

EXHIBIT A

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The 1988 Elections: Continuation of the Post-New Deal System
Elections and Dilemmas of American Democratic Governance: Reflections
Solidarity as a New Social Movement
Public Opinion and the Welfare State: The United States in Comparative Perspective
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The 1988 Elections: Continuation of The Post-New Deal System

From the Editor:

In this issue...

EVERETT C. LADD analyzes the outcomes of the 1988 presidential and congressional elections. He argues that their results display in full form the new party and electoral system that has consigned that of the New Deal era to the history books.

DEMETRIOS CARALEY reflects on the role of American elections as a means of selecting rulers and delivering policy mandates from the voters. He offers prescriptions for changing the electoral system so as to make officials more accountable to the voters.

DAVID S. MASON examines the extent to which Poland's independent trade union Solidarity functioned as a social movement. He finds that while Solidarity may have been unique within the Soviet bloc, it fit many of the criteria of "new social movements" in the West and as such reflects a trend that may transcend East-West boundaries.

ROBERT Y. SHAPIRO and JOHN T. YOUNG examine public opinion toward different social welfare policies in the United States and other countries. They show that public support for social welfare policies in the United States has generally remained solid from the 1970s to the early 1980s, with the exception of increased opposition to income maintenance programs.

RICHARD ROSE attempts to explode the myth that America has a big government. He shows that it is relatively small compared to the average advanced industrial nation, primarily because government in America has been growing more slowly in the past quarter century.

WILLIAM T. TOW surveys the recent U.S.-ANZUS dispute. He argues that strong differences between the U.S. and New Zealand's Labour Government were left unresolved when both sides proved unable to compromise their respective interpretations of valid extended deterrence strategy in the Pacific.

DEMETRIOS CARALEY

EVERETT CARLL LADD

Predictability was the most striking feature of the 1988 election. It had two separate bases. First, 1988 was an incumbents' election. Conditions prevailing throughout the year strongly encouraged a "no" response to the question, "is it time for a change?" A second basis for its predictability is that the election took place well into the latest of our country's great partisan transformations — this one having begun in the late 1960s. When major change is first evident in the parties and elections system, its central features — shifts in group ties to the political parties, issues cutting in novel directions, etc. — often startle us. But after we have seen them over a series of elections we take them as givens. That's what happened in 1988. The election told us little we didn't already know. Instead, it was confirming, or reaffirming. The New Deal era now seems as remote as the age of McKinley.

THE IMMEDIATE SETTING

From its beginning the 1988 presidential contest was waged against a backdrop that favored the Republicans. One element of this setting involved the status of the two-term incumbent president. During the last months of his presidency, Ronald Reagan was more popular than when he first took office. In the twelve months or so following the Iran-contra revelations, which broke with such political fury in November 1986, Reagan's popular standing clearly suffered. But by the end

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of 1987 he had largely recovered. The *Los Angeles Times* Election Day poll on 8 November 1988 found 60 percent of all voters approving Reagan's presidential performance. Such popularity is partly transferable to the party—as Franklin D. Roosevelt proved half a century ago. Under Reagan, Republicans have drawn close to the Democrats in party identification and have pulled ahead among young voters. And no American president ever committed himself as fully to the election of his successor as Reagan did to George Bush.

A second facet of the setting for the 1988 election was the public's response to current conditions in the economy, foreign affairs, and the like. Presidential elections are always in part referendums on national performance. In 1988, most voters thought things were going fairly well and were thus inclined to give the "ins" another chance.

Time for a Change?

To be sure, many analysts had thought that after eight years of Reagan conservatism the public was ready to try something new. The persistence of a clear majority in opinion polls saying that they wanted the next president to change direction in dealing with the nation's problems, rather than follow "the same policies as the Reagan administration," helped form these expectations. In fact, this poll finding was highly misleading. Virtually every time a variant of the question has been asked, going back to the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, a majority has endorsed a shift from the incumbent's policies. This has not meant, however, support for *some specific alternative* to the incumbent — only that all possible "something else" are preferred to him.

Testing specific alternatives yields a very different picture. In early August 1988, for example, the CBS *News/New York Times* poll asked whether "you think the Reagan administration has been too conservative, or not conservative enough?" Of those with an opinion, 17 percent volunteered that the administration's approach was about right. Forty-three percent said it had been too conservative — but 42 percent found it insufficiently so. In the context of a Bush-Dukakis race, the latter were simply not "voters for change."

Views on the economy always influence the electorate's conclusions on whether it's time to change; and in the final months of Campaign '88 these views were both positive and becoming more so. The University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment was 97.4 in August 1988 — not the highest figure in the last 35 years but near the high end of modern experience and the highest it had been in more than two years.

Assessing the Economy

By a margin of 69–26 percent, respondents to an early August 1988 CBS *News/New York Times* poll said they considered themselves better off than they had been

"eight years" earlier. By 40–16 percent in an early September Roper Organization survey, respondents declared themselves better off than they had been "four years" previously. Fifty-seven percent in this latter poll expected to be better off four years hence than they are now, just 6 percent worse off. A survey taken 8–11 September by CBS *News* and the *New York Times* found 68 percent describing the nation's economy as good, 31 percent as bad. Seventy-four percent said their family's financial position was good, just 15 percent bad.

In a question favored by many analysts, respondents are asked whether they think things in general are moving in the "right direction" or are off on the "wrong track." Surveys showed the former response increasing over the summer and fall of 1988. Stanley Greenberg, who polls for many Democratic candidates, told the presidential campaign *Hotline* in early September that "in every statewide and every congressional poll that we've done in the last two weeks, more people thought the country was moving in the right direction than off on the wrong track, whereas two months ago we barely had a district or state — including ones with low unemployment like Delaware and Connecticut — where the right direction exceeded the wrong track." Greenberg concluded that the shift "is part of a general mood in which people are reevaluating where the economy is — beginning to believe that the Reagan years brought positive gains at the economic level that are real. . . . The type of assessment of the economy that Greenberg described in the late summer persisted throughout the fall campaign.

Democrats are again debating the lessons of the 1988 presidential balloting. "Did we just run a bad campaign, or is our problem deeper?" Part of the answer is that a third alternative has to be factored in to explain what happened in 1988: when an out-of-power party must contend for the presidency in a period of peace and relative prosperity, it is likely to lose. That was the Democrats' problem in 1988. The election results were not inevitable, but they were both likely and predictable. Bush's final margin of roughly 8 percentage points seems to me to be at the low end of the likely range, given the setting in which the contest was waged. Polls in fact suggest that a higher turnout would have resulted in a bigger Republican margin. The CBS *News/New York Times* post-election survey showed Bush preferred over Dukakis by 12 points among all registered nonvoters interviewed, by 16 points among unregistered nonvoters.

THE CONTEXT FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL VOTING

The United States had, of course, another set of elections on 8 November 1988 that came out very differently than did the presidential contest. The Democrats made net gains of one seat in the Senate, two in the House, and one governorship; and they maintained their commanding position in the state legislatures. Thus continued the two-tier electoral system evident for the last quarter century: one partisan outcome for the presidency and another elsewhere. 1988 was a good year for incumbents — not just for the incumbent party seeking four more years in the

White House. The lack of any strong sense across the electorate that it was time for a change presumably aided congressional incumbents as well.

Cognitive Madisonianism

Much more is at work, however, accounting for the extraordinary, historically unprecedented divergence of presidential and congressional voting. Some observers speculate on how much the contemporary electorate is being guided by a kind of cognitive Madisonianism. The many variants of this interpretation all start from the fact that with two centuries of experience with a political philosophy and attendant institutions that raise checked-and-divided governmental authority to a lofty status as an instrument for preserving individual liberty, Americans are less likely than their counterparts in other democracies to be troubled by a Republican White House and a Democratic Congress. Never before the last quarter century had Americans regularly experienced sustained divided party control of their national executive and legislative institutions, but their entire history had prepared them for the underlying idea of divided government.

Has a new ideological element been added to the historic mix? Are Americans now seeking a new form of divided power—a Republican executive and Democratic legislature—to express some new set of perspectives or objectives? Certainly the public is saying that they like the idea of divided party control. For example, in a survey taken 23–26 October 1988, NBC News and the *Wall Street Journal* asked: “In general, do you think it is better for the same political party to control both the Congress and the presidency, or do you think it is better to have different political parties controlling the Congress and the presidency?” Only 32 percent opted for unified party control, 54 percent for divided authority. In a survey taken in Connecticut from 29 November through 6 December 1988, the University of Connecticut’s Institute for Social Inquiry asked: “The way the election came out, the Republicans control the White House but the Democrats control both Houses of Congress. Do you think this is good for the country, or would it be better if one party had both the presidency and the Congress?” Sixty-seven percent of those interviewed said the prevailing divided arrangements were desirable. By a margin of 55 to 36 percent, those who had voted for George Bush on 8 November and who declared themselves pleased with his victory endorsed as “good for the country” a Democratic congressional majority.

I have often noted that contemporary public opinion research in the United States shows a public highly ambivalent on many major questions of public policy. For example, Americans endorse high levels of governmental protections and services, and at the same time they describe government as too big, expensive, and intrusive.¹ The public wants somewhat contradictory things of the modern state. And

¹ See, for example, Everett Carl Ladd, “Politics in the 80s: An Electorate at Odds with Itself,” *Public Opinion* 3 (December/January 1983): 2–6; Ladd, “The Reagan Phenomenon and Public Attitudes Toward Government” in Lester M. Salmons and Michael S. Lund, eds., *The Reagan Presidency and*

we know it sees the Democrats and Republicans differing significantly on the issue of government’s role. Would it be surprising, then, if a kind of cognitive Madisonianism in modern guise emerged: Let’s set the two parties’ views of government’s proper role more actively in (hopefully) creative tension, with a Republican executive pushing one way and a Democratic legislature the other.

S.M. Lipset argues that it is by no means chance that leaves the Republicans advantaged in the White House and the Democrats on Capitol Hill. “The Republicans are assisted on the national level by the fact that the presidency is perceived as an elected monarch, as a symbol as well as a leadership position for the entire country, which ideally is above narrow interest conflicts and is heavily involved with domestic moral values and foreign and defense policies. The office is inherently linked to nationalism. . . . Democratic liberals look weak in this context. Reagan and Bush appear strong. Congress, on the other hand, is the place where cleavages get fought out. Members perform services, act as ombudspersons, and represent interests. They appeal narrowly, rather than broadly. And the Democrats, with their links to mass groups and popularly-based interest organizations, are in a better position to fulfill these functions.”²

Incumbency, et al.

Even those most inclined to see cognitive Madisonianism in the two-tier voting must acknowledge, however, that much else is now at work. The fact is that virtually all incumbents of both parties who seek to win reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives now typically do so by overwhelming margins. A main source of this result and the burgeoning uncompetitiveness is the virtually complete separation of House voting from judgments about the proper course of public policy. While I will not discuss it here, much the same thing seems to be happening in state legislatures, for the same basic reasons.

Political scientist David Mayhew was one of the first to call attention to the “vanishing marginals.”—House seats where the winner’s margin was small enough that the contest could be seen as competitive.³ In 1960, while both parties had plenty of safe seats, 203 of the 435 contests were at least marginally competitive, with the winner being held to less than 60 percent of the vote. By 1980, though, only 140 House races saw the winner under 60 percent.

House voting in 1988 was the most uncompetitive in U.S. history. The winner was either unopposed or beat his opponent by 70 to 30 percent or more in 242

² Seymour Martin Lipset, “A Reaffirming Election: 1988,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 1 (January 1989).

³ David R. Mayhew, “Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals,” *Polity* 6 (Spring 1974): 295–317.

⁴ See, for example, Everett Carl Ladd, “Politics in the 80s: An Electorate at Odds with Itself,” *Public Opinion* 3 (December/January 1983): 2–6; Ladd, “The Reagan Phenomenon and Public Attitudes Toward Government” in Lester M. Salmons and Michael S. Lund, eds., *The Reagan Presidency and*

districts. A respectable showing for a challenger has become holding the victor to just 60 to 69 percent of the vote, a result obtained in 128 districts in 1988. The losing candidate got as much as 40 percent of the vote in just 65 contests, and he came within 10 percentage points of the winner—that is, losing by 55-45 or less—in only 29 of the 435 House races (Table 1).

Open seats—those where no incumbent is running—are often quite competitive, but in 1988 there were just twenty-six of them. Only six incumbents seeking reelection lost, and five of them had been tinged by some form of scandal.

What accounts for the virtual disappearance of competitiveness in U.S. House elections? One big part of the story is the enormous advantage incumbents typically enjoy in resources for promoting their candidacies. Staff provided to House members was tripled in the 1960s and 1970s, and members of Congress have put many of their new assistants to work on matters back home in their districts. They have found this useful in serving constituents' needs, of course—but, not incidentally, useful in a narrowly self-serving sense as a little electoral machine made available to them year-round at public expense. Few challengers can match this resource for self-publicizing.

Incumbents generally enjoy a large advantage as well in campaign contributions. Knowing that current office-holders are likely to be reelected and that they will have to deal with them in advancing their legislative objectives, the political action committees (PACs) of the various interest groups heavily back them, regardless of party. In the 1985-1986 election cycle, PAC dollars went to congressional incumbents over their challengers by about \$96 to \$20 million; and incomplete tabulations for 1987-1988 suggest an even greater margin. Even challengers in races targeted by their political parties for special effort usually have less financial support than the members of Congress they seek to unseat.

In races for governor and U.S. senator—as well, of course, as that for president—many voters know something substantial about the candidates' policy stands or

records. In these contests, even well-funded incumbents who are better known than their opponents may readily be defeated when the electorate is in the mood for policy change. But members of Congress simply don't have the policy visibility of governors and senators. Most voters know next to nothing about their representative's voting record. They are, though, more likely to have some vaguely favorable image of him or her than they are of his or her opponent.

Decline of Party Voting

Political party ties are the one thing that could upset this dynamic. That is, a voter might not know anything about a member of Congress's voting record but still vote against him or her in favor of a less-well-known challenger because the voter preferred the challenger's party. This is, of course, exactly what happened historically. But over the last quarter century, as incumbents have accumulated election resources greater than ever before, the proportion of the electorate bound by strong party ties has declined precipitously. Better educated and drawing their political information largely from the communications media, today's voters feel they need parties less than did their counterparts of times past.

In highly visible races like those for president, senator, and governor, voters typically acquire enough information to make up for the decline of the guidance that party ties long provided. At the other end of the spectrum, in elections of school board members, aldermen, etc., voters often have enough close-up, personal knowledge of the candidates to reach informed judgments. House races are where we have our problem. Party voting is no longer decisive, but substantive knowledge of the candidates' records is usually insufficient to furnish a substitute base for substantive choice. Enjoying huge advantages in resources for self-promotion, incumbents in such contests are now winning reelection routinely by escalating margins.

THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENCY

A complex structure is at work producing the outcomes that distinguish the contemporary parties and elections system. Returning to the presidential component, the Republicans won the presidency in 1988 in substantial part because they were the incumbent party in a time of peace and relative prosperity. But clearly more than that was at work. Just as the Democrats' ascendancy in the Congress has persisted over an extended span, so has the GOP's presidential dominance. In the last six presidential elections—1968-1988—the Republicans garnered 53 percent of all the ballots cast, the Democrats just 43 percent (Table 2). Only one previous extended set of elections was decided more decisively: the five from 1932 through 1948, when the Democrats won 55 percent of the vote to the Republicans' 43 percent. All manner of short-term factors enter into presidential election outcomes. But margins of the magnitude piled up in the New Deal and in the contemporary cycle

TABLE 1
Competitiveness of the U.S. House of Representatives' Districts, 1960-1988

| Winner's Margin | No. of Districts in Which Winner's Margin in 1980 was: | No. of All Districts in Which Winner's Margin in 1980 was: | No. of Districts in Which Winner's Margin in 1988 was: |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Unopposed | 64 | 27 | 67 |
| 75-99% | 43 | 94 | 91 |
| 70-74% | 27 | 84 | 84 |
| 65-69% | 49 | 80 | 82 |
| 60-64% | 59 | 50 | 66 |
| 55-59% | 112 | 61 | 36 |
| 52-54% | 86 | 39 | 7 |
| 51% + less | 36 | 40 | 12 |

Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan perceived the threat to his party's standing. He told the Labour party's national executive committee: "If you want to retain power you have got to listen to what people—our people—say and what they want. If you talk to people in the factories and in the clubs, they all want to pay less tax. They are more interested in that than the Government giving money away in other directions." Unfortunately for the party, not many of its leaders were prepared to act on this insight. Jenkins stresses Margaret Thatcher's economic appeal to broad segments of British working class.

Social Issues

A second set of issues that challenged the Democratic Party nationally involved a diverse array of social questions. The New Deal coalition, Christopher Jencks has observed, was held together by economic interests. Rural white southerners and the northern working class could unite on greater governmental intervention in the marketplace.

Neither group had "liberal" views on issues like race, patriotism, capital punishment, or abortion. Once these issues became politically salient, as they did in the 1960s, Democratic presidential candidates faced, and still face an almost insoluble problem. If they took liberal positions on such issues they estranged the white South and part of the white working class. If they took conservative positions they risked estranging the educated liberals who ran their campaigns and raised their money. Democratic candidates for Congress can often sidestep this problem because most congressional districts are relatively homogenous. . . . This strategy does not work as well in statewide elections, especially if the state is socially diverse. . . . It doesn't seem to work at all in national elections.⁶

Foreign Policy

The third set of issues is in foreign and defense policy. It is easy to forget these days that the Democrats were in the New Deal era the party of the more assertive foreign policy. Indeed, the charge made the rounds in some Republican circles that the United States "got wavy" when the Democrats were in office. Certainly the United States got in the 1930s and 1940s from the Democrats a kind of foreign policy nationalism that was the intellectual equivalent of the "new nationalism" that the party pushed in domestic economic affairs — in both cases, following the earlier lead of Franklin's Republican cousin, Theodore Roosevelt. The United States, Democratic leaders insisted, had broad responsibilities for advancing both spe-

⁶ Peter Jenkins, *Mrs. Thatcher's Revolution: The Ending of the Socialist Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 26.
⁷ Christopher Jencks, "Lessons for Liberals," *The New York Review of Books*, 22 December 1988, 21-22.

TABLE 2
The Parties' Share of the Popular Vote for President, 1932-1948 and 1988-1988

| | Democrats | Republicans | Other | All |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 1932-1948: | | | | |
| Votes: | 127,553,850 | 98,757,569 | 5,568,148 | 231,879,567 |
| Percentage: | 55 | 43 | 2 | 100 |
| 1988-1988: | | | | |
| Votes: | 218,168,407 | 285,343,131 | 21,751,370 | 505,240,908 |
| Percentage: | 43 | 53 | 4 | 100 |

Note: For the 1988 presidential election, the latest data available were provided by the Federal Election Commission, 12 January 1989.

show something more than an accumulation of short-term forces. The Democrats' 12 point lead in the Roosevelt era occurred in part because their approach to governing was more popular than the GOP's. Likewise the Republicans 10 point margin over the last six contests reflects an edge grounded in voters' decisions on the broad reach of public policy.

The Role of Government

Analysts differ as to the precise mix of developments in public policy that has given the Republicans their presidential majority of the modern period. I would identify three components. One results from the tremendous real growth of government over the 1960s and 1970s. In response to this growth, governmental actions came increasingly to be seen as problems, not just as solutions to problems. "Government causes inflation" is one part of this. "Government taxes too much" is another part. The actual tax burden on most citizens increased dramatically after the 1950s. In 1953, families with incomes around the national average paid 11.8 percent of their income in taxes; in 1966 they paid 17.8 percent, and in 1980, 22.7 percent.⁸ Incomes rose, but the proportion paid out in taxes rose much faster. Taxes claimed about twice as much of the average family's earnings in 1980 as they had twenty-five years earlier.

This ushered in an era of populist protests against big government quite different from anything that occurred in the New Deal era. A substantial segment of the lower-middle and working classes came to resent the amount they had to pay and to be receptive to appeals from conservative politicians on the plank of tax reduction. A similar development occurred in the United Kingdom. In his brilliant account of the rise of Thatcherism, Peter Jenkins describes how in the late 1970s

⁸ Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, "Significant Features of Fiscal Federalism," 1980-81 (Washington, D.C.: December 1981), 48.

cific national interests and the cause of democracy through a major assertion of American power into world affairs.

Important segments of the Democratic party would probably have modified this New Deal-era approach in any case, but the Vietnam war served at once to quicken and heighten the reassessment. The Republicans were thus given an enormous opportunity to establish themselves as the more tough-minded of the two parties on foreign policy issues, the one more prepared to maintain a strong national defense and to resist Communist expansion.

The Democrats continued to bring important assets to their policy confrontations with the Republicans, including the widespread perception across middle-class America that they were better than the Republicans in responding to claims for needed protections and services. But the combined disadvantages that accrued to the party from the developments noted in foreign policy, social issues, and taxes and related big government issues was more than their New Deal majority could withstand.

THE GENERATIONAL COMPONENT OF PARTY CHANGE

The new policy cleavages made themselves felt in partisan attachments. But the impact was hardly a bolt from the blue. We need to see how changes in the mix of party ites have gradually emerged. In forming party attachments, individuals gain a frame of reference from the decisive events of the period when they first came to political consciousness—usually in their late teens or early twenties—which then shape their subsequent values and actions.⁷ Some political leaders are decidedly more respected and popular than others—and sometimes these ascendent politicians are Republicans and sometimes they are Democrats. In the last decade, the Carter-Reagan comparison has been very helpful to the GOP—especially among new voters without a lot of past political experience. Similarly, a distinctive mix of issues dominates political argument as these new voters come of age politically. If the mix generally favors one party over the other—as it did the Democrats in the 1930s and the Republicans in the 1970s and 1980s—the impact of persons without much previous personal political experience is apt to be substantial. This makes young people a key early-warning indicator of major partisan change. As the group ages, it begins to have new and sometimes conflicting political experiences, but these are filtered through an established pattern of party loyalties that are likely to persist, unless and until the mix of new experiences produces a sustained break.

Do available data support this general interpretation? Let's begin by looking

⁷ See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936); Mannheim, "The Sociological Problem of Generations" in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 376-322; Sigmund Neumann, *Permanent Revolution* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942); Rudolf Heberle, *Social Movements* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951).

TABLE 3
Party Identification of Americans by Age, in 1952 and 1985

| | 1952 | | | 1985 | | | Ind. | Democratic Percentage (-) | |
|------------------|------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|------------------------------|------|
| | D | R | Ind. | D | R | Ind. | | 1952 | 1985 |
| 18-21 yrs. old | 40% | 28% | 38% | 30% | 40% | 30% | | +16% | -10% |
| 22-25 yrs. old | 42 | 27 | 31 | 31 | 35 | 34 | | +15 | -4 |
| 26-29 yrs. old | 43 | 26 | 31 | 31 | 35 | 33 | | +17 | -4 |
| 30-33 yrs. old | 45 | 26 | 29 | 34 | 31 | 35 | | +16 | +3 |
| 34-37 yrs. old | 43 | 29 | 28 | 37 | 30 | 33 | | +14 | +7 |
| 38-41 yrs. old | 45 | 30 | 29 | 36 | 32 | 30 | | +16 | +6 |
| 42-45 yrs. old | 39 | 35 | 25 | 37 | 32 | 31 | | +2 | +5 |
| 46-49 yrs. old | 38 | 36 | 25 | 37 | 33 | 30 | | +3 | +4 |
| 50-53 yrs. old | 42 | 32 | 25 | 35 | 36 | 28 | | +10 | -1 |
| 54-57 yrs. old | 39 | 39 | 24 | 41 | 32 | 27 | | +1 | +9 |
| 58-61 yrs. old | 41 | 37 | 21 | 42 | 35 | 23 | | +4 | +7 |
| 62-65 yrs. old | 39 | 39 | 22 | 48 | 32 | 21 | | 0 | +16 |
| 66-69 yrs. old | 37 | 45 | 18 | 46 | 35 | 19 | | -8 | +11 |
| 70-73 yrs. old | 40 | 43 | 17 | 47 | 35 | 17 | | -3 | +12 |
| 74-77 yrs. old | 38 | 49 | 14 | 41 | 41 | 18 | | -13 | 0 |
| 78-81 yrs. old | 34 | 50 | 16 | 40 | 41 | 18 | | -16 | -1 |
| 82 yrs. and over | 31 | 57 | 12 | 40 | 42 | 18 | | -26 | -2 |
| ALL AGES | 41 | 50 | 28 | 37 | 34 | 29 | | +8 | +3 |

Source: Gallup polls conducted April through July 1982 (seven in number) and January through July 1955 (eight in number).

Similar analysis done by Helmut Norpoth using CBS News/New York Times surveys yields the same basic picture. See Helmut Norpoth, "Changes in Party Identification: Evidence of a Republican Majority?" paper prepared for delivery at the American Political Science Association meetings, New Orleans, La, 1985.

at the party preferences of different age groups in the United States as shown by Gallup surveys taken in 1952 and in 1985 (Table 3). The first thing we see is a striking difference in the party preferences of the age groups in the two periods. In 1952 the Democrats' best groups were the young and middle-aged, while the Republicans had large leads among elderly voters. In 1985, however, the Republicans were strongest among the young and the very old, while the Democrats had their greatest strength among people in their fifties, sixties, and early seventies.

Let's translate these data more directly into the frame of generational experience, showing groups by the time when they came of age politically rather than by current age. "Coming of age politically" will be expressed here as reaching 18 years, which seems adequate as a rough standard. Looking at Table 4, we see a broad array of groups, from those who reached 18 years of age way back in the early 1890s (who were still part of the electorate in 1952) to people who reached voting

TABLE 4
Percent Republican and Democratic of Major Party Identifiers
by Years in Which Respondents Reached Maturity (18 Years),
1952 and 1985 Gallup Polls

| Year | 1952 Gallup Polls | | 1985 Gallup Polls | |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | % Republican | % Democratic (-) | % Republican | % Democratic (-) |
| 1890-93 | 63% | -20% | | |
| 1894-97 | 54 | -8 | | |
| 1898-1901 | 51 | -2 | | |
| 1902-05 | 54 | -8 | | |
| 1906-09 | 49 | +2 | | |
| 1910-13 | 48 | +4 | | |
| 1914-17 | 47 | +6 | | |
| 1918-21 | 48 | +8 | | |
| 1922-25 | 49 | +4 | 0% | 50% |
| 1926-29 | 48 | +8 | 0 | 50 |
| 1930-33 | 41 | +18 | +14 | 43 |
| 1934-37 | 39 | +22 | +14 | 43 |
| 1938-41 | 37 | +26 | +20 | 40 |
| 1942-45 | 39 | +22 | +10 | 45 |
| 1946-49 | 39 | +22 | +12 | 44 |
| 1950-53 | | | 0 | 60 |
| 1954-57 | | | +8 | 47 |
| 1958-61 | | | +8 | 47 |
| 1962-65 | | | +10 | 45 |
| 1966-69 | | | +10 | 45 |
| 1970-73 | | | +6 | 47 |
| 1974-77 | | | -8 | 53 |
| 1978-81 | | | -6 | 59 |
| 1982-85 | | | -14 | 57 |

Notes: Since the object of this table is to focus on the relative Republican vs. Democratic strength in each generation, independents have been excluded from the calculations. To take an example of how the data should be read, among those who reached 18 years of age in the 1932-35 span, who identify with one or the other major party, 87% are Republican (and hence 43% Democratic).

age just in the last few years. Using both the 1952 and the 1985 surveys extends the range of our generational examination. Some groups are represented in both the 1952 and the 1985 polls. Those who were just coming of political age in 1952 were in their fifties by the mid-1980s.

The relative standing of the major parties varies substantially across generational groups in a fashion that corresponds in rough terms to what we know of decisive political experiences. For example, both the 1952 and the 1985 Gallup polls

show the Democrats' margin over the Republicans' greatest among those who came of age politically at the height of the Democrats' New Deal ascendancy. Since static enters into polling and poll responses, it is especially impressive that the picture provided by the two batches of surveys separated by thirty-three years is so consistent.

People who reached political maturity in the late 1930s and early 1940s were in 1952 unusually pro-Democratic—and they are so today. Republicans had a big edge in the 1890s, but they began to lose this among new voters coming of age in the early twentieth century—reflecting in part the impact of immigration on the makeup of the population. In the 1930s the Democrats began achieving an overwhelming generational advantage over the Republicans; this was not interrupted until the 1950s, when various developments, among them Dwight Eisenhower's personal popularity, cut significantly into the Democrats' edge among new voters. The heyday of John Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society saw the Democrats recover among new entrants, but over the last decade the GOP has, for the first time in a long while, taken the lead among those just coming into the electorate. This new Republican margin widened during the Reagan presidency.

Surveys taken in 1988 show the pattern sketched in Tables 3 and 4 continuing. For example, the combined results of four national surveys taken for the Americans Talk Security project (ATS) between February and June 1988 found the Democrats' best age cohort people between 60 and 75 years of age, who had come of age politically in the 1930s and 1940s. The Republicans' best group was those 18-29, the children of the Carter and Reagan years. The Gallup Youth Surveys taken in 1988 showed Republicans doing well in the 13-17 age cohort. These surveys ask: "When you are old enough to vote, do you think you will be more likely to vote for candidates of the Republican party or for candidates of the Democratic party?" Forty-four percent of those interviewed in the three 1988 surveys said the Republicans, 36 percent the Democrats.*

These data help us understand why in recent years no dramatic overall swing to the Republicans has occurred in party identification, though the Democrats' lead has been diminished. The Democrats put together a long string where they bested the Republicans among new voters, and they continue to reap the benefits: People who came of age politically from the 1930s through the 1960s remain a large part of the electorate, and the impressive Democratic base among these age groups has by no means been obliterated. The Democrats are down from their once clear ascendancy, but they still have a lot of generational capital. In recent years, the Republicans have reversed the trend among new entrants; should they continue to have this success, they will in time shift the underlying partisan base decisively in their favor.

* Robert Bezilia, ed., *America's Youth 1987-88* (Princeton, N.J.: The Gallup Organization, 1988), 108-9.

size, however, that Ronald Reagan's popularity had much to do with it, coming after various events over the past quarter century had already eroded Democratic loyalties (Table 5).

GROUPS AND THE 1988 BALLOTING

The presidential voting on 8 November further testified to the dramatic shift that has occurred in the partisanship and electoral behavior of white southerners. According to the election day polls of NBS News and the *Wall Street Journal*, for example, Bush received 57 percent of the whites vote nationally; but his margins in the South ranged from a low of 63 percent in Florida to a high of 80 percent in Mississippi (Table 6). According to the *Los Angeles Times* exit poll, an extraordinary 74 percent of southern white Protestants voted for George Bush, just 25 percent for Michael Dukakis. In the New Deal era, white southerners' overwhelming support for the national Democratic Party had two main sources: racial tension and memories reaching back to the Civil War, and the fact that white southerners were the most liberal—that is, New Deal policy supporting—regional group in the country. In the contemporary alignment, things have become almost exactly reversed. White southerners have become the most Republican regional group in presidential voting, because of the racial division that finds blacks overwhelmingly Democratic and because they are now generally the most conservative regional group.

Elsewhere, looking at key groups, the changes that have occurred from the New Deal era to the present are surely far less dramatic. Taken together, though, many of these other changes are impressive and together define an electoral universe vastly different from that of the 1930s through the 1950s. Tables 7-9 document

TABLE 5
Party Identification of White Southerners

| | | Spring | | | | 1988 | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|
| | | 1983 | | 1984 | | 1985 | | 1988 | |
| D | R | D | R | D | R | D | R | D | R |
| 48% | 21% | 33% | 42% | 35% | 29% | 28% | 36% | 25% | 32% |
| Dem. +23% | | Dem. +19% | | Dem. +14% | | Reps. +9% | | Reps. +2% | |

Source: Combined Gallup polls in the years shown, except for 1988. The 1988 data are from four surveys taken for the Americans Talk Security project, February through June.

The Exceptional Case of the White South

On occasion, amidst the many cases of gradual change in the partisan preferences of social groups, there is a really dramatic shift. White southerners are the prime example of such a dramatic change in the contemporary partisan experience. The new issue mix, with a racial component more powerful than elsewhere, has had an explosive impact on this group.

The swing-over in professed party identification was especially sharp in the mid-1980s. According to Gallup data, the percentage of white southerners identifying as Republicans in the January-July 1985 span was 10 points higher than it had been in the spring of 1984, and 18 points higher than in 1979, an unprecedentedly rapid swing. Other polls confirm the picture Gallup provides: The partisan balance was tipped significantly in favor of the Republicans during the 1984 campaign. We don't know precisely why this shift occurred when it did. We can hypothe-

TABLE 6
Vote in 1988 of Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics

| | Whites | | Blacks | | Hispanics | |
|--------------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | % Bush | % Dukakis | % Bush | % Dukakis | % Bush | % Dukakis |
| U.S. | 57 | 43 | 11 | 89 | 31 | 69 |
| Alabama | 76 | 24 | 7 | 93 | NA | NA |
| Florida | 63 | 37 | 6 | 92 | 68 | 32 |
| N. Carolina | 67 | 33 | 6 | 97 | NA | NA |
| Texas | 65 | 35 | 10 | 90 | 21 | 79 |
| Arkansas | 60 | 37 | 10 | 90 | NA | NA |
| Louisiana | 75 | 25 | 10 | 90 | NA | NA |
| Mississippi | 80 | 20 | 13 | 87 | NA | NA |
| So. Carolina | 78 | 22 | 10 | 90 | NA | NA |
| Tennessee | 67 | 33 | 13 | 87 | NA | NA |
| Georgia | 74 | 26 | 10 | 90 | NA | NA |

Source: The 1988 election day surveys taken by NBC News and the *Wall Street Journal*. The national sample included 11,703 voters, and large independent samples were polled in each of the states shown.

TABLE 7
1988 Vote for Selected Social Groups

| | Presidential Vote | | Congressional Vote | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|----------|
| | Bush | Dukakis | Republican | Democrat |
| So. White Protestants | 74% | 25% | 82% | 40% |
| High Status Males | 66 | 33 | 65 | 36 |
| WASP's | 62 | 36 | 66 | 36 |
| Born-Again Christians | 80 | 34 | 49 | 43 |
| Young Affluents | 67 | 41 | 46 | 44 |
| Everyone | 53 | 48 | 48 | 48 |
| White Ethnics | 52 | 47 | 45 | 49 |
| High Status Females | 50 | 49 | 42 | 52 |
| Blue-Collar White Catholics | 45 | 55 | 37 | 65 |
| Hispanics | 37 | 62 | 42 | 52 |
| Blacks | 11 | 86 | 9 | 78 |

Note: 5,043 voters were interviewed as they were leaving polling stations around the country. Source: *Los Angeles Times* Election Day Poll, 8 November 1988.

TABLE 8
Party Identification of 1988 General Election Voters

| | Republican | Independent & "Something Else" | Democratic |
|-----------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Born-Again Christians | 51% | 20% | 29% |
| Southern White Protestants | 48 | 20 | 29 |
| WASPs | 55 | 21 | 24 |
| High Status Males | 48 | 24 | 28 |
| Young Affluents | 44 | 22 | 34 |
| Everyone | 38 | 21 | 42 |
| High Status Females | 38 | 21 | 40 |
| White Ethnics | 32 | 22 | 46 |
| Blue-Collar White Catholics | 22 | 21 | 59 |
| Hispanics | 23 | 12 | 65 |
| Blacks | 7 | 10 | 83 |

Sources: ABC News Election Day Poll, 8 November 1988. 23,030 voters were interviewed as they left polling stations around the country.

this by comparing the presidential and congressional vote in 1988 of ten key groups and by showing the party identification (and self-described ideological orientations) of group members who went to the polls on election day.

In the New Deal years, men and women had voted almost identically. In 1988, however, according to the CBS News/New York Times exit poll, the gender gap was 15 percentage points: Men favored Bush over Dukakis by a 16 point margin, women by just 1 percentage point. The NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll put the gap at 14 points. Analysis of the exit poll data show that the gap between men and women was especially great among those of high socioeconomic status. The *Los Angeles Times* exit poll found, for example, high status males (college grads, family incomes of \$50,000 a year and higher) went for Bush over Dukakis by 2 to 1, while high status women split evenly between the two candidates. High status men are also more likely than their female counterparts to identify as Republicans and to describe themselves as conservatives.

Election day poll data show that the pattern of voting among Hispanics evident in recent past elections persisted almost entirely unchanged in 1988. Nationally, the GOP is the minority party among the nation's Hispanic voters, but it gets a healthy minority share. One group of Hispanics, those of Cuban background concentrated in Florida, is heavily Republican. The GOP's position overall within the rapidly-growing Hispanic population is roughly equivalent to its position among the nation's black voters in the New Deal era. The present overwhelming black support for the Democrats is, of course, yet another product of the shifts of the past quarter century.

Northern white Protestants of British ancestry, of high social status—the storied WASP—remain today, as in the past, heavily Republican and conservative. But rivaling the WASPs on both counts are members of another group of a quite

TABLE 9
Ideological Self-Identification of 1988 General Election Voters

| | Conservative | "Somewhere in between" | Liberal |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------------------------|---------|
| Born-Again Christians | 64% | 23% | 13% |
| Southern White Protestants | 60 | 25 | 15 |
| WASPs | 64 | 19 | 17 |
| High Status Males | 58 | 20 | 23 |
| Young Affluents | 48 | 23 | 29 |
| Everyone | 43 | 32 | 25 |
| High Status Females | 40 | 30 | 30 |
| White Ethnics | 39 | 32 | 29 |
| Blue-Collar White Catholics | 32 | 43 | 25 |
| Hispanics | 30 | 40 | 30 |
| Blacks | 19 | 19 | 40 |

Sources: ABC News Election Day Poll, 8 November 1988. 23,030 voters were interviewed as they left polling stations around the country.

Note for Tables 7-9:

How the above groups are constructed from the exit poll survey data, where it is not evident from the categories themselves.

High Status:

Blue-Collar:

Young Affluents:

WASPs:

White Ethnics:

Born-Again:

College graduates, family income of \$50,000 and higher.

(ABC) No college training; paid hourly.

(LAT) No college training; head of household identified by respondent as blue-collar worker.

Under 40 years; college grade; family income of \$50,000 and higher.

Whites of British ancestry; residing outside the South; college graduates; Protestants.

Irish Catholic, Greek, Italian, Polish, and other Slavic.

(ABC) The questionnaire presented respondents with a long list of groups and asked the respondents: "Do any of the following apply to you? Check all that apply." (Born-Again Christian was the 11th item in a list of 14). Fifteen percent of the sample indicated thus that they were "Born-Again Christians."

(LAT) The questionnaire approached this matter of religious identification very differently. The questionnaire contained the following free-standing question: "Have you had a born-again experience—a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Jesus Christ?" Twenty-eight percent of the entire sample answered yes.

different social position: those who say they have had a "born-again experience—a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Jesus Christ." Born-again Christians are a far larger segment of the contemporary Republican electorate than are WASPs.

In noting these and other elements of change in group voting that help define the contemporary alignment, I should stress that many things have not changed. Every major change in group alignments incorporates important features of its predecessor. The relative voting patterns of various white ethnic groups have, for example, remained remarkably constant. The ABC News exit poll this year showed, for example, Protestants of German ancestry 15 percentage points more Repub-

ican in their presidential vote than were German Catholics; Irish Protestants 14 points more Republican than Irish Catholics. Nonetheless, the overall group alignment of the contemporary system differs substantially from that of the New Deal era.

The Contemporary Parties/Elections System

Our present-day electoral alignment, the product of a quarter-century of change, has five principal components: The group basis of the present system has shifted markedly from that of the New Deal years; the new voting alignments reflect profound changes in the mix and cut of issues, which cumulatively have worked to the Democrats' disadvantage in national contests; the Republicans have emerged as the majority party in presidential electioneering; the new alignment displays a split personality—one face evident in presidential balloting, another in state and local contests (where the Democrats predominate); dealignment—the weakening of voters' ties to the parties—is evident throughout the current system, as party-less voting now occurs to an historically unprecedented degree.

Do these features, and changes from the previous system to which they point, constitute a realignment? I remain inclined to say they do. But argument over the term's meaning is simply not worth the candle. For over three decades, political scientists have been engaged in an exceptionally unproductive debate over just what criteria must be met before a proper realignment may be officially declared. As this debate has dragged on, the world of American political parties has been transformed. Let's bury the concept and get on with a precise charting of the new arrangements and their implications. A transformed parties and election system is firmly in place in the United States. It has no historic counterpart, and it seems to this observer to impart as much of consequence to contemporary politics as any of its predecessor systems did to theirs.

Elections and Dilemmas of American Democratic Governance: Reflections

DEMETRIOS CARALEY

I take as a central dilemma of American democratic governance that while all the adult citizenry have gained the opportunity to vote freely in elections on who the president and members of Congress are to be, they seem to be losing influence on what those officials do on questions of policy once in office. The 1968 election campaigns produced more criticism both of the process of choosing these officials and of the lack of policy mandates than any others in recent memory. This article attempts to organize that criticism under three headings, reflect upon it, and offer some prescriptions for change.

The bill of particulars being leveled against the American democracy is, as I would summarize it: First, presidential and congressional election campaigns have become much more like popularity or beauty contests, con games, and television spectacles than a means of choosing the best persons to rule or producing a policy mandate to our highest officials from the voters. Second, voters cannot fix responsibility for successful or unsuccessful governmental policies because of the constitutional separation of powers between the presidency and Congress and because of the high frequency in the past thirty-four years of different parties controlling the two branches. Third, appointive federal justices with life tenure on the Supreme Court have the power to nullify the policy preferences of voting majorities working through the president and Congress.

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EXHIBIT B

The 1992 Vote for President Clinton: Another Brittle Mandate?

NOTING
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EVERETT CARLL LADD

Three decades ago, Angus Campbell and his colleagues, acknowledging a debt to V. O. Key, Jr., classified U.S. presidential elections as three basic types: maintaining, deviating, and realigning.¹ With one large amendment, this scheme seems to me to provide a useful way of locating the 1992 presidential contest. With incumbent President George Bush losing to Democratic challenger Bill Clinton by 5.5 percentage points in the popular vote, the election was evidently not maintaining. But with little happening to the mix of party identification, the alignment of social groups, or the configuration of policy preferences, neither was it realigning. It can, however, be thought of as deviating. The prevailing balance of power in presidential electioneering was rocked by short-term demands for change strong enough to give the out-of-power party control of the Executive Branch for the first time in a dozen years. The success of Ross

¹ See Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley, 1960), 531-38; and Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), 63-67. The authors defined a maintaining election as one in which "the pattern of partisan attachments prevailing in the preceding period persists, and the majority party wins the presidency." In contrast, a realigning election is one where "the basic partisan commitments of a portion of the electorate change, and a new party balance is created." See also James L. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 103 (Winter 1988-89): 613-635; Demetrios Caraley, "Elections and Dilemmas of American Democratic Government: Reflections," *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Spring 1989): 19-40.

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Perot's candidacy — which gained 19 percent of the popular vote and may well have tipped the election — also stamps the 1992 contest as a deviating case.

"In a deviating election," Campbell and his colleagues wrote, "the basic division of party loyalties is not seriously disturbed, but the influence of short-term forces on the vote is such that it brings about the defeat of the majority party."² For some time now, of course, the United States hasn't had such a majority. The weakening of voter loyalties to political parties, sometimes called dealignment, is at a point where the old model — which assumed that one party or another would normally enjoy a clear, persisting national advantage — does not apply. In part as a result of conditions stemming from dealignment, presidential and congressional voting have been showing markedly different patterns. If one were looking only at the make-up of Congress, one would have to describe the Democrats as the majority. But — the 1992 results notwithstanding — presidential balloting of the past quarter-century has shown the Republicans advantaged.³

The 1992 contest didn't result in the defeat of a majority party. Still, the incumbent party, which has been ascendant in recent presidential contests, did lose — as a result of short-term forces rather than in response to shifts in the structure of groups' political loyalties or a sea turn in the public's expectations about the proper course of public policy. Four years ago, in these pages, I described the 1988 results as indicating a continuation of the post-New Deal system. This same assessment applies to the 1992 election. For all their concern about the performance of the country's economy and political institutions, Americans issued a call better understood in terms of restoration than of change. Furthermore, the results attest to the durability of previously-set partisan and electoral transformations. The distinctive parties and elections system that took form in stages from the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s remained in place in 1992, dictating many features of the competition. Even in its deficiencies, the contemporary system is now commonplace.

"WE DIDN'T BREAK THE GOP ELECTORAL LOCK — WE JUST PICKED IT"

George Bush entered the 1992 campaign with assets seemingly sufficient to secure his reelection. But a variety of elements came together to turn the political environment adverse to him. Despite the scope of the reversal that brought Bush

down electorally just twenty months after he had appeared dominant, the 1992 election was a quiet one in terms of the underlying electoral alignment. The Democrats did relatively better in presidential voting, of course, than they had in the three previous elections, but not because they had found a key to electoral realignment. As Clinton strategist James Carville acknowledged, "We didn't break the GOP electoral lock on the White House — we just picked it."⁴

The Democrats dominated presidential politics on the playing field that the New Deal configured — the only time since the age of Andrew Jackson that they have managed to do so. The alignment of social groups and the governing philosophy they adopted under Franklin D. Roosevelt's leadership found majoritarian support. In stages, the New Deal playing field was greatly reconfigured.⁵

Many of the shifts were gradual. For example, the South, a decisive element in the Democratic coalition for much of U.S. history, began drifting away from it in 1948, when the national Democratic party changed course on civil rights. This regional realignment continued over several decades, moving fastest in presidential voting, more slowly in local contests. By the Reagan years, the South's long journey had progressed to the point that the region was the Republicans' most secure base in presidential contests. This status was reaffirmed in 1992. Even though the Democrats, for the first time ever, nominated a ticket in which both members hailed from states of the old Confederacy (and independent Ross Perot came from the South as well), George Bush enjoyed his best performance in the region. It was the only section of the country where he gained a plurality of the popular vote. In an off year nationally, the GOP picked up two U.S. Senate seats in Dixie.

FAMILIAR PATTERNS IN ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUP VOTING

The ethnocultural make-up of the 1992 vote followed the outline of recent elections, with only a few slight shifts. Black Americans were not a main part of the Roosevelt coalition — both because many of them were disenfranchised and because many still favored the party of Abraham Lincoln. Since 1964, however, blacks have been overwhelmingly Democratic, and they are a key element in the contemporary Democratic alliance. What success Bill Clinton had in the South — winning Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee — was due largely to his high support among black voters. He was swamped in the southern white electorate. Southern white Protestants, a key part of every preceding Democratic alliance, are now solidly Republican — more solidly so than northern white Protes-

² Campbell, et al., *Elections and the Political Order*, 69.

³ I have discussed these developments and their sources at length in other publications. See, for example, "The 1988 Election: Continuation of the Post-New Deal System," *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Spring 1989): 1-18; "Like Waiting for Godot: The Uselessness of 'Realignment' for Understanding Change in Contemporary American Politics" in Byron E. Shafer, ed., *The End of Realignment? A Trojany of a Concept and Death of a Phenomenon* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), chap. 2; and "Political Parties, Reform, and American Democracy" in John Kenneth White and Jerome M. Mileur, eds., *Challenges to Party Government* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), chap. 1.

⁴ James Carville, quoted in *Wall Street Journal*, 27 November 1992.

⁵ I have described the process in *Transformations of the American Party System: Political Coalitions from the New Deal to the 1970s* (New York: Norton, 1978); and in *Where Have All the Voters Gone?: The Fracturing of America's Political Parties* (New York: Norton, 1982).

TABLE 1
Ethnocultural and Religious Groups:
Presidential Vote and Party Identification in 1992

| | % of the Electorate | Vote for President | | | Party Identification of Voters | | |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | % for Clinton | % for Bush | % for Perot | % Dem. | % Rep. | % Ind. |
| Whites, attend religious services weekly | 33 | 31 | 53 | 16 | 31 | 44 | 25 |
| Whites, "Born-Again Christians/Fundamentalists" | 15 | 23 | 82 | 15 | 23 | 52 | 24 |
| All Whites | 85 | 39 | 40 | 20 | 34 | 38 | 28 |
| Blacks, attend religious services weekly | 4 | 85 | 8 | 6 | 79 | 7 | 13 |
| Blacks, "Born-Again Christians/Fundamentalists" | 3 | 86 | 11 | 3 | 79 | 8 | 13 |
| All Blacks | 10 | 83 | 10 | 7 | 75 | 8 | 17 |
| Jews | 3 | 80 | 11 | 9 | 85 | 13 | 21 |
| Hispanics | 3 | 61 | 25 | 14 | 49 | 28 | 23 |
| White Catholics | 22 | 42 | 37 | 22 | 41 | 32 | 28 |
| White Northern Protestant | 1 | 31 | 65 | 15 | 28 | 42 | 32 |
| White Southern Protestant | 21 | 36 | 44 | 20 | 29 | 47 | 24 |
| | 12 | 30 | 53 | 17 | 32 | 44 | 24 |

Source: VRS Exit Poll, 3 November 1992.

tants, the party's historic base (Table 1). In a sense, the realignment of the South was completed in 1992, when southern white Protestants went Republican in House of Representatives races, not just the presidency, by a margin of roughly 3 to 2.

The familiar connection in the contemporary era between frequency of church attendance and partisan choice continued in evidence in 1992. All groups of black Americans, including church-goers, are heavily Democratic. Among whites, though, Republicans now do far better with the "churched" part of the electorate than with the "unchurched." According to the Voter Research and Surveys (VRS) election day survey, whites who attend religious services (a third of the national electorate) voted for Bush over Clinton by 53 to 31 percent, with 16 percent going for Perot. In contrast, all white voters gave the president just 40 percent support; 39 percent backed Clinton and 20 percent Perot. Fifteen percent of voters interviewed by VRS in 1992 checked off the questionnaire category "Born-again Christian/Fundamentalist" as applying to them. Of this group, nearly two-thirds voted for Bush. On the other hand, the president was supported by fewer than 1 in 5 of those who said they had no religious ties (7 percent of voters).

During the campaign there was considerable speculation about the impact the Religious Right was having on Republican fortunes, as in its thus-far successful efforts to keep a strong anti-abortion plank in the GOP platform. In the wake of its presidential defeat, the Republican party is now often depicted in press accounts as likely to be engulfed in a battle for its soul, pitting conservative Christians and those more pragmatically inclined. It's true, of course, that any

party that wants to win a national majority must seek to be inclusive, must offer a big tent. Still, in 1992—when by all accounts economic, not social issues were doing them in—the Republicans were kept in the presidential race in large part by the strength of the support Bush retained among highly religious participating whites in general and religious conservatives in particular. With regard to abortion, of the 12 percent of voters who told the VRS survey that it was one of the most important issues for them in deciding how to vote, 53 percent backed Bush, only 36 percent Clinton, and 9 percent Perot. Their backing among large segments of the churched public is a resource for Republicans, even as it also carries the potential for making the party too narrow in its appeals.

Hispanic Americans, the fastest growing ethnic collectivity (although still markedly underrepresented among voters) gave the Democrats a clear margin this year, as they have been doing; but their ranks included a substantial Republican base of 25–30 percent. Given present size and, even more, their potential for future growth, Hispanics are an absolutely critical group in the current battle for supremacy. Asian-Americans, a still-small but fast-growing group, gave the president one of his best showings in 1992. Democratic in every presidential election since the New Deal, Jews swung further from the Republicans in the 1992 balloting than any other ethnocultural group. In 1988 (according to the CBS News/*New York Times* exit poll), Jewish voters gave Bush 35 percent of their ballots; this past election, only 11 percent of Jews backed him, as national conditions and the Clinton campaign brought many in the group back into the Democratic camp.

Catholics, along with southern white Protestants, a mainstay of earlier Democratic coalitions, continued in 1992 their long drift away from decisive Democratic loyalties. White Catholics were just 6 percentage points more for Clinton than were northern white Protestants. The VRS exit poll showed 42 percent of white Catholic voters under age 30 identifying as Republicans, as against just 34 percent calling themselves Democrats and 25 percent independents. Among older Catholic voters, however, the Democrats still have a large margin in party loyalties. The age progression is essentially the same for southern white Protestants (Table 2).

THE GENDER GAP PERSISTS

In other areas the pattern of social group alignment, which has become familiar in the contemporary era, was maintained in 1992. For example, gender was again an important factor in vote choice. According to the VRS survey, women gave Clinton a 9 percentage point margin, while men favored him over Bush by just 3 points. In the eleven U.S. Senate races where a woman faced a man, the gender gap was typically large. If one takes the percentage point margin (plus or minus) the female candidate had among men and subtracts it from her margin among women, gaps range from lows of just 3 points in Arizona, 11 points in South Dakota, and 14 in Kansas and Illinois to highs of 27 and 28 points in the two

TABLE 2
White Catholics and Southern White Protestants in the 1992 Electorate:
Party Identification by Age

| | % Democratic | % Republican | % Independent |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| White Catholics | | | |
| Under 30 years of age | 34 | 42 | 25 |
| 30-44 | 36 | 32 | 32 |
| 45-59 | 40 | 32 | 28 |
| 60+ | 57 | 24 | 19 |
| Southern White Protestants | | | |
| Under 30 years of age | 26 | 52 | 22 |
| 30-44 | 22 | 54 | 25 |
| 45-59 | 34 | 38 | 28 |
| 60+ | 45 | 35 | 20 |

Source: VRS Exit Poll, 3 November 1992.

California contests. In every case women voters gave larger shares of their votes to the female candidate than did male voters. All of the women who ran for the Senate in 1992 are Democrats, with the one exception of Republican Charlene Haas in South Dakota.

The VRS survey found no gender gap in party identification among voters with a high school education or less. But for those with more than four years of college, the gap was 18 percentage points. The same thing can be seen in the presidential vote. There wasn't a gender split in Bush-Clinton preference between men and women of high school training. In the ranks of those with graduate training, Clinton led Bush by a whopping 25 points, 55 to 30 percent among women; he led the president by just 7 points, 47-40 percent, among men. (Continuing a now-familiar pattern of partisan support, Democrat Clinton did far better in general this year among persons with post-graduate training than among all college grads.) In a number of U.S. Senate races—including those in California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania—Democratic women candidates got much bigger margins among highly schooled women than among those with high school training or among highly-schooled males (Table 3).

It's not by chance, of course, that gender differences have become an established feature of the contemporary parties and elections system. Since the 1960s, many women have encountered new sets of problems attendant upon their greatly expanded participation in the workforce over this span and as a result of the sharp rise in the proportion of single-parent, female-headed households. Relatedly, family status was again an important variable in 1992. According to the VRS study, married voters gave Bush a slight margin. But those single, divorced or separated, and widowed all backed Clinton strongly, by roughly 20 percentage points in each case. Variables like gender and family status never figured prominently in the New Deal vote pattern, but they are staples of the current order.

TABLE 3
Big Gender Differences in the 1992 Voting Between
Highly Educated Women and Men

| Vote for President | % for Clinton | % for Bush | % for Perot | Dems. Margin | Gender Gap |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| High School Graduate | 43 | 36 | 18 | 5 | -5 |
| Women | 43 | 33 | 24 | 10 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| College Graduate | 44 | 40 | 16 | 4 | 13 |
| Women | 34 | 43 | 23 | -9 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| Graduate Training | 55 | 30 | 15 | 25 | 18 |
| Women | 47 | 40 | 13 | 7 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| Vote in the Two California Senate Races | % for Feinstein (D) | % for Seymour (R) | | Dems. Margin <th>Gender Gap</th> | Gender Gap |
| High School Graduate | 55 | 44 | | 11 | -5 |
| Women | 55 | 39 | | 16 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| College Graduate | 67 | 30 | | 37 | 29 |
| Women | 51 | 43 | | 8 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| Graduate Training | 82 | 17 | | 65 | 53 |
| Women | 56 | 44 | | 12 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| High School Graduate | % for Boxer (D) | % for Hershenson (R) | | Dems. Margin <th>Gender Gap</th> | Gender Gap |
| High School Graduate | 41 | 55 | | -14 | -11 |
| Women | 45 | 48 | | -3 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| College Graduate | 59 | 36 | | 23 | 25 |
| Women | 46 | 46 | | -2 | |
| Men | | | | | |
| Graduate Training | 76 | 21 | | 55 | 52 |
| Women | 51 | 46 | | 5 | |
| Men | | | | | |

Source: 1992 VRS Exit Poll, 3 November 1992.

CONTINUITIES IN PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Table 4 brings together data on patterns in party identification among voters in the last six presidential elections. These data are from the CBS News and *New York Times* exit polls of 1972 through 1988, and the VRS exit poll in 1992. We see how closely the partisan preferences of the various social groups in the 1992 electorate resemble those in the immediately preceding elections and how much

TABLE 4
Party Identification of the Voting Public by Social Group, 1972-1992

| | 1972 | | 1976 | | 1980 | | 1984 | | 1988 | | 1992 | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| | % D | % R | % D | % R | % D | % R | % D | % R | % D | % R | % D | % R |
| EVERYONE | 47 | 11 | 41 | 16 | 45 | 15 | 38 | 3 | 38 | 3 | 38 | 3 |
| By Gender | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 46 | 11 | 39 | 16 | 42 | 11 | 35 | -1 | 33 | -6 | 34 | -2 |
| Female | 48 | 12 | 43 | 16 | 48 | 20 | 41 | 5 | 42 | 8 | 41 | 7 |
| By Race | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| White | 43 | 5 | 38 | 11 | 42 | 10 | 34 | -5 | 33 | -6 | 34 | -4 |
| Black | 80 | 68 | 74 | 87 | 73 | 3 | 77 | -7 | 77 | 68 | 75 | 87 |
| Hispanic | 75 | 59 | 73 | 65 | 67 | 52 | 58 | 29 | 64 | 48 | 50 | 26 |
| Asian | | | NA | | | | | | | | 32 | -1 |
| By Age | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-24* | 49 | 24 | 41 | 23 | 44 | 12 | 34 | -6 | | | | |
| 25-29* | 48 | 19 | 40 | 22 | 44 | 18 | 39 | 4 | 38 | 0 | 35 | -1 |
| 30-44 | 47 | 13 | 39 | 15 | 41 | 13 | 38 | 6 | 37 | 3 | 36 | 1 |
| 45-59 | 48 | 12 | 42 | 14 | 47 | 17 | 39 | 5 | 36 | 1 | 37 | 4 |
| 60+ | 42 | -8 | 45 | 13 | 40 | 10 | 40 | -1 | 42 | 7 | 45 | 11 |
| By Religion | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Protestant | 40 | -5 | 37 | 7 | 38 | 0 | 32 | -12 | 33 | -10 | 33 | -11 |
| Catholic | 57 | 33 | 45 | 28 | 49 | 27 | 45 | 16 | 40 | 8 | 43 | 12 |
| Jewish | 68 | 59 | 65 | 47 | 63 | 48 | 80 | 44 | 65 | 37 | 65 | 42 |
| None | 42 | 21 | 41 | 28 | 37 | 17 | 40 | 24 | 41 | 18 | 43 | 26 |
| By Race/Region/Religion | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Northern Wh. Prot. | 31 | -24 | 31 | -4 | 31 | -14 | 28 | -23 | 28 | -19 | 29 | -18 |
| Southern Wh. Prot. | 49 | 16 | 46 | 23 | 44 | 12 | 31 | -10 | 30 | -14 | 32 | -12 |
| Northern Wh. Cath. | 55 | 29 | 41 | 22 | 49 | 27 | 44 | 17 | 37 | 5 | 41 | 10 |
| Southern Wh. Cath. | 64 | 43 | 57 | 42 | 46 | 18 | 38 | 1 | 30 | -13 | 39 | 3 |
| By Union Family | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 58 | 32 | 49 | 31 | 53 | 31 | 49 | 24 | 50 | 25 | 49 | 24 |
| No | 42 | 2 | 37 | 9 | 40 | 7 | 34 | -6 | 34 | -5 | 36 | -2 |
| By Education | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than HS | | | | | 55 | 28 | 53 | 23 | 55 | 29 | 55 | 27 |
| HS Grad | | | | | 50 | 23 | 41 | 7 | 45 | 13 | 43 | 11 |
| Some College | | | NA | | 40 | 9 | 36 | -1 | 35 | -1 | 36 | 0 |
| College Grad | | | | | 37 | 4 | 34 | -3 | 31 | -9 | 35 | -3 |
| By Occupation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Blue Collar/White Collar/Prof./Mgr. | 58 | 28 | 48 | 30 | 51 | 28 | 44 | -17 | 46 | 19 | NA | NA |
| Unemployed | 43 | 7 | 33 | 5 | 38 | 5 | 36 | 0 | 32 | -7 | NA | NA |
| Homemaker/Student/Retired | 52 | 22 | 53 | 37 | 50 | 23 | 54 | 35 | 56 | 34 | NA | NA |
| Homemaker | 47 | 8 | | | | | 37 | -4 | 37 | 0 | NA | NA |
| Student | 46 | 19 | NA | | | | 41 | 6 | 39 | 2 | NA | NA |
| Retired | 41 | -7 | | | | | 39 | -1 | 42 | 7 | NA | NA |

Source: Election Day Surveys of Voters (Exit Polls), CBS News/New York Times, 1972-86; Voter Research and Surveys, 1992.

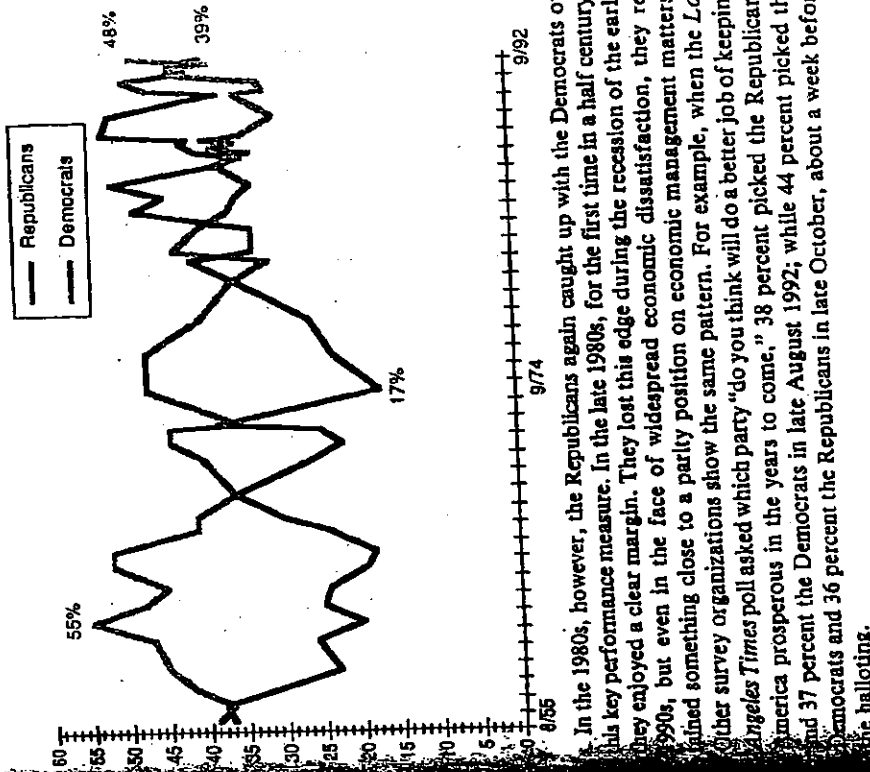
*The distributions in 1980 and 1982 are for persons 18-29 years of age.

they differ in certain cases from the ones still evident in the electorates of the 1970s. In 1972 and 1976, for example, the Democrats' best age group was the youngest voters; their worst was the oldest cohort. In 1988 and 1992, however, things were almost exactly reversed; the Democrats had their best margin in party ID among voters 60 years of age and older. If one looks at all adult Americans, rather than just at voters, one sees the same shift in party ties by age (Table 4). In the 1970s, southern white Protestants hadn't yet swung over to the GOP in professed party loyalties. The 1984 presidential election was the first in U.S. history in which a plurality of this group identified with the party of Lincoln. In 1972 and 1976, the Democrats' margin in party identification was exactly the same among men and women voters. In recent contests, however, there has been a clear, though not overwhelming, gender gap in party support. The Democrats have had an edge in party identification among women, but trail narrowly among men. Many people who profess to be Republicans or Democrats are tightly tied to their respective parties. One might have expected to find a substantial short-term shift in party identification away from the Republicans in a year like 1992, with an independent candidate making a strong run for the presidency and attracting enormous media attention, and with much of the public dissatisfied with the way things were going, especially economically, under a Republican president who saw his approval ratings plummet. In fact, not much happened to the distribution of party loyalties over the election year.

I have reviewed data on party identification from all of the principal national survey organizations, not just Gallup, whose results are assembled in Table 5. These data are generally consistent. They show the two parties relatively evenly matched in party allegiance during most of 1992, with the Democrats generally holding a slight edge. The distributions on election day were close to what they had been at the beginning of the year. We see in Table 5 that around the time of the Democratic convention, when Ross Perot announced his withdrawal from the presidential race and Bill Clinton surged to a big lead in his trial-heat matches with George Bush, the Democrats' party ID margin did rise briefly into the double-digit range. Similarly, when the Bush campaign foundered again in October, losing the modest momentum it had seemingly gained over the previous month and a half, the Democrats' edge in party identification among registered voters—data on all adults are not available from these surveys—again rose to roughly 10 points. But Gallup's surveys in the closing days of the campaign once more showed the two parties closely matched in party identification, with the Democrats leading only slightly. The VRS election-day survey of voters gave a picture consistent with the late pre-election findings; it showed Democrats outnumbering Republicans by just 3 percentage points among those who went to the polls on 3 November.

As one would expect, the data indicate that more weakly attached semipartisans were affected more by the ebb and flow of the campaign. By semipartisans I mean those who first identify themselves as independents when asked about their party preference but subsequently say they lean to one party or the other, when

FIGURE 1
Which Party Is Better for Prosperity?
(% of Public Saying Each Party)



In the 1980s, however, the Republicans again caught up with the Democrats on this key performance measure. In the late 1980s, for the first time in a half century, they enjoyed a clear margin. They lost this edge during the recession of the early 1990s, but even in the face of widespread economic dissatisfaction, they retained something close to a parity position on economic management matters. Other survey organizations show the same pattern. For example, when the *Los Angeles Times* poll asked which party "do you think will do a better job of keeping America prosperous in the years to come," 38 percent picked the Republicans and 37 percent the Democrats in late August 1992; while 44 percent picked the Democrats and 36 percent the Republicans in late October, about a week before the balloting.

A DEVIATING ELECTION

Bush Victory Had Been Expected at the Start of the Campaign
Over the course of the 1992 campaign, little was happening with regard to the partisan makeup and outlook of the American electorate after the intense partisan argument of the late 1960s on through the early 1980s. Having settled into a partisan era, the country showed no inclination to move in some different direction in 1992. Nonetheless, the 1992 presidential results were obviously a

TABLE 6
Party Identification by Social Group, at the Start and the Conclusion, of Campaign '92

| | Oct. 1991-May 1992 (All adults) | | | | Oct.-Nov. 1992 (Registered voters) | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| | % D | % R | % I | % F | % D | % R | % I | % F |
| EVERYONE | 33 | 34 | 34 | 31 | 38 | 32 | 31 | 31 |
| By Gender | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 28 | 35 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 33 | 35 | 35 |
| Female | 37 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 40 | 32 | 28 | 28 |
| By Race | | | | | | | | |
| White | 29 | 37 | 33 | 33 | 32 | 36 | 33 | 33 |
| Black | 60 | 6 | 33 | 4 | 81 | 4 | 15 | 15 |
| Hispanic | 44 | 28 | 27 | 21 | 65 | 23 | 21 | 21 |
| By Race/Region | | | | | | | | |
| White/Northeast | 29 | 37 | 34 | 35 | 33 | 32 | 35 | 35 |
| White/Midwest | 28 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 30 | 32 | 31 | 31 |
| White/South | 32 | 38 | 30 | 29 | 32 | 39 | 29 | 29 |
| White/West | 28 | 39 | 33 | 30 | 31 | 40 | 30 | 30 |
| By Religion | | | | | | | | |
| Protestant | 34 | 37 | 29 | 29 | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Catholic | 33 | 32 | 35 | 35 | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Jewish | 47 | 23 | 30 | 30 | | | | |
| By Age | | | | | | | | |
| 18-29 | 28 | 36 | 37 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 33 | 33 |
| 30-39 | 29 | 35 | 36 | 31 | 33 | 34 | 31 | 31 |
| 40-49 | 30 | 30 | 40 | 28 | 35 | 28 | 37 | 37 |
| 50-59 | 38 | 32 | 32 | 22 | 36 | 34 | 28 | 28 |
| 60-69 | 38 | 34 | 28 | 22 | 37 | 33 | 22 | 22 |
| 70-79 | 42 | 34 | 23 | 14 | 46 | 32 | 14 | 14 |
| 80+ | 38 | 42 | 20 | 14 | 47 | 30 | 14 | 14 |
| By Education | | | | | | | | |
| Less than HS | 43 | 28 | 30 | 21 | 64 | 25 | 21 | 21 |
| HS Grad | 34 | 32 | 34 | 31 | 37 | 33 | 31 | 31 |
| Some College | 29 | 37 | 33 | 34 | 34 | 32 | 34 | 34 |
| College Grad+ | 27 | 38 | 35 | 34 | 30 | 38 | 34 | 34 |
| By Income | | | | | | | | |
| Less than \$20,000 | 40 | 28 | 32 | 23 | 51 | 26 | 23 | 23 |
| \$20-29,000 | 33 | 32 | 35 | 33 | 36 | 33 | 33 | 33 |
| \$30-49,000 | 31 | 35 | 34 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 33 | 33 |
| \$50,000+ | 25 | 42 | 33 | 37 | 25 | 38 | 37 | 37 |

Source: Gallup surveys taken between October 1991 and May 1992 were combined, as were the daily tracking polls of October 20 through November 2.

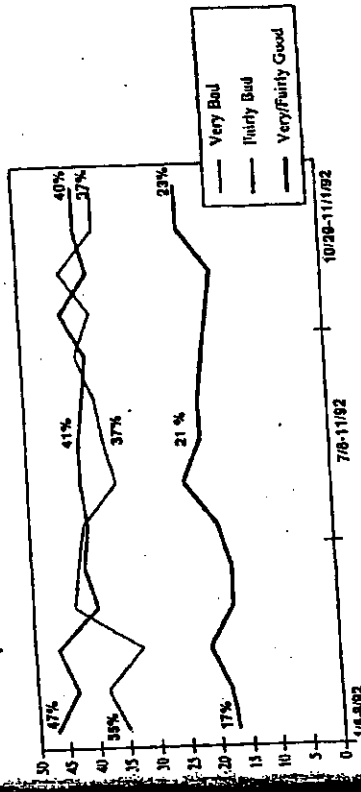
over the 1930s and 1940s showed response distributions much like these. But by the mid-1950s, near the end of Dwight Eisenhower's first term, the Republicans had caught up with the Democrats on the prosperity dimension. They couldn't hold this position, though, and at the end of Eisenhower's presidency a substantial plurality of Americans again credited the Democrats with being the party of prosperity. Figure 1 shows that the Democrats maintained this status throughout the next two decades, often by overwhelming margins.

sharp departure from those of the three preceding presidential contests, all of which the Republicans won handily. Why? What short-term factors produced the deviation? The Clinton campaign's answer has been widely publicized: "It's the economy, stupid." And, the economy was widely implicated. Still, the dynamic that took over the 1992 campaign and pushed it in a direction different from what most observers had expected a year or more before the balloting was much more interesting and complicated than that the economy was sour, and most voters thus were persuaded "it's time for a change." Before exploring this dynamic, let's go back and review what the upcoming election looked like in the latter part of 1991, when the long campaign was getting underway.

Most election analysts believed that a Bush victory was highly likely. First, he had the resources of incumbency. The most important of these stems from the fact that an American president is more than a head of government; he is also the chief of state, a primary symbol of the nation, and the embodiment of its many shared political aspirations. Second, Bush enjoyed over most of the first three years of his presidency high public ratings. The proportion saying they approved his handling of the office in those first three years averaged much higher, for example, than that backing Ronald Reagan in any three years of his tenure. To the generally good marks that Bush got in his first two years was added the great credit he was given for his handling of the crisis in the Persian Gulf. Following the decisive U.S. military victory in the war against Saddam Hussein in March 1991, between 85 and 90 percent of adult Americans said they approved the president's conduct of his office. The Gallup poll of 28 February-3 March put those approving at 89 percent. The CBS News/*New York Times* poll of 4-6 March got virtually identical findings: 88 percent approving, 8 percent disapproving. While everyone knew at the time that these ratings were going to fall substantially, they also knew that the ratings had a long way to drop before Bush would be in any political difficulty. Through his handling of this major foreign policy challenge, Bush gained the judgment of much of the public that he was up to the presidency.

A third factor leading most analysts in 1991 to expect a Bush reelection in 1992 involved decisions being made by potential Democratic nominees. The party's most prominent and established figures without exception decided not to challenge the president. Among those choosing not to run: New York Governor Mario Cuomo, Texas senator and 1988 vice-presidential nominee Lloyd Bentsen, Tennessee senator and 1988 contender Al Gore, and House majority leader and 1988 contender Richard Gephardt. No one who had prior to the campaign established himself in the public's eyes as a possible president entered the race. With one exception, the Democratic field was entirely untested at the level of presidential politics. And that exception, former California Governor Jerry Brown, had acquired negative marks from his previous national exposure, which included a run for the Democratic nomination in 1976. Former Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas, Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, and the

FIGURE 2
Question: How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days: Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad?



Sources: Surveys by CBS News and the *New York Times* throughout 1992; 14 askings of the question, latest October 28-November 1, 1992.

eventual winner, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, began the campaign largely unknown to the electorate.

The reason Bush was not challenged by any member of the Democrats' first team involves the way presidential nominations are now conferred in the United States. The new parties and election system is distinguished by much more than the pattern of group political attachments I have been describing; many institutional factors are involved as well. In particular, the formal role of political party organizations in presidential electioneering has been vastly diminished. Presidential nominations are no longer conferred by party organizations, as they had been in all previous systems from 1832 on. Though the national nominating conventions continue to operate, they no longer really choose nominees; instead they ratify choices made in a long, drawn-out string of primaries. And candidates no longer can count on party organization for much assistance; the faded machines of yesteryear have long since disappeared. Instead, candidates must put together their entire campaign apparatus themselves. This means candidacies must begin early. Most decisions bearing on who the field will include are made by the summer or early fall of the year preceding the election itself. And at that point in 1991, the consensus among Democratic politicians was that Bush would be hard to beat. The 1996 election seemed more promising.

The above elements were widely agreed upon. To them, I would add two other dimensions on which there is disagreement. First, my analysis suggests strongly that the Republicans entered the 1992 campaign with most of their assets intact. In the Reagan years the party climbed out of the decidedly second-place status

in party identification, which it had occupied for most of the preceding half-century, and reached party in underlying partisanship. The GOP retained this position going into the 1992 campaign. As in 1984 and 1988, it didn't have a gap in party loyalties to overcome. Also, the party was seen as better able than the Democrats to manage the country's affairs. Even in mid-1992, when economic worries were high, the GOP still often got better ratings on economic management than did the Democrats.

In the area of political philosophy, too, the GOP's assets had held up well. Government's size and performance continued to be widely criticized. Though they elected a Democrat to the presidency, voters still indicated on 3 November 1992 that they favored restraint on government growth. When the VRS exit poll asked them whether they wanted government that provided more services while costing more in taxes, or government that cost less while providing fewer services, only 36 percent of voters chose the former. Fifty-five percent opted for less government. When a CBS News/*New York Times* poll of 12-14 January 1993 asked whether "you think that, in general, the federal government creates more problems than it solves . . . [or] solves more problems than it creates," by 69 to 22 percent respondents said the former.

Lastly, when the campaign began in the latter half of 1991, most economic indicators showed trends at least modestly favorable to the incumbent party. These indicators, including changes in gross domestic product (GDP), suggested that the U.S. economy bottomed out in the second quarter of 1991. The three quarters in which real GDP fell were the last one in 1990 and the first two in 1991. Nearly eighteen months prior to the 1992 balloting, economic decline had ended; recovery, even if sluggish, had begun. It appeared that George Bush would not have to run for reelection in the midst of recession.

These trends in basic economic performance data explain why a number of models developed to forecast presidential elections showed Bush likely to win. Ray Fair's model predicted that Bush would receive about 56 percent of the popular vote. Another by Michael Lewis-Beck and Thomas Rice estimated that Bush would gain 58 percent of the electoral vote.⁷ Both the Fair and the Lewis-Beck/Rice models incorporate measures of the pre-election economy, together with an assumption that an incumbent president is likely to do well in seeking reelection if the economy isn't in recession. Fair's includes measures of real GDP growth per capita and of inflation. The Lewis-Beck/Rice model also incorporates GDP growth. In retrospect, it's easy to see a blind spot in these models: they included no measure of what people *thought* the economy was doing, but relied

⁷ Ray Fair, "The Effect of Economic Events on Votes for the President," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 60 (1978): 159-73; and Michael Lewis-Beck and Thomas Rice, *Forecasting Elections* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1992). The Fair piece cited it, of course, the one where the author sets forth the terms of his model's estimates, not where its application to the 1992 election is set forth.

exclusively upon objective measures of economic performance.⁸ The traditional rule of thumb—that an incumbent president seeking reelection when the economy is either strong or at least recovering, is thereby advantaged—suggested that the economy would not be Bush's nemesis in the 1992 campaign.

The Clinton Candidacy

This article was finished just as Bill Clinton was sworn in as the forty-second president of the United States. Aspects of how he is likely to conduct the office could perhaps be deduced with some reliability from the way he has comport himself in public office since he first won the Arkansas governorship in 1978. But the success or failure of Clinton's presidency is still entirely to be determined. One thing could be said confidently about his prospects for success: they are not reduced by the fact that he won with only 43 percent of the popular vote, the smallest proportion since Woodrow Wilson took office with 42 percent in 1912.⁹ Clinton's success or failure as president will be determined by what he does, given the various needs and problems brought to the presidency during his tenure. He has as much chance to be successful—so far as the vote proportion itself is directly concerned—as someone taking office with 60 percent of the vote would have.

But if it is possible that Bill Clinton will be seen to achieve great things in the presidency, it must be acknowledged that his was often a troubled candidacy. At no point in the 1992 campaign did he succeed in dispelling the doubts among a majority of the electorate about his suitability for the office. These doubts showed up regularly in poll findings. For example, in a survey taken 12 and 13 October, CBS News and the *New York Times* asked respondents whether they thought Clinton could be "trusted to deal with all the problems a president has to deal with," or were they "concerned that he might make serious mistakes?" A hardly newsworthy that 80 percent of Republicans polled said they were worried about him in this regard, but it is striking indeed that 57 percent of Independents and 32 percent of Democrats said so. The incumbent president

⁸ Michael F. Niemi, vice president and economist of Mitsubishi Bank, has demonstrated quite well that if consumer confidence is substituted for actual economic performance, one can get a lead that does quite well with the 1992 election results. See his "Forecasting Presidential Elections: New Use for Consumer Surveys," *The Public Perspective*, November/December 1992, 31-33. The parallels between 1912 and 1992 are interesting. Both elections were three-way races, rarities in U.S. political experience. In both instances a Democrat won when a third party or independent candidate badly divided the normal Republican vote. That Theodore Roosevelt, a former Republican, did this against sitting Republican President William Howard Taft in 1912 is well known in no way disputed. Some would quarrel, I recognize, at my argument that Ross Perot's independent candidacy in 1992 served largely to divide the Republican vote. But I believe the data show this was the case, and I will develop the argument below.

long been advocating. One of this company, David Kusnet, now on the White House speechwriting staff, argued in a book published in early 1992 that the Democrats could regain the presidency only if they again began "speaking American."¹¹ "You don't have to be a social historian — you just have to watch TV, go to the movies, talk to your neighbors, or simply search your soul — to get a sense of some of the ideas that have helped shape our nation," Kusnet wrote. "Perhaps most important is the idea that America is special, and Americans are special people. A country that doesn't define itself by language or lineage has to set other standards for citizenship, and the classic definition of American nationality includes a dedication to democratic values and a commitment to building a virtuous community — the great American experiment. . . . Far from being academic or archaic, these ideas have echoed throughout two centuries of political debate."¹²

The problem for the Democrats, Kusnet maintained, was that "for the past decade, Republicans have been more at home with (and more adept at) the rhetoric of American exceptionalism. . . . During the Reagan-Bush years, Democrats remained reluctant to espouse a similar belief in America's place in the world. Of course, many Democratic party activists . . . were shaped by the protest movements of the 1960s, which ended up concentrating more on America's problems than its promise. Yet Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale, whose politics weren't formed in the sixties, seemed tone deaf to the music of American specialness."¹³ The music of Clinton's campaign reflected perspectives like those Kusnet articulated. The campaign was a determined effort to steal the Republicans' clothes by speaking American better than they did.

Perceptions of the Economy in the Campaign

Economic concerns were obviously front and center throughout 1992. Three separate sources repeatedly told Americans that the sky was falling. One of these, the Democratic campaign, is entirely unremarkable. The out-of-power party often charges the "ins" with economic mismanagement as part of its case to voters that it be given a chance to govern. In 1992 the Democrats did their job more or less in the standard fashion. The other two sources were unusual, though, and it took both of them to convince Americans that — though objective data showed the economy growing, if sluggishly, in late 1991 and more robustly as 1992 proceeded — in fact the United States was in desperate straits. One of these sources was the well-financed, television-centered, independent campaign of H. Ross Perot. The other was the press, to which I will turn shortly. But first, let me restate the argument: an incumbent president not plagued by scandal is likely to

¹¹ David Kusnet, *Speaking American: How the Democrats Can Win in the 90's* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992).

¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

was shown trailing by 13 percentage points in this survey; nonetheless Bush got better marks on the trust issue than did Clinton.¹⁰

The election day poll taken by Voter Research and Surveys provided further information on the Democrat's inability to overcome widespread doubts about him. For example, VRS asked: "If Bill Clinton wins today, what best describes your feelings about what he will do as president?" The response alternatives given respondents as they left the voting stations were "excited"; "optimistic but not excited"; "concerned, but not scared"; and "scared." Only 41 percent picked one of the two positive assessments; 15 percent said they would be excited, 26 percent optimistic. Against these 41 percent were 57 percent who said they would be concerned (27 percent) or scared (30 percent). And it wasn't just Bush voters who offered a negative review. Twenty-eight percent of VRS respondents who described themselves as Democrats said a Clinton victory would worry them. Sixty percent of independents were thus negative on him.

In the sense indicated by the above, Bill Clinton was his own worst enemy; and the inability of his candidacy to shake questions of a personal sort about him was an important factor that a Democratic strategist scripting his party's 1992 campaign would have written differently. In other important regards, however, the Clinton campaign had things break its way. Some of these elements stemmed from the real strengths that Clinton himself brought to the race. He proved to be an impressively disciplined and determined candidate. His personal resilience, physically and emotionally, was remarkable. In other regards, too, he was a good candidate: he was not gaffe-prone, and he projected affability, with few traces of rancor. In short, while Clinton had never before been tested in a national race, he proved able to meet the test.

Besides his personal attributes as a campaigner, Clinton had carefully studied the major lessons for his party of recent presidential elections. Prior to 1992, his work on the national stage had largely involved his leading role in the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), an organization of Democratic moderates and conservatives. At home, Clinton showed he could maintain his popularity and win repeated reelection in a conservative state. He talked often about the importance of individuals taking responsibility for things — avoiding unbroken emphasis on government's responsibility. His positions in favor of a strong national defense and a vigorous U.S. foreign policy, and his general inclination to celebrate the American idea rather than concentrate on deficiencies within it, also served to separate him from stands that have plagued his party over the last quarter-century.

The "new" Democratic party that Clinton said he champions resembles one that many Democratic strategists and intellectuals of the party's center-right have

¹⁰ Just before his inauguration, Yankelovich Partners asked in a survey done for *Time* and CNN, "Do you think Bill Clinton is a leader you can trust, or do you have some doubts and reservations?" Only 41 percent said he was a leader they could trust, 50 percent that they still had doubts. Some honeymoon!

performance during this span had it faithfully reflected reality. But 96 percent negative coverage distorted what was in fact a complex picture with many positive as well as negative features. Neither am I suggesting that the press had a master plan to elect Clinton by exaggerating the economy's problems. It appears that something far more prosaic occurred. First, a majority of journalists felt closer to the Democrats' stands than to those of the Republicans. This identification is, of course, a staple of modern American politics.¹⁵ After a dozen years in power, the Republicans and their economic policies had in 1992 become an old and tired story. Many journalists, it seems, were in a mood for something new. Finally, "the economy in shambles" is inherently a more exciting story than "some problems, yes, but many strengths." The coming together of these three distinct elements contributed to the most important political event of the 1992 campaign — an uninterrupted stream of negative press reports and commentary on the nation's economy that left much of the public in a state of bewilderment and frustration.¹⁷

The Perot Candidacy

Throughout the 1992 campaign, analysts pondered the impact that Ross Perot's candidacy was having and tried to divine just how much in the final analysis the support he drew would tip the balance between Bush and Clinton. There was never agreement on these matters, and now in the wake of the election I suspect there won't be any either. Available data, especially those from the VRS

¹⁴ Surveys leave little doubt that the tilt among national journalists in the United States is toward values and policies generally thought of as liberal. National journalists give more backing to liberal candidates than the American public does. In 1984, for example, Ronald Reagan was backed by about 59 percent of the entire electorate, but by just 26 percent of reporters and editors. The latter figure is according to a national survey taken by the *Los Angeles Times*. The *Times* survey also found that 55 percent of the journalists call themselves liberal and just 17 percent conservative. The pollsters reported that journalists were also "markedly more liberal than others of similar educational and professional standing." On a wide variety of social and political issues — such as affirmative action for blacks and other minorities, abortion, sexual norms and conduct — journalists are notably more liberal than the public at large. The survey referred to was taken in 1985 by the *Los Angeles Times*. About 3,000 reporters and editors randomly selected at over 600 newspapers around the country were polled.

¹⁵ A variety of other explanations have been offered for the public's foul mood with regard to the state of the economy. In one of its *Roper Reports* series, for example, the Roper Organization — a New York-based survey research organization not connected to the Roper Center — concluded that "consumer confidence and the public mood in 1992 were far more depressed than many observers believed warranted. Interest rates and inflation were very low, while unemployment rose only modestly by historic standards. Nonetheless, a 20-year low of only 14 percent of Americans in this [Roper Reports] study said the nation is headed in the 'right direction.'" [Roper Reports 92 (December 1992): 2.] Seeking to reconcile the apparent discrepancy, the analysis suggested: "One explanation dates back to the 1980s when Roper Reports observed signs of 'aspiration inflation,' meaning material expectations were growing much faster than achievement. In May 1989, we said: 'Given much higher material expectations, public opinion would react sharply — and extremely negatively — to any future downturn in the economy.' And so it did."

win reelection in the United States if the economy is strong or at least recovering. Bush's reelection bid met all of these criteria. In addition, he had just presided over the successful use of U.S. power in the Persian Gulf and received generally high marks for his handling of foreign affairs. In this setting a Bush defeat was unlikely, unless a large majority of the public somehow became convinced that the U.S. economy was being badly managed, threatening the nation's future. In late 1991 and throughout 1992, a large majority did become convinced of such economic malperformance.

For example, in fourteen national surveys done throughout 1992 up to the election, CBS News and the *New York Times* asked respondents how they would rate "the conditions of the national economy these days." At no time did as many as one in four rate it very good or fairly good. More than three-fourths called the economy fairly bad or very bad throughout the election year. On election eve (a survey of 29 October–1 November), 77 percent said the national economy was in bad shape (Figure 2), even though it was growing in real terms at an annualized rate of roughly 3.5 percent.

The Democrats could not have made the case that the U.S. economy was failing badly, given objective conditions, had they not received assistance above and beyond what they could have reasonably counted upon. As far as the press's reporting of economic developments is concerned, the striking fact is the sustained, unremitting emphasis on problems and failure. As the content analysis of ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news coverage of the economy done by Robert Lichter and his colleagues at the Center for Media and Public Affairs indicates, coverage of the economy became increasingly more intense in the latter part of 1991; it was more than twice as heavy in the October 1991–September 1992 span than it had been in the preceding twelve months when the recession was underway. This much might be explained largely by the fact that the Gulf war and the breakup of the Soviet empire commanded so much attention in the latter half of 1990 and the first half of 1991 that news of the domestic economy was largely crowded out.¹⁶

This cannot account, however, for the extreme pessimism and negativism of the expanded coverage of the economy by national TV news in late 1991 and 1992, when recovery had begun. The Center for Media and Public Affairs reports on its content analysis that "during the most recent quarter [July–September 1992], 96 percent of the sources [cited on the evening news broadcasts] have focused on economic weakness and shortcomings."¹⁷

Though recovery was underway, the U.S. economy still had many problems during the closing months of the 1992 campaign. I would not argue that TV news coverage would have come down 96 percent positive or optimistic on economic

¹⁶ The results of the content analysis of news coverage of the U.S. economy may be found in "The Boom in Gloom: TV News Coverage of the American Economy, 1990–1992," *Media Monitor* 6 (October 1992): 2–4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

when compared to those of a political and attitudinal nature. Republican dominance of the presidency in recent decades has been based on the GOP's doing better among self-described Republicans than the Democratic party has done among Democrats, and vastly better than the Democrats among independents. In 1992, for the first time since 1964, the Democratic nominee got a higher proportion of the ballots of Democratic identifiers than the Republican candidate did of his party's adherents — thanks in large measure to Perot's appeal.

Self-described independents favored the Republicans over the Democrats in every election since FDR up to this one, except for the 1964 Lyndon Johnson landslide. In 1976, for example, when Democrat Jimmy Carter gained the presidency, independents backed Republican Gerald Ford by a margin of 52–48 percent. In 1984, when Ronald Reagan beat Walter Mondale by 18 percentage points among all voters, he won by 28 points among independents.¹¹ This year, however, Clinton edged Bush out among independents by 38 to 32 percent — in large part, it appears, because Perot got the backing of 30 percent of self-described independent voters.

Philosophically, the Perotists resembled the Bushites, though with a more libertarian coloration. Asked in the VRS exit poll which they would rather have, "government provide more services but cost more in taxes," or "government cost less but provide fewer services," Bush and Perot voters responded similarly, both saying by margins of roughly two to one that they wanted smaller government. In sharp contrast, a clear majority of Clinton voters — 55 to 36 percent — opted for the "more government" response. Voters were also asked which should be "the highest priority for the next president": "cutting taxes"; "reducing the budget deficit"; or "expanding domestic programs." Again, Bush and Perot supporters responded in similar fashion to this question. In contrast, Clinton's backers were far more likely than either of the other groups to urge the expansion of domestic programs (Table 7).

Their libertarian inclinations engaged, Perot adherents weren't secured on the Republican side by Bush's "values" emphasis. Only 5 percent of Perotists, for example, checked "abortion" as the one (or one of two) issues which "mattered most in deciding how you voted," compared to 19 percent of Bush voters. Just 28 percent of Perot's supporters said they wanted abortion illegal in most or all cases, as against 50 percent of Bush voters. Thirty-three percent of the Perot electorate indicated that they attended "religious services at least once a week," about the same as that (35 percent) for Clinton voters, but far below the 55 percent of Bush backers.

It's not that Perot's supporters were yearning for a shift in social values. Asked in the VRS survey whether it was more important for government to "encourage traditional family values" or "encourage tolerance of non-traditional families," 75 percent of the Perotists and 87 percent of the Bushites said the former, as

¹¹ The 1976 and 1984 data are from the CBS News exit polls of those years.

exit poll, help us understand the makeup of Perot's backers, and thus to get a better idea of where on the political spectrum they came from. But the larger question of what the 1992 contest would have been like had Perot not entered it can never be settled by data derived from a race in which Perot's candidacy was in fact a major element.

From his first entry into the race via the novel instrument of television talk shows in March of 1992 to his television blitz down the campaign's stretch, Perot concentrated his fire on what he depicted as the profound failure of the Bush administration to comprehend the severity of the economic problems facing the country and to chart a course toward their solution. He argued that a once-great U.S. economy was in a perilous decline that threatened the historic American promise of growing abundance. Perot's call was a powerful one, because it seemed to many so disinterested and because it was so quintessentially American. What did the plain-speaking Texas billionaire have to gain other than knowledge that he had helped the country he loved? Perot's was no radical bashing of the private business system. Instead he was calling for a restoration of American economic greatness, based on such tried and true bourgeois principles as living within one's means and paying one's debts. Political insiders knew that Perot was intensely averse to Bush personally. But Perot rarely revealed any personal animosity in his public presentations, and all that most voters saw was a businessman saying that the sky had fallen economically on the watch of George Bush (and while not emphasized, that of his Republican predecessor, Ronald Reagan). I think it's unlikely that the sense of an American economy in grave difficulty would have taken hold as it did, against considerable evidence to the contrary, had Perot not added his seemingly disinterested voice to the argument and campaigned so effectively to advance it.

The makeup of the 19 percent of the electorate who voted for Ross Perot gives further indication of a heavy impact of the economic sky-is-falling account on George Bush's candidacy. Perot's voters came disproportionately from groups — defined both in terms of social status and political outlook — that have been giving the Republicans strong support in recent presidential elections. They hadn't changed their stance on most major political issues in 1992, and in general they differed sharply from Clinton backers. But like the latter, Perot's voters believed the economy was in deep trouble, and that its weaknesses signified the failure of Bush's leadership.

These conclusions emerge clearly from analysis of the VRS exit poll. The study shows that Perot backers were overwhelmingly non-Hispanic whites (94 percent), disproportionately male (52 percent, while the entire electorate was just 46 percent male), and western (24 percent, compared to the 19 percent of all voters coming from the western states). In terms of age and gender, Perot did best among young (18–29) men, among whom he got 26 percent of the vote. At the other end of the spectrum, he was supported by only 10 percent of women age 60 and older.

The Texas independent cut most deeply into what have been Republican demographic bases. But these characteristics of his backers seem relatively unimportant

he was himself a challenger to the sitting president and clearly wasn't responsible for the "economic mess" that most Perot voters perceived, Clinton still got generally poor marks from the Perotists.

But the main survey evidence bearing on Perot's impact is elsewhere. The data show that his voters were disproportionately libertarian-inclined independents and Republicans, who were angered by government excesses and wanted a more restricted governmental role, but who accepted Perot's argument that the growth of the U.S. deficit exemplified the failure of the political class and precipitated economic decline. Fifty-six percent of Perot voters said they had backed Bush in 1988; only 17 percent of them had been for Dukakis. Disproportionately, they were demographic and attitudinal Republican voters who left Bush not for a Democrat but for a man they perceived as a no-nonsense billionaire interested only in restoring America's greatness.

The Bush Candidacy

Together with the boost his candidacy received from Ross Perot, Clinton also received considerable (unintended, of course) help from the president himself. Given the range of problems they are expected to help solve and the many diverse political and managerial skills they are expected to possess, modern presidents often have trouble measuring up, and they see their popular standing plunge. Still, no president has seen as sharp a reversal in his fortunes as did George Bush, and part of this was his own doing. At the conclusion of the Gulf war in early March 1991, a Gallup poll recorded Bush's public approval at an extraordinarily high 89 percent. Only 8 percent said they disapproved his handling of the office. Twenty months later, however, Bush's approval stood at around 35 percent. A survey taken by CBS News on 16 and 17 October 1992, two weeks before the election, found just 36 percent of respondents approving Bush's overall performance as president, while 59 percent disapproved. Presidents whose leadership gets approval scores in the thirties are bound to have trouble winning reelection. George Bush's defeat on 3 November at the hands of Democrat Bill Clinton followed the long erosion of his popular standing, which occurred over the last six months of 1991 and much of 1992.

Bush's steep decline has been attributed in large part to economic worries. However, it's instructive to review other possible sources of his political decline originating in the leadership style and approach he brought to the presidency. No one wins the office without having considerable abilities and strengths. But every president has his weaknesses too. The strengths and weaknesses often stem from the same basic approach to handling the office, which may work well in some circumstances and conditions and poorly in others.

Bush got generally good marks in personal terms. "Slimster" was not an adjective that has often been applied to him as it was, for example, to Richard Nixon. In a survey taken 5-7 February 1992 by ABC News and the *Washington Post*, 82

TABLE 7
Perot, Bush, and Clinton Voters Compared on General Political Outlook

| | Perot Voters | Bush Voters | Clinton Voters |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Question: Would you rather have: (1) government provide more services, but cost more in taxes; (2) government cut less in taxes but provide fewer services? | | | |
| Cost Less/Do Less | 66% | 72% | 36% |
| Cost More/Do More | 28 | 20 | 55 |
| Question: Which is more important for government to do: (1) encourage traditional family values; (2) encourage tolerance of non-traditional families? | | | |
| Encourage Traditional Values | 75 | 87 | 53 |
| Encourage Tolerance | 19 | 9 | 42 |
| Question: Which should be the highest priority for the next president: (1) cutting taxes; (2) reducing the budget deficit; (3) expanding domestic programs? | | | |
| Cutting Taxes | 11 | 16 | 14 |
| Reducing Deficit | 65 | 58 | 44 |
| Expanding Programs | 14 | 15 | 33 |

Source: VRS Exit Poll, 3 November 1992.

against 53 percent of the Clintonians. The Perot electorate wasn't looking for "new values"; they just weren't much occupied by social issues, which left them more open to suasion on the economic dimension.

The VRS exit poll found that 89 percent of Perot backers, who by large margins favored less government, had concluded that the national economy was either "not good" or "poor." This was the view of 94 percent of Clinton supporters, but of only 57 percent of Bush backers. Perotists were in a sense the ultimate economic restorationists. Seventy-nine percent of them checked off either the "Federal budget deficit" or "Economy/jobs" as the one or two issues that most determined their vote, compared to 61 percent of Clintonians and 40 percent of Bushites.

When asked how they would have voted had Perot not been on the ballot, 38 percent of his supporters said they would have backed Clinton, 37 percent Bush, 6 percent someone else, while 14 percent said they wouldn't have voted. Some analysts argue from these numbers that Perot didn't have any impact on the final point spread between the two main contenders. I find this reasoning unsound. First, since Perot was on the ballot and had been campaigning very actively down the stretch, strongly criticizing the incumbent administration, the hypothetical question of what they would have done if all this hadn't happened is bereft of utility. Second, Perot voters indicated on the VRS survey their deep misgivings about the Democratic nominee. The exit poll asked, "If Bill Clinton wins today, what best describes your feelings about what he will do as president?" Seventy-eight percent of Perot's backers took one or the other of two negative assessments: 43 percent saying they would be "concerned," 35 percent "scared." Even though

percent of those polled said Bush was well described as "decent"; 71 percent said "moral" was well applied; 65 percent said "honest" was appropriate. And this survey was taken at a time when his overall rating as president had already fallen sharply, and he had the approval of less than half the populace.

But if many features of Bush the man were readily understood and in large measure noted approvingly, his policies and his animating vision for the country prompted uncertainty and criticism. The question of where Bush belonged on the American political spectrum kept getting raised. Was he really a conservative or in fact a pragmatist, one who lacks a fixed policy, adopting instead whatever works? Was he a leader who lacked a coherent political philosophy and was vulnerable, at least in domestic policy, to being influenced unduly by his advisers or to being tossed to and fro in shifting political winds? Was his presidency driven too much by a belated response to events?

One reason George Bush's presidential leadership proved to be such a puzzle is that it combined two approaches that are often thought to be contradictory. On the one hand, he espoused many of the tenets of contemporary mainstream Republicanism. Like many in his party and like his predecessor, Ronald Reagan, Bush believes that government has grown excessively in recent decades and that its growth needs to be curbed. Like many in his party, too, he thought that greater emphasis should be placed on the individual's exercise of responsibility through family and community life. This approach is one that Kerry Mullins and Aaron Wildavsky have called "individualist." They wrote that "Bush's individualist sympathies are particularly evident in the economic realm. Rather than taking a paternalistic attitude toward social welfare issues, he appears to prefer market solutions and freedom of choice. Free-enterprise zones [where government encourages private investment through tax concessions and the like] are offered as a remedy for economically distressed areas of the country. [And Bush] took a strong stance against a large increase in the minimum wage, emphasizing employer choice over worker protection."¹⁹

At the same time, though, Bush's ideals and goals are inclusionary. As president, he sought "to integrate all elements of the American polity (classes, races, regions, interests, even political opponents) into a cohesive whole. . . . This commitment seems rooted deep in Bush's personality. In all of his dealings he was inclined to conciliation. "We need compromise," he said in his inaugural address: "we've had dissension. We need harmony; we've had a chorus of discordant voices." Speaking of tensions between the executive branch and Congress, he lamented that "we have seen the hard looks and heard the statements in which not each other's ideas are challenged, but each other's motives."

¹⁹ Kerry Mullins and Aaron Wildavsky, "The Procedural Presidency of George Bush," *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (Spring 1992): 32. See, too, Mullins and Wildavsky, *The Beleaguered Presidency* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1992).
a. *Ibid.*, 32.

Often Bush was pulled one way by his conservative individualism, another by his commitment to compromise as proper due process in intergovernmental affairs or by his commitment to inclusion in dealing with the groups making up the populace. One of the most politically costly decisions of his presidency came, for example, in the fall of 1990 in the wrangle with Congress over the federal budget. Bush had run in 1988 on a promise of "no new taxes"—a pledge consistent with his party's belief that government had grown too large. In the budget battle, though, Bush was pulled in the opposite direction by his preference for compromise (here with the Democratic leadership of the Congress) over confrontation and by his belief that interbranch give-and-take is not only unavoidable where one party controls the executive and the other the legislative, but that it accords with due process. But when he compromised on his no-new-taxes pledge and backed tax hikes, Bush seemed to waffle. Clinton hit Bush hard in the 1992 election on breaking that pledge.

Similarly, his insistence on less governmental and more individual responsibility pushed Bush in one direction when dealing with the country's racial problems, while his desire to see black Americans better integrated into the national community pushed him in another. Such conflict led to a type of waffling that sprang from a tension between conflicting sets of values, each genuinely held.

ENVOI

The Democrats regained the presidency in 1992 after three straight losing efforts. While the electorate seemed to be moved largely by a combination of short-term forces, by bringing Clinton to power it gave the Democrats the chance to have an administration widely seen as successful—something they haven't had since the mid-1960s, before problems stemming from the Vietnam war toppled Lyndon Johnson. And should this transpire, there may well be long-term partisan consequences. In particular, the Democrats might strengthen their image and standing as a governing party. Conversely, a general sense that Clinton and his colleagues had managed foreign and domestic national affairs badly could easily rekindle the concerns that bedeviled Democratic presidential bids over the two preceding decades.

It's also likely that public judgments in the months and years ahead about the performance of the Clinton administration will affect the future of Ross Perot's movement. Many of the structural factors that contributed to the strength of Perot's 1992 run—weakened party loyalties and party organization, television's central and highly plebiscitary role in the new electoral order, etc.—will only be enhanced in the future. The decisive impetus to Perotism in the last election, however, was the sense that economic management in being botched. Any pronounced sense of political failure under Clinton is likely to stimulate efforts at institutionalizing some political third force.

Voters ended divided government in the 1992 balloting. There is no indication that they did anything to curb the conditions that have encouraged it. Americans