

The Moderate Methodology for Deliberate Moderate

A significant portion of the American public identifies itself as ‘moderate’. Ironically this includes people closer to the extreme ends of the political spectrum who identify themselves as moderate either because they limit the scope of the extremes; or because they find it inconvenient for their position to be identified as extreme.

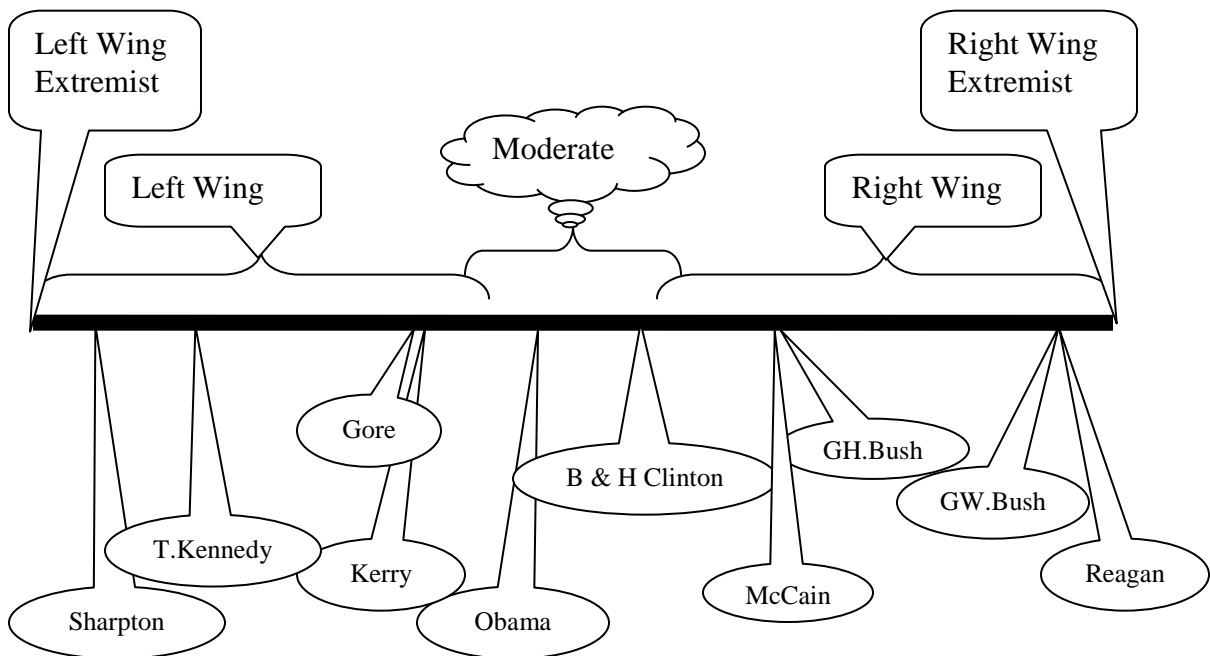
Webster defines ‘moderate’ as ‘avoiding extremes’, or ‘tending toward the mean or average.’ Given this definition, it would seem a methodology for determination of a moderate position on most any particular issue might look like this:

Moderate Methodology:

- Define extremes for an issue. ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ seem familiar & useful.
- Determine a point approximating the middle between those extremes.
- This point would approximate the *starting place* for a moderate position.

For each issue in this paper, I suggest the extremes and a moderate position. I then try to identify what American ‘right’ and ‘left’ wing extreme positions ‘typically’ say regarding the issue; and provide my observations. It is interesting to me that the typical position for each ‘wing’ will vary in its relationship to the moderate position.

While it would be unreasonable to assume one could always objectively analyze the issues below, this framework offers the opportunity to intelligently focus on where an individual’s beliefs lie relative to the extremes. Below is a graphical representation of positions used in this paper; and for argument’s sake I suggest where some might fall. This represents an aggregation of their positions on issues given my impressions.



How to read the material below:

Issue ← This is the specific issue being considered

Right: ← This is an attempt to describe the extreme right position.

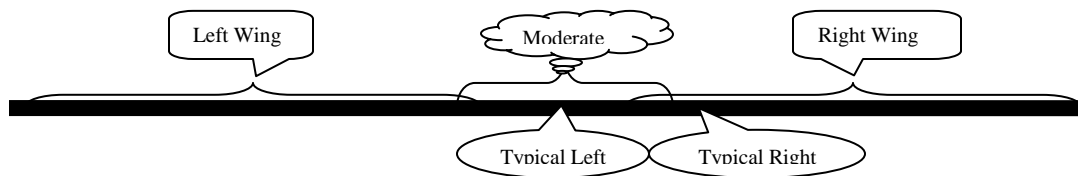
Left: ← This is an attempt to describe the extreme left position.

Moderate: ← This is an attempt to describe the moderate position.

Typical US Right Wing position: ← In this section, an attempt is made to summarize the ‘typical right’ position (which may or may not be extreme). Sometimes a little humor here can be useful...

Typical US Left Wing position: ← In this section, an attempt is made to summarize the ‘typical left’ position (which may or may not be extreme). Sometimes a little humor here can be useful...

Observations: ← In this section, an attempt is made to discuss some observations relative to the topic.



The graph above is used to gauge where typical left and right fall on the continuum between the extremes. This is a particularly interesting exercise, as sometimes the two typical positions are close together, sometimes farther apart. Sometimes they are even reversed – though this is rare.

The following pages are intended to drive discussion, enjoy!

The exercise that would be most useful would be for elected officials to indicate where they believe they are on the particular issues, and determine where the public feels those candidates are on the particular issues. Frankly, the ‘composite’ graph (as presented in the previous page) is of little value except to grab someone’s attention... ☺

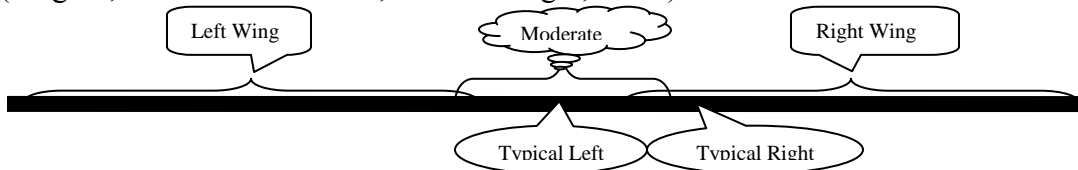
Government

- Right: Leader not accountable to the governed (i.e. Dictatorship, Monarchy).
Left: No leader (i.e. Anarchy)
Moderate: Leader elected by & accountable to governed (i.e. Democratic Republic).

Typical US Right Wing position: Prefer democracy, disproportionate influence of wealth or privilege is appropriate; it's ok if only a portion of governed exercise their vote.

Typical US Left Wing position: Prefer democracy, an improvement would be if wealth had less impact on outcome; the more that vote the better democracy works.

Observations: Even Democracy has a range, determined by what percentage of the governed may actually influence elections. In the US the concept of Democracy is highly valued by all, but the implementation has historically been influenced negatively by minorities that wish to exert influence above their ability represented by their number. The greatest danger to Democracy today is Fascism. Fascists generally do not trust open, all inclusive democracy and strive to limit it to some group that identifies itself as special (religion, economic condition, national origin, etc...).



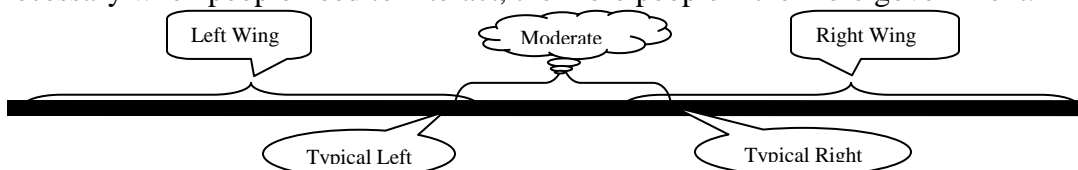
Federal vs. Local Government

- Right: Local Government should always trump Federal Government.
Left: Federal Government should always trump Local Government.
Moderate: A mix of Federal and Local Government is best equipped to deal with the range of challenges the population faces.

Typical US Right Wing position: Prefer weaker Federal Government as compared with Local Government – though the Federal Government must be strong for foreign policy.

Typical US Left Wing position: Prefer stronger Federal Government to keep Local Governments from deviating from national policies or social priorities.

Observations: Federal Government is best equipped to enable stuff like interstate commerce, defense, foreign policy and other issues that span the country. Local Governments are best equipped to deal with unique local issues. Both types are necessary when people need to interact, the more people – the more government.



Economics

- Right: As much economic activity as possible should be determined by markets.
Left: As much economic activity as possible should be planned by government.
Moderate: Economic activity should be determined by a combination of market and planned activity, each leveraged to the benefit of the economy.

Typical US Right Wing position: Capitalism beat Socialism under Reagan, so we must continue to drive socialism from our economy by making government smaller and private sector more influential.

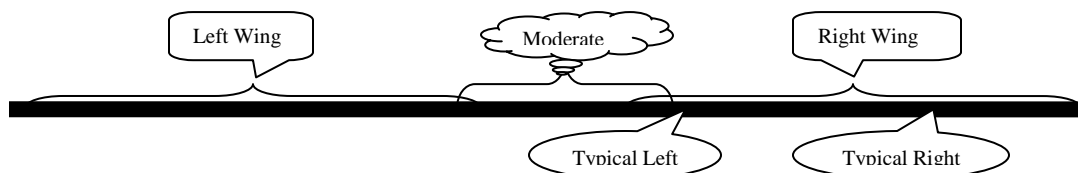
Typical US Left Wing position: Capitalism is good, but government intervention in the economy can be leveraged to stabilize economy and promote social priorities.

Observations: The terms ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’ are used today to describe economic options at the extremes; but neither are clearly defined or universally understood. People use these terms emotionally as shorthand for concepts ranging from government to economics.

In their ‘pure’ sense, capitalism implies ‘market driven activity’ and socialism implies ‘government driven activity.’ The reality is no economy in the world is strictly capitalist or socialist today because experience has shown neither can work on its own. All economies today are mixed. The US economy is about 2/3 market driven and 1/3 planned, as evidenced by our GNP and size of government spending or influence. One might argue that the moderate position is 50/50, but this would ignore recognition that both options are legitimate and best applied to certain circumstances.

It is more useful to avoid loaded terms like ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialism’ and focus on terms with a more obvious definition like ‘market’ for free market activity and ‘planned’ activities accomplished by the government. I also prefer to ignore the bias represented by the extremes that ‘all government is wasteful’ or ‘markets are inherently unfair.’

Mixed economies work best when market competition is preserved and planed objectives are scrutinized.



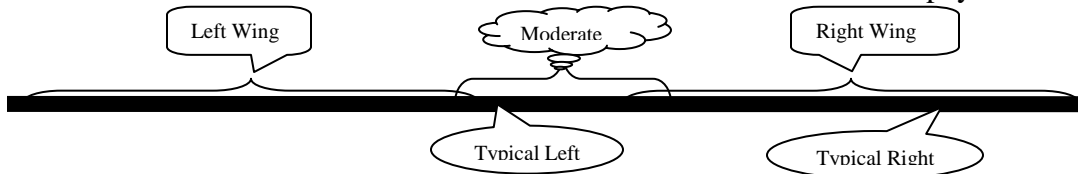
Taxes

- Right: All taxes are undesirable (favor markets).
Left: High taxes result in best services (favor planned).
Moderate: Taxes to cover cost of services best provided by government.

Typical US Right Wing position: Lower taxes is always a goal, and relief for over-taxed wealthy and corporations a priority; middle class too if possible.

Typical US Left Wing position: Lower taxes for middle and lower class, with taxes used to redistribute imbalance of economic rewards. Marginal utility theory applies.

Observations: Even when there is no option but to tax, the central issue is the fairness of the method of determination and collection of tax. Some want others to pay their share.



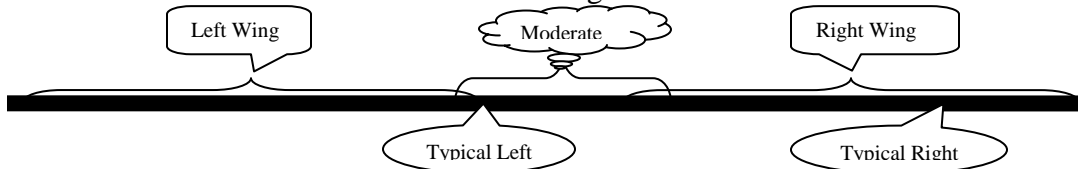
Regulation

- Right: All regulations are undesirable unless provided/governed by regulated.
Left: Everything should be regulated by an authority other than the regulated.
Moderate: Regulations are often needed to promote and preserve open competitive markets.

Typical US Right Wing position: Less regulation is always the goal.

Typical US Left Wing position: Regulate whenever there is danger that market behavior will undermine competitive markets or interfere with social priorities.

Observations: Consolidation of wealth and advantages often undermine circumstances conducive to open competitive markets. Constant vigilance and a combination of approaches providing regulation have positive results to the economy; but care must be taken that regulation is applied only when/where/as needed. This is not an easy equation. Ironic the difference between extremes for Regulation vs. Government...



Balanced Budget

Right: All budgets should balance at all times.

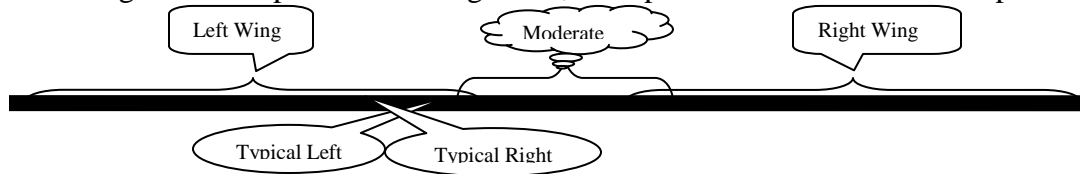
Left: Balanced budgets are not important.

Moderate: Keynesian Economics prove under the right circumstances deficit spending is beneficial to economic objectives, though generally balanced budgets are desired.

Typical US Right Wing position: Deficit spending is always bad unless we are spending money on defense, a military campaign, or have an opportunity to lower taxes.

Typical US Left Wing position: Deficit spending is acceptable if it is providing defense or services to further social priorities; but taxes should be raised to offset this.

Observations: Debt can be healthy and productive when properly managed. Few have the courage to accomplish this management, and special interests distort the options.



Welfare

Right: Taxes should not be used for social welfare; that is what charity is for.

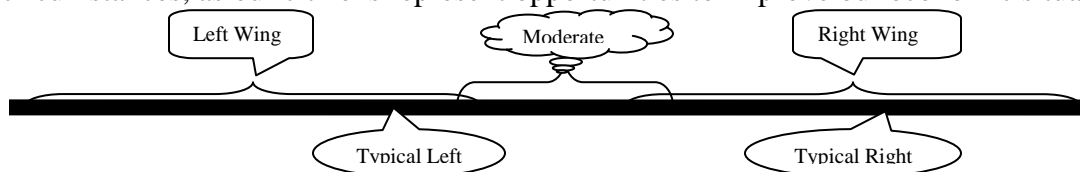
Left: Taxes equalize fairness of economy as public welfare a right of all citizens.

Moderate: Taxes should provide temporary welfare for citizens with the goal of helping those citizens become productive within the economy.

Typical US Right Wing position: Reduce taxpayer funded welfare in favor of private charity whenever possible. Welfare makes people less competitive for jobs, unnaturally driving up wages and taxes.

Typical US Left Wing position: Welfare is a necessary evil of our economy.

Observations: Economic fluctuations, family backgrounds and other factors often contribute to situations where citizens need assistance in order to reach their potential and become/remain productive. The challenge is that temporary dependence on public welfare can lead to dependence on that welfare as a way of life. Thus creative approaches need to be explored to find effective ways to deal with a range of circumstances, as our citizens represent opportunities to improve our economic situation.



Health Care

Right: Health care for individuals is the responsibility of the individual or their parent.

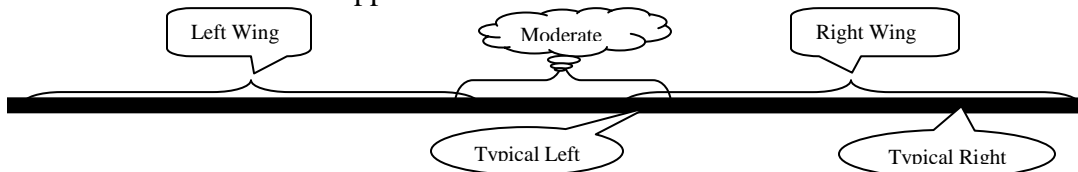
Left: Health care for individuals is the responsibility of the state.

Moderate: A minimum level of health care should be available for all, not based on ability to afford health care.

Typical US Right Wing position: If you can't afford health care, you don't deserve it.

Typical US Left Wing position: Everyone deserves health care, we must find a way to provide it.

Observations: Economic inequity, bad health care management, irresponsible use of health care, an aging population, poor health management and other factors have all contributed to a dangerous situation related to affordability of health care. A combination of prevention, better health care management, changed expectations and more responsible use of health care must be applied if this situation is to be remedied.



Social Security

Right: State supplied social security is socialism and should be privatized.

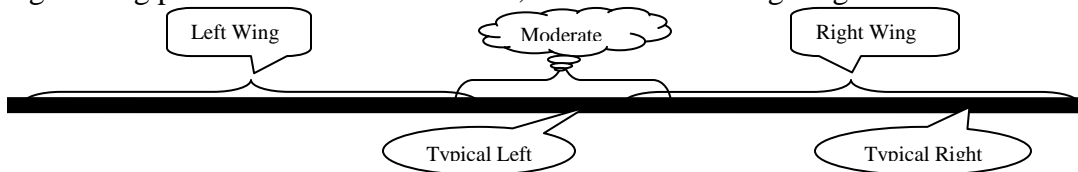
Left: Only the state can provide adequate social security for the population.

Moderate: Reasonable level of state sponsored social security is a basic necessity, and in conjunction with private alternatives the public benefits from this investment.

Typical US Right Wing position: Privatize, it was never a good idea for state to provide.

Typical US Left Wing position: Privatization undermines the system, all must participate.

Observations: As the population ages policies must change to preserve social security as a means to meet basic requirements. Irresponsible government actions have undermined the funding, and this must be corrected as soon as possible. This will be difficult politically, but it must be done. Conservatives continue to do all in their power to undermine this even as they attempt to disguise their ambitions. This should be seen as augmenting private alternatives for most, but critical to a large segment of our society.



Education

Right: All education should be private (individuals pay).

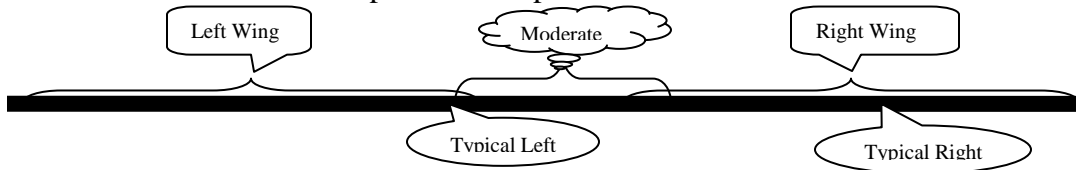
Left: All education should be public (funded by taxes).

Moderate: Mix of private and public education where taxes fund public education available to all, but individuals can pay for their own alternative.

Typical US Right Wing position: Public education is wasteful, efforts to reduce the waste is a priority, and private education is desirable. Not everyone should have to pay for public education, especially those who opt for private education.

Typical US Left Wing position: Public education needs more funding, everyone should contribute.

Observations: Society benefits when education is provided for all. All should fund public education for that reason, and alternative private education should be funded by the individuals that wish to opt out of the public alternative.



School Prayer

Right: All schools should allow and encourage prayer.

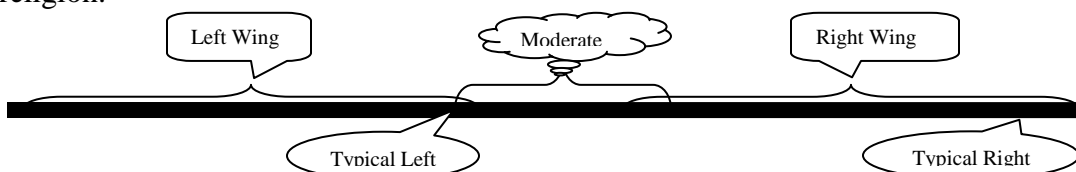
Left: Prayer should not be tolerated in public schools.

Middle: If someone wishes to pray or otherwise express their religious customs or beliefs in a public school, they should do so in a way that does not impose on others. At the same time religion is a part of some individuals and we should give that person space to live their beliefs – as long as this is not providing pressure on others to conform to that belief system.

Typical US Right Wing position: We need God in schools and should be able to talk to God, express our religion (as long as only our religion is expressed) so we can help others find our God.

Typical US Left Wing position: Separation of church and state is important, school prayer is just another attempt to undermine that separation.

Observations: Separation of church and state is in the constitution to protect the right of people to live their religion as well as to protect the right of people to live without religion.



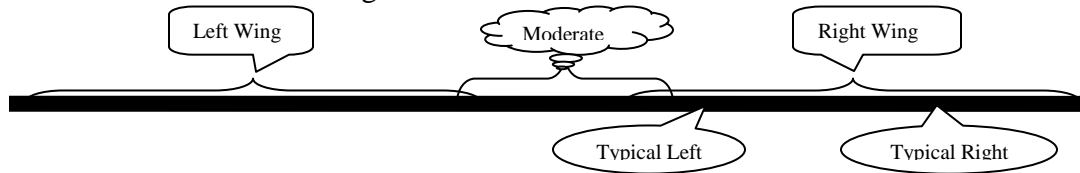
Immigration

- Right: We have enough people, only additional should be invited.
Left: We are all immigrants; we should welcome all who wish to join us.
Moderate: We need a fair and thoughtful immigration policy that considers the needs of our country as well as the needs of potential citizens.

Typical US Right Wing position: No immigrants unless we benefit by lowering consumer costs.

Typical US Left Wing position: We must protect our jobs but be sensitive to the poor who strive to benefit by our economic and political environment.

Observations: The population of the world continues to grow, they are going to go somewhere. We continue to need labor provided by those immigrants both for work our citizens do not aspire to do as well as to help manage consumer costs – but must be careful not to undermine wages of our citizens. This is a difficult balance.



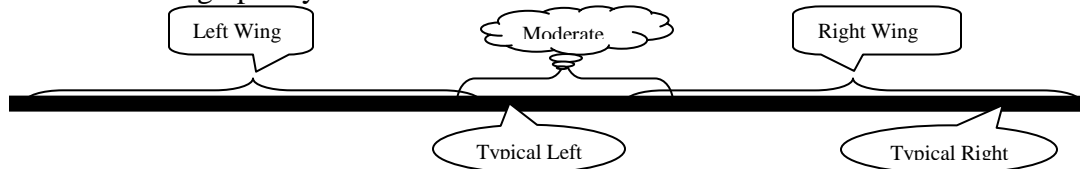
Foreign Intervention

- Right: Use our foreign policy and military only to further our national and economic interests.
Left: Use our foreign policy and military only to further human right interests.
Moderate: Foreign policy should balance our national needs with human right interests.

Typical US Right Wing position: Isolationism, unless we are furthering our own political or economic agenda.

Typical US Left Wing position: Internationalism, with an eye to furthering our political or economic interests.

Observations: We have often undermined our strategic interests through selfish tactical use of our foreign policy.



Terrorism

Right: War on terror.

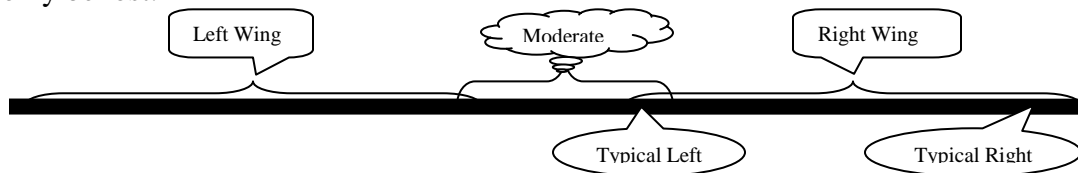
Left: Capitulate to terrorists.

Moderate: Understand what leads to terrorism. Balance response with as much attention to eliminating terrorist motivation as use of additional terror.

Typical US Right Wing position: Terrorists are people who do bad things to us, and we must defeat them until they stop doing bad things to us. This unites us and makes us stronger.

Typical US Left Wing position: Terrorism must be dealt with using force only to protect ourselves, and we all need to find a way to get along.

Observations: Terrorism has existed as long as humans have interacted with each other; and there is no reason to feel hopeful that this will ever change. Our country has used terrorism to conduct foreign policy, and certainly will again in the future. Terrorism within our country is very high relative to other countries. Today conservatives in this country leverage the notion of terrorism to achieve political ends. Any war on terror can only be lost.



The Middle East

Right: Back Israel under all circumstances.

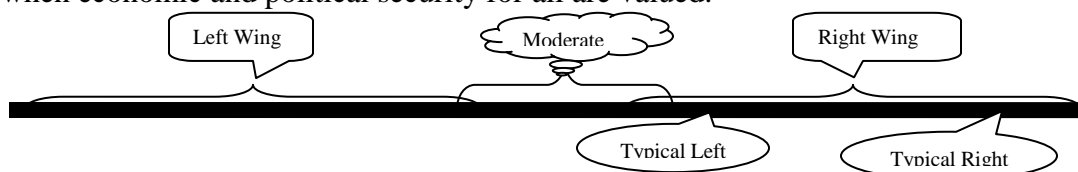
Left: Back Palestinians under all circumstances.

Moderate: Stop taking sides; support both sides equally with economics, influence and military.

Typical US Right Wing position: Israel is our ally, and God wants us to nurture and protect it.

Typical US Left Wing position: Israel is our friend, but we need to also help the Palestinians.

Observations: Since the end of the Cold War there has been no good reason for the US to support the state of Israel at the expense of its neighbors or our economy. That support has done little more than undermine the US relationship with others in the region and enable bad behavior from Israel to its neighbors. Peace in that region will only result when economic and political security for all are valued.



God

Right: I know there is a God, and I know what he wants.

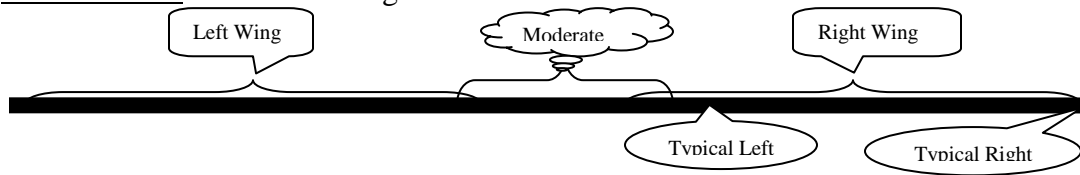
Left: I know there is no God.

Moderate: Maybe there is a God; or maybe there is no God. An individual can choose to believe either way but can't know what God would expect of us.

Typical US Right Wing position: God is on our side.

Typical US Left Wing position: There might not be a God, and if there is one what if he is not on our side?

Observations: God is not religion.



Religion

Right: My religion was provided by God; I have an obligation to impose it on all.

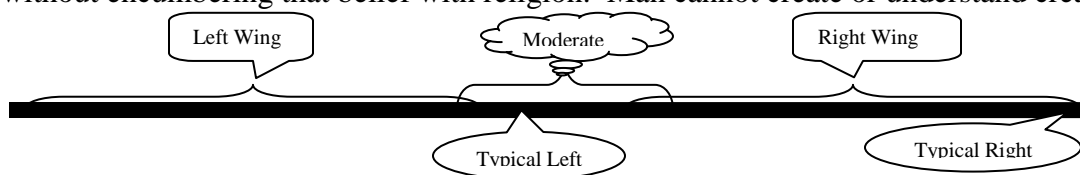
Left: Religion is bad for humanity and should be eliminated.

Moderate: Religion meets fundamental needs for some humans; provides some positive influences for some humans; is manipulated by some humans; and provides very negative consequences for some humans. Separation of church and state is very important; and respect for everyone's right to their beliefs fundamental.

Typical US Right Wing position: Separation of church and state means other religions, not mine. I know what God wants and this should influence our government.

Typical US Left Wing position: Separation of church and state is very important.

Observations: Religion is the body of beliefs humans hold describing their notion of what God is and wants. Even Atheists practice religion, as they proclaim to know something that they cannot know and proscribe how we should behave regarding the topic. Religions usually demean the concept of God. While religion provides many positive effects for some humans, it undermines human intellect; facilitates fascism; factors in most wars; and even when it does not cause a war it often enables people to kill or die for a cause. One can choose to believe that God is responsible for all creation without encumbering that belief with religion. Man cannot create or understand creation.



Abortion

Right: Never allow abortion.

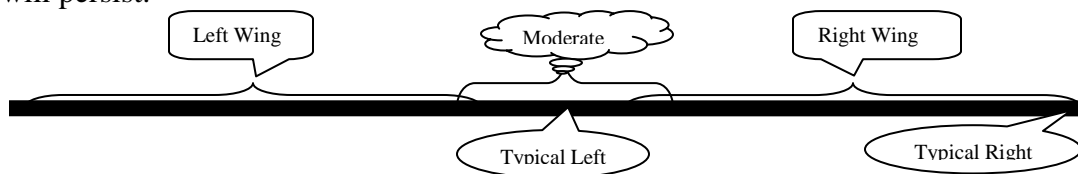
Left: Allow abortion until sometime after childbirth.

Moderate: The state has determined that until the point where a fetus is viable without the mother that mother has the right to exercise her own beliefs regarding acceptability of abortion. Even if one would choose a point different than that, one should respect the mother's right to make that choice.

Typical US Right Wing position: When a sperm fertilizes an egg humans should make sure the baby is born. After the baby is born it is the parents' responsibility to take care of the child and provide food, education and health care, not the tax payers.

Typical US Left Wing position: A Woman has the right to decide if a pregnancy should continue right up to the point where the baby is viable on its own. If the baby's parents are unable to provide food, education or health care for the baby, the state should.

Observations: Abortion is unavoidable; it is an essential part of the human reproductive cycle. Each man cannot avoid aborting more than a million sperm daily. During each of her reproductive years, a woman will abort about 12 eggs unless she has a baby that year. There are rational arguments for choosing many points during the reproductive process to govern when a man or woman can interrupt the ability of their contribution (sperm or egg) to become a human; and some argue that this option concludes sometime after birth. While it may be useful for the state to pick an arbitrary point after which a human should not interrupt the ability for a child to have life, it should ultimately be up to the mother since her body is required for the process. While it is the right of the public to have an opinion, and in a democracy try to influence that point the state determines, all should respect the mother's choice. No matter what point is chosen, substantial disagreement will persist.



Below are examples of the various points which rational people might choose to limit abortion:

- Each egg must have and each sperm should be given the opportunity to be a child.
- Conception begins life (but what about married vs. not married vs. forced/rape/incest?).
- Some point of development of fetus (brain, nervous system, heart...)
- Viability of fetus to survive without mother.
- Birth
- Some point after birth depending on some variable (sex, health, handicap...)

Gay Rights

Right: God said homosexuality is a sin so they have no rights and need go straight.

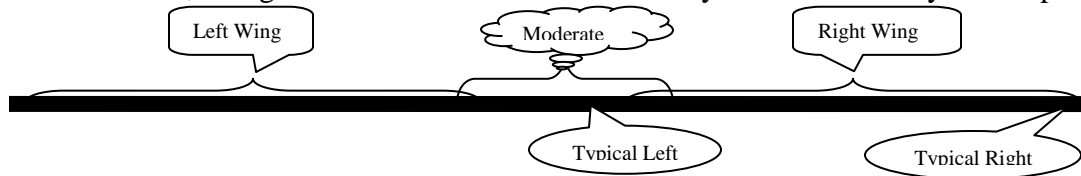
Left: Gays should have more rights than heterosexuals.

Moderate: We all have the same rights.

Typical US Right Wing position: Gays are sinners, they should go back in the closet or fix their problem.

Typical US Left Wing position: Gays have same rights as heterosexuals.

Observations: We eventually overcome most other state bigotry; this one gradually be overcome also, though this issue has had thousands of years of variability in acceptance.



Gun Control

Right: There should be no limit to what type of guns an American can own and use.

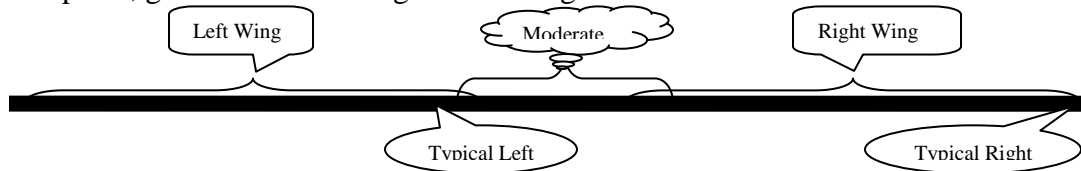
Left: All guns are bad and should be eliminated.

Moderate: It is reasonable to assume gun laws should protect citizens from irresponsible gun use. Assault weapons for example do not make sense within our society.

Typical US Right Wing position: Constitution protects guns, all guns, and nobody has a right to interfere with this.

Typical US Left Wing position: Gun control is reasonable.

Observations: Guns result in a lot of human death and suffering. Our country is a notable exception in the civilized world, we need to adjust. Population pressures have an influence on this topic. When population gets more dense and more human interactions take place, guns influence can get more dangerous.



Environment

Right: The environment and its natural resources are unlimited and available for all to use or derive income from.

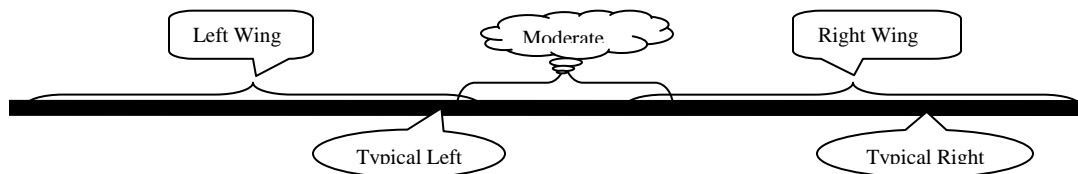
Left: Man does not have the right to adversely impact the environment.

Moderate: The environment and natural resources should be used to our benefit; but understanding impacts and resource planning/management is prudent and necessary.

Typical US Right Wing position: God gave us these resources; government has no right denying us from deriving income or pleasure from the environment

Typical US Left Wing position: Resource management is important since there are limits to our natural resources and the earth's ability to sustain the environments that humans depend on.

Observations: Since the US has historically had the biggest impact on resource consumption and change to the environment, it would make sense that we should play a leadership role in managing the future impact on resources and the environment. The current economic and political status of the US is in large part a result of our aggressive use of resources; and as other nations strive to achieve our status and standard of living additional stress will be placed on the resources. Some adjustment in consumption and impact must take place or the current environment for humans cannot be sustained. At that point an impact on standard of living and political balance is no longer avoidable.



Challenges:

Does an individual really aspire to an objective moderate position, or do they wish re-label their position as moderate?

Extreme positions tend to be black & white, while moderate position tends to be grey. Does this mean any particular position is objectively better?

US political parties tend to lean toward the 'right wing' or 'conservative' side, and that side more heavily influences the outcome on most issues. The 'left wing' or 'liberal' side is weaker today and may tend to be closer to a moderate position, leading those on the right to dismiss the methodology. Can we attribute this to the same factors that result in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs?

Other Insights:

Having found myself defending both extremes at different stages in my life, it has become obvious to me that on every issue the moderate position seems more defensible and thus more comfortable to my values.

Being labeled a conservative or liberal, republican or democrat, or even a moderate is often of little value since an individual may deviate from the norm on any, or many, issues. To hold a meaningful intelligent discussion, one issue should be explored and it is useful to determine where on the scale each identifies with. One can then examine why they gravitate to that part of the scale.

I find it fascinating that the relative position of 'typical' American 'left' and 'right' positions will vary depending on the issue; but that it seems that religious biases drive the greater variation between the two sides.

DeliberateModerate™ & ModerateMethodology©

Vision:

Be recognized as the benchmark for a deliberately moderate position on issues.

Mission:

Provide a forum for the community to derive a deliberately moderate position on issues.

Purpose/Values/Objectives:

Strive for a 'benchmark' for a deliberately moderate position on specific issues.

Open and respectful political dialogue; replacing anger & disrespect with thoughtful civility & a touch of humor.

Do not support/advocate for any candidate or party, no site advertisements.

Tap the intellectual and experiential potential of the community to improve political understanding.

Rules of Engagement:

Dialogue will refrain from deliberately inflammatory or insulting comments.

'Right' and 'Left' will be used in place of loaded terms such as liberal, conservative, socialist, capitalist, etc...

All points of view are welcome and valued, as long as presented with respect as constructive contribution.

Those needing to vent their passion in a less respectful manner can use the many other blogs for that purpose.

The DeliberateModerate position will be 'defined'; but not represented as 'right or wrong', 'good or bad'.

Methodology:

Leverage DeliberateModerate.com website to collaborate, including site management.

Leverage ModerateMethodology as framework for collaboration.

Identify a picture representing wings of methodology, note significance of the middle.

Determine and manage 'left' and 'right' extremes; and 'deliberate moderate' (delmod) position interactively.

TheDeliberateModerate (me for now...) moderates site and has final accountability for decisions.

Collaborate to determine site management rules, roles, etc...

Leverage the propensity of many people to gravitate to moderation.

Undermine inappropriate use of the term 'moderate'.

Simplicity and clarity is highly valued.

Focus is on specific issues, not generalities.

Site Introduction:

Background – why I evolved to current beliefs – does this help set context?

Ask for and invite help building site and growing/maintaining site & collaborations.

Why ‘moderate’ position needs clarity – abuse of the term.

Consider Maslow’s Theory implications.

Political Science departments at Universities – good place for some interaction.

Ideas:

Candidates/Incumbents ‘plot’ where they are on issues interactively on site.

Public ‘vote’ where they see candidate/incumbent really is on issues/composite interactively on site.

Scale -5 Left, 0 (Delmod), +5 Right? Calculate as absolute value: x_L , 0, y_R (To avoid negative implications.)

Composite score across issues per candidate/incumbent? Also note standard deviation across issues.

Relationship with WIKI or other sites? Twitter? Facebook? (how/why?) Other???

Adding additional ‘issues’ & how to govern.

Discussion rooms per ‘issue’. Blogs? Issue: too much to read, consolidate/simplify...

- ‘Spin Room’ for elevator stories (simplified)
- ‘Back Office’ for development of ideas (detail...)

Issues:

Religion/God – probably avoided (at least initially), leverage a different site.

Site set up and maintenance. Site Governance & oversight.

Local, State, National? Begin with National...

GoDaddy rules.

Trademark. Copyright. Intellectual property and value protection.

Other opportunities? Ideas from community?

Experience should be friendly with reduced complexity, avoid ‘turn-offs’/negativity.

DeliberateModerate is most likely to be attacked from the right which is well organized and funded.

Consider heart with head; and communication as a competency.

How will we know if we are successful? :

Significant interaction from community - especially if it brings ‘thoughtful civility’ to discussion.

Interaction from candidates/incumbents - especially if it brings a more honest assessment of positions.

References to site by political community – especially if it results in positive moderate impact on issues.