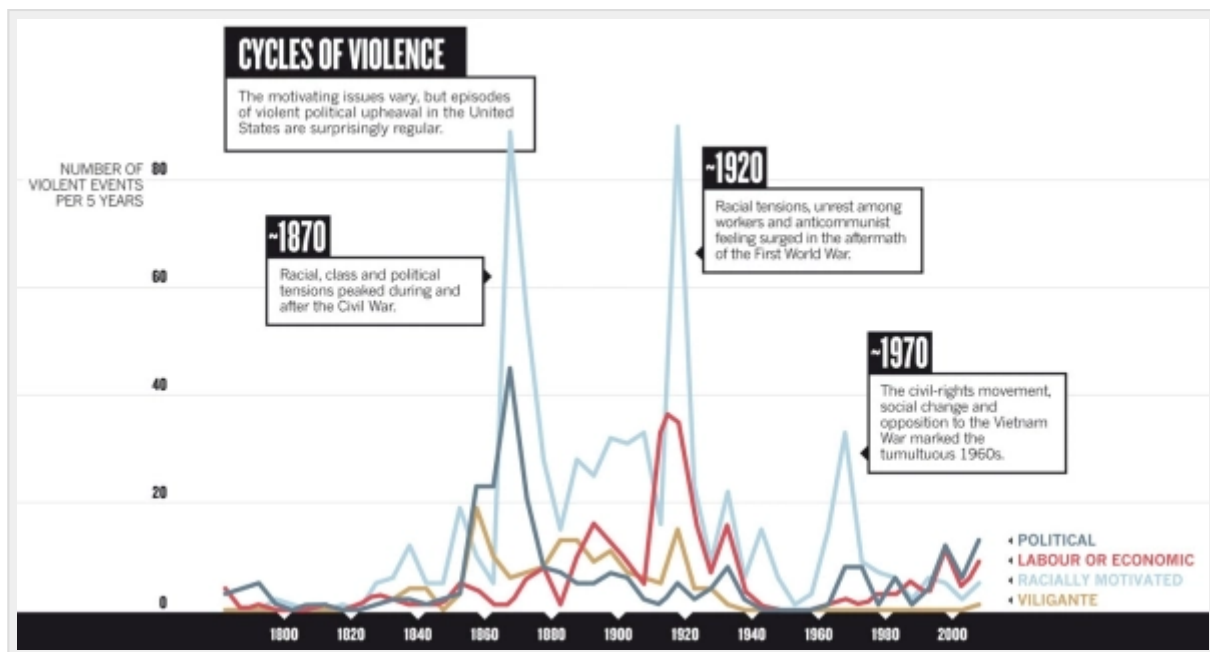


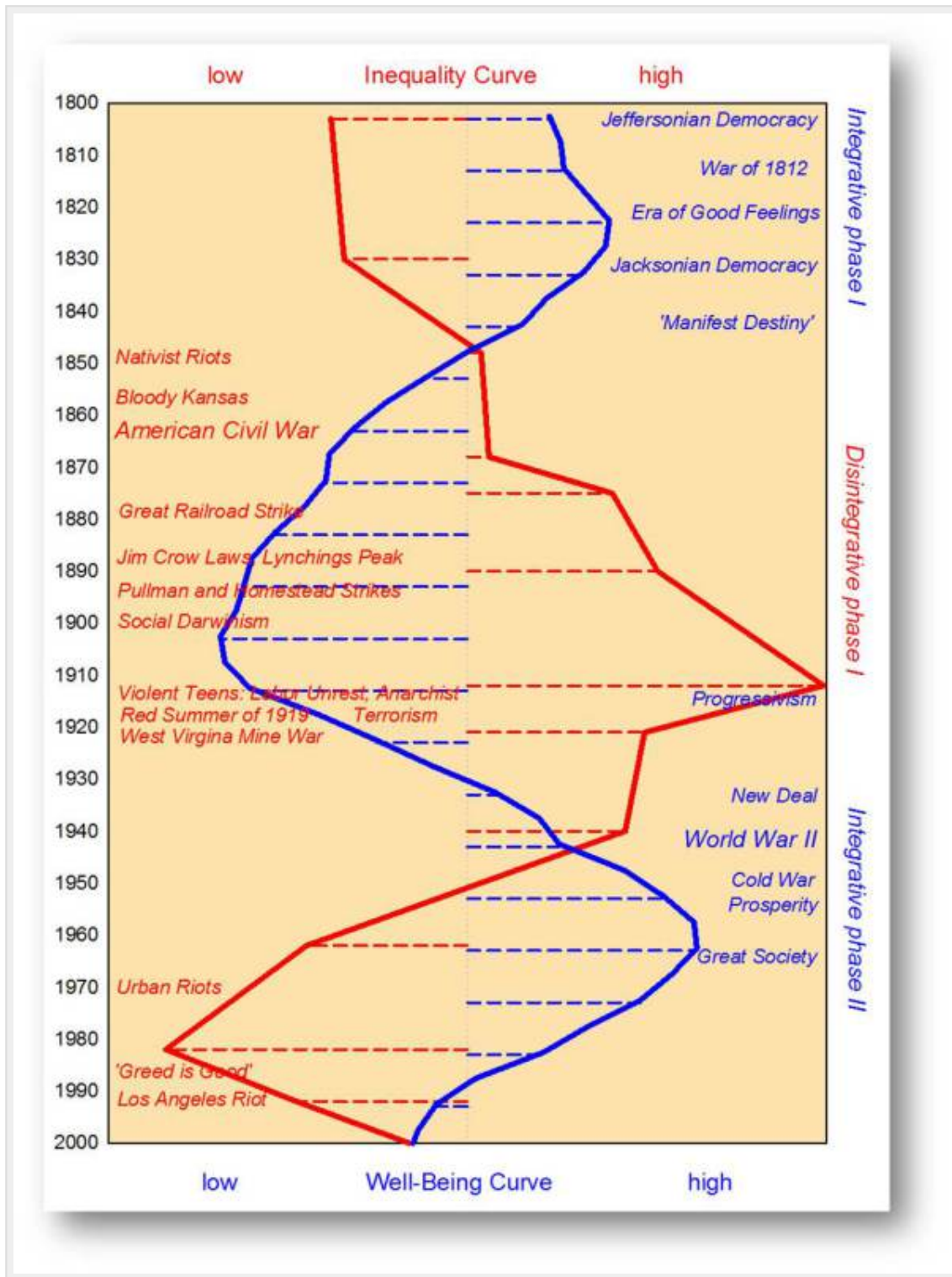
Mapping the Road to American Disunion

american nations, colin woodard, great depression, immigration, occupy wall street, peter turchin, tea party

Scientist/historian Peter Turchin (who was recently [in the news for his model which describes the evolution of human civilization](#) over the past few millennia) previously claimed that the United States is due for some sort of upheaval in the coming years – based on his study of historical cycles (cliodynamics), as previously discussed in my post [Dark Times Ahead?](#)



This pattern generally follows cycles of economic inequality, which itself tracks societal unrest and political disunity:



I strongly recommend reading Turchin's discussions on the matter:

[The Double Helix of Inequality and Well-Being | Social Evolution Forum](#)

[Peter Turchin – The history of inequality](#)

[The Strange Disappearance of Cooperation in America | Social Evolution Forum](#)

One of Turchin's most recent posts, [The Road to Disunion](#), touched on this issue again:

In 2010 I published a short essay in the science journal *Nature*, in which I pointed out these worrying trends, and suggested that they were all slated to intensify in the years around 2020. A month ago I posted a book-length manuscript, which fleshes out the theoretical argument with large amounts of data we are fortunate to have for the American society and polity.

The disquieting conclusion from this more recent analysis is that we are still firmly on track to some kind of a social and political upheaval during the coming decade or so. The worsening structural-demographic trends argue that things will be quite a lot more violent than the 1960s. How much worse – I don't want even think about it.

But as I read the today's news, I am struck by how many parallels there are between the 2010s and the 1850s, especially on the political front.

Before 1850 the United States had a stable political landscape dominated by two main parties: the Democrats and the Whigs. During the 1850s this "Second Party System" collapsed.

The Democrats split along the Southern/Northern divide, while the Whig party simply disintegrated.

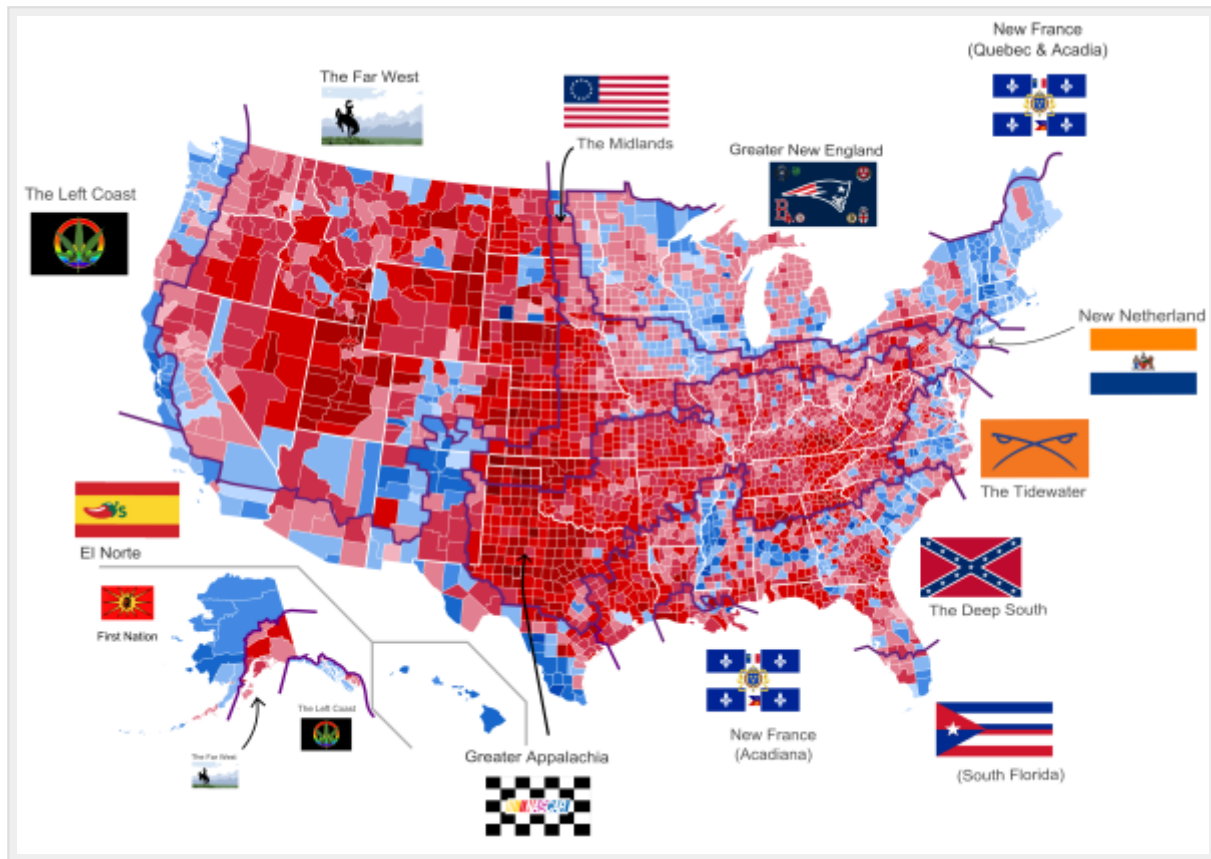
...

It's "high noon," cautioned Democratic Senator Tom Harkin, "as dangerous as the breakup of the Union before the Civil War." He doesn't know how right he is.

On the issue of outbreaks of violence, M.G. of the blog *Those Who Can See* has previously noted that much of the violence associated with previous upheavals appear to have been associated with racial/ethnic conflict: [freed/migrating Blacks in the post-Civil War, post-World War I, and post-World War II eras](#) – and [immigrant groups](#), Catholic Irish, Italians, and Eastern Europeans [in the early part of the 20th century](#). As such, perhaps violent outbursts such as those that occurred before will not occur in the coming upheaval.

Though, that said, it's not like we aren't being swelled [by ever increasing numbers of minority migrants today](#).

In his book *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, Colin Woodard has made similar predictions about future internecine strife. Specifically, he forecast conflict between the various "nations" that make up the United States (and Canada). See [Flags of the American Nations](#) and [Maps of the American Nations](#).



Indeed, with the current government shutdown and on-going political disarray, perhaps this process is already underway.

EDIT: Indeed, shortly after I published this, there appears to have been a shooting at the U.S. Capitol. Things may indeed be in the process of unraveling as we speak...

In light of his book, [in an article in the Washington Monthly](#), Woodard had this to say about the group at the center of the current political showdown, the Tea Party:

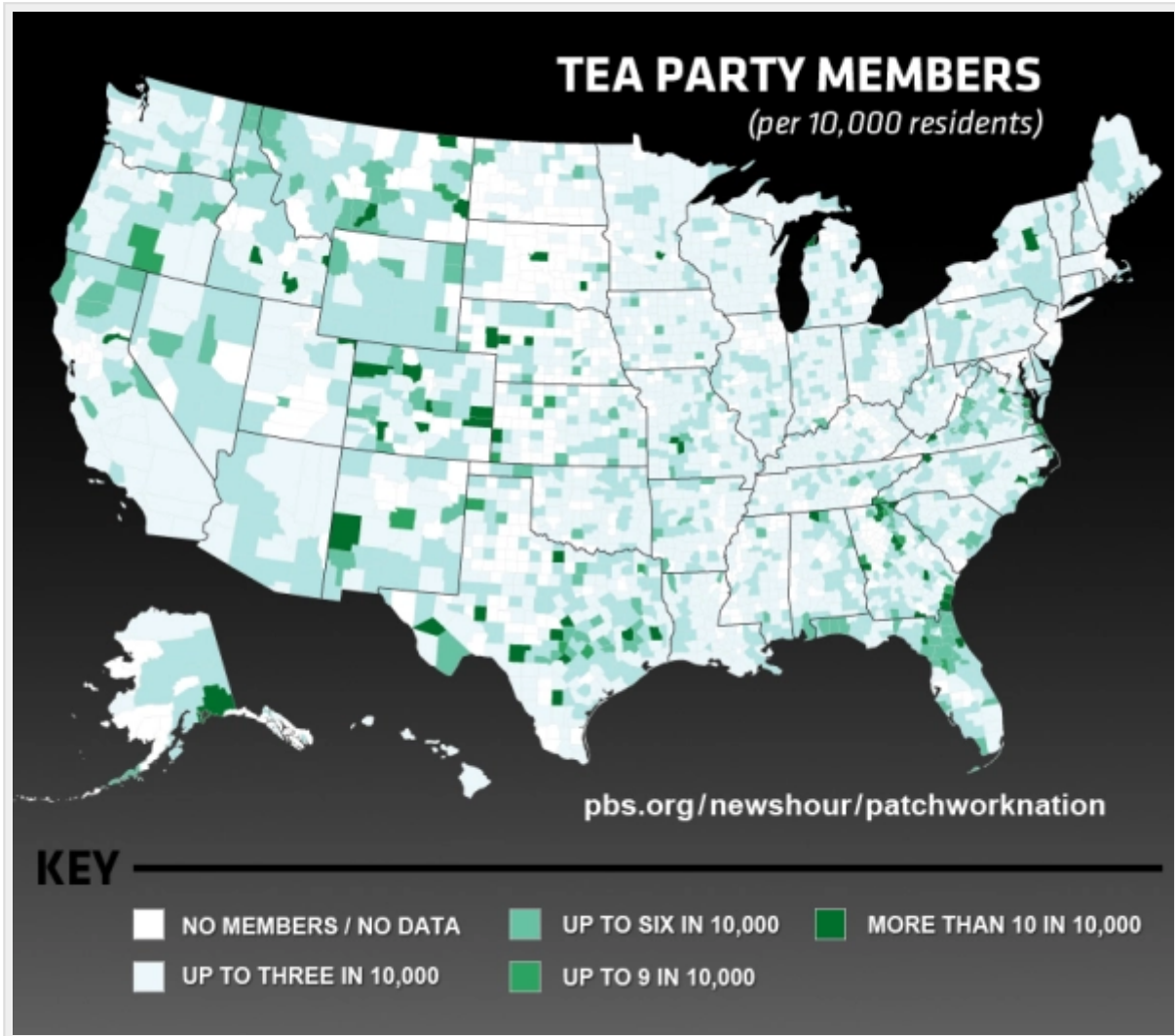
Indeed, in much of the northern tier of the country, the Tea Party has seen a ... reversal of fortune...When the Tea Party burst onto the national scene in the summer of 2010, it looked like a national movement. From Wasilla, Alaska, to Augusta, Maine, it dominated GOP rhetoric and produced candidates in virtually every level of government and section of the country. But over the past year, even as its grip on the national GOP has strengthened, its influence has melted away in large swaths of the northern half of the continent, its activists forced to confront the fact that their agenda and credo are anathema to the centuries- old social, political, and cultural traditions of these regions. The Tea Party agenda may hold sway over large parts of the South and interior West...But the movement has no hope of truly dominating the country....

The Tea Party movement is active across the country, but it has had only limited success in the three nations of the northern alliance. Of the sixty members of the House Tea Party caucus, only three hail from Yankeedom, and not one comes from the Left Coast or New Netherland...

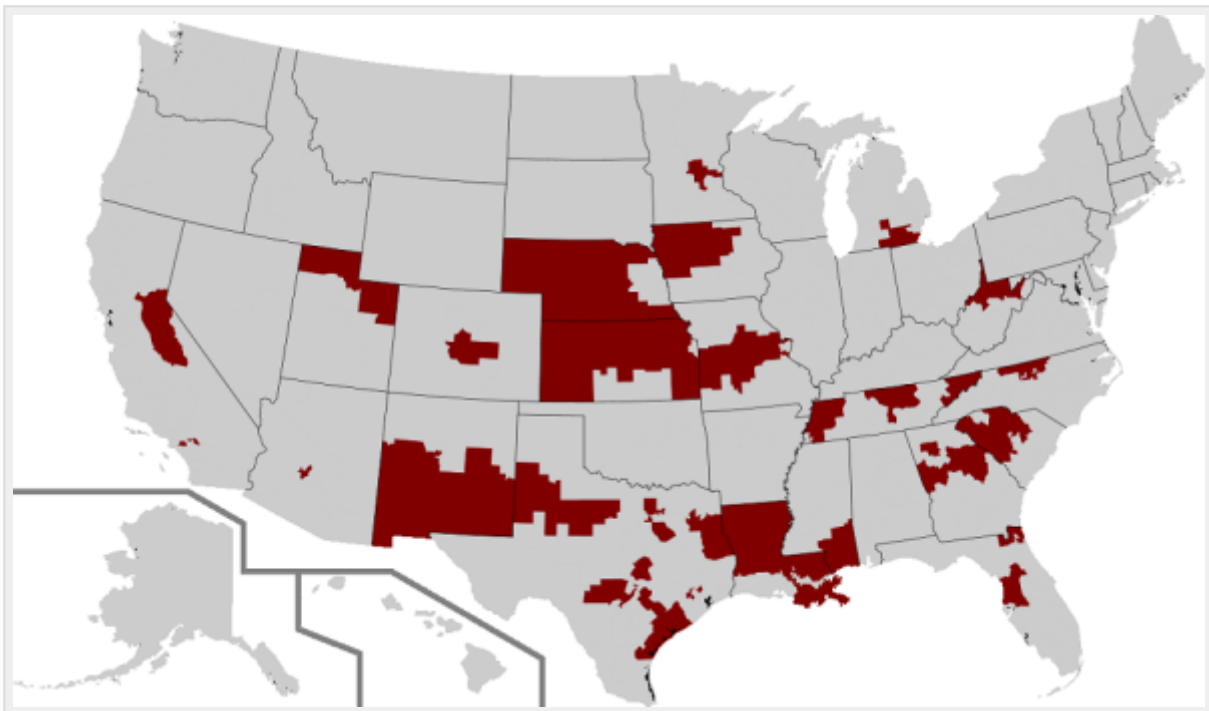
By contrast, the Tea Party has encountered little resistance to its agenda in the four nations of the Dixie bloc, as it is a carbon copy of the Deep Southern program of the last two centuries: reduce taxes for the wealthy and services for everyone else, crush the labor unions, public education, and the regulatory system, and suppress voter turnout. The four nations account for fifty-one of the sixty members of the House Tea Party caucus—or 85 percent of them—with the Deep South alone accounting for twenty-two....

The Dixie bloc is far from solid. Of the Deep South's partners, Greater Appalachia is the most reliable after Tidewater, sharing a dominant Protestant religious culture that focuses on individual salvation in the next world and discourages efforts to perfect the current one, condoning slavery in the nineteenth century, the racial caste system in the twentieth, and laissez-faire capitalism throughout. But this culture also prizes personal freedom and resents domination by outsiders, be they mining companies or federal regulators. Significantly, Appalachia has had a near monopoly on the production of "southern" populists (LBJ, Ross Perot, Sam Rayburn, Mike Huckabee) and progressives (Cordell Hull, Bill Clinton, Al Gore).

Woodard seems to be proclaiming that the Tea Party is a party spearheaded by Deep Southern masterminds and manned by Appalachians and Far Westerners. As such, [at the behest of Peter Turchin](#), I wanted to map the Tea Party's strongholds ([source](#)):



Also, here is a map of congressional districts held by Tea Party members ([source](#)):

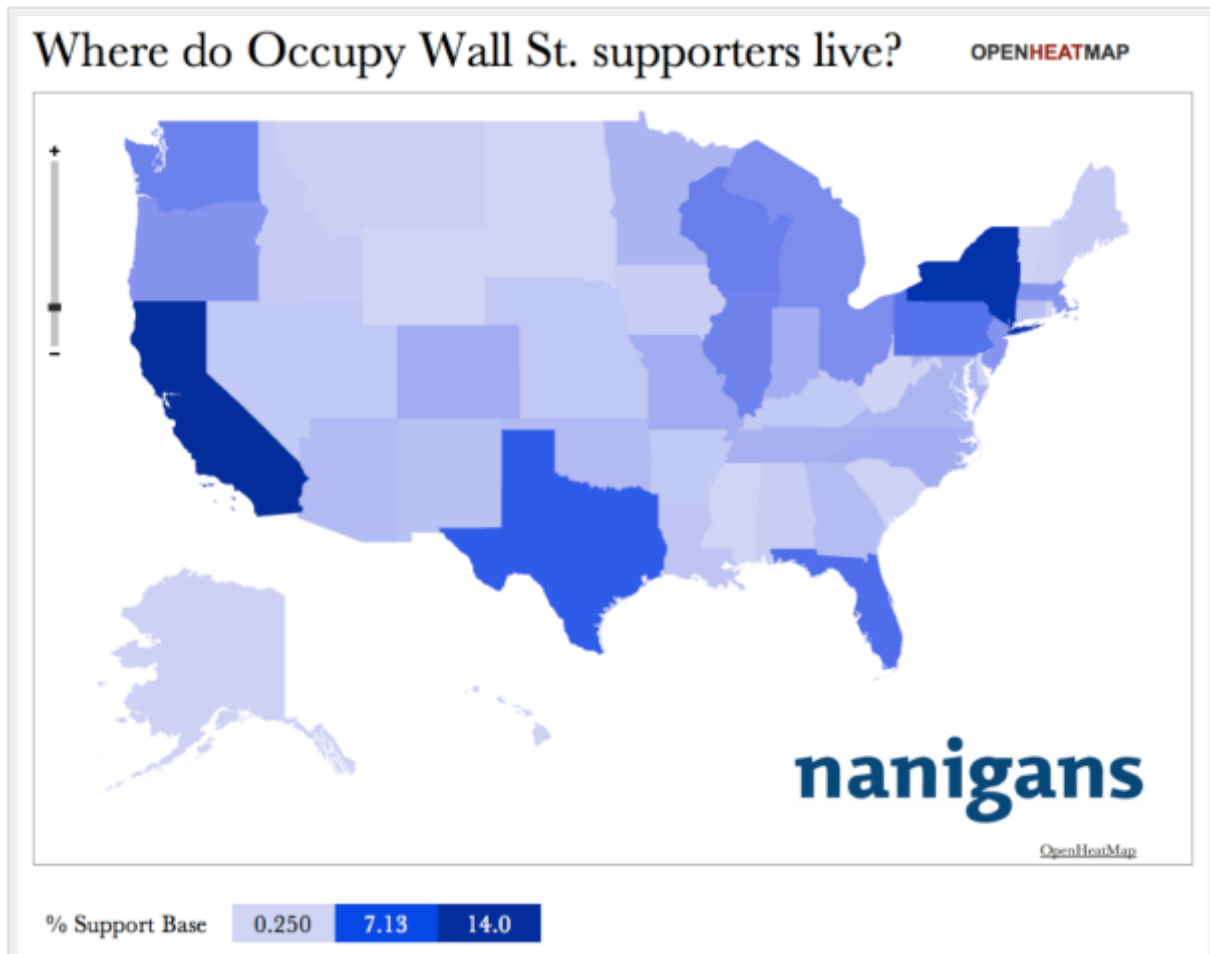


The Tea Party indeed appears to be a Deep Southern phenomenon – and secondarily, an

Appalachian (and by extension, a Far Western) phenomenon.



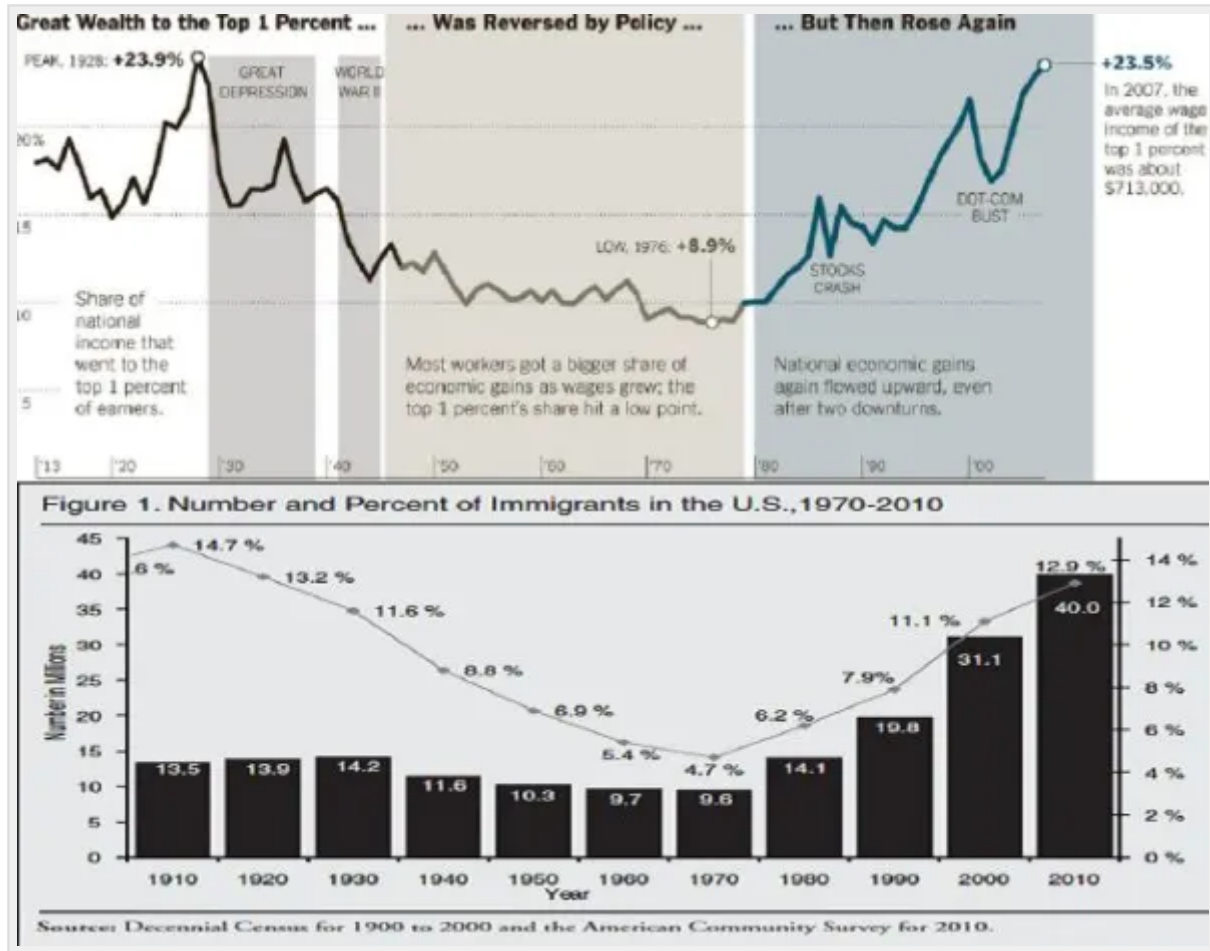
Now how about the Tea Party's ideological opposites, the Occupy Wall Street movement? They would be expected to have a somewhat different geographical distribution ([source](#)):



This appears to be the straight fraction of Occupy Wall Street supporters from each state. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to be adjusted for population, which explains the apparent outsized support of the four most populous states (California, Texas, New York, and Florida). That said, there does seem to be a pattern where support is strongest in Yankeedom and the Left Coast, and weakest across the previously discussed Tea Party nations. Interestingly, northern New England proper (Maine, and to a lesser extent, New Hampshire and Vermont), which is perhaps more truly Yankee in its composition than the rest of "Yankeedom", seems to have elicited weaker support. More study is needed!

In any case, things aren't looking good for the country in the coming years. Thanks to ongoing mass immigration and its effects on wages (indeed, [immigrants account for all post 2000 job growth](#)) – and hence, the distribution of wealth – I suspect that the political and

social upheavals to come might pale in comparison to the economic ones that likely await us. Reinforcing that point is that the distribution of wealth is once again where it was right before the Great Depression (with the top 1% capturing 95% of the income gains since 2009).



Worse still, this time, unlike during the Depression, the flow of cheap labor continues unabated, so it's unclear that the foundation for economic recovery will be present. I will discuss this in depth in a future post.

EDIT 10/4/13: Even NBC News has acknowledged that it seems that things in America are "coming apart." The apparent signs of the impending upheaval are becoming too visible to ignore, as we see from last night's broadcast:

At the end of the clip, Harry Smith wonders why it has come to this. Perhaps he should read this post and the work of Turchin and Woodard. Maybe if more people were aware of this historical cycle, we could break it....

Please also see:

Posts by Peter Turchin on Immigration, links to which can be found here:

[HBD Fundamentals: On the economic impact of demographic changes \(particularly immigration and the Baby Boom in the United States\)](#).

My own posts on the matter:

[immigration – JayMan's Blog](#)