Mulvaney is of the same opinion as West and Bachmann, and also of many fellow Republicans, on the issue of immigration. However, Mulvaney’s proposed solutions to stop illegal immigration would be very expensive to implement, and thereby not in line with TPM principles. But if one applies the same reasoning as was used regarding the views of Allen West on the same subject, these efforts would in the long run save the government money, and as such be in line with the TPM view of reduced government spending after all.

Energy policy is another area where Mulvaney has very clear ideas on what has to be done. His views coincide with the views of Bachmann and West as to energy self-sufficiency, lower costs for the consumers, and less regulation and full exploitation of all domestic resources, including building nuclear power plants. He claims that objections to this course of action as well as current energy taxes are based on “questionable science” and “baseless claims regarding global warming.”⁴⁵

⁴³http://mulvaney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=42:national-defense&catid=11:issues (1/5/2012).

⁴⁴<http://www.mulvaneyforcongress.com/issues-2/illegal-immigration/> (1/5/2012).

⁴⁵<http://www.mulvaneyforcongress.com/issues-2/energy/> (1/5/2012).

In Congress he has voted consistently in favor of legislation that removes regulations and taxes with regard to energy as well as against any legislation that would protect against global warming.⁴⁶ Once again his votes are similar to the Republican House members, and his views on energy are in tune with the TPM. An interesting fact to take note of in this regard is his view on global warming. The TPM has been accused by some of not taking global warming seriously, while others have claimed that this has been a groundless accusation aimed at slandering the TPM and its supporters. As a TPM-endorsed congressman Mulvaney's statements on global warming clearly show that there is indeed some truth to the claim that the TPM is ignorant when it comes to climate questions, as is Mulvaney.

The final issue to be discussed is Mulvaney's views on health care. Mulvaney concedes that the health care system "does ... need some reforms," but holds that the current Health Care Reform is not the answer to the problems. He is against what he sees as the government running the health care system, and in favor of "more personal control, free-market competition," as well as "common-sense reforms." In addition he claims that the current reform has led to an increase in insurance costs and also an increase in taxes and regulations for small businesses. His solution to the problems is to repeal Obamacare, or at least prevent any related regulations or funding from being passed.⁴⁷

In Congress Mulvaney is a cosponsor of the proposed act to repeal the Health Care Law and has also supported any legislation that would replace the law or reduce its funding or regulations, his voting pattern coinciding with other Republicans as well as with Bachmann and West.⁴⁸ And once again his principles are the same as the TPM's with regard to less government regulation and spending.

Like Bachmann and West, his views on all the discussed issues have been consistent with the TPM view, as well as with the voting pattern of the Republican members of Congress. There was however one specific area where he voted against the Republican majority, namely when he voted against the Boehner deficit-reduction and debt-ceiling plan in July of 2011. When he voted against the Republican majority, he indirectly in effect supported the Democrats. However it was clear before the vote that only a small Republican minority would vote against the plan that thereby was sure to pass with the help of the Republican majority, and Mulvaney thus would have known that his vote would have no practical effect. The question then arises whether he voted in this manner just to make point

⁴⁶ http://www.ontheissues.org/House/Mick_Mulvaney_Energy_+Oil.htm (1/5/2012).

⁴⁷ <http://www.mulvaneyforcongress.com/issues-2/health-care/> (1/5/2012).

⁴⁸ http://www.ontheissues.org/House/Mick_Mulvaney_Health_Care.htm (1/5/2012).

and separate himself from the Republican Party. Another interesting question is whether he would have voted in the same way if his vote had been a decisive one.

TPM Impact in Congress

Bachmann, West, and Mulvaney all ran on the Republican ticket in the mid-term elections and are registered as Republicans in Congress. All three were also TPM-endorsed candidates, and all three support the views of the TPM and are members of the Tea Party Caucus. The recent discussion shows that their views and votes are consistent with TPM principles regarding the discussed issues. What also comes to light is that their views and votes are in most cases also consistent with the views and votes of the other Republican members of Congress, whether endorsed by the TPM or not. These candidates do not seem to have been very preoccupied with profiling themselves as one or the other after entering Congress. Their main focus rather seems to have been advocating their own political principles, and also to vote according to these principles. Many of these principles are very much to the far right side of American politics, which is of course the main reason they were endorsed by the TPM in the first place.

As there are only two major parties in American politics a third party, body, or movement on one of the outer wings of American politics would automatically fall in line behind one of these major parties. Of course, as the TPM according to its principles and views belongs to the political right-wing it is not surprising that the TPM-endorsed candidates in Congress cast their votes in a similar pattern to the other Republican members of Congress.

The TPM-endorsements created an extra momentum for a number of candidates in their election campaigns for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, and candidates like Bachmann, West, and Mulvaney all profited from their TPM-endorsement when it came to the mid-term elections. What a number of the TPM-endorsed candidates also had in common was that they were not the favorite candidates of the Republican establishment, often due to their right-wing conservative views, and the TPM-endorsements for some became the decisive factor. Some of these candidates criticized the Republican Party, but none of the TPM-endorsed winning candidates rejected the Republican Party to the extent that they left the party and ran as Independents. It is therefore evident that they regard themselves as

Republicans. Some are members of the Tea Party Caucus, but this does not exclude being Republican, in fact all the members are Republicans. This Caucus might then be seen more as a common ground for Republicans who hold the same right-wing conservative views, and also as a forum where a number of TPM-endorsed candidates as well as TPM-candidates can hear the views of the many TPM supporters that helped them win their congressional seats. What may be the case regarding some TPM-endorsed candidates is that because of the lack of support from their own party before the elections, and because of the support they received from the TPM, these candidates do not feel as obliged as the “un-endorsed” Republican members of Congress to support the Republican Party with their vote in every instance. An example of this is Mulvaney voting against the Boehner plan in Congress. However on most issues their right-wing views coincide with the general Republican standpoints, as shown above.

The TPM-candidates on the other hand, see themselves as outside of the Republican Party and do not necessarily feel any allegiance towards the Republicans. Senator Rand Paul made this very clear in his book when he described how the Republican establishment had worked against his election as Senator. They do not belong to any central organization, nor are they led or supervised by a central TPM-management or have to answer to any TPM-leadership, but are “tea-partiers” in the sense that they share their principles and beliefs with the TPM, and denounce the Republican Party. However, all of the TPM-candidates who won their elections in 2010 were still members of the Republican Party, including Rand Paul. It seems that if a person is so adamant about the fact that he or she is not a Republican, the natural thing to do would be to leave the Republican Party and run as an Independent. The fact that no one did leads to the suspicion that also these candidates are in fact Republicans at heart. One possible reason why they chose to denounce the Republican Party and embrace the TPM could be to boost their own chances at the mid-term elections, taking advantage of the right-wing momentum that was created by the TPM in the time-period leading up to the election, especially if they were up against Republican establishment-favorites. Another possible reason may be that some were unhappy with the direction of the Republican Party, seeing them as becoming too center-oriented or not conservative enough, and therefore wanted to make a point to that effect by embracing the right-wing philosophy of the TPM.

The evidence points to the conclusion that like the TPM-endorsed Republican candidates, the TPM-candidates despite their assurances to the contrary also are Republicans at heart. One political label does not necessarily exclude the other. The question once again arises as to what the real nature of the TPM really is, and also as to what impact it has had in

Congress. The Republican Party membership of all TPM or TPM-endorsed congressmen and women underscores the conclusion that the TPM is not an independent political entity in Congress. In addition a party has a broad issue focus, whereas the discussion above has clearly demonstrated that the TPM has failed to take a clear stand on several issues like immigration and homeland security. The findings in this chapter are in line with Heywood's theory on parties and movements and thus further strengthen the conclusion from the previous chapters that the TPM is not a political party, but at the most a social movement.

As to the question of whether the TPM is in fact an independent grassroots movement or perhaps a right-wing branch of the Republican Party the TPM itself is adamant that it is an independent grassroots movement consisting of a loose collection of individuals as well as of local and national groups that have the same common goal regarding how the country should be governed, rejecting the allegation that it is part of the Republican Party. However, the findings in this chapter show that there is a strong connection between the TPM and the Republican Party through the TPM-endorsed Republican members of Congress, and through the Republican Party allegiance of the "TPM-members" of Congress.

Regarding the TPM impact in Congress, its possible influence would have to be exercised through the TPM and the TPM-endorsed candidates. The TPM can be said to have some influence in that the candidates who were successfully endorsed share its political views and values, and consequently work to promote these common principles in Congress. However, it is safe to assume that these candidates would have advocated their principles in Congress whether endorsed by the TPM or not. On the other hand, some of these candidates might not have won their elections without the support or endorsement of the TPM, and the winning candidate might instead have been a more moderate Republican politician who did not share the TPM views and values to the same degree. The relationship between the TPM and its endorsed candidates can therefore be described as a symbiosis where both parts stand to benefit from the connection. As a consequence, the TPM does have some impact in Congress in that it ensured the election of several candidates that share and work for its principles. Also, the TPM may thus have contributed to the Republican Party moving further right and becoming more conservative in its policies because of an increase in the share of right-wing conservatives among the Republican members of Congress after the 2010 mid-term elections.

It should be briefly noted that there also exists a Senate Tea Party Caucus. However this caucus has only few members. Also, due to the fact that the Democrat Party carries the majority in the Senate, TPM-endorsed Senators do not have any decisive power in the Senate,

and are therefore not described or discussed in this context with regard to possible TPM impact in Congress.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Party, Movement or Republican Affiliate

The foregoing chapters have described and discussed the TPM with regard to different contexts. Some questions were raised in the introduction while others have emerged through the different discussions. The final chapter aims to answer these questions based on a comprehensive assessment of the information and discussions that have come to light through the thesis.

One of the goals of this thesis has been to try and identify the true nature of the TPM and whether it is a political party or a social movement, or in fact an affiliate right-wing branch of the Republican Party. The authors of the source literature have very diverging views of the TPM. However, none of the authors of the source literature make the claim that the TPM is a political party. According to the political theory of Andrew Heywood a political party is an organized body with card-carrying membership that has a general ideological identity, a broad issue-focus, and aims to win and exercise government power. The examination of the TPM has established that the TPM is not one organization, but consists of individual activists, local groups of varying sizes, national organizations like FW and AFP, and symbolic leaders like Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann. Also, the TPM does not have a central organizing body or leadership, or any kind of formal membership registration. The different bodies that constitute the TPM have different goals and visions, and do not have a broad focus when it comes to issues. However, they can be said to share the same overarching principles. These individuals and organizations work to further their own views, and with regard to the 2010 mid-term elections they did try to influence the outcome of the elections through endorsements and support, but do not necessarily have any aspirations to exercise government power. Their goal seems to be more in the area of influencing government policies through the elections of politicians that share their views. Also, the TPM is not registered as a political party, and there has not been discovered any evidence that indicates that this is the wish of the TPM supporters or of any of the different organizations

affiliated with the TPM. Based on these facts about the TPM compared to the political theory of Andrew Heywood the answer to the question of whether the TPM is a political party is definitely no.

Regarding the TPM as a possible social movement, Heywood's theory describes a social movement as having a loose organizational framework and no card-carrying membership requirement, and the participants share common attitudes and aspirations as well as exercise political activism and intended and planned action in the pursuit of a few recognized goals. The findings of this thesis show that the TPM does have a loose organizational framework with no central organizing body. The different TPM groups and individuals are independent of one-another and pursue their own limited set of goals. Their issues are mostly to be found within the area of less government, less taxation, deficit reduction, and strict adherence to the Constitution, while issues like foreign policy, immigration and civil rights are seldom addressed in rallies, meetings, or any mission statements. TPM-affiliated organizations like FW and TPP exercise formal registration of supporters or members, but in the TPM in general there is no formal membership requirement or registration. The TPM supporters share common attitudes and beliefs within the areas mentioned above, and arrange meetings and rallies to mark their stand and also to present and spread their principles and goals to a larger audience. Their activities and endorsements with regard to the 2010 mid-term election can also be seen as a pursuit of their goals through the elections of candidates with similar principles and views who can further these causes on a higher political level. As such, the TPM fills the criteria set forth by Heywood's theory regarding social movements.

Heywood's theory also includes a description of new social movements as opposed to the traditional social movement. These movements are more concerned with "quality of life"-related issues like individual freedom than with social advancement, they advocate decentralization and participatory decision-making, they practice an often innovative and theatrical form of protest politics, and the participants tend to be better educated and more affluent than used to be norm form social movements. These criteria describe the TPM even more precisely. Two of the most important issues for the TPM are less government and the repeal of the Health Care Reform because the TPM is in favor of more freedom to choose for the individual. Also, the lack of want in the TPM for a more centralized organization or leadership as well as the demographics of the TPM supporters that show that they are predominantly well-educated and relatively well-off economically, support the TPM as a new social movement. In addition TPM rallies, activities, and also several TPM personalities have

caught a lot of attention because of their outspokenness, noise, and visibility, fulfilling the criterion of theatrical protest politics.

However, the fact that the TPM fulfills the criteria for being a new social movement does not automatically mean that it is a social movement. And this is an issue that is highly controversial. In the book *Mad as Hell* Rasmussen and Schoen are very adamant that the TPM is a social movement, calling it an independent grassroots organization. They claim that the TPM is the result of a populist revolt facilitated by current conditions in society, and is totally independent of the Republican Party. They also hold that the TPM represents something new and unprecedented in American politics, and also constitutes a lasting shift in the American electorate. They portray the TPM as a true grassroots movement that shapes its own agenda, presenting a lot of evidence in support of their assertions

Some of the findings of this thesis support the claims of R&S. Heywood's theory on social movements when evaluated against the TPM supports their claim that the TPM is an independent grassroots organization. Also, all the source literature presents and refers to individual activists and local groups that see themselves as part of the TPM, and reject both major political parties in the U.S. This is also supported by websites and articles found on the World Wide Web. In addition a number of politicians like Rand Paul are self-proclaimed "tea-partiers," and also ran for election as "tea-partiers" instead of as Republicans, Independents, or Democrats (although they all ran on the Republican ticket). These facts support the claim of R&S of the TPM as a Grassroots movement.

R&S further claim that the TPM is the result of a populist uprising among the public. The description of populism as a consequence of a crisis and dissatisfaction among the public coincides with conditions present in the American society in 2009 when the TPM first started up. The financial crisis, the bailouts, and the increased government regulation were among the factors that led to disgruntlement among the public and thereby also to the appeal of the TPM that advocated an anti-establishment message of smaller government and more individual freedom. Marches, rallies, and web activity protesting against the politics in Washington also testify to the notion of the TPM as a populist uprising. Therefore it seems very plausible that the TPM at least started out as a spontaneous populist reaction against Washington. This will be discussed further in the next segment.

As to their claim that the TPM is totally independent of the Republican Party the fact that many TPM supporters openly criticize and denounce the Republican Party supports this assertion. The discussion of the 2010 mid-term elections also showed that TPM supporters and affiliated organizations in several cases supported candidates that were ideologically in

line with the TPM, but in the long run not very electable, and also lost the Republicans several Senate seats. In his book Rand Paul describes how the Republican Party worked against his nomination in the primary election on behalf of an establishment-favored candidate. These facts all support the notion of the TPM as an independent entity separate from the Republican Party.

Finally R&S claim that the TPM represents something new and unprecedented in American politics, and that a permanent realignment of the electorate has taken place. If one views the TPM as a populist movement, history shows that it is one in a line of many populist movements or parties, and as such the TPM does not constitute anything new and unprecedented. However, if one looks at size and support of the TPM, polls and surveys clearly indicate that it has had the largest, and as such unprecedented, support of any populist movement in American political history. As to a possible permanent realignment of the electorate this is too early to say, as the TPM has only existed for barely three years, and has of yet only participated in one national election. The 2010 mid-term elections did show a realignment of the electorate, but this might just as well be attributed to factors like typical voting trends, the economic crisis, and the falling popularity of President Obama as was discussed in Chapter three. An economic recovery might result in very different results at a later election, and the volatile voting patterns of the American electorate could just as well turn against the TPM at a later point in time. Also, populist movements have traditionally had short lifespans in American politics. Only time will show whether R&S have interpreted the current political situation correctly with regard to their claim of a permanent realignment.

The authors of the book *Crashing the Tea Party*, Street and DiMaggio, are in total disagreement with R&S and claim that the TPM is Astroturf and that it was manufactured by Republican representatives to attract more voters to the Republican Party. In addition they claim that the TPM is media-made as well as misrepresented by the media with regard to an exaggeration of size and influence. Finally they claim that its supporters are among other things ignorant, paranoid, and racist.

Several findings in this thesis also support the claims of S&D. With regard to the claim that the TPM is Astroturf and was manufactured by the Republican Party, national organizations like FW, OCDB, and AFP that are affiliated with the TPM do have ties to the Republican Party. The chairman of FW is former Republican House majority leader Dick Armey. The OCDB started out as a political action committee that worked against the election of Obama as President, and also worked in favor of Sarah Palin as vice-president. Also, the AFP was founded by billionaire David H. Koch who has donated large amounts of

money to Republican causes.¹ In addition, several of the symbolic leaders of the TPM, like Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann have strong ties to the Republican Party. Michele Bachmann was discussed in the previous chapter with regard to her capacity as a Republican Congresswoman. Also, Palin is a former Republican member of Congress. These facts certainly suggest strong ties between the Republican Party and the TPM. Many of the national organizations like FW and OCDB have also been involved in TPM meetings and rallies, both with regard to arranging and to funding. Bachmann, Armev, and Palin have attended and spoken at many of these rallies and meetings. It is highly unlikely that any of these organizations or individuals would get involved to this extent unless they had some influence over the TPM agenda. This grade of involvement implies that national organizations and powerful individuals are involved in setting the TPM agenda, which is in direct conflict with the notion of the TPM as a bottoms-up grassroots movement, but rather suggests that the TPM is an Astroturf top-down organization. This involvement also implies that there is a very strong connection between the TPM and the Republican Party. The question remains whether the Republican Party is running the TPM, or whether the TPM is trying to infiltrate the Republican Party. The fact that many of the national organizations like FW and OCDB existed and were connected to the Republican Party well before the formation of the TPM, as well the political track record of the mentioned individuals strongly suggests that the Republican Party has more influence over the TPM than the other way around.

These organizations and individuals were also involved in the 2010 mid-term elections through both funding and endorsements of their favored candidates. As they because of their means and connections were able to provide a candidate with more attention and funding than local TPM-groups, their influence was bound to be the decisive one. This was demonstrated in the New Hampshire elections where Sarah Palin-endorsed candidate Ayotte beat locally TPM-endorsed candidate Lamontagne in the primary election by a large margin. This shows that money and power also played a role with regard to the mid-term elections, strengthening the image of the TPM as a top-down organization with strong ties to the Republican Party. This also suggests that these organizations and individuals have an influence over the policy agenda of the TPM through their choices of endorsing certain candidates over others, which in turn gives them a certain amount of influence over the Republican policy agenda in Congress.

¹ <http://www.forbes.com/profile/david-koch/> (5/5/2012).

S&D further claim that the TPM is made by the media, and also misrepresented by the media in that the media exaggerates both the size and the impact the TPM. There is a lot of well-founded evidence in the literature, and also credible information to be found on the World Wide Web that shows that the TPM started out as a spontaneous protest against Washington among the electorate. There has not been discovered any evidence that suggests that the TPM was in fact instigated by the media. However, it seems as if right-wing media like FOX News was very quick to pick up on the TPM, and from then on gave it a lot of air-time and attention, assisting and facilitating its growth and increased public attention and support. Without the media attention the TPM could not have reached such a number of people in such a short time. This issue will be further addressed in the next segment. As to the claim that the TPM is misrepresented by the media this is not unlikely. A news channel like FOX News that has become one of the most important champions for the TPM, and also is known for its partisan broadcasting, would necessarily present the TPM in an as favorable light as possible, and more than willingly exaggerate its size and importance in order to try and increase its popularity. People are more likely to be drawn to a movement that appears to be large and popular than to a movement that appears quite small and unknown. Popularity gives credibility. Also, surveys and polls can be manipulated by asking leading questions or providing selected answers, and interviews can be “cut and glued.” FOX News is also known for its extreme views and presentations. However, this is not unique or unknown in the media world, and should therefore not come as a surprise or a revelation. Left-wing media would probably not be above doing the same if they had a cause or a favorite to promote, and both sides continuously try to slander the other by presenting facts in the worst possible light. Accordingly, the claim that the media has misrepresented the TPM is true, but neither surprising nor revolutionary. What is more surprising is maybe the large number of people that have let themselves be persuaded by partisan reporting.

The final claim from S&D to be discussed is their description of the TPM supporters as racist, ignorant and paranoid, as well as a number of other more or less unflattering characteristics. This issue was debated in Chapter two, but a few additional points have emerged during the following chapters. With regard to racism, this can manifest itself in different ways. The political views of Bachmann, West, and Mulvaney that were presented with regard to immigration does show a certain degree of racism. All have very harsh views and very little regard for illegal immigrants, characterizing every one of them as a cost to society. When Bachmann only wants to give visas to highly skilled workers this can also be seen as discrimination and thereby racism towards poor, uneducated people from for instance

third world countries who are thereby collectively regarded as a liability, and as unable to make their own living. As to the description of the TPM supporters as ignorant, there also seems to be some truth to this claim. One of the reasons for this assertion is that not only do a number of TPM supporters completely disregard factual information about global warming, but also members of Congress like Bachmann and Mulvaney display the same level of ignorance, calling global warming “baseless claims” and “questionable science.” It is surprising that members of Congress show so little regard for scientific findings made by renowned scientists. Another factor is that the right-wing media like FOX News mentioned above is known to present very partisan versions of facts and news in their programs, as well as to often broadcast commentators and guests with extreme views. A number of people regard the news and information that they hear and learn from right-wing media sources as absolute truths, and do not question or seek information from other sources in order to verify what they have learned, however improbable. Some people obviously only seek information that suits their own views. Everyone in a democratic society is entitled to his or her own opinion, but when an opinion is built only on partisan and sometimes obviously questionable information this does testify to a certain level of ignorance and disregard for the possible truth.

Regarding the true nature of the TPM one can find arguments both for and against the TPM as a genuine grassroots movement. There are without a doubt a number of TPM supporters that work for the TPM on a local grassroots level that regard themselves as “tea-partiers” and not as affiliated with any of the two major parties. Also, polls have shown that among the TPM supporters that proclaim to have a major party affiliation, there are in fact a small number of Democrats, and a number of Independents. However, the findings of this thesis show that the TPM is a complex organization that is composed of more than the just mentioned components. The TPM as of today also consists of powerful national organizations with specific agendas and the means and the connections to promote this agenda. In addition it consists of individuals and politicians with a lot of influence and connections on a national scale, as well as of a number of congressional TPM-politicians and TPM-endorsed politicians. These different components have different degrees of attachment to the TPM, and different degrees of influence over the TPM agenda.

The facts clearly indicate that the TPM did start out as a grassroots movement. However it seems that as the TPM caught the attention of the national media, it also caught the attention of several national organizations and politicians that decided to “join” the TPM, both because they shared the same principles, but also because they saw the TPM as a means

to further their own cause on a novel and popular arena. Because of their size and connections they were soon in a position where they were able to influence and partly take over the TPM agenda. Consequently the TPM can no longer be regarded as a pure grassroots movement. The minor parts of the TPM that still consist of local activists and supporters can still be regarded as grassroots, but the main part of the TPM that also is the most visible and influential part consists of powerful organizations and of well-connected individuals, and the TPM can as such be regarded as Astroturf.

As these actors also have strong ties to the Republican Party, the main part of the TPM is very strongly attached to the Republican Party. The fact that TPM-endorsements most likely lost the Republicans some Senate seats does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a separation between the TPM and the Republican Party. It might just as well be attributed to hubris on the part of the endorsers. Prior to the 2010 mid-term elections polls indicated that the TPM had a lot of support among the electorate and was expected to influence a number of elections through its endorsements. This might have led the endorsers to overrate their possible influence in the elections, and endorse candidates that would otherwise have been deemed unelectable. As to the lack of establishment-support for a number of the TPM-endorsed candidates this does not have to be understood as a denouncement of the TPM. The Republican establishment is relatively moderate, and it therefore stands to reason that they would support the candidates that were most in line with their more moderate views, and also the candidates that they regarded as the most electable.

The TPM-candidates who won their mid-term elections are also members of the Republican Party, in addition the findings show that TPM-endorsed candidates vote in line with the Republican Party. This thesis therefore holds that the TPM-candidates and the TPM-endorsed candidates in the House of Representatives in fact together constitute a right-wing segment of the Republican Party, and there is consequently no independent “TPM-group” in the congressional House. Also, the parts of the TPM that consist of the before mentioned type of powerful organizations and individuals are so closely connected to the Republican Party that they also must be regarded as a right-wing affiliate of the same party. What is left as an independent grassroots part of the TPM are activists and organizations on a local level only.

However, the election victories of the TPM-candidates and the TPM-endorsed candidates have given the TPM some influence and impact in Congress, as there now are more right-wing conservatives in the Republican House Caucus than there were before the 2010 mid-term elections. This will ensure that the Republican political agenda does not move any further towards the center of American politics, and it also might instigate a Republican

agenda-move towards the right-wing conservative side of the Republican political spectrum, and as such also towards the TPM.

Remaining Questions and a Finding

One of the questions asked in the introduction was whether the TPM has lived up to its promises and visions, or if the political reality of Washington has proved too big an obstacle to make a tangible difference. During the election campaigns many TPM-connected candidates promised that they would go to Washington to work for issues like smaller government, deficit reduction, a stricter adherence to the Constitution, and the repeal of Obamacare. From the examination of several TPM-connected candidates, it does seem as if they have been voting in line with their principles and promises. As to the visions, as of sixteen months into their congressional careers, there does not seem any tangible change in Washington politics. Many representatives have been active in sponsoring as well as cosponsoring numerous bills that would repeal Obamacare, reduce government regulation and funding in several areas, stop the increase of the debt ceiling, and ensure more freedom to the individual. They have also cast their votes accordingly, voting down proposals from the Democrats that would work to the opposite effect. However, institutional factors and the political reality of Washington as of today has resulted in a divided Congress, and the Democrat proposals tend to be voted down in the House of Representatives, while the Republican proposals tend to be voted down in the Senate. That results in nothing much getting done one way or the other. The TPM can be said to have made a difference in that its endorsees helped secure a large Republican majority in the House of Representatives. However the Republican majority might have been secured also without help from the TPM.² Due to trends and conditions discussed in the foregoing chapters the Republicans had a clear advantage going in to the mid-term elections, and the general momentum in society was very much in favor of the Republican Party.

The area where the TPM probably made the most important impact and contribution with regard to the mid-term elections was in invigorating and mobilizing the electorate in favor of the Republican Party. The TPM anti-establishment message, its outspokenness, and

² Bullock 2011: 217-220.

its energy appealed to an electorate that was disillusioned with Washington and unhappy with the state of the nation. The TPM gave a number of voters a new possible alternative that spoke directly to their discontentment, and mobilized voters that otherwise would have remained passive. Due to the conservative values of the TPM most of these voters were on the right-wing side of the political spectrum, a fact that in turn benefited the Republican Party at the mid-term elections. The left-wing had no viable counter-alternative to offer their side of the electorate, and many of those who voted for President Obama in the 2008 election chose to stay passive as a result of their disillusionment with the President's performance. The possibility of winning a majority in either chamber of Congress also contributed to the mobilization of the Republican electorate, but the TPM should be given credit for its level of activity and visibility that helped bring this message out to the voters.

A second question asked in the introduction was whether the support of the TPM among the electorate constitutes a lasting shift in the electorate. This has been discussed extensively earlier in the thesis, but it should be noted that there have been major realignments in the electorate several times before in American electoral history, and although they may have lasted for a few elections, as of today none have been permanent. The TPM message and principles speak directly to the current ills in American society, and if the situation were to rectify itself somewhat, the TPM's message would not hold the same appeal to the electorate. If President Obama for instance manages to get re-elected in 2012, and his policies in the long run succeed in getting the country and the economy back on track, the voting pattern in 2014 or 2016 may look completely different. Also, the faithlessness and volatility of the electorate that punished President Obama in 2010, may just as well punish the TPM at a later point in time if the voters do not see any tangible difference in Washington in the course of a couple of years. So the answer still is that it is too early to make this conclusion concerning the TPM after barely three years of existence.

An interesting point that has emerged during the thesis is how the different political wings of American politics manage to use the Constitution and the Founding Fathers in defense of completely opposite political views. This became very clear with regard to the TPM, seeing as much of the source literature also attempted to do just this. Read separately, opposite interpretations made perfect sense. For instance a man like Thomas Jefferson is claimed to have been both for and against taxation. This illustrates a polarization in American politics and also illustrates how much political affiliation depends on the basic attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of each individual citizen. However, the question can be asked whether it is correct to view 2012 in the light of 1789.

The last issue to be discussed in this context is a very interesting finding with regard to the role of the media related to the popularity of the TPM. Several of the authors of the source literature claim that the emergence of a “new” mass media that is more partisan and hard-edged has facilitated the formation and growth of the TPM.³ However, it appears that this new mass media, in addition to new types of media like websites and blogs, has in fact been vital to the TPM’s formation and subsequent growth. This is very interesting in that it testifies to the fact that the TPM had most likely not existed today without the media. This also testifies to the change that has taken place in the media landscape, as well as to the power and influence of today’s new media channels.

As opposed to twenty years ago when the media consisted of newspapers and network television, today’s media is much more diverse, and also includes websites, blogs, and cable television. The content of the media outlets has also changed in that before the media was more concerned with factual, unpartisan reporting, whereas today the media has become much more personal, partisan, and hard-edged and seems at times more concerned with publishing personal opinions and slander than with reporting the actual facts. Evidently everyone has the choice to look up the former, but a number of people select to turn to the latter choice in order to learn news and facts from a likeminded source. The FOX Network is one of the best-known partisan sources of information in the United States, and it is just because of its partisan, opinionated news reporting that it has become so well known throughout the country, attracting like-minded right-wing conservative viewers by the millions. This kind of partisan, rough-mouthed news coverage has shown a frightening ability to persuade and animate its followers.

When the TPM started arriving upon the political scene the first media source to spread the word about its activities was the World Wide Web. Twenty years ago the Santelli rant would have ended up as a side column in a newspaper and probably would have been left at that. However, in 2009 the rant became a YouTube hit, and the message soon caught on all over the net. People shared and engaged, spreading it out to an increasing number of people in a typical grassroots manner. It might still have ended there, but soon the cable networks heard about it, and the right-wing media seems to have liked the fact that the TPM was just in line with the sentiments that they were propagating. FOX News and its news anchor Glenn Beck became one of the most active proponents for the TPM, and as discussed earlier

³Rasmussen & Schoen 2010: 224-246.
Street & DiMaggio 2011: 138-141.
Lepore 2010: 41.

probably exaggerated both its size and importance in order to appeal to its viewers. Also, the TPM might have been seen as a way to validate and spread the FOX Network's own political views and aspirations in a new manner. Because of its large segment of viewers, FOX Network reached and also influenced a lot of people who believe that its reports and comments are the Gospel. Thereby it was able to generate a lot of attention and momentum for the TPM that it most probably would not have received from any of the "old" kinds of media. Since then the network has become famous for its constant criticism of the Obama administration as opposed to its praise of the virtues of the TPM. This brief and somewhat superficial summary nevertheless demonstrates the power of the new media as opposed to the old, and also demonstrates the vital role that the right-wing media played in the emergence of the TPM.

So although the TPM was not initially created by the right-wing mass media as claimed by S&D, this media was still the decisive factor in its growth and development. As a consequence it is logical to deduce that the TPM is in fact not as strong or viable as earlier populist movements, some of which were described in Chapter two, even though the TPM as of today can claim a larger percentage of supporters. The reasoning behind this assertion is that the TPM would never have been able to develop or reach its present size without the media attention and the backing from the right-wing media networks, and it most likely would not even have been founded without the World Wide Web. Older populist movements on the other hand managed to grow on their own accord and attract a sizeable percentage of the electorate solely through their own achievements and attractiveness, something that can be seen as a much greater achievement. This also further testifies in favor of the claim that the TPM is in fact an Astroturf organization.

Looking to the Future

The American society as of 2009 found itself in a deep economic crisis, and there was an increasing gap between the politicians and the public. The TPM emerged on the political scene and made a successful appeal to the core of the American soul. With the help of effective rhetoric the TPM convinced the electorate that it held the solutions to the problems, and was accordingly able to mobilize the Republican electorate in the 2010 mid-term

elections. However, this thesis makes the claim that the TPM of today is predominantly an Astroturf right-wing branch of the Republican Party.

The future destiny of the TPM is not an easy question to predict. Because of its nature this will most likely depend on whether TPM-affiliated national organizations and politicians regard that the TPM can be of use for instance at future elections. If not, what will be left of the TPM will be the less powerful, not so sizeable local grassroots segment of the movement.

The TPM has tried to make its voice heard with regard to the Republican presidential primaries in 2011 and 2012, but without much success. Michele Bachmann was in the running as a potential presidential candidate, but eventually had to pull out due to lack of support. Michele Bachmann has now officially endorsed the Republican presidential candidate for 2012, namely Mitt Romney, and it remains to be seen whether this will create an increase in TPM interest and activities.

It seems as if the novelty and the momentum from 2010 has lost some of its appeal to the voters, and a poll conducted for ABC News and Washington Times in April of 2012 showed that the percentage of TPM supporters among the electorate had dropped six percent in the past seven months. The poll showed a decline in its popularity in other areas as well, and also not surprisingly that the TPM had the highest support among those with a negative view of the economy, as well as among conservative Republicans.⁴

Based on the findings of this thesis, an area that would be interesting to explore further would be a closer examination of the relationship and interactions between the TPM and Glenn Beck and the FOX Network as to how they may have had mutual benefits from each other. A second interesting topic is the relationship between the TPM and national organizations like FW and OCDB with regard to how these organizations have been able to influence and take over parts of the TPM agenda. The final area of research to be suggested in this context is to attempt to make a neutral assessment of the views of the TPM compared to the intended meaning of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution in order to evaluate whether the TPM's claim of constitutional support for their views is in fact a valid one.

⁴ <http://www.langerresearch.com/uploads/1136a6TeaParty.pdf>

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