American Political Parties

Why They Formed, How They Function, and Where They're Headed

John Kenneth White and Matthew R. Kerbel

AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

American Political Parties

Why They Formed, How They Function, and Where They're Headed

John Kenneth White
Matthew R. Kerbel

Cover image: Rob Young/Wikimedia Commons

For our daughters, Jeannette White and Gabrielle Kerbel,
who grew up with this book.

CONTENTS

There is reason to worry that our two hundred-plus-year experiment with democracy is in danger. On January 6, 2021, insurrectionists invaded the US Capitol, interrupting the official congressional certification of the 2020 electoral vote and Joe Biden's victory. Then-president Donald Trump successfully encouraged protestors to march from the White House to the Capitol and disrupt the solemn proceedings, and unsuccessfully urged his vice president, Mike Pence, to refuse to certify enough electoral votes to reverse the election outcome. As demonstrators neared the House and Senate chambers, members of Congress were hustled to secure locations while Capitol police, National Guard, and Washington, DC, police officers fought the rioters, often in hand-to-hand combat. For the first time in US history, a sitting president was accused of inciting an insurrection that, if successful, would have led to a constitutional crisis the likes of which Americans have never before seen.

The Republican and Democratic Parties were obvious sources of blame for this discord, especially from those who questioned the election result after their passions were inflamed by Donald Trump. Deep fissures in our politics are reflected in sharp divisions between the political parties. A metaphorical canyon divided Republicans from Democrats in 2020, with 85 percent of Trump and Biden supporters each saying the other side did not understand them.[1] Foreign actors, especially Russia, were accused of using social media to enflame these tensions by planting false narratives designed to cause chaos and exacerbate social divisions. Consequently, partisan animosity boiled over.

This hostility may feel extreme, but it is not new. In fact, it goes back to the very beginning of the constitutional republic. George Washington understood the problems partisanship could create, and in his 1796 farewell address, Washington denounced "the spirit of party" in words that have an eerily contemporary ring:

> This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. . . . The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose

in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty. . . .

[The spirit of party] serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foments occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus, the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.[2]

Washington's wish for an apolitical, unified nation did not come to pass. Instead, parties became pillars of American political and social life. Fledgling parties vigorously contested the presidential elections of 1796 and 1800, resulting in division, chaos, and contested results. As parties became more ingrained in the American psyche—and later enshrined in election law—a two-party system took root. Soon, it became impossible to imagine the political system functioning without parties. Partisan newspapers became features of public life, conveying the positions of the earliest American parties to their supporters. Later, the two major parties acted as vital agents of political socialization for a wave of Irish immigrants in the 1840s and a historic number of European migrants in the 1890s.

George Washington Plunkitt, boss of New York City's infamous Tammany Hall machine, candidly told a reporter in 1905 how he wooed young men into his Democratic organization:

I hear of a young feller that's proud of his voice, thinks he can sing fine. I ask him to come around to Washington Hall and join our Glee Club. He comes and sings, and he's a follower of Plunkitt for life. Another young feller gains a reputation as a baseball player in a vacant lot. I bring him into our baseball club. That fixes him. You'll find him workin' for my ticket at the polls next election day. Then there's the feller that likes rowin' on the river, the young feller that makes a name as a waltzer on his block, the young feller that's handy with his dukes—I rope them all in by givin' them opportunities to show themselves off. I don't trouble them with political arguments. I just study human nature and act accordin'.[3]

During the nineteenth century, presidents were often secondary in prominence to local and state party leaders, who doled out thousands of patronage jobs to their most loyal supporters—positions that often made the difference between prosperity and ruin. But party influence wasn't always about jobs. Party leaders were vital intermediaries—assisting those in trouble with the law; providing aid to victims of fire or some other tragedy; and creating fraternal organizations or other social outlets. Former first lady Michelle Obama remembers how her father, Fraser Robinson, acquired his patronage job at the Chicago water filtration plant and, in return, served as a neighborhood precinct captain. Obama writes:

> He'd held the post for years, in part because loyal service to the party machine was more or less expected of city employees. Even if he'd been half forced into it, though, my dad loved the job, which baffled my mother given the amount of time it demanded. He paid weekend visits to a nearby neighborhood to check in on his constituents, often with me reluctantly in tow. . . . When somebody had problems with garbage pickup or snow plowing or was irritated by a pothole, my dad was there to listen. His purpose was to help people feel cared for by the Democrats—and to vote accordingly when elections rolled around.[4]

Time eroded the power of these local party organizations as an expanding civil service substantially reduced the number of patronage jobs. Today, national party organizations like the Democratic National Committee, Republican National Committee, and their congressional counterparts have subsumed the once-powerful party bosses to dominate national and (frequently) state politics. This centralization of party power coincides with a partisanship that sees fewer voters split their tickets between Democrats and Republicans; more citizens contributing small dollar amounts to the national parties and candidates of their choice; and opportunities for wealthy individuals to contribute vast sums without any public attribution (a phenomenon known as "dark money"). Party identification has become the most important factor in how people vote, transforming elections into a kind of political Armageddon. After the 2020 contest, 66 percent said it was either the "single most important election" or "one of the most important" in their lifetimes.[5]

The partisanship we live with today can be traced back to different views of American government that divided the nation's founders. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, two members of George Washington's first cabinet, were adversaries whose differences were so contentious they eventually caused both

to resign. Hamilton believed that freedom was a peculiarly American trait but needed to be paired with a strong central government led by a strong executive to prevent it from running amok. Jefferson also believed freedom to be a core American value, but he felt it could only be preserved by local civic virtue nurtured in the absence of a strong central government. In Jefferson's view, there were substantial differences among the states, and local authorities should have the power to determine what works best in their communities.

For more than two centuries, the debate initiated by Hamilton and Jefferson about the size and role of government has imperfectly but consistently shaped partisan divisions. Although the issues separating the two sides have changed and changed again, the central tenets of their disagreement have not. Since the Democratic and Republican Parties began regularly competing after 1860, each party has at times embraced elements of the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian position. In the late nineteenth century, Democrats advanced agrarian interests by advocating Jeffersonian localism while Republicans promoted a rapidly nationalizing industrial sector. Then, during the Great Depression, Democrats became the party of Hamiltonian nationalism and oversaw an unprecedented expansion of the national social welfare state. In the late twentieth century, Republican Ronald Reagan gave voice to Jefferson's ideal of local control even as he presided over an expansion of the federal government. Subsequently, Bill Clinton bowed to the popularity of Reagan's appeal and modified the Democrats' Hamiltonian stance of relying on government to solve problems, going as far as to declare that "the era of big government is over."[6]

In their current incarnation, Democrats align more with Hamilton and his approach to vesting major responsibilities in a federal government that can respond to the exigencies of the moment. This is particularly true in a post-COVID 19 world where Joe Biden and his fellow Democrats want to use federal power to address looming crises—be it with direct relief for those displaced by the pandemic, investing in physical and human infrastructure, or dealing with climate change. Republicans in turn have long advocated limited government with less taxation and regulation—defending Donald Trump's tax cuts and viewing states and localities as the appropriate locus of government activity. Congressional Republicans unanimously opposed Biden's American Families Plan to deal with COVID-19, which included direct payments to families and childcare tax credits, and also unanimously opposed his Build Back Better legislation, designed to expand the social safety net. They are backed in these efforts by rank-and-file Republicans. After the 2020 election, 62 percent of Trump

voters said congressional Republicans "should do their best to stand up to Biden on major policies, even if it means little gets passed."[7]

One reason why the parties have not been steadfast in their embrace of the Hamiltonian or Jeffersonian position is that Americans prefer some combination of both. Bill Clinton drew this simple analogy between Jefferson's embrace of liberty and Hamilton's advocacy for community:

> Take a penny from your pocket. On one side next to Lincoln's portrait is a single word: "Liberty." On the other side is our national motto. It says, "E Pluribus Unum"—"Out of Many, One." It does not say, 'Every man for himself.' That humble penny is an explicit declaration—one you can carry around in your pocket—that America is about both individual liberty and community obligation. These two commitments—to protect personal freedom and to seek common ground—are the coin of our realm, the measure of our worth.[8]

Nevertheless, the political parties have often forced Americans to choose one side or the other—sometimes resulting in their hatred for both. Herbert Croly argued that Hamilton "perverted [the] national idea as much as Jefferson perverted the American democratic idea, and the proper relation of these two fundamental conceptions one to another cannot be completely understood until this double perversion is corrected."[9] Thus, there have been historic oscillations as both parties adjusted their perspectives as to whether Hamilton's emphasis on authority and a strong federal government, or Jefferson's preference for a devolution of power to state and local officials meets the moment. Often, Americans want both even if they can't have both.

The Hamilton-Jefferson debate has even extended to what parties should look like and how they should act. Hamilton's preference for a strong, centralized approach to politics has seen both parties become much stronger at the national level in terms of organization and money—sometimes using these resources to shape elections at the state level. Yet when it comes to selecting their presidential candidates, the party establishments have weakened. Democrats have long been unable to dictate their party's nominee, allowing primary voters to make that decision since 1972. Historically, Republicans deferred to their party's leaders to select their presidential candidates until Donald Trump smashed whatever power a weakened national Republican establishment retained. Indeed, Trump's go-it-alone, one-man control over the GOP—even in his post-presidency—is unlike anything we have ever witnessed. Even past

strong presidents (Franklin D. Roosevelt comes to mind) had to defer to party bosses whenever the situation required.

Thus, even when they have been sympathetic to Jefferson's preference for a weak national government, organizationally the parties have transformed themselves into national behemoths that Hamilton might have welcomed. Still, the groups that identify with the two parties are very different. Democrats have a multicultural appeal and a broad, at times unwieldy coalition that includes progressive, liberal, and moderate elements. This diversity of supporters can complicate governance when the party holds power, especially when it has exceptionally narrow congressional majorities like it did following the 2020 election. Republicans are more monolithic, especially since Donald Trump took control of the party rank-and-file, although there are differing opinions as to whether Trump's position as a modern-day party boss will last. Outright near-unanimous Republican opposition to Joe Biden in the early days of his presidency put tremendous pressure on the Democratic party's coalition to hold together despite internal differences.

This book tells the story of American political parties—why they formed, how they function, and where they are headed. It is a saga filled with many twists and turns, surprises, and uncertain outcomes along the lines sketched out between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Chapter 1 describes in greater detail the emergence of the arguments developed by Hamilton and Jefferson about the appropriate scope and nature of the federal government that have reverberated through the long history of political parties in America and provide the backdrop for the framework of this book. Chapter 2 details the first century of American political party development and explores how parties forged a uniquely American character while adapting to new times and technologies. Chapter 3 takes this history into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, focusing on forces that molded party organizations into powerful institutions at the turn of the twentieth and on forces that eroded and then helped rebuild them at the turn of the twenty-first.

Chapter 4 describes the ongoing evolution in how parties choose their presidential nominees, with emphasis on how the rise of personality politics and the emergence of social media have shaped nomination politics and undermined formerly powerful party organizations. Chapter 5 notes how party loyalties can strengthen during periods of realignment (when new coalitions of voters upend previous political coalitions) and erode during periods of dealignment (when independent voters become decisive in elections). Chapter 6 looks closely at the challenges posed to parties by social media. Chapter 7 explores the importance

of money in politics, examines the current state of campaign finance laws (or lack thereof), and considers how the Internet and super-rich individuals have revolutionized fundraising. Chapter 8 examines the role of the party in government, including the importance of the national party organizations. Chapter 9 looks at the role of third parties in the American two-party system and notes that at key junctures they have helped the major parties adjust to changing public demands. We conclude by considering what lies ahead for a party system that appears to be buckling under the weight of a rapidly changing America.

In its complexity and entirety, the saga of the US party system is fascinating because of the continued evolution of its actors. With each election, we learn more about how the two major parties address the eternal and emerging questions of our politics. We will begin most naturally with an election like no other in our lifetimes: the extraordinary story of 2020 and how partisan combat and its aftermath upset centuries-old norms of party behavior while bringing the republic itself to the brink. While the 2020 election and its aftermath add an important chapter to our story, as we note in the conclusion, the final ending has yet to be written.

Introduction: An Election Like No Other

WE HAVE NEVER WITNESSED anything like the 2020 election and its aftermath, where the centrist tendencies essential to the success of the American two-party system gave way to a politics of absolutism that manifested in an insurrection against the government. Consider the extraordinary events of late 2020 and early 2021, when expectations of a peaceful transfer of power were superseded by partisan violence.

It was a moment of outsized participation marked by great partisan energy, when 159 million Americans voted in person or by mail amidst a once-in-a-century pandemic. After days of counting ballots, Joe Biden emerged as the winner, having secured 306 electoral votes to Donald Trump's 232. This was a devastating loss for Republicans, who in the space of just four years had surrendered the presidency, House, and Senate—the first time that had happened to the party since Herbert Hoover was defeated for reelection in 1932.

But the counting of the ballots marked only the beginning of an unprecedented moment in American history. On January 6, 2021, President Trump incited a crowd to stop the official certification of the electoral votes by a joint session of Congress. Inflamed by Trump's rhetoric that urged his supporters to "fight like hell" because "if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," thousands marched from the White House and stormed the Capitol.[1] Armed with guns, bear spray, zip ties, and other weapons, the rioters constructed a makeshift gallows on the Capitol grounds intended for congressional leaders, including Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Members of Congress scrambled to get out of harm's way and into secure locations, while congressional staffers barricaded their offices, hid under conference tables, and feared for their lives. Five people died during the insurrection, including one Capitol police officer; two officers perished by suicide shortly afterward.

One week later the House of Representatives impeached Trump for a second time. House Democrats were unanimous in their support for impeachment, and they were joined by ten Republicans, including the then-number three GOP leader, Wyoming congresswoman Liz Cheney, the daughter of a former Republican vice president. Following a Senate trial held just days after Trump left office

in February 2021, fifty-seven senators voted to convict the former president—including seven Republicans. Despite falling ten votes short of the two-thirds needed for conviction, it was the most bipartisan judgment ever leveled in an impeachment trial and marked the first time that multiple members of a president's party supported conviction.

Inaugurated as the nation's forty-sixth president two weeks after the attempted insurrection, Joe Biden made a plea for an American democracy that he called "precious," yet "fragile."[2] He was not the first or only figure to take note of the tenuous nature of the American political system during a fraught moment in history. Former President Barack Obama saw an American system of government under siege:

> America as an experiment is genuinely important to the world not because of the accidents of history that made us the most powerful nation on Earth, but because America is the first real experiment in building a large, multi-ethnic, multicultural democracy. And we don't know yet if that can hold. There haven't been enough of them to say for certain that it's going to work.[3]

Lara Trump, the former president's daughter-in-law, saw the zero-sum stakes of the 2020 election this way: "This is not just a choice between Republican and Democrat or left and right. This is an election that will decide if we keep America America—or if we head down an unchartered, frightening path towards socialism."[4]

Biden struck a hopeful tone at his inauguration, but the proceedings were set against the threat of additional violence and a pandemic that by then had already killed more Americans than *all* of those who died during World War II. Ringed by thousands of troops, Biden took the presidential oath just hours after Donald Trump departed Washington, DC, for his Florida estate. For the first time since Andrew Johnson refused to attend the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant in 1869, a departing chief executive was nowhere to be found on the inaugural platform. It was a symbolic statement about resistance to the peaceful transfer of power that echoed the rebellion days before.

The only other comparable precedent was 1801—the first time an American political party handed over the reins of government to its opposition—when Thomas Jefferson was sworn into office just hours after the defeated John Adams decamped for his native Massachusetts. Like 2020, the Adams-Jefferson contest of 1800 was an ugly, highly partisan affair with ramifications for the continuity of government. Federalist John Adams loathed Democrat Thomas Jefferson who, in turn, lambasted his opponent for approving the Alien and

Sedition Acts that made criticism of the president a crime and landed pro-Jefferson newspaper editorialists in jail. One Jefferson supporter captured the election's importance: "To reign by fear and not by affection was ever bad policy. I am confident that the people of America are too fond of freedom to surrender it passively; and that whenever any body of men disclose views inimical to their interests, they will hurl them into insignificance."[5]

Like 2020, the contentious election of 1800 was followed by an even more contentious aftermath. Owing to an Electoral College mechanism that didn't account for the emergence of political parties, Thomas Jefferson's running mate, Aaron Burr, won an equal number of votes to Jefferson in the Electoral College. Under the Constitution, the House of Representatives had to resolve the matter. Controlled by the Federalist Party, whose most well-known public spokesperson was Alexander Hamilton, members of the congressional majority were confronted with an unappetizing choice: which of their rivals would they select to be the next president? After a weeks-long deadlock and with Hamilton's endorsement, the Federalist House chose Jefferson as the lesser of two evils. Adams left office, but a period of political vitriol followed. Four years later, Burr assassinated Hamilton in a duel. Within a decade, the Federalist Party itself devolved into political insignificance.

The election of 1800, and John Adams's acceptance of defeat, created what James MacGregor Burns described as a vital extra-constitutional right: the peaceful transition from a party-in-power to its opposition. Burns noted that this customary transfer of power from one political party to another—one that still eludes many other nations—showcased America at its best:

> A crucial liberty, one that had not been tested during the twelve-year hegemony of Federalist government, was established in the election of 1800—the freedom of the opposition not only to oppose, but to prevail peacefully. Not only did this constitute evidence to the world that the American polity was far more stable than it may have appeared, it was a notice to future American political leaders that they need not contemplate coups or venture violence in order to succeed. Much to the contrary, the path to political power in the United States was shown to lead directly to and through the ballot box, ensuring for generations to come the freedom of meaningful political opposition and the regular, orderly peaceful transfer of political power.[6]

This peaceful transfer of power and acceptance of constitutional norms shaped how American political parties developed around a set of democratic values. Louis Hartz, a political theorist best known for his commentary on American political culture, maintained that the United States had achieved a

national consensus centered on the importance of individual freedoms: "It is a remarkable force this fixed, dogmatic liberalism of a liberal way of life. It is the secret root from which have sprung many of the most puzzling aspects of American cultural phenomena."[7] Englishman G. K. Chesterton wrote in 1920 that the United States was founded on a "creed," saying: "That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence; perhaps the only piece of practical politics that is also theoretical politics and also great literature."[8] This creed allowed for little tolerance of extremes and was decidedly centrist in nature. Lewis Cass, the 1848 Democratic nominee for president, once told a Tammany Hall audience of party bosses in New York City that he was "opposed to all the isms of the day" like "communism and socialism."[9] Abraham Lincoln warned that if the Declaration of Independence were amended to read that "all men are created equal, except Negroes, foreigners, and Catholics," then "I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."[10]

The American penchant for middle-of-the-road politics formed a foundation for our two-party system. President Dwight Eisenhower once noted, "There is in our affairs at home, a middle way between untrammeled freedom of the individual and the demands for the welfare of the whole nation. This way must avoid government by bureaucracy as carefully as it avoids neglect of the helpless."[11] The search for the middle led to the development of two broad parties, a phenomenon that happened almost simultaneously with the adoption of the US Constitution. Although the names and allegiances of the parties have changed many times, a two-party system with its origins in the formative years of American political parties has endured for more than two centuries. As political scientist V. O. Key observed: "Human institutions have an impressive capacity to perpetuate themselves or at least to preserve their form. The circumstances that happened to mold the American party system into a dual form at its inception must bear a degree of responsibility for its present existence."[12]

As the two-party system began to form, a public consensus about the boundaries of political debate formed with it, the product of the disagreements between Hamilton and Jefferson and their influence as party leaders. They established the parameters of conflict that would take place between two dominant parties by posing and answering several key questions:

1. How do we limit our freedoms and still possess them?
2. How much government should we have, and when is it too excessive?

3. When do we need a national government to act in the interests of all our citizens?
4. When is it appropriate to leave matters to local customs and practices?

Hamilton believed that Americans were inextricably linked by a common bond of citizenship that required action by the federal government, and especially the president, when times demanded it. Writing in *The Federalist*, Hamilton observed, "Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government." Hamilton added that energetic executives were "essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks" as well as the "steady administration of the laws; to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary course of justice; to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction, and of anarchy."[13] For Hamilton, the best presidents were proactive executives who protected individual rights and acted on behalf of the nation.

Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, preferred a more limited federal role, believing local communities should take the lead and act in the citizen's best interests and that the nation's diversity meant that different states and locales would choose different alternatives. In 1825, Jefferson warned about the expanding power of government and believed that "the salvation of the republic" rested on the regeneration and spread of the New England town hall meeting.[14]

As two-party competition developed between Democrats and Republicans, vigorous debates emerged between them revolving around these poles. From time to time, the leading parties shifted positions. Democrats began their storied history as devotees of Jeffersonian Localism, espousing the doctrine of "states' rights." Republicans initially staked their political fortunes on a Hamiltonian Nationalism that would keep the Union together amidst a Civil War. Later Republicans espoused building railroads, creating land-grant colleges and universities, and giving the federal government a powerful voice in protecting industrial workers as the nation's economy shifted from an agricultural to an industrial base. The Great Depression altered the parties' accustomed roles. Democrats, led by Franklin D. Roosevelt, wanted the federal government to bring relief to the nation's unemployed and provide greater economic security, including passage of Social Security. Republicans took Jefferson's side, believing that Roosevelt's New Deal programs infringed individual freedoms and threatened the sanctity of local rule.

The parties never quite played their assigned roles perfectly. During the Eisenhower years, Republicans presided over a massive expansion of the federal

government, including creating the nation's interstate highways. In the Clinton years, Democrats scaled back their expectations about what the federal government can and should do. Complicating matters is the tendency for the public to want some combination of Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism. Journalist Walter Lippmann once observed that Americans did not like to choose between these two schools of thought: "To be partisan as between Jefferson and Hamilton is like arguing whether men or women are more necessary to the procreation of the race. Neither can live alone. Alone—that is, without the other—each is excessive and soon intolerable."[15] Throughout history, voters have reversed course when they perceive that one party offers too much government and the other too little. But if either Hamilton or Jefferson had come back to life at any point in the late nineteenth or twentieth centuries, they would have recognized themselves in the tone of Democratic and Republican Party leaders.

Now, however, after four years of the Donald Trump presidency, two impeachment trials, and political polarization that echoes the fracturing of the party system of the 1850s, there arises a question as to whether the public consensus recognized by political theorists and historians has come apart. Put another way, is the continuance of our two-party system assured, or will the Democrats and Republicans splinter into three or four parties? The question is a serious one. As previously noted, Lewis Cass, the 1848 Democratic presidential nominee, embraced moderation by rejecting all the extreme "isms" of his day. But the Trump presidency was built on an important "ism"—populism—which sees "the people," whom it purports to represent, as *producers* who personify the American Dream, while its enemies are *takers*—that is, elites, immigrants, and those who reject conventional social mores. In its essence, populism is all about us versus them: the makers vs. the takers. In 1995, political scientist Wilson Carey McWilliams noted that the populism of the Right [favors] "old hatred and [creates] new resentments, threatening what remains of civic community."[16] It specifically threatens to undermine the moderation that makes the two-party system possible.

Donald Trump was defeated in 2020, but the populist movement he leads is poised to define the Republican Party for the foreseeable future. Political commentator Michael Lind writes:

> In the Republican party, the inherited program shared by much of the conservative movement and the party's donors, with its emphasis on free trade and large-scale immigration, and cuts in entitlements like Social Security and Medicare, is a relic of the late 20th century, when the country-club

wing of the party was much more important than the country and western wing. The anger and sense of betrayal of the newly dominant white working class in the Republican party makes perfect sense. . . . Mr. Trump exposed the gap between what orthodox conservative Republicans offer and what today's dominant Republican voters actually want—middle-class entitlements plus crackdowns on illegal immigrants, Muslims, foreign trade rivals, and free-riding allies.[17]

Whenever populism ascends, rhetorical excess inevitably follows. Michael Kazin writes: "By calling the enemy an 'octopus,' 'leech,' 'pig,' or 'fat cat,' a populist speaker suggested that 'the people' were opposing a form of savagery as much as a structure inimical to their interests. Character assassination was always essential to the rhetorical game."[18] For four years, Donald Trump engaged in a form of character assassination on Twitter, replete with dismissive name-calling (e.g., "Crooked Hillary" Clinton, "Sleepy Joe" Biden, and "Crazy Nancy" Pelosi). In 2016, Hillary Clinton charged that Trump "built his campaign on prejudice and paranoia. He is taking hate groups mainstream, and helping a radical fringe take over the Republican Party."[19] Clinton was prophetic, as white supremacists and armed militias staged the violent Capitol insurrection that resulted in mayhem and murder.

Back in 1964, political scientist Richard Hofstadter anticipated contemporary populism by noting the emergence of a "paranoid style" that was beginning to creep into our political discourse:

As a member of the avant-garde who is capable of perceiving the conspiracy before it is fully obvious to an as yet unaroused public, the paranoid is a militant leader. He does not see social conflict as something to be mediated and compromised, in the manner of the working politician. Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, the quality needed is not a willingness to compromise but the will to fight things out to a finish. Nothing but complete victory will do. Since the enemy is thought of as being totally evil and totally unappeasable, he must be totally eliminated—if not from the world, at least from the theater of operations to which the paranoid directs his attention. This demand for unqualified victories leads to the formulation of hopelessly unrealistic goals, and since these goals are not even remotely attainable, failure constantly heightens the paranoid's frustration. Even partial success leaves him with the same sense of powerlessness with which he began, and this in turn only strengthens his awareness of the vast and terrifying quality of the enemy he opposes.[20]

Hofstadter's description of the "paranoid style" captures the qualities that underlay Trump's appeal and his ability to remake the Republican Party in his image. As Donald Trump Jr. told the crowd gathered to hear his father prior to their storming of the Capitol, their presence should be a warning to those Republicans who wanted to certify the Electoral College votes: "This isn't their party anymore," he said. "This is Donald Trump's Republican party."[21] Trump Jr. was right. A poll taken immediately following Trump's second impeachment trial found 75 percent of Republicans wanted Trump to continue playing a prominent role in the Republican Party.[22] Seventy-one percent of Republicans believed impeaching and convicting the former President was an act of disloyalty.[23]

The result has been to strip the Republican Party of its conservative principles and stymie the development of conservative policies and programs. This became apparent in 2020 when the GOP followed Trump's instructions and re-adopted its 2016 platform without changing a word. It was an unprecedented action that left voters adrift as to what Trump and the Republican Party would do if he had won a second term. Democrats, as is customary, adopted a full-length party platform that defined their approach to the major issues of the day—including the COVID-19 pandemic, race relations and policing, immigration, climate change, and foreign policy. Republicans essentially expressed their loyalty to one man.

Sixty years ago, a committee of the American Political Science Association issued this prescient warning:

> When the President's program actually is the sole program . . ., either his party becomes a flock of sheep or the party falls apart. In effect, this concept of the presidency disperses the party system by making the President reach directly for the support of a majority of the voters. It favors a President who exploits skillfully the arts of demoguery, who sees the whole country as his political backyard, and who does not mind turning into the embodiment of personal government.[24]

History has shown that whenever populist grievances become dominant, populism itself descends into its own paranoid style and eventually recedes into the background. Trump's takeover of the Republican Party has created its own unique politics of grievance and has brought many former white working-class Democrats who resent globalism and the country's changing political demography into their ranks. But the transformation of the Republican Party into a Trumpian populist entity threatens to eliminate the political consensus that has shaped American discourse for nearly three centuries and potentially the existence of the two-party system itself. The anger Republicans exhibit has spilled

over into our civic life. Today, 55 percent of Republicans believe "the traditional American way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it."[25] Thirty-nine percent say that "if elected leaders will not protect America, the people must do it themselves, even if it requires taking violent action."[26]

Even if Republicans remain out of power, the threat posed by right-wing populism to the survival of the party system is real. Party scholars often focus on the majority party—why it succeeds in gaining power and what ideas it has to offer. But the minority party also plays a vital role in stable governance. It defines its disagreements with the majority, even as it selects those issues upon which they agree. Those disagreements, often filled with echoes of Hamilton and Jefferson, are presented to voters who determine which side they prefer. The minority party can also co-opt the development of third parties and simplify the choice voters must make.

Back in 2014, Republican South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham, said, "The country needs a vibrant Republican party."[27] He was right. In politics, ideas matter and move nations, and a vibrant Republican Party would choose areas of disagreement with Democrats and offer policy alternatives. Today, ideas are in short supply as the Republican Party has abandoned its conservative principles to indulge in personality politics. Time will determine whether that lasts, but it calls into question if the long-standing consensus derived from the Hamilton-Jefferson debates will continue, or whether the two-party system is past its zenith.

This is where the party system stands in the aftermath of the 2020 election. To understand how we got here, it is best to return to the beginning and look at the history of political party development in America, at how once-weak political parties grew into the dominant institutions we know today. We will tell that story in the next two chapters, starting in chapter 1 with an account of how nascent parties took root in what Burns once described as the "vineyard of liberty" that characterized the early United States.[28]

Hamilton vs. Jefferson: How Political Parties Began

THE FRAMERS OF THE US CONSTITUTION were well versed in the writings of Aristotle, Locke, Montesquieu, and other democratic thinkers. From their extensive reading of history, they understood the dangers of unchecked ambition and the necessities of free speech and minority protections that are so vital in creating a representative democracy. The tripartite system of government they devised—consisting of a president, Congress, and judiciary—has endured with only modest revisions to the US Constitution. Upon leaving the presidency in 1796, George Washington urged that the Constitution "be sacredly maintained—that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue."[1] Forty-two years later, Abraham Lincoln told the Springfield, Illinois, Young Men's Lyceum that the Constitution should become "the political religion of the nation."[2]

Yet while the Framers realized success in establishing instruments of governance, they struggled over how to organize elections. Popular, democratic elections were a novel experiment that many believed could not happen without widespread turmoil and violence. One Massachusetts delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia contended that the "evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy."[3] Alexander Hamilton agreed: "The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right."[4] By the twenty-first century, however, the "excess of democracy" had become universal. In 2017, there were 35,879 cities and townships; 12,880 independent school districts; 3,031 counties; and 38,266 special districts spread across the US, many with elected leaders.[5]

The Constitution's Framers were skeptical of political parties, thinking of them as factions to be avoided. So, it was to their great astonishment that political parties proved to be the agents that made the document's provisions and the complex system of elections work. Parties afforded a way of organizing elections, legitimizing opposition, and guaranteeing peaceful transitions of power. Once in office, they often helped elected officials work together and bridged some of

the differences both between and among government institutions. One might assume, therefore, that political parties would be welcome instruments of governance. Quite the contrary. For more than 200 years, Americans have steadfastly refused to embrace party-led government—preferring instead that their leaders act in a nonpartisan manner. In 1956, John F. Kennedy wrote a Pulitzer Prize–winning book, *Profiles in Courage*, which extolled those who placed conscience above party.[6] Sixty years later, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump took a different tack, this time underscoring the public's distaste for both major parties: "We look at politicians and think: This one's owned by this millionaire. That one's owned by that millionaire, or lobbyist, or special group."[7] Voters rewarded Trump's Republican Party by giving them complete control of the federal government in 2016. But their investment was fleeting. Two years later, they soured on Trump's leadership and handed control of the House of Representatives to Democrats. Two years after that, they gave Democrats the White House and Senate as well.

The remainder of this chapter sets the foundation for our discussion of the evolution and role of political parties in America. We start by looking at the love-hate relationship Americans have with parties and how this has influenced party development. Next, we address what roles parties play and how they differ from other players in the political system. The chapter ends with a discussion of the disparate perspectives on political parties held by Hamilton and Jefferson, which will help to structure our understanding of party development.

Political Parties: Institutions Americans Love to Hate

The Founding Fathers were elitists who wanted to minimize the role citizens would play in choosing their officeholders. They were especially fearful of political parties, arguing that it was necessary, in Madison's words, to "break and control the violence of faction [meaning parties and other special interest groups]."[8] James Madison, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson believed that an enlightened citizenry would have no use for parties. Instead of parties, Madison hoped other mediating institutions would "refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through the medium of the chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial conditions."[9] Madison believed a multitude of interests would proliferate through continental expansion, thus making the development of large, mass-based parties virtually inconceivable: "You make it less probable

that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other."[10]

Madison's belief that parties were unsuited filters for mass expressions of public opinion was based on his reading of history. He believed human beings were emotional creatures, often embracing different religions and political leaders with a zealotry that usually ended in chaos and violence. Most of Madison's contemporaries agreed, and they despised political parties as vehicles that would, inevitably, ignite uncontrollable political passions. George Washington was especially critical of partisan demagogues whose objective, he claimed, was not to give people the facts from which they could reasonably make up their own minds but to make them blind followers. In an early draft of a 1792 speech renouncing a second term (never delivered when he had a change of heart), Washington maintained that "we are all children of the same country . . . [and] that our interest, however diversified in local and smaller matters, is the same in all the great and essential concerns of the nation."[11] Determined to make good on his intention to leave office in 1796, Washington issued his famous farewell address, in which he admonished his fellow citizens to avoid partisanship at any cost, noting that the "spirit of party" caused great division and agitated passions that helped divide the nation.[12]

Washington was hardly alone in admonishing partisanship. Six years before Washington's famous farewell and prior to the end of the Revolutionary War, John Adams bemoaned the country's elites drift toward party politics: "There is nothing I dread so much as a division of the Republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader and converting measures in opposition to each other."[13] Abigail Adams, observing the effects of partisan attacks on her husband during his presidency, wrote, "Party spirit is blind, malevolent, un-candid, ungenerous, unjust, and unforgiving."[14] James Monroe, the nation's fifth chief executive, urged his backers to obliterate all party divisions. When Abraham Lincoln sought reelection in 1864 under the newly created National Union banner, half a million pamphlets were published bearing titles such as "No Party Now but All for Our Country."[15]

Today's party leaders also seem skeptical about a place for parties in the American setting. In the keynote address that launched Barack Obama's national career at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, the future president spoke of the ills that stem from dividing the country into partisan groups:

The pundits like to slice and dice our country into Red States and Blue States; Red States for Republicans, Blue States for Democrats. But I've got news for them. We worship an awesome God in the Blue States, and

we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the Red States. We coach Little League in the Blue States and have gay friends in the Red States. There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America.[16]

Because this message resonates with so many people, political figures often find it advantageous to downplay political labels. Seeking reelection in 1972, Richard Nixon instructed his staff not to include the word "Republican" in any of his television advertisements or campaign brochures. Four years later, Gerald R. Ford was bluntly told by his advisors not to campaign for Republican candidates lest his support erode among independents and ticket splitters.[17] Asking Republicans and Republican-leaning voters in 2020 whether they considered themselves to be more a supporter of Donald Trump, or more a supporter of the Republican party, 52 percent labeled themselves Trump supporters first.[18] Campaigning for reelection in 2020, Trump mentioned the Republican Party only five times in his acceptance speech: twice referring to Abraham Lincoln; twice pledging to keep Americans safe from rioters and looters; and once to promise that the party would protect those with preexisting health conditions should Obamacare be overturned by the Supreme Court.[19] For his part, Joe Biden mentioned the Democratic Party just once and in a bipartisan context, saying: "[W]hile I will be the Democratic candidate, I will be an American president. I will work as hard for those who didn't support me as I will for those who did."[20]

Students of political parties, however, give them more kudos than the public. In his book *The American Commonwealth*, published in 1888, James Bryce began a tradition of scholarly investigation of political parties by devoting more than 200 pages to the subject. His treatment was laudatory: "Parties are inevitable. No free large country has been without them. No one has shown how representative government could be worked without them. They bring order out of chaos to a multitude of voters."[21] More than a century later, scores of academicians agree with Bryce. In a 1996 amicus curiae (friend-of-the-court) brief filed with the US Supreme Court, the Committee for Party Renewal, a bipartisan group of political scientists, summarized the views held by most party scholars:

Political parties play a unique and crucial role in our democratic system of government. Parties enable citizens to participate coherently in a system of government allowing for a substantial number of popularly elected offices. They bring fractious and diverse groups together as a unified force, provide

a necessary link between the distinct branches and levels of government, and provide continuity that lasts beyond terms of office. Parties also play an important role in encouraging active participation in politics, holding politicians accountable for their actions, and encouraging debate and discussion of important issues.[22]

Three Important Party Distinctions

One topic that bedevils any examination of parties in America is how one defines them. What is a political party? What makes one organization more "party-like" than another? What are the differences among interest groups, campaign consulting firms, political action committees, and political parties? What are the various components of political parties? Are parties member-oriented, or are they simply tools for an office-seeking elite?

Scholars have wrestled with these and other related questions for decades. Many of these topics are discussed in the chapters that follow, but a few clarifications are in order. They center around three questions:

1. How do political parties differ from other organizations, particularly those concerned with the outcome of government activity?
2. What are the various elements that comprise American political parties?
3. What do parties seek to accomplish and how are their activities related to these goals?

These three questions have occupied considerable scholarly attention since the formal study of US parties began in earnest after World War II. But they have a renewed urgency in today's interconnected, fast-paced world. Even though the Internet allows individuals to access thousands of web pages dealing with politics, and social media gives individuals an ever-greater voice, the major parties still matter. Democrats and Republicans hold positions on a variety of issues and identifying with a particular political party provides vital cues to voters. In 2020, the Gallup organization identified several large partisan discrepancies on the importance of the candidates' positions on key issues when casting their vote:

- Healthcare: Democrats ranked this issue 32 points higher than Republicans.
- Coronavirus Response: Democrats ranked this issue 32 points higher than Republicans.
- Race Relations: Democrats ranked this issue 27 points higher than Republicans.

- Climate Change: Democrats ranked this issue 65 points higher than Republicans.
- Economy: Republicans ranked this issue 8 points higher than Democrats.
- Abortion: Republicans ranks this issue 8 points higher than Democrats.
- Terrorism/National Security: Republicans ranked this issue 22 points higher than Democrats.
- Crime: Republicans ranked this issue 15 points higher than Democrats.
- Gun Policy: Republicans ranked this issue 16 points higher than Democrats.
- Taxes: Republicans ranked this issue 18 points higher than Democrats.[23]

Simply put on nearly every major issue confronting the United States, Democrats and Republicans have different worldviews. In this environment, the strategic objectives of the two major parties matter a great deal because their partisans ascribe great weight to them.

How Parties Differ from Other Organizations

At first glance, strangers to the American party system might find little distinction between parties and interest groups. Indeed, Madison's own discussion of "faction" is vague, and scholars have tangled with this issue for nearly two centuries. So, what, if anything, distinguishes a political party from, say, the American Association of Retired Persons, the Environmental Defense Fund, the National Rifle Association, or the National Association of Manufacturers? We point to four important distinctions:

1. Parties run candidates for office under their own label. Although interest groups may consistently back candidates of one party, such as the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization's (AFL-CIO) support of Democrats or the National Association of Manufacturers' support of Republicans, they do not have a party label and do not officially nominate candidates for office.
2. When it comes to determining policy, parties have a broad range of concerns. The 2020 Democratic Party platform had much to say about the pandemic, restoring the economy, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, immigration, foreign policy, national defense, and climate change.[24] Republicans promoted smaller government; education, healthcare, and criminal justice reforms; drilling for more energy resources; and border security.[25]
3. Unlike political parties, interest groups have a much narrower set of concerns.[26] The American Association of Retired Persons, for example,

is keenly interested in policies affecting older Americans but pays scant attention to environmental legislation. The Environmental Defense Fund makes its views plain on modifications to the Endangered Species Act but offers little input on how to combat terrorism. Likewise, the National Rifle Association offers its unadulterated opposition to gun control but has little to say on other issues such as reforming Social Security.

4. Political parties are subject to state and local laws, and the relationship between parties and the states is an intimate one. Interest groups, on the other hand, are private organizations operating under some state and federal regulations and with the aid of constitutional protections of free speech, assembly, and petition.

Interest groups and parties have worked together on numerous occasions. The present-day merging of gun rights, as advocated by the National Rifle Association, with a cooperating Republican Party is one example. The close ties between advocates who support dealing with the effects of climate change and the Democratic Party is another. Today, there are so many overlapping activities between political parties and interest groups that the competition between the two has become especially intense—a development that is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

The Components of American Political Parties

In ancient Greece, when the priestess of Apollo at Delphi made ready to deliver a prophecy, she positioned herself on a special seat supported by three legs, the tripod.[27] The tripod gave the priestess a clear view of the past, present, and future. Political scientists in the early 1950s likened political parties to that tripod of so long ago, contending that parties are also supported by three legs: party in the electorate, party organization, and party in government.[28]

- *Party in the electorate* (PIE) refers to those who identify with a particular party. In some countries, party organizations require active participation to be considered a member, which often means paying a membership fee. In the United States, however, party membership is not nearly as well defined. Here, the "party in the electorate" denotes a person's psychological attachment to a particular party. Some root for a political party the way others might cheer on their favorite baseball team. Attaching oneself to a political party in this fashion can manifest itself in a range of activities, although party identification can also be weak and not automatically translate into

partisan behavior. Some people will vote exclusively or primarily for can-
didates of their party, although it is possible to identify with a party and
still vote for the opposition, or even not vote at all. Some people choose to
register as a Republican or Democrat when they sign up to vote, but for-
mal registration is not a requirement for being included in the party in the
electorate. Other formalized party activities may include participation in a
party primary, raising money at a party fundraiser, making telephone calls,
or advocating for a party on social media to help get out the vote for a party's
candidate.

- *Party organization* (PO) refers to the formal apparatus of the party or the
party bureaucracy. It encompasses physical assets like the party headquar-
ters, collective activities like quadrennial national conventions, elites and
rank-and-file workers, and regulations governing how activities are struc-
tured and how leaders and workers are to behave. When party meetings
are held, members of the organization show up. When partisans pass out
literature during a campaign, the party organization is responsible for deliv-
ering the pamphlets. The Republican National Committee (RNC) and the
Democratic National Committee (DNC) each have headquarters in Wash-
ington, DC, and Democratic and Republican state party committees can be
found in every state capital.

- *Party in government* (PIG) refers to those who have captured office under
a party label. In 2021, Democrats in the Senate comprised one segment of
the Democratic Party in government led by majority leader Chuck Schumer,
while Senate Republicans comprised one segment of the Republican Party
in government led by minority leader Mitch McConnell. Similarly, in the
House of Representatives, Speaker Nancy Pelosi spoke for the Democrats
while minority leader Kevin McCarthy represented the Republicans. As
president, Joe Biden is the overall head of the Democratic Party in govern-
ment, a role Donald Trump held for the Republican Party when he was pres-
ident. Branches of the party in government may be found in any legislative,
executive, or judicial body that organizes itself along partisan lines, from the
president and Congress down to states, counties, cities, and towns.

In the 1950s, the tripod model of political parties seemed both accurate
and parsimonious. Partisanship was broad and fixed as tightly as one's religion.
The public was divided between Democrats and Republicans, and they voted
accordingly. What few "independents" there were generally did not vote and
therefore placed themselves outside the political system. Legislative leaders were

important figures. Party organizations were fixtures in nearly every community and controlled nominations for most elective offices. Citizens were active in party organizations, either for ideological reasons or for the sense of belonging to the larger community that partisan activity engendered. Elected officials carried the party banner openly. In an age of black-and-white television, the tripod model nicely captured how the three party components neatly fit together.

Does the Tripod Model Still Work?

The rise in the importance and availability of information has changed the way parties operate. During the agricultural era, the key to production was land; in the Industrial Era, it was human labor; today, it is trained intelligence. In the early 1970s, sociologist Daniel Bell heralded the coming of a new postindustrial society that placed a premium on the gathering and dissemination of information.[29] In the twenty-first century, American life has been transformed by several interrelated developments:

- Most of today's workers are salaried professionals. In 2019, more than sixty-four million workers held management, professional, and related occupations.[30] Labor union membership, which peaked in 1954 at 35 percent of the workforce, fell to 10.8 percent in 2020.[31]
- A college degree has become a "union card" for employment. Today, the largest portion of the labor force is composed of millennials, and the wage gap between those who have a college degree and those who do not is the highest in history. In 2018, millennials who held a bachelor's degree or higher had a median income of $56,000, while those who were high school graduates had a median income of just $31,300.[32]
- Social media has reshaped the way Americans interact with each other and has diminished the once restrictive boundaries of time and space. Email, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, Parler, Reddit, Tik Tok, and other social media outlets have become established means of social and political interaction. More than 80 million Americans followed Donald Trump on Twitter while he was president (before he was permanently banned from the platform), making it Trump's primary means of communicating with voters. Older forms of communication (e.g., printed newspapers, presidential news conferences, and traditional television network programming) became increasingly outdated and ineffectual.

- New occupational structures, and with them new lifestyles and social classes, are creating new elites, including a self-selected political elite that works to influence political outcomes online through blogs and social networking.

What Do Political Parties Seek to Accomplish?

In one respect, the answer to this question is simple: Parties seek to win elections. Winning means parties can seize power and control one or more branches of the federal, state, or local governments. Seizing power can also have material benefits, as parties collect the so-called spoils of office. Several notable political party definitions follow this logic:

- "A political party is a group organized to gain control of government in the name of the group by winning election to public office" (Joseph Schlesinger).[33]
- "A political party [is] any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect government officeholders under a given label" (Leon Epstein).[34]
- "Political parties can be seen as coalitions of elites to capture and use political office. [But] a political party is more than a coalition. A political party is an institutionalized coalition, one that has adopted rules, norms, and procedures" (John Aldrich).[35]

Others argue that a party's true purpose is to implement its ideology by adopting a particular set of policies. Winning elections and controlling the government are means to changing the course of government. Some definitions of party capture this objective:

- "[A] party is a body of men [*sic*] united, for promoting by their joint endeavors, the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed" (Edmund Burke).[36]
- "[A] political party [is] an organization that seeks to achieve political power by electing members to public office so that their political philosophies can be reflected in public policies" (Jay M. Shafritz).[37]

The foremost problems with using the election-policy dimension to capture the essence of parties are that it is static and incomplete, and it discounts the diversity of party structures in the United States. The history of parties is continually evolving as new conditions arise. Suggestions that US parties are "election driven," "policy oriented," or searching for the "vital center" are tied to the assumption that it has always been so and that all party organizations scattered

throughout the nation follow a similar pattern. A close reading of US history suggests that party goals and activities have varied over time. As we will see shortly, sometimes parties have leaned toward the election-centered definition; at other times they have been closer to the policy-driven perspective. Therefore, instead of defining party goals in any sort of concrete way, conceivably the best approach is to remain mindful of the dichotomy between winning elections or remaining true to one's principles, then trying to discern when each perspective best fits a given moment in history.

Origins: Hamilton vs. Jefferson

After traveling what was then the breadth of the United States in 1831 and 1832, Alexis de Tocqueville remarked, "All the domestic controversies of the Americans at first appear to a stranger to be incomprehensible or puerile, and he is at a loss whether to pity a people who take such arrant trifles in good earnest or to envy that happiness which enables a community to discuss them."[38] During much of the twentieth century, Tocqueville's complaint was echoed in the oft-heard line: "There's not a dime's worth of difference between the Democratic and Republican parties." Today, party polarization had rendered this old adage moot.

Nonetheless, historians have placed much value in the belief that the United States is a special country set apart from its European origins. Announcing his 2020 candidacy for the presidency near Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Joe Biden focused on this notion that the United States is more than a physical location found on a globe: "Folks, America is an idea, an idea that's stronger than any army, bigger than any ocean, more powerful than any dictator or tyrant. It gives hope to the most desperate people on earth, it guarantees that everyone is treated with dignity and gives no safe harbor. It instills in every person in this country the belief that no matter where you start in life, there's nothing you can't achieve if you work at it."[39]

Such expressions constitute what some have called American Exceptionalism,[40] which has long held a place in American political culture. Expressions such as "the American Dream" and "the American Way of Life" (along with the damning phrase "un-American") reflect the distinctiveness many Americans have long found in the experiment devised by the Framers. Historians have been struck by the rigidity of the American mind reflected in this attitude. As one observed, "Who would think of using the word 'un-Italian' or 'un-French' as we use the word 'un-American'?"[41]

But such ideological rigidity does not mean that partisan disagreements are lacking, either in the history books or in contemporary news accounts about politics. After the Constitution was ratified and George Washington took his place as the nation's first president, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson began to act, as Jefferson recalled, "like two cocks."[42] The raging battle between these two stubborn and forceful men was personal and political. Both were staunchly committed to individualism, freedom, and equality of opportunity, yet they strongly differed on how these values could be translated into an effective form of governance.

Those disagreements came from the vastly different solutions each man devised to a vexing problem—namely, how liberty could be restrained such that it could be enjoyed. For his part, Hamilton preferred that liberty be coupled with authority: "In every civil society, there must be a supreme power, to which all members of that society are subject; for, otherwise, there could be no supremacy, or subordination, that is no government at all."[43] Jefferson, meanwhile, preferred that liberty be paired with local civic responsibility. It was on that basis that the enduring struggle between Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism began.

Hamiltonian nationalism envisions the United States as one "family," with a strong central government and an energetic president acting on its behalf. Addressing the delegates to the New York State Convention called to ratify the Constitution, Hamilton noted, "The confidence of the people will easily be gained by good administration. This is the true touchstone." To him, "good administration" meant a strong central government acting on behalf of the national—or family—interest. Thus, any expression of a special interest was, to use Hamilton's word, "mischievous."[44] But Hamilton had his own partialities, favoring the development of the nation's urban centers and an unfettered capitalism. His espousal of a strong central government aroused considerable controversy.

Unlike Hamilton, Jefferson had a nearly limitless faith in the ordinary citizen. To a nation largely composed of farmers, he declared, "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people."[45] Jefferson's devotion to liberty made him distrust most attempts to restrain it, particularly those of the federal government: "Were we directed from Washington when to sow, and when to reap, we should soon want bread."[46] In 1825, Jefferson warned of the expanding power of government and wrote that the "salvation of the republic" rested on the regeneration and spread of the New England town meeting.[47] The best guarantee of liberty in Jefferson's view was to restrain the mighty hand of government. Table 1.1 highlights several additional differences

TABLE 1.1: The Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian Models of American Governance

Hamiltonian Nationalism	Jeffersonian Localism
Views the United States as one national "family."	Sees the United States as a series of diverse communities.
Prefers a concentration of power in the federal government so that it may act in the interest of the national family.	Prefers to give power to state and local governments so that they can act in deference to local customs.
Inclined to constrain liberty for the sake of national unity by marrying liberty with a strong central authority.	More inclined to favor liberty and wary of national authority. Prefers to concentrate governmental power at the state and local levels.
Trusts in elites to run the government.	Trusts in the common sense of average Americans to run the government.
Prefers a hierarchical party structure populated by "professional" party politicians.	Prefers a decentralized party structure populated by so-called amateur politicians, who often are local party activists.
Sees parties as vehicles whose primary purpose is to win elections and control the government.	Views parties as more ideologically based. Commitment to principles is viewed as even more important than winning elections.

between Hamilton's and Jefferson's view of government, with a special focus on how these differences might relate to the party system.

This debate between the political descendants of Hamilton and Jefferson is the touchstone for partisan conflict and party politics in America that continues to this day. Martin Van Buren, among many others, traces the evolution of parties to the factional disputes between Hamilton and Jefferson. According to Van Buren,

> The two great parties of this country, with occasional changes in name only, have for the principal part of a century, occupied antagonistic positions upon all important political questions. They have maintained an unbroken succession, and have, throughout, been composed respectively of men agreeing in their party passion, and preferences, and entertaining, with rare exceptions, similar views on the subject of government and its administration.[48]

Over time the two parties, with changing names and roles, recast Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism to suit their evolving interests.

During the Civil War and the Industrial Era that followed, Republicans stood with Hamilton, whereas Democrats claimed Jefferson as one of their own and promoted states' rights. Since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, Democrats have generally aligned themselves with Hamilton, likening the nation to a family. In a 2020 televised address to high school graduates confined to their homes during the coronavirus pandemic, Barack Obama stressed the need to engage in communal activity:

No one does big things by themselves. Right now, when people are scared, it's easy to be cynical and say let me just look out for myself, or my family, or people who look or think or pray like me. But if we're going to get through these difficult times; if we're going to create a world where everybody has the opportunity to find a job and afford college; if we're going to save the environment and defeat future pandemics, then we're going to have to do it together. So be alive to one another's struggles. Stand up for one another's rights. Leave behind all the old ways of thinking that divide us—sexism, racial prejudice, status, greed—and set the world on a different path.[49]

Whereas Obama, Biden, and their fellow Democrats espouse a reinvigorated Hamiltonian nationalism, the Republican Party, during the New Deal, and especially during the Ronald Reagan years, immersed itself in the values cherished by Jeffersonian localism. Campaigning for the presidency in 1936, Republican Alf Landon assailed the "folly" of Roosevelt's New Deal and denounced the "vast multitude of new offices" and the "centralized bureaucracy" from which "swarms of inspectors" swooped over the countryside "to harass our people."[50] Landon promised that his restrained and prudent management of the federal bureaucracy would result in an outpouring of freedom by adherence to a simple dictum: "I want the Secretary of the Treasury to be obliged to say to committees of Congress every time a new appropriation is proposed, 'Gentlemen, you will have to provide some new taxes if you do this.'"[51]

Though our values may be constant, the circumstances in which they are applied are not, and at critical junctures, Americans have shifted between Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism. The whiff of civil war, the onset of a depression, the ravages of inflation, a pandemic, and a violent attack on the seat of government inevitably cause Americans to take stock of their situation, reevaluate their expectations of government, and choose a political party and a course of action in a manner consistent with the enduring values of freedom, individualism, and equality of opportunity. Such shifts in public attitudes are

sometimes influenced by a dominant personality. Abraham Lincoln reasserted Hamilton's vision of a national family to save the Union, and Franklin Roosevelt redefined Hamiltonian nationalism to meet the challenges of the Great Depression. Ronald Reagan revitalized Jeffersonian localism when he called out the federal government as the problem, not the solution to our problems. In 2021, Democrats advocated a reinvigorated Hamiltonian nationalism to address intertwined public health, economic, racial, and climate security challenges that would transform American government much as FDR did in the 1930s. Biden hung side-by-side portraits of Hamilton and Jefferson in the Oval Office, noting the two men were "hallmarks of how differences of opinion, expressed within the guardrails of the Republic, are essential to democracy."[52]

Sometimes, Americans do not want to choose between Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism. Instead, they want to enjoy the fruits of both. So, for instance, progressive activists engaged online to reform the Democratic Party align themselves with the first three Hamiltonian positions and the last three Jeffersonian positions in table 1.1 without feeling any sense of contradiction. They view the United States as a national "family" (albeit made up of diverse communities), believe concentrated federal power is necessary to bring about a progressive agenda, and are willing to trade off a degree of liberty in exchange for a greater government safety-net. At the same time, they trust the wisdom of average Americans—such as those who have chosen to engage in online political activism—over elite decision-making, oppose Democratic Party professionals, and chafe when they perceive elected Democrats abandoning principle to win elections.

This melding of Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism is not unusual in American history. It reasserts itself during periodic swings from one faction to the other, when the parties test their ideas and battle for dominance amidst changing political and social problems. Over time, this enduring battle has produced surprising results. Hamilton would be astonished to learn that his concept of a national family is being used to promote the interests of have-nots, especially women and minorities, or as the basis for universal health insurance. But as this book suggests, political parties cannot escape the vineyards tilled by Hamilton and Jefferson, whose ideas give expression to American ideological impulses and serve as instruments to implement the constitutional designs of the Framers in a world they never could have envisioned.

Today, political parties remain an important part of the democratic process. For all their many deficiencies, parties afford average Americans the best avenue for speaking their minds and being heard. As you read the chapters to follow,

you are invited to assess for yourself the role and consequence of political parties in our system. You will find that despite the changes political parties have experienced through the centuries, it is still possible to find Hamilton's and Jefferson's fingerprints on the parties that dominate today's politics. Culturally, economically, geographically, and demographically, the United States has been a fluid work in progress since those two men fashioned organizations that formalized the political divisions of post-Revolutionary War America. That these organizations would somehow evolve into the groups that continue to function in a world where information is transmitted at the speed of light is a testament to the enduring nature of a set of institutions that were not even imagined by the Constitution's authors. As they face each other across a widening ideological divide, today's Republicans and Democrats continue a dialogue with deep historical and institutional roots.

The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Party Politics

T HE MOST FREQUENTLY QUOTED LINE in the study of political parties was penned in 1942: "It should be flatly stated," wrote political scientist E. E. Schattschneider, "that the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties."[1] Schattschneider's proclamation is found in nearly every text on political parties written since the 1940s (you just read it here), and most political scientists still accept his assertion as a fact. Yet, to the average citizen, political parties are synonymous with corruption, gridlock, and elitism. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that political parties have had a tortured and tormented history. Although Americans, along with the British, can claim to have invented the modern political party, few take pride in this accomplishment and most deplore their modern-day manifestations. According to a 2021 survey, 78 percent of Americans agree that "traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like me"; only 20 percent disagree.[2] Thus, it should come as no surprise that for more than two hundred years, political parties have searched for their rightful place in the American polity without ever quite finding it.

The Colonial Experience

Contemporary political parties have their roots in colonial America, where pre-Revolutionary War parties were little more than extensions of rival family clans such as the Wards and Hopkins in Rhode Island and the DeLanceys and Livingstons in New York. The contests between these clans invariably centered on an ideological dispute over the reach of royal authority in the colonies, which began almost as soon as the British ships carrying settlers to Jamestown left port in 1607. On one side were those loyal to the Crown and the appointed royal governors; those opposed were faithful to the elected colonial assemblies. Those supporting the Crown were often wealthy, having received immense land grants from the king, whereas those who did not share these special privileges

were tradesmen, small shop owners, and those who tilled the soil and became accustomed to the hardships of the New World. These poor, adventurous outcasts were suspicious of authority figures, especially the king, and their political cynicism was deep-seated.

Although these divisions structured colonial politics, localism and diversity prevented mature parties from forming. In pre-Revolutionary America, each colony had its own customs, history, and political identity. Moreover, there was a great diversity of individual interests among small-freehold farmers, plantation slaveholders, merchants, ship owners and builders, emerging manufacturers, and others. In addition, there were numerous ethnic and religious groups, divided between those who desired an aristocratic and consolidated republic and those who preferred a more democratic regime with power concentrated in the states.

The American Revolution forged these cleavages into a debate about self-governance. Tradesmen and laborers despised King George III and favored severing ties with Britain. Dubbed patriots, many advocated violence to end what they saw as British subjugation. Increased taxation, coupled with Royal disregard of their interests, prompted several high-profile protests, such as the Boston Tea Party of 1773 and the sinking of the *Gaspee* off the Rhode Island coast one year earlier. Edmund Burke, a member of the British House of Commons at the time, noted that "the state of America has been kept in continual agitation. Everything administered as [a] remedy to the public complaint, if it did not produce, was at least followed by, a heightening of the distemper."[3]

Colonial loyalists remained faithful to the British Crown, and they regarded the patriots as rabble-rousers. With the uprisings at Lexington and Concord in 1775, the contest between the patriots and loyalists became an outright civil war, with well-organized patriots winning control of state governments throughout the colonies. Through societies like the Sons of Liberty, they held rallies, sponsored "committees of correspondence" to spread their views, and recruited important community leaders to their cause. Patriot leader Thomas Paine espoused the virtues of self-rule in his 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, and John Adams organized his fellow Bostonians to fight against "foreign" influence in colonial affairs. Their activities were less focused on winning elections (there were few voters at the time) than on shaping public opinion.

Even before the Revolutionary War ended, Adams wrote to a correspondent, "There is nothing I dread so much as a division of the Republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader and converting measures in opposition to each other."[4] But enduring conflict over the structure and scope of post-Revolutionary governing institutions moved the new nation inexorably in

the direction of opposing camps. Differences that turned violent precipitated the collapse of the Articles of Confederation, the young republic's first governing document. For a brief time after the Revolution, a short-lived boom in imports from England pushed the cost of agricultural and manufactured goods downward. Money became scarce, resulting in a severe economic depression that began in the late 1770s and lasted nearly a decade. Working-class citizens and small farmers were hardest hit. Bank foreclosures skyrocketed. Most states levied heavy taxes in a largely unsuccessful attempt to eliminate their wartime debts. By the mid-1780s, the demands for action grew louder.

To avoid bloodshed, some states passed laws to postpone foreclosures and allow farmers to use agricultural products to help pay loans. But none of these actions eased the governing crisis, which came to a head when former army captain Daniel Shays led a mob of farmers against the state government of Massachusetts in 1787. Their purpose was to prevent foreclosures on their debt-ridden land by keeping the country courts of western Massachusetts from sitting until the next election. The state militia eventually dispersed the mob, but the uprising, which became known as Shays's Rebellion, galvanized the states to convene delegates in Philadelphia for the purpose of drafting a new governing document.

The differences underlying Shays's Rebellion persisted during and after the Constitutional Convention. The Constitution's supporters, who became known as Federalists, and those who opposed its ratification, dubbed Anti-Federalists, carried their disputes from Independence Hall in Philadelphia to the various state capitals. Anti-Federalists contended that representatives in any national government must reflect a true picture of the people, possessing an intimate knowledge of their circumstances and needs. This could only be achieved, they argued, through small, relatively homogeneous republics such as those already constructed in the existing states. One prominent Anti-Federalist spokesperson asked, "Is it practicable for a country so large and so numerous . . . to elect a representation that will speak their sentiments? . . . It certainly is not."[5] Federalists believed that a representative republic was possible and desirable—especially if populated by those "who possess [the] most wisdom to discern, and [the] most virtue to pursue, the common good of society."[6]

Federalists vs. Democratic-Republicans

George Washington assumed the presidency in 1789 believing that parties were unnecessary and that he could bypass them by creating an "enlightened administration." To that end, Washington took into his Cabinet the leading political

antagonists of his time: Alexander Hamilton as treasury secretary and Thomas Jefferson as secretary of state. Less than a year after becoming president, Washington's experiment of having a government without parties faltered. Hamilton and Jefferson vehemently disagreed in the Cabinet councils over how to manage the growing economic crisis.

Hamilton offered a sweeping plan to revive the sagging economy—the most controversial portion of which involved the complete assumption of debts incurred by the states during the Revolutionary War. To Hamilton and his Federalist followers, this policy was not only sound economics but good politics: by helping those who backed the revolt against King George III, confidence in the national government would be restored, and nearly $80 million would be put in the pockets of those most likely to reinvest in the nation's tiny infrastructure. The result would be an increase in the flow of goods and services accompanied by a general rise in living standards.

To pay for full assumption, Hamilton proposed an excise tax on distilled spirits that became known as the Whiskey Tax. Because most whiskey producers were farmers in the South and West, this measure shifted the tax burden from northeastern business owners to small farmers—in effect, punishing those most likely to support Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans. Additionally, to ensure that enough money would fill the federal coffers, Hamilton advocated establishing a Bank of the United States that would make loans and collect interest payments while it curbed the diverse practices of state-chartered banks. The idea of a national bank, not one of the powers specifically given to the Congress in the Constitution, created enormous animosity between advocates of states' rights and those seeking a more powerful national government—a dispute that would not be resolved until 1819 by the Supreme Court in the case of McCulloch v. Maryland.

Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans believed that federal assumption of state debts would create a windfall for the monied class, especially those living in New England. Opposition to Hamilton's scheme was led in the House of Representatives by James Madison. He agreed with Hamilton that the economy needed strengthening, but he fretted about the shift of capital from the agricultural states (including his native Virginia) to a few northeastern manufacturing states. Moreover, Madison thought the Whiskey Tax would be a financial disaster for small farmers. His prediction came true in 1794, when farmers in western Pennsylvania caused an uprising that became popularly known as the Whiskey Insurrection. Madison corralled seventeen House members to his side—about one-quarter of the chamber. About the same number of legislators opposed him.

At the conclusion of the First Congress, an exasperated Hamilton exclaimed, "It was not till the last session that I became unequivocally convinced that Mr. Madison, cooperating with Mr. Jefferson, is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration; and actuated by views, in my judgment, subversive to the principles of good government and dangerous to the union, peace, and happiness of the country."[7] Vice President John Adams likewise bemoaned the "turbulent maneuvers" of factions that could "tie the hands and destroy the influence" of those who desired to promote the public interest. Adams told his son-in-law that the partisan battles between Hamilton and Jefferson had created a "division of sentiments over everything."[8]

The battle between Hamilton and Madison extended beyond the halls of Congress to the newspapers. In a move that foreshadowed the inextricable link that would develop between political parties and the mass media, Hamilton forged a close alliance with John Ward Fenno, publisher of the *Gazette of the United States*. Madison, not willing to let Fenno's editorials go unanswered, persuaded Philip Freneau to edit a rival newspaper, the *National Gazette*. These party-controlled newspapers, although having a small number of subscribers (the *Gazette of the United States* had only 1,500), quickly became the most popular method of communicating with the party faithful.[9] Together, they helped clarify this first battle between Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism, even as they exacerbated the animosity between these two leaders. The battle of epithets that played out in the country's young newspapers ensured that partisanship would overflow the Washington administration to capture much of American society.

Despite intense congressional opposition, Hamilton's economic plan won approval after some wily backroom maneuvering. Jefferson played a key behind-the-scenes role, endorsing the bill in exchange for assurances that the federal capital would be moved south from New York City to a new District of Columbia. But Jefferson's role in advancing Hamilton's initiative alienated his agrarian constituents. Seeking to mend political fences, Jefferson embarked on a tour with his ally James Madison during the spring of 1791 that was to have profound consequences for party development. Ostensibly, the duo set out on a nature tour to "observe the vegetation and wildlife in the region," but their real purpose was to sample public opinion. In effect, they were testing the waters for the formation of a new political party. In New York City, Jefferson and Madison met with Robert Livingston and George Clinton—two longtime rivals of Hamilton—as well as Senator Aaron Burr, who was attempting to broaden his political influence.

Two years later, in 1793, Jefferson and Hamilton renewed their struggle. This time, the issue was how to respond to the French Revolution. To Jefferson and his followers, the French cry for "liberty, equality, and fraternity" was an extension of the American Revolution. Thomas Paine was so moved by the French revolutionaries that he journeyed to France to help the cause. At the same time, the German Republican Society was formed in Philadelphia. Its members sympathized with the French revolutionaries and believed that the American Revolution was losing momentum because of Hamilton, who, they claimed, was endangering the promise of democracy contained in the Declaration of Independence. By 1798, there were forty-three of these popular societies, organized in every state except New Hampshire and Georgia.

To Hamilton and his Federalist backers, the French Revolution signaled the emergence of anarchy and a rejection of traditional Christian values. They were horrified by the mob violence and feared that the emerging republican movement could lead America down the same path. Jefferson remarked that these different reactions to the French Revolution "kindled and brought forth the two [political] parties with an ardor which our own interests merely could never incite."[10] Jefferson dubbed Hamilton's party the "monocrats." For his part, Jefferson never referred to his party as the "Democrats" because the term conjured visions of mob rule; he preferred the name "Republicans" to describe his emerging political organization. Historians use the term Democratic-Republicans to describe Jefferson's party.

When the bloody beheadings of the Terror of 1793 became known, reservations about the French experiment became widespread. Seeking to cool the growing political passions in his own country, President Washington sent James Monroe to Paris and John Jay to London to obtain treaties that would protect American shipping interests and keep the United States out of the European political thicket. But when Jay returned with an agreement that many believed was partial to the British, a political firestorm erupted. The treaty was so controversial that Washington waited six months before submitting it to the Senate for ratification in 1795, where it barely received the two-thirds majority required for passage.

By 1796, Hamilton's controversial economic policies and the Jay Treaty divided public opinion and led to the creation of the nation's first official political parties. The Federalists took their name to signal their intention to create a strong, centralized government. (Note that this group of Federalists does not refer to the supporters of the Constitution crafted in Philadelphia in 1787.) The opposing Democratic-Republicans wished to make clear that they were

devoted to the people and "the republican principle" of representative governance. (During the Andrew Jackson era the Democratic-Republicans became known as the Democrats, which continues to exist today.) Most Federalists were affluent businessmen from the northeastern states, whereas Democratic-Republicans won backing from small farmers in the mid-Atlantic and southern states. The division proved so powerful that in 1796 a presidential election was hotly contested for the first time. Thomas Jefferson was so opposed to the Jay Treaty that he accepted the Democratic-Republican call to lend his name as a presidential candidate. The battle between Federalist John Adams and Democratic-Republican Jefferson was a close one, with Adams winning 71 electoral votes to Jefferson's 68. Under the peculiar constitutional arrangements of the time—which did not anticipate or account for political party competition—runner-up Jefferson became vice president.

The 1796 Adams-Jefferson contest was more than a struggle between two men—it was a battle between two political organizations. Although there were scores of local political groups before 1796, some even using the term *parties*, the election of 1800 saw the emergence of political organizations as we know them today. Propelled by a strong conviction that the Federalist-controlled US government was abandoning sacred "republican principles," Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans formed a party replete with grassroots supporters, which ran slates of candidates for numerous offices on a platform of issues that appealed to the American sense of limited government and a prevailing fear of placing too much authority in one individual.

In what proved to be a futile attempt to stem the growing Democratic-Republican tide, John Adams and his Federalist followers in Congress sought to emulate Jefferson's organizational skills. Because they had less grassroots support—there were no Federalist clubs to speak of—organizing proved difficult. Yet, by virtue of the fact that they ran the government, they could use their positions to press their advantage in the process confirming some of the Founders' fears about the factional dangers of partisanship. Thus, the Federalist-controlled Congress passed the 1798 Sedition Act, which made it a misdemeanor to publish false or malicious information and provided that anyone convicted of conspiring to hinder the operations of the federal government would be subject to heavy fines and possible imprisonment. The Alien Acts, which became law in the same year, made it easier to deport political adversaries who were not citizens—especially the growing Irish population, which was pro-Democratic-Republican, as well as any migrating French revolutionaries. Fourteen indictments were issued between 1798 and 1800. One Democratic-Republican was jailed because

he carried a placard protesting the acts; another was sentenced to six months for attempting, in the words of a Federalist-appointed judge, to "mislead the ignorant and inflame their minds against the President."[11]

Jefferson worried that these new laws might make it possible for the Federalists to install one of their own as a president-for-life. Thus, the organizing efforts of Jefferson and Madison became a whirlwind of activity as the election of 1800 approached. Democratic-Republican members of Congress met in Philadelphia and formally endorsed Jefferson for president and Aaron Burr for vice president. The Federalists responded by nominating a ticket consisting of John Adams of Massachusetts and Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina—the first of many North-South pairings.

As in 1796, the Adams-Jefferson contest was hard fought. Hamilton warned his Federalist followers that no defections would be tolerated in the Electoral College. But Hamilton's admonition notwithstanding, Jefferson prevailed. As in the first Adams-Jefferson race, the southern states backed Jefferson while most of the Northeast sided with Adams. But the switch of New York from Adams to Jefferson—the culmination of Jefferson's courting of New Yorkers that began with his 1791 "nature tour"—paid off. Clinton and Livingston, together with Burr's New York City organization, rallied the troops on Jefferson's behalf. New York's electoral votes gave Jefferson an eight-vote plurality in the Electoral College. The Democratic-Republican victory, which had to be ratified in the House of Representatives, extended to both houses of Congress. As Jefferson later recalled, "The Revolution of 1800 was as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 1776 was in its forms."[12] That revolution, as John Adams later observed, was the rejection of what Adams called "the monarchial principle"—a reference to his belief that those in power would do what is right for the country regardless of partisanship. After Jefferson's victory, future presidents would be party leaders. Adams himself blamed his lack of party standing for his defeat: "Jefferson had a party; Hamilton had a party; but the commonwealth [a reference to Adams] had none."[13] Jefferson replied that political parties had become an inevitable part of public life that had separated the two founding brothers.

In the two decades following Thomas Jefferson's election, Democratic-Republicans strengthened their hold on the government. But this did not stop the partisan bickering between Jeffersonian localists and Hamiltonian nationalists and their successors. One of the very first, and most bitter, partisan battles Jefferson faced involved the "midnight appointments" of loyal Federalists to the federal judiciary made by John Adams upon leaving the presidency in March

1801. The Federalists hoped that by making these appointments they could limit the damage done by the Democratic-Republicans until the next election in 1804. One of those appointed by Adams was William Marbury, who was slated to become a justice of the peace. The incoming secretary of state, James Madison, refused to deliver Marbury's nominating papers after the outgoing Federalist secretary of state, John Marshall, failed to deliver them in time. In response, Marbury and seven others sued the government, claiming that Madison had defaulted on his duty to serve his appointment papers. The Supreme Court heard the case of Marbury v. Madison in 1803. In a landmark ruling, Chief Justice John Marshall (the same former secretary of state who had been appointed to the court by John Adams) wrote that Marbury was entitled to his appointment, but Congress had exceeded its authority when it gave the Supreme Court the power to order Madison to surrender the papers, which it had done in a provision of the Judiciary Act of 1789. Marshall thus wormed his way out of a certain confrontation with President Jefferson while expanding the Federalist principle of strong central government by claiming for the court the authority to declare acts of the other branches unconstitutional, an authority known as judicial review.[14]

The next twenty years saw what historians sometimes call the Era of Good Feelings because of the apparent lack of political disagreement. In truth, the Democratic-Republicans were so powerful and organized that for the only time in American history there was essentially a one-party government with no serious electoral competition. The trio of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe established a Virginia dynasty that controlled the White House; in the five elections held between 1804 and 1820, Democratic-Republicans won between 53 and 92 percent of the Electoral College votes and held between 61 and 85 percent of the seats in Congress.

Meanwhile, the Federalists had started down a path to political obscurity, sealed by their reaction to the War of 1812. Federalists, who retained a strong base of support in the New England states, vehemently opposed the war, believing that it would seriously impede vital trade with England. They dubbed the conflict "Mr. Madison's War," and New Englanders continued to illicitly trade with the British, sometimes even withholding money and militia from the war effort. Democratic-Republicans, in turn, stoked popular outrage at the British impressment of American sailors—the removal of British-born sailors from American vessels and forced entry into the British navy—and believed that the rampant nationalism would unify their diverse party. Partisan passions escalated after Congress declared war on Great Britain in 1812. When the *Federal*

Republican, a Federalist newspaper located in Baltimore, editorialized against the war, an angry mob razed the building where it was printed. Elsewhere, Federalist sympathizers were beaten, stabbed, and even tarred and feathered. Two years later the Federalists met in Hartford, Connecticut, and proposed generous peace terms. Rumors persisted that the Federalists favored the secession of the New England states from the Union, and the party, already weakened by its antiwar stance, fell into disrepute. By 1820, the Federalists had become political dinosaurs, not even bothering to nominate a token candidate to oppose James Monroe in that year's presidential contest. Hamilton's party faded into the history books; however, Hamilton's ideas did not.

Jackson and Mass-Based Parties

The strength of the Democratic-Republicans ultimately was their undoing. By 1810, the House of Representatives was filled with a variety of Democratic-Republicans. Some were traditional states' rights advocates; others wanted an enlarged role for the federal government to enhance westward expansion. Thus, even though most elected officials were Democratic-Republicans, the label became increasingly ambiguous. By 1824, the intraparty divisions had widened into a chasm. Five candidates, each representing a different faction, aggressively sought the presidency: Henry Clay, the Speaker of the House and champion of westward expansion; John C. Calhoun, secretary of war and supporter of states' rights; Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans; John Quincy Adams, son of the former president and secretary of state under Monroe; and William Crawford, former treasury secretary and, like Calhoun, a doctrinaire states' rights advocate. The Congressional Caucus (the means by which Democratic-Republican nominees had been chosen since 1800) convened in Washington, DC, in February and selected Crawford to be the party's standard-bearer with Calhoun as his running mate. The remaining three candidates boycotted the caucus and persuaded their respective state legislatures to place their names in contention.

On election day, Jackson led in the popular votes cast, winning 153,000 more than the combined votes cast for Adams and Crawford. But Jackson failed to win an electoral majority. The all-important Electoral College vote split, with Jackson receiving ninety-nine votes; Adams, eighty-four; Crawford, forty-one; and Clay, thirty-seven. Under such conditions, the Constitution turns the matter over to the House of Representatives for a final decision among the top three contenders. Clay, excluded from consideration, backed Adams, who reciprocated

by promising to make Clay secretary of state in the new administration. Because he was the powerful speaker of the House, Clay was able to clinch the House vote, and the presidency, for Adams.

Jackson's supporters were outraged by what they believed was a corrupt bargain between Adams and Clay. They considered Adams a usurper in the White House, and in several state capitals they plotted a comeback, with New York senator Martin Van Buren providing the organizational muscle. Van Buren correctly suspected that his home state could be decisive in the 1828 election, and he formed an alliance with Jackson that would help put "Old Hickory" over the top and avenge his 1824 defeat.

By 1826, several states had changed their laws allowing voters to choose delegates to the Electoral College rather than leaving the task to the various state legislatures. A general loosening of voter qualifications also greatly enlarged the size of the potential electorate. Meanwhile, Jefferson's party continued fracturing. On one side were the Adams-Clay followers who were determined to implement internal improvements to the nation's infrastructure. Like the Federalists of two decades earlier, they were convinced that national prosperity necessitated an active government. On the other side were the so-called traditional Democratic-Republicans whose ranks included Van Buren. They opposed internal improvements, including road and canal construction, because they believed such projects would violate state sovereignty. Jackson had managed to keep his distance from both factions, remaining a popular figure without an official party organization—until Van Buren took charge of his campaign.

Van Buren's first step toward involvement in national politics was to solidify his following in Congress. He quickly became leader of the Democratic-Republicans, a name he preferred to "Republicans" because it expressed solidarity with the more egalitarian agrarian wing of the party. Van Buren undertook scores of trips around the country, campaigning for Jackson wherever he went. His goals were to arouse public indignation against the Adams-Clay deal, conduct door-to-door canvasses in every town, and make sure that Jackson supporters went to the polls on election day. Adams's forces derided Jackson as a military butcher and even called the chastity of his wife into question. Nonetheless, Jackson handily beat Adams, winning all of the South, the new western states, and Van Buren's New York. Just as significant, voter turnout doubled from 25 percent in 1824 to 50 percent in 1828. Jackson and Van Buren were the first to understand the power of mass-based party politics. Political parties were now firmly established as a primary vehicle for translating public sentiments into governing policies. Henceforth, parties became a mainstay of American political life.

With his victory, Jackson's Democratic-Republican wing, which shortened its name to the Democratic Party, had consumed Jefferson's Party. Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and others banded together as the opposition Whigs. Their name was intended to summon up the spirits of those who composed the patriot party during the heyday of the American Revolution and the British Whigs of the eighteenth century. Whigs stood for restrained executive powers, westward expansion, and protective tariffs. Thus, by the mid-1830s, a two-party system had taken root on American soil. But unlike the earlier political skirmishes between Hamilton and Jefferson, ideological differences were gradually supplanted by a "politics of personality," as people decided they either loved or hated Jackson. In addition, by raiding the federal treasury Van Buren purchased an additional degree of party unity. The bargain was straightforward: State and local Democrats would be given dollars from the national treasury if they called themselves Democrats, supported Jackson on most matters, and took no controversial policy stands. As for issues of local concern, they were free to do as they saw fit. This move established a pattern of reciprocal deference characterized by both linkages and autonomy between state and federal party organizations. In this case, local party organizations would be linked to the state and national organizations, but they were also free to manage their own affairs.

By forming a political machine capable of winning elections, Van Buren won the grudging admiration of his opponents. Van Buren's organization consisted of a single recognized party leader capable of mobilizing supporters and awarding valuable patronage (i.e., jobs). By virtue of superior organization and ample resources, parties had moved beyond a mere collection of like-minded followers to organizations able to control government. Indeed, organization has been a watchword in party politics ever since. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the resource-driven nature of party organizations shapes contemporary politics and defines the role parties play in the twenty-first century.

During Jackson's presidency, power shifted from the affluent to the common citizen. Jacksonian Democracy had several consequences, the most significant of which was an immense increase in both the number of officials chosen by election and the number of people allowed to participate in electoral politics. Between 1824 and 1848, voter turnout increased from 25 percent to 79 percent, and in some states was as high as 92 percent. State and national party conventions emerged as important decision-making bodies in selecting candidates for office. A partisan press flourished, as parties used newspapers to communicate with their expanding ranks of followers—a low-tech precursor to the partisan websites of the twenty-first century.

To Van Buren, this new political environment posed both challenges and op-portunities. Could the ever-increasing range of political voices be harmonized into consistently supporting one political party? Could issues attract new backers, or would appealing personalities be the key to winning new supporters? Van Buren maintained that the answers to these questions lay in building a party organization that was committed to principles even as it dispensed political favors. But jobs, not principles, formed the basis of politics in the 1830s and 1840s. The emergence of the spoils system (as in, "to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy"[15]) had a single purpose: to fill government jobs at every level with loyal party workers. Even the mailman was a party loyalist. The spoils system meant that those filling these so-called patronage jobs would work diligently for the party or risk being bounced from the payroll. Because holding a job depended on one's party activity, giving time and money to the party became a means of ensuring economic security.

Over time, the spoils system changed the essence of politics. Elections were no longer solitary affairs confined to the affluent. Instead, they were community events, as issues and candidates were debated over the "cider barrel." Party or-ganizations sponsored picnics, socials, and dinners and held rallies, demonstra-tions, and conventions. By immersing themselves in the social fabric of civic life, parties kept citizens involved and inspired their loyalty on election day. Many voters proudly displayed their party affiliation by wearing political buttons on their lapels, a practice that was commonplace through the twentieth century and anticipated automobile bumper stickers. Indeed, party devotion affected more people and reached more deeply than many ever considered possible. The result was a stable pattern of voting; true independents and vote-switching between elections were rarities, phenomena that also characterize today's politics.

By the late nineteenth century, parties organized politics by affording so-cial outlets, presenting tickets of candidates, drafting platforms, and initiat-ing meaningful cues and symbols for voters. American politics became party politics. Parties provided coherence to political thought, even as they created a politics of "us versus them," which was heightened during and immediately following the Civil War.

Although sectionalism had been a factor in American politics since 1796, the growing economic disparities between North and South during the first decades of the nineteenth century intensified those regional differences. The North was increasingly urban and ethnically pluralistic as it developed a strong industri-al-based economy, whereas the South remained mostly agricultural. These eco-nomic disparities led each region to see its political interests differently. Over

time, the politics of the two regions became increasingly irreconcilable. In 1846, Pennsylvania Democratic congressman David Wilmot introduced legislation prohibiting slavery in any territory acquired from the Mexican War. The Wilmot Proviso passed in the House, where representatives from states prohibiting slavery were in the majority, but pro-slavery Southerners blocked it in the Senate. Bitter animosities ensued, splitting the Democrats and Whigs in half. Northern Democrats moved toward establishing a new abolitionist party while Southern Democrats defended slavery. The Whig Party split into two factions: Conscience Whigs supported the Wilmot Proviso while Cotton Whigs believed that the federal government had no business outlawing slavery. When the Whig Party refused to consider the Wilmot Proviso during the 1848 election, many Conscience Whigs left the party in disgust.

By 1854, any remnant of party unity was shattered when the Kansas-Nebraska Bill became law and annulled the Missouri Compromise of 1820 by permitting slavery if voters in these two states approved. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill created a political firestorm and ignited violence between supporters and opponents in the two states. Proslavery Democrats backed the new law and excluded abolitionist Democrats from party councils. Opposition to the new law was widespread in the North, resulting in protests that led to the creation of the Republican Party. After an 1854 Republican gathering in Ripon, Wisconsin, one participant observed, "We came into the little meeting held in a schoolhouse Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats. We came out of it Republicans."[16] Four years later, the Republicans attained major party status when Democrats lost 40 percent of their northern seats in the House of Representatives, enabling the Republicans to win control—an extraordinary achievement. In 1860, Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln for president; in a four-way race, he won every free state except New Jersey. Democrats became the party of the South; Republicans, the party of the North; and the Whigs collapsed from their inability to reconcile the incompatible demands of their Conscience and Cotton factions.

While slavery sealed the Whigs' fate, the question of immigration also contributed to the party's demise. Powerful nativist, anti-Catholic sentiments buffeted northern Whigs following a huge influx of Irish immigrants. The failure of the Irish potato crop in 1840, and the death from famine of over a million people, prompted more than 750,000 Irish to emigrate to the United States from 1841 to 1850, eroding Anglo-Saxon Protestant denominations of many northern cities. Anti-Catholic riots erupted in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York.

As anti-immigrant fervor spread, an organization called the Know-Nothings gained influence. The Know-Nothings believed that "foreigners ha[d] no right

to dictate our laws, and therefore ha[d] no just ground to complain if Americans see proper to exclude them from offices of trust."[17] Their name derived from members' statements that they "kn[e]w nothing" about this secret society's existence. Appearing on the ballot as the American Party, their contempt for the foreign-born was directed at Roman Catholics, who, they believed, owed their primary allegiance to the Pope rather than the Constitution—a prejudice that was not fully expunged until John F. Kennedy became the first Catholic president in 1961.

The Know-Nothings enjoyed their greatest success in 1854 when they successfully competed in Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Kentucky, and California. In Massachusetts, where Irish Catholic immigrants had been pouring into the state at a rate of more than 100,000 per year, the Know-Nothings won all but 3 seats in the more than 350-seat state House of Representatives, every congressional seat, and all statewide offices including the governorship. One despondent Whig declared, "This election has demonstrated that, by a majority, Roman Catholicism is feared more than American slavery."[18] In 1856, the Know-Nothings attempted to capitalize on their victories by selecting former president Millard Fillmore to be their presidential candidate. Fillmore and Republican candidate John C. Fremont split the antislavery vote, resulting in Democrat James Buchanan's victory.

The schism was eventually repaired as the Know-Nothings became subsumed into the ranks of an insurgent Republican Party, which established a popular majority and retained it from its inception until the Great Depression of the 1930s. Republicans benefitted at the polls from having been the party that saved the Union and emancipated the slaves. Civil War veterans were reminded by GOP leaders to "vote as you shot," and their partisan loyalties were reinforced by generous benefits allocated by Republican-controlled Congresses.

Republicans became associated with Hamiltonian national measures as the nineteenth century progressed, and industrialization swept the country. They appealed to farmers by supporting the Homestead Act, which offered cheap land in the West. They won support from business and labor by advocating high protective tariffs and land grants designed to develop transcontinental railroads. During this period, Democrats were more closely associated with Jeffersonian localism and states' rights, as they remained the party of the South. But they rarely won national elections. Only when the Republicans were divided, or nominated weak candidates, were Democrats able to win the presidency, as happened with Grover Cleveland in 1884 and 1892, and with Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and 1916.

Political Machines

European immigration exploded between 1890 and 1930, when more than fifteen million left Europe—roughly equal to the total number of immigrants from all countries to enter the United States between 1820 and 1890. For those stepping from the steerage ships, confusion about where to stay and find employment predominated. The Industrial Revolution provided jobs, but at low wages and under insufferable conditions. Few services existed to help the downtrodden. In this every-man-for-himself atmosphere, political party machines helped ease the transition for many immigrants and in the process cemented one-party rule in large American cities. By 1900, robust party machines ruled in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Kansas City, and Minneapolis. At the state level, machines controlled Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

In exchange for a job, food, and occasional help with the law, party "bosses" asked for votes on election day. George Washington Plunkitt, one-time head of New York's Tammany Hall machine, was infamous for his candid portrayal of how the machine worked, and he won the undying loyalty of those who benefitted from it. The more people the machine helped, the greater its grasp of the reins of power. State political bosses, mayors, and ward leaders doled out thousands of patronage jobs to loyal party workers. Awarding jobs after a campaign was a top priority. One party leader reputedly met with his director of patronage every week to pursue every application for every city job down to the lowliest ditch digger. In fact, patronage was an important party tool that continued to be widely used until the 1960s and, in some places, until the end of the twentieth century.

Party machines were aided by local election laws that ensured voting was not a private matter, permitting machines to exercise a corrupt hold on power. Prior to 1888, each party printed its own ballot, usually in a distinctive color. Voters chose a party ballot and placed it in the ballot box. Split-ticket voting was not possible under this system, and the public selection of a ballot made it no secret whom the voter preferred. Moreover, election "inspectors" were appointed by the party bosses to view the proceedings, sometimes even getting their supporters to vote more than once or to vote under the name of a deceased person. Characteristically, the bosses required firms doing government business to pay a kickback fee. The same held true to secure favorable health and safety inspections and zoning regulations.

Overt corruption was tolerated because party leaders had such a devoted fol-
lowing. If someone's house burned, a child was arrested, or there was no food
in the pantry, it was the boss who came to the rescue. As Chicago resident Jane
Anderson wrote in 1898,

> If the Boss's friend gets drunk, he takes care of him; if he is evicted for rent,
> arrested for crime, loses wife or child, the Boss stands by him and helps him
> out. . . . The Boss gives presents at weddings and christenings; buys tick-
> ets wholesale for benefits, provides a helping hand at funerals, furnishing
> carriages for the poor and a decent burial for the destitute when they are
> dead, keeping his account with the undertaker and never allows a county
> burial. To ask where the money comes from which the Boss uses this way
> would be sinister.[19]

From the 1830s to the 1890s, political parties shaped the government and
the way average citizens thought about politics. But the twentieth century saw
profound changes in the characteristics and relative influence of the parties.
Starting with the progressive era at the dawn of the twentieth century, parties
began to lose their strength and entered a long period of decline, only to emerge,
reinvented and revived, as something quite different than they were during the
era of the party machine. We will consider that part of the story in chapter 3.

Throughout their history, however, the rivalry between Alexander Hamilton
and Thomas Jefferson persisted, as party leaders split over how much influence
the federal government should have in local affairs. In the nineteenth century,
Democrats supported Jeffersonian limits on the national government; in the
twentieth century, this would become the Republican Party's position. But so
deeply embedded is the ongoing debate between Hamilton and Jefferson that it
endures in the twenty-first century. For instance, consider this entry from the
conservative blog Red State, which attempts to connect support by Democrats
for Donald Trump being "silenced" by Facebook and Twitter to another time
when Democrats attempted to, in the words of the diarist, "silence dissenting
political opinion by force":

> During the war of 1812, Federalists opposed the war as they believe it was
> manufactured by the Jefferson Democrats to further that party's politi-
> cal interests. As soon as war started, Alexander Hanson used the Federal
> Republican to denounce Madison and the war. Within days, a mob of
> Jefferson Democrats destroyed the newspaper's office including the print-
> ing press. Hanson fled for his life.[20]

In a different context, this entry appeared on the progressive blog Daily Kos, citing a moment of agreement between Jefferson and Hamilton as it pertains to the Senate filibuster:

> Thomas Jefferson wrote an early manual for the Senate establishing "procedures for silencing senators who debated 'superfluous, or tediously.'" They had experienced the need for supermajorities in the Articles of Confederation, and explicitly abandoned them in the Constitution. In Federalist 22, Alexander Hamilton wrote about supermajority requirements, "What at first sight may seem a remedy, is, in reality, a poison."[21]

In an era defined by instantaneous communication, debates invoking Hamilton and Jefferson about the role of government persist on the major parties' websites, on ideological blogs, and on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Parler. Thus, remnants of nineteenth-century American political development continue in the very partisan and highly networked twenty-first century, a reminder that party competition today remains heavily influenced by the differences responsible for the emergence of the party system.

Party Organizations in the Twenty-First Century

Т HE PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson that spawned the creation of political parties in the United States extended to different conceptions of how political parties should be organized. Recall that Hamilton sought national solutions to problems afflicting all Americans, which required having a strong federal government and an active president. Jefferson thought the national government should exercise restraint and let state and local governments take the lead in solving problems.

Not surprisingly, for Hamilton's followers, global solutions to big problems required a type of party discipline that assigned great importance to national parties writing platforms and promising action. They wanted national parties to be powerful organizations, able to command enough discipline to get the executive and legislative branches of the federal government to act in concert—an objective not easily achieved in a political system defined by federalism and separation of powers. Jefferson's preference for local solutions meant that state and local party institutions should be diverse organizations paying close attention to local customs and nominating candidates who best fit that state's political culture.

The development of contemporary party organizations followed a jagged path oscillating between the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian models. It begins with the emergence of strong party machines at the turn of the twentieth century and subsequent attempts to reform them. These reform efforts were bipartisan, spearheaded by the progressive wings of both major parties, just as party machines were bipartisan, with Democrats using patronage to control cities and Republicans organizing rural and (eventually) some suburban areas. It continues with the rise of national party organizations from underdeveloped and under-resourced institutions to power players in American politics.

The Progressive Era

Party machines reigned over an America defined by great inequalities brought about by the Industrial Revolution. By the turn of the twentieth century,

colossal fortunes had been made by the likes of John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and J. P. Morgan, industrial giants who controlled the production and delivery of everything from oil to sugar, copper to beef, tobacco to rubber, and candy to locomotives. But many urban residents huddled in tiny tenements after working long hours in unsightly factories and sweatshops. Farmers suffered from falling prices for their goods, low inflation, and the private ownership of railroads. Appalachian coal miners were forced to accept insufferable working conditions because the government did little to help, and there was no other work available. Poverty-stricken twelve-and thirteen-year-old children were often pressed into work because their small bodies could fit more easily into the tiny mineshafts.

Calls for reform abounded but went largely unheeded. That meant virtually no government intervention in ending child labor, alleviating horrendous working conditions, and improving the poverty-level wages paid by the industrial giants. Frustrated by government inaction and gridlock, the working class mobilized. Labor unions, such as the Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor, quickly expanded. But they were no match for a government aligned with corporate interests. When the unions decided to strike, government injunctions were issued to summon workers back to the factories. Union leaders were jailed for conspiracy and contempt for not obeying the injunctions. Labor riots ensued, like the 1894 Pullman Car Strike that spread from Chicago to the Northwest. After several outbursts of violence, President Grover Cleveland sent thousands of federal troops and marshals into Chicago in August 1894 under the pretense of protecting mail deliveries. With that, the strike came to a screeching halt.

Without federal assistance, lower-class workers—many of whom were immigrants—looked for help from their local party organizations. As we saw in chapter 2, machine leaders could dispense jobs to the party faithful in return for supporting the party and voting for its candidates on Election Day. A reporter covering George Washington Plunkitt, leader of New York's Tammany Hall machine, described in great detail how the life of a party boss was consumed by attending to the needs of the people who would keep the machine in power:

2 A.M.: Aroused from sleep by the ringing of his doorbell; went to the door and found a bartender, who asked him to go to the police station and bail out a saloon-keeper who had been arrested for violating the excise law. Furnished bail and returned to bed at three o'clock.

6 A.M.: Awakened by fire engines passing his house. Hastened to the scene of the fire, according to the custom of the Tammany district leaders, to give assistance to the fire sufferers, if needed. Met several of his election

district captains who are always under orders to look out for fires, which are considered great vote-getters. Found several tenants who had been burned out, took them to a hotel, supplied them with clothes, fed them, and arranged temporary quarters for them until they could rent and furnish new apartments.

8:30 A.M.: Went to the police court to look after his constituents. Found six "drunks." Secured the discharge of four by a timely word with the judge, and paid the fines of two.

9 A.M.: Appeared in the Municipal District Court. Directed one of his district captains to act as counsel for a widow against whom dispossess proceedings had been instituted and obtained an extension of time. Paid the rent of a poor family about to be dispossessed and gave them a dollar for food.

11 A.M.: At home again. Found four men waiting for him. One had been discharged by the Metropolitan Railway Company for neglect of duty, and wanted the district leader to fix things. Another wanted a job on the road. The third sought a place on the Subway and the fourth, a plumber, was looking for work with the Consolidated Gas Company. The district leader spent nearly three hours fixing things for the four men, and succeeded in each case.

3 P.M.: Attended the funeral of an Italian as far as the ferry. Hurried back to make his appearance at the funeral of a Hebrew constituent. Went conspicuously to the front both in the Catholic church and the synagogue, and later attended the Hebrew confirmation ceremonies in the synagogue.

7 P.M.: Went to district headquarters and presided over a meeting of election district captains. Each captain submitted a list of all the voters in his district, reported on their attitude toward Tammany, suggested who might be won over and how they could be won, told who were in need, and who were in trouble of any kind and the best way to reach them. District leader took notes and gave orders.

8 P.M.: Went to a church fair. Took chances on everything, bought ice cream for the young girls and the children. Kissed the little ones, flattered their mothers and took their fathers out for something down at the corner.

9 P.M.: At the clubhouse again. Spent $10 on tickets for a church excursion and promised a subscription for a new church bell. Bought tickets for a baseball game to be played by two nines from his district. Listened to the complaints of a dozen pushcart peddlers who said they were persecuted

by the police and assured them he would go to Police Headquarters in the morning and see about it.

10:30 P.M.: Attended a Hebrew wedding reception and dance. Had previously sent a handsome wedding present to the bride.

12 P.M.: In bed.[1]

In a different context, activities like these could be seen as remarkable constituent service. But as the power of the city machines grew, so did corruption. Plunkitt himself tried to justify what he did as "honest" graft, which he regarded as taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by being in power ("I seen my opportunities and I took 'em," he once said[2])—as opposed to "dishonest" graft, or outright stealing from the city coffers. Not surprisingly, reformers didn't see things this way. The early years of the twentieth century saw a strong enough reform movement to support a national Progressive Party, whose 1912 platform described how the party machines controlled by both Democrats and Republicans had become a threat to liberty:

Political Parties exist to secure responsible government and to execute the will of the people. From these great tasks both of the old parties have turned aside. Instead of instruments to promote the general welfare, they have become the tools of corrupt interests which use them impartially to serve their selfish purposes. Behind the ostensible government sits enthroned an invisible government owing no allegiance and acknowledging no responsibility to the people. To destroy this invisible government, to dissolve the unholy alliance between corrupt business and corrupt politics is the first task of the statesmanship of the day.[3]

Former president Teddy Roosevelt sought to reclaim his old job under the Progressive Party banner that year, despite his earlier association with the Republican Party establishment. Roosevelt began his political career after returning as a hero from the Spanish-American War in 1898. He was elected governor of New York, thanks to the backing of the GOP boss, Senator Thomas C. Platt, but was quickly sickened by the graft that characterized New York politics. Rather than abandoning party politics, Roosevelt hoped to make the Republican Party an agent of reform. His efforts did not sit well with Republican bosses, and they vowed to get rid of their nemesis. Platt engineered Roosevelt's nomination as the 1900 Republican vice-presidential candidate, believing the then obscurity of the vice presidency (it had been mostly a dead-end job in the nineteenth century) would surely

bury Roosevelt. That plan backfired when President McKinley was assassinated in 1901, and Roosevelt became the twenty-sixth president of the United States.

Roosevelt's initial reform agenda was relatively modest. Besieged by conservative, business-minded congressional Republicans on the one hand and reform-minded Progressives on the other, he chose a middle-of-the-road course. In 1908, Roosevelt declined to seek reelection, opting to support his longtime friend, Secretary of War William Howard Taft, who easily defeated Democrat William Jennings Bryan. But Roosevelt was frustrated by Taft's failure to espouse progressive reforms and sought the presidency again in 1912. However, wresting the Republican nomination from an incumbent president proved impossible. After Taft's renomination Roosevelt accepted an invitation to join with other disaffected progressive Republicans and run for president as a third-party candidate. Their new Progressive Party adopted the nickname "Bull Moose" (following Roosevelt's declaration that he was "as strong as a bull moose"). The Bull Moose platform called for the direct election of US senators, women's suffrage, restricting the president to a single six-year term, a constitutional amendment allowing an income tax, the institution of a minimum wage, the prohibition of child labor, the creation of a Department of Labor, and even overturning some judicial decisions. These proposals collectively sought to weaken the political parties, empower voters, and create a stronger social safety net.

Roosevelt finished second, winning more votes than Taft—the best performance for a third-party presidential candidate in the twentieth century. But the Republican split enabled Democrat Woodrow Wilson to enter the White House. The Progressive Party faded from the scene in 1916, after Roosevelt refused its nomination, and most of its followers returned to the Republican ranks. Robert M. LaFollette Sr. was the Progressive Party's presidential nominee in 1924 and attracted 16 percent of the popular vote but won only his home state of Wisconsin. In retrospect, though, the 1912 election had a decisive impact on the progressive struggle. Democrats, as well as conservative Republicans, could no longer withstand the power of the reform wave, and both parties became vulnerable to insurgents who promised to weaken their organizations. President Wilson won enactment of several Progressive planks, as did most state and local governments. By attacking political parties so vehemently and scoring so solidly with the voters, the Progressives ensured that the remainder of the twentieth century would be an anti-party age.

It took decades of gradual and persistent reform efforts for Progressives to change how political parties operated. Reform initiatives began in 1870, shifted into high gear during the 1890s, and slowed after the 1912 elections. Initial

accomplishments set up subsequent opportunities, as once a state or city was "cleaned up," residents elsewhere took notice and demanded reform in their own communities. Almost like an avalanche, the Progressive Movement gathered more followers as it pushed ahead, until large portions of its agenda were established. Key progressive reforms implemented during this period included the introduction of the Australian ballot, direct primary elections, a merit system to replace the spoils system, municipal ownership of utilities, ballot initiatives, nonpartisan municipal elections, direct election of US senators, and women's suffrage.

The Australian Ballot. When each party was allowed to print its own ballot on distinctive colored paper, machine politicians could keep track of how people voted and retaliate against anyone who voted against them. Bribery in the form of vote buying was also easy. The Australian ballot, named after its country of origin, curbed these abuses. It required that election ballots be prepared by the states, not party organizations. Ballots were to be identical and to include the names of all candidates seeking office, thereby enabling voters to cast a secret ballot. It did not eliminate intimidation and bribery, but party henchmen could now lose an election and never know who was responsible. The new ballot also enabled citizens to split their tickets—that is, to vote for candidates of opposing parties running in the same election. The Australian ballot was first introduced in Kentucky in 1880; by 1896, most states had followed suit.

Direct Primary Elections. Existing election laws made it easy for party bosses to keep reform-minded candidates off the ballot by controlling the nominating process. To qualify for the ballot, candidates had to receive the party's nomination, which was cleared by party leaders in private and subsequently ratified at local or state party conventions. A civic-minded reformer might consider running for office under a third-party label, but most state election laws were written with the consent of Democrats and Republicans, making it functionally impossible for insurgent candidates and parties to participate in the election process. Direct primary elections provided a solution to this dilemma. Instead of a small group of party leaders choosing a nominee, all party supporters would be given the opportunity. Nominations would be made through elections, called primaries, where the entire party membership had a say.

The Merit System. Supported by generally well-to-do urban reformers (called "mugwumps"), the idea of filling government posts based on merit rather than favoritism posed a direct threat to the patronage relationships at the heart of political machines. Attacking the patronage system denied party machines the ability to provide government jobs to faithful subordinates, while assuring that government positions would be filled with qualified people—a novel idea at the

time. Thus, the merit system (later termed the civil service) became a pillar of the Progressive platform, favored by reformers weary of lackluster government services. The idea was not initially well-received by party leaders but following the assassination of President James Garfield by a disappointed job seeker in 1881, Congress established the Civil Service Commission to set standards for employment and create thousands of permanent federal jobs that would continue regardless of which party controlled the White House. By the turn of the twentieth century, most states followed the federal government's example, dealing a decisive blow to party leaders.

Municipal Ownership of Utilities. At the turn of the twentieth century, utility companies that had been awarded their franchises by the party machines charged exorbitant rates even as they provided poor service. The companies were guaranteed huge profits, raising costs on customers who had no choice but to pay. Party leaders kept profits high because they were receiving huge kickbacks from the companies in exchange for franchise rights. Reformers realized that breaking this cozy relationship required public regulation of utility companies, and they pushed measures to do so through state and local governments. Many of these businesses remained privately owned, but in exchange for the franchise they agreed to allow a public board or commission to set rates. Other services, such as garbage collection, sewage removal, and transportation, would be assumed by government under new agencies administered by employees who got their jobs through the merit system.

Ballot Initiative, Referendum, and Recall. One way to link voters to their government is to give average citizens a direct say in what government does. Another is to dismiss elected officials should they lose voter confidence. In an era of partisan corruption, Progressives championed these reforms. The ballot initiative requires a legislature to consider specific measures. The referendum gives voters a voice on policy matters by gathering enough signatures to place a measure on a ballot. The recall allows voters to remove elected officials in a special election before their term of office is over. South Dakota was first to authorize ballot initiatives in 1898; Oregon was first with referenda in 1902 and with recalls in 1908. After California instituted ballot initiatives in 1910 under outspoken Progressive Republican governor Hiram Johnson, these measures earned national attention, and by the 1920s about three-fourths of the states allowed initiatives, referenda, and recalls. Today, these forms of direct popular participation are commonplace. In 2003, California voters recalled unpopular Democratic governor Gray Davis and replaced him with Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. In 2012, Wisconsin voters rejected a recall of controversial

Republican governor Scott Walker after he successfully sought legislation limiting the collective bargaining rights of public unions. In 2021, California voters rejected a recall of Governor Gavin Newsom following measures he undertook in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, including mandatory mask wearing and business closures. Besides recalling unpopular officeholders, voters have voiced their preferences on a host of policy questions including LGBTQ rights, campaign finance reform, gambling, and the legal use of marijuana.

Nonpartisan Municipal Elections. Progressives generally believed that the problems facing most municipalities were technical and could be solved by a combination of professional administration and scientific principles. Following this logic, Progressives pushed for nonpartisan city elections, where candidates were not identified by party label. Boston was the first to implement this reform in 1909; two decades later, twenty-six of the nation's largest cities followed suit. This reform has been only modestly successful. Although the party labels of municipal candidates may not be printed on the ballot, it is generally no mystery which candidates are sponsored by a particular political party.

Direct Election of US Senators and Women's Suffrage. Two additional Progressive measures helped reduce the influence of party machines: the direct election of US senators and extending the vote to women. Under Article I of the Constitution, the election of senators was left to state legislatures. Progressives argued that this provision, combined with a six-year term and staggered elections, insulated the upper chamber from public opinion. They provided the impetus for the Seventeenth Amendment (ratified in 1913) that allowed citizens to cast a ballot for individual senatorial candidates. As a result, parties had to rally their supporters behind specific Senate candidates as opposed to supporting individual legislators who would confirm a senatorial choice. Women's suffrage was another Progressive cause. In 1890, Wyoming was the first state to grant women the right to vote, followed by Utah and Idaho in 1896. Even though the women's suffrage movement was centered in the East (primarily New York and Massachusetts), change did not come to that region until 1919, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified and women everywhere attained the right to vote. Credit for its passage lies with the grit and determination of women demanding equality, especially Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. But Progressive reformers also lent their voices to the cause because they believed that once women were enfranchised, corrupt party machines would suffer at the polls. Although the enfranchisement of women did not bring an immediate end to the party machines, the influx of women to the electorate required parties to pay greater attention to mass mobilization.

Over a period of decades, Progressives gradually but fundamentally altered the party system by changing politics from a private affair to a public concern. During the 1800s, parties operated as private organizations free from government interference. Progressives demanded public oversight and government regulation of most party activities, transforming the parties into quasi-public agencies subject to legislative control. The success of this effort weakened party machines: the direct primary stripped party leaders of their ability to completely control nominations; the secret ballot reduced voter intimidation and election fraud; the merit system lessened patronage opportunities; public control of utility companies drained party coffers; the direct election of US senators removed the ability to control federal elections through local officeholders; and women's suffrage expanded the electorate.

Placed on the defensive by disclosures of corruption and a growing sense of public outrage, party bosses inevitably yielded to the reforms. But this did not mean that party organizations suffered. In fact, many reform measures that reduced corruption inadvertently worked to strengthen the two-party system. Although the direct primary precluded complete control over nominations by party leaders, a candidate's ability to get on a state primary ballot required a massive number of signatures. This labor-intensive process was something parties were well-suited to accomplish. Senators were subject to direct popular election, but they needed a party nomination to win a place on the ballot and initially relied on party organizations to run their campaigns. The merit system reduced patronage, yet there remained scores of "exempt" and "temporary" positions to be filled. Utilities might be controlled by boards and commissions, but the city government-corporate nexus was far from broken. Party war chests continued to overflow with contributions from businesses.

Some Progressive reforms ironically strengthened the major parties' legal standing. The new laws curtailed the worst abuses of the machine era but made independent and minor-party candidacies more difficult. Instead of adhering to the Australian practice of omitting party designation on the ballot, most states adopted a general election ballot that required party labels to be placed alongside a candidate's name. It was easy for the two major parties to keep this official ballot recognition because state law reserved a place for the two parties that received the most votes in the last election. All other parties would have to circulate petitions before the next election to gain ballot access, a difficult and extremely time-consuming chore.

Voter registration is another Progressive Era change that may have undercut the interests of reformers. In a provocative book entitled *Why Americans Still*

Don't Vote, and Why Politicians Want It That Way, scholars Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward argue that voter registration requirements, implemented around the turn of the twentieth century, were designed to shrink the size of the electorate.[4] In the aftermath of the 2020 election, voter registration has again become a controversial issue. During his reelection campaign, Donald Trump attacked direct mail voting,[5] falsely claiming the practice is riddled with fraud (in fact, the states of Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Utah, and Hawaii conduct their elections entirely by mail without incident[6]). After Trump lost, dozens of states enacted restrictive laws to address unsubstantiated claims of fraud that had the effect of making voting more difficult. Many of these laws seek to shorten the time frame during which voters can request an absentee ballot; allow states to purge voters from the rolls; eliminate drop boxes for absentee ballots; impose strict signature requirements on absentee ballots; require strict voter identification; limit the time period for early voting; reduce the number of polling places in African-American communities; and even, in the case of Georgia, prohibit the distribution of food and water for those waiting in line to vote. Some states went so far as to remove the responsibility to certify elections from their secretaries of state and to place it in the hands of Republican-controlled state legislatures, raising the prospect that electoral votes from those states would not be awarded to the popular voter winner in future presidential elections.[7]

The New Deal and Party Politics

Progressive reforms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries directly attacked Jeffersonian style of local governance by empowering nonpartisan administrative agencies to fight corruption at the local level. Jeffersonian localism was dealt a second blow during the 1930s when Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies directed the national government to take an unprecedented role in protecting its citizens. FDR's ascendency followed decades of Jeffersonian ascendency made possible by Republican Party dominance of national politics. Except for the presidencies of Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson, Republicans controlled the federal government from Reconstruction through the Great Depression. Warren Harding in 1920, Calvin Coolidge in 1924, and Herbert Hoover in 1928 were elected by decisive margins and profited from a strong national economy and an enduring Republican majority in the electorate. But everything changed on October 24, 1929, when the stock market crashed, and the Great Depression began. Stock values dropped nearly 75 percent, and by 1931 unemployment reached 25 percent. Farmers were especially hard hit, seeing

prices for commodities drop to their lowest levels since 1910. Thousands of children were unable to attend school due to a lack of shoes.

In 1932, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the popular governor of New York (and cousin to Teddy) was elected president in a landslide. FDR won forty-two states to President Hoover's six, and Democrats carried both houses of Congress by overwhelming margins. In the Senate, Democrats won fifty-nine of ninety-six seats; in the House, Democrats had 312 members to the Republicans' 123. Roosevelt moved rapidly to take advantage of these enormous majorities, proposing a flurry of legislation designed to provide immediate relief to the "ill-nourished, ill-clad, and ill-housed." Congress approved the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the National Recovery Administration (NRA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the Social Security Act. The first hundred days of Roosevelt's administration, which saw the creation of what came to be known as the New Deal, set a standard for legislative activity against which all of Roosevelt's successors have been measured.

FDR's New Deal drastically transformed the national government and the political parties. Abandoning its laissez-faire posture, the federal government became an active, national player whose primary responsibility was to ensure the economic well-being of the people. The New Deal signaled the emergence of an administrative state whereby the federal government regulated some elements of the economy; elevated the cause of organized labor, farmers, and the elderly; and redistributed wealth through a progressive income tax. It also transformed the relationship between citizens and government. Prior to Roosevelt, a rugged individualism prevailed. But the Great Depression made it possible for Roosevelt to construct a federal foundation for economic security. The inalienable rights secured by the Constitution—speech, press, worship, due process—were supplemented by Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, two of which included "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear."[8]

The rise of executive-centered government was a serious blow to local party organizations. Local and state powers diminished as Americans looked to the president for leadership. Under Roosevelt, Democrats established a national headquarters in 1932, and Republicans quickly followed suit. By the 1950s, the cumulative effects of the Progressive and New Deal reforms on political parties became apparent. The rise of nonpartisan administration was so complete, and the concentration of power at the federal level so entrenched, that the last vestiges of the spoils system had been removed. Hamiltonian nationalism was enjoying a renaissance, both in terms of policy and marking the beginnings of

stronger party organizations, the latter not becoming fully apparent until the beginnings of the twenty-first century. On a policy level, the desire for federal action was so great that Jefferson's preference for a more limited federal government came to be viewed as a radical departure from the norm. In 1964, Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater pledged to restore Jeffersonian localism, telling the Republican Convention: "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."[9] He lost forty-four states to Lyndon B. Johnson.

Television and Candidate-Centered Politics

Aside from Progressivism and the New Deal, the Cold War deeply affected party politics and helped to make politics more of a national affair. Initially, the rise of communism was a boon to Republicans, who had been shut out of the White House in five consecutive elections from 1932 through 1948. From 1952 to 1988, Republican presidential candidates benefitted from increased Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Promising to deliver "peace through strength," Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard M. Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush won the presidency in part by projecting a combination of steadiness and toughness. Republicans won seven of the ten presidential elections held between 1952 and 1988. But the party paid a high price for its victories. Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, and the first President Bush were "plebiscitary presidents"—winning personal triumphs without increasing the number of people who called themselves Republicans. Thus, although the Cold War served the interests of Republican presidential candidates, the growing personalization of political campaigns initially weakened the Republican Party. Democrats also grew weaker, as their congressional incumbents ran increasingly personal campaigns, often emphasizing their own local accomplishments rather than broad party themes. Over time, voters came to view politics in terms of individual candidates rather than party competition.

At the same time, a professional class of political consultants pushed aside the party activists who had conducted campaigns since the emergence of American political parties. These professionals used mass-based voter contact techniques to reach large numbers of voters through television and direct mail, employing techniques learned in marketing firms rather than in the trenches of partisan political warfare. The professionalization of campaigning turned electioneering into a contest driven by strategists and handlers. Today, the national party organizations and nearly every congressional candidate, most state legislators,

and a growing number of municipal officials hire campaign consulting firms, who provide a breathtaking range of services necessary to waging mass campaigns: polling, conducting focus groups, demographic research, message development, fundraising, managing direct mail, radio and television production, and event planning.

More than any other factor, television turned campaigns into exercises in consumer marketing and candidates into clay to be molded and sold to the public as reflections of what people tell pollsters they want in their politicians. As an entertainment medium that plays directly to people's emotions, television is an ideal vehicle for reaching voters at a gut level, and smart candidates managed by savvy handlers used it to great effect to connect with voters on a large scale—without forming the direct associations characteristic of the machine era of patronage politics. In the television age, politics became an exercise in manipulating mass public opinion.

Acquiring a party's nomination by abandoning the party in favor of personalized voter outreach dates back to when television was an infant medium in the 1950s. Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first presidential candidate to employ television advertising, and, not coincidentally, he was the first of several "citizen politicians" to seek and win the presidency on the strength of their personal biographies and with the help of a carefully calibrated television campaign. On February 2, 1952, Citizens for Eisenhower opened its doors, managed not by Republican partisans but by a mortgage banker and the president of the Ford Foundation and propelled by advertising executives who had run successful television campaigns for consumer products like aspirin.[10] They presented Eisenhower as a nonpartisan office seeker who was simply renting the top slot on the Republican ticket, selling the public on the idea that the likable World War II hero with humble Midwestern roots was a natural for the presidency. For their part, voters could support Eisenhower without making a partisan commitment. It was a marriage of convenience.

Richard M. Nixon emulated Eisenhower's approach in 1968 but took it a giant step further by using television to reinvent himself after his failed 1960 presidential campaign and an unsuccessful run for governor of California in 1962. In the parlance of hired image consultants, Nixon suffered from "high negatives" among voters who did not trust him after a checkered career clouded by ethical questions. But television, and the consultants Nixon hired, allowed him to create the image of a "New Nixon": honest, open, sympathetic, and accessible. In an age of candidate-centered campaigns, Nixon could not have been elected without an image makeover; however, in the previous era of strong party

organizations it is unlikely that party leaders would have given him the opportunity to try.

Candidates continue to employ television to sell themselves to voters, spending enormous amounts on advertising. But cable television, the Internet, social media, and the ability to gather detailed information about voters have revolutionized campaign advertising. In the late twentieth century when three broadcast networks reigned supreme, ad campaigns were broad in scope, repeating the same themes and messages to a national audience. Today, candidates can target specific groups of voters, customizing the campaign's message and selecting the most efficient medium for communicating it.

Institutional Retrenchment

Just as presidential campaigns were becoming candidate-centered affairs, the national political parties engaged in efforts to reinvent themselves to become relevant in changing political times. The Republican Party was the first to reform. In 1973, the GOP was in serious trouble as the economy soured; then, in 1974, the Watergate scandal forced Nixon's resignation. The 1974 midterm elections proved disastrous for Republicans, when a large class of Democratic freshmen, dubbed "Watergate babies," was elected in heretofore safe Republican districts. Following Jimmy Carter's 1976 victory, some prognosticators predicted that the Republican Party was headed for extinction.

Given the prevailing pessimism, leaders in the Republican National Committee (RNC) decided to reconfigure the party. The task of reimagining the GOP fell to the newly appointed party chair, William Brock, a former US senator from Tennessee. To enhance Republican electoral prospects, Brock initiated a four-part strategy: (1) aggressive fundraising; (2) organizational improvements; (3) better candidate recruitment; and (4) changing the party's image.

Fundraising. Believing Republicans needed more money to win elections, Brock decided to solicit funds from ordinary voters, using some of the same techniques for party building that campaign consultants used on behalf of electing candidates. Computerized lists of potential supporters were used to send letters asking for small contributions. Although the response to these direct mail solicitations was low, those who gave were placed on a donor list and asked every six months or so to contribute more money. The approach worked. In 1977, the RNC expanded its base of contributors from 250,000 to 350,000. Three years later, a phenomenal 1.2 million Republicans were sending in checks payable to

the RNC. Even though the average contribution was just \$25, total receipts grew from \$12.7 million in 1976 to more than \$26 million in 1980.[11]

Organizational Improvements. Brock revamped the organizational structure of the national committee by installing fifteen regional directors to help plan strategy and bolster the state parties; establishing task forces to encourage states to develop long-range plans; providing regional finance directors to help raise money; and assigning one organizational expert to each state committee. Brock also initiated a program whereby state and local party organizations could use RNC-owned equipment and sophisticated technologies at a minimal cost. A massive computer network enabled the state and local Republican parties to download a variety of software programs to expedite accounting, word processing, direct mail, get-out-the-vote drives, mailing list maintenance, and political targeting. Finally, the RNC provided GOP candidates with low-cost polling services.

Candidate Recruitment. Brock also realized that these tools meant nothing without good candidates. He instituted a "farm team" approach to candidate development by recruiting prospective Republicans to seek lesser offices with the support of the national party, believing that successful local candidates would be the rising Republican stars of the future. Between 1977 and 1980, more than ten thousand Republicans, mostly state and local candidates, attended candidate-recruitment sessions sponsored by the Republican National Committee.[12]

Image Repair. Finally, Brock sought to refurbish the Republican Party's tattered image. Prior to his tenure, the Republican Party had the reputation of appealing primarily to older, white well-to-do men. Brock wanted these "country club Republicans" to make way for more women and minorities. To help these efforts along, he began publishing the lively opinion journal *Commonsense* whose purpose was to invigorate the party with new ideas designed to appeal to voters who might be open to becoming Republicans.

The Democratic Party's reaction to Brock's reforms was to say, in effect, "Stop until we can catch up!" Following Jimmy Carter's defeat in 1980, Democrats knew that the national party needed an overhaul. Under the leadership of Charles Manatt, who was chosen to serve as party chair in 1981, the DNC was reorganized to provide stronger managerial leadership and fundraising prowess. Manatt tripled the number of DNC staffers, began a series of training seminars for state and local candidates, organized a State Party Works program that allowed state parties access to state-of-the-art campaign techniques and strategies, devised a massive voter registration program, and copied the RNC's successful direct mail efforts.[13]

Besides the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee, the congressional campaign committees also underwent an overhaul and grew both in power and prestige. These congressional committees perform candidate recruitment and development functions for House and Senate candidates, with the objective of winning (or preserving) party majorities in the House and Senate. They are the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), and the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC).

Organizationally, congressional campaign committees are very old institutions. The NRCC was established in 1866 by radical Republicans from the Northeast to protect against political retaliation from their rival Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, who became president after Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865 and controlled the Republican National Committee by virtue of his holding the presidency. Not to be outdone, a group of pro-Johnson Democrats created the DCCC. Senators had little need for these legislative party organizations until the Seventeenth Amendment instituted direct election of senators in 1913. Senate campaign committees were established by both parties shortly thereafter.

Despite these early origins, congressional campaign committees were unimportant players at the national level until the 1970s. Serving as little more than fundraising apparatuses for incumbents to collect money in Washington and channel it back to their local districts, the committees lacked professional staff and permanent headquarters. That began to change in the 1960s, as the cost of campaigning began to escalate, television became an integral part of political campaigns, and progressive reformers stripped local parties of much of their patronage, resulting in fewer volunteers showing up at party headquarters. Members of Congress turned to the congressional campaign committees for help. Once again, Republicans were the first innovators. Taking their lead from Bill Brock, the Senate and House Republican campaign committees devised extensive direct mail programs. The result was an avalanche of cash that continues to build. During the 2020 calendar year, the Republican national and congressional party committees raised a combined total of $845 million.[14]

Democrats followed a similar path. Under the aggressive leadership of California congressman Tony Coelho, the DCCC implemented scores of new fundraising programs. Coelho made it a practice to visit hundreds of business and trade associations asking for contributions. According to then-Representative Barney Frank, "Tony Coelho was very good at explaining the facts of life to

PACs: If you want to talk to us later, you had better help us now."[15] In 2020, the combined Democratic national and congressional party committees raised a total of $457 million.[16]

Parties and the Advent of Social Media

Richard Nixon's success at reinventing himself became the template for how to run a media campaign and was emulated by other candidates who, with professional assistance, crafted biographical appeals that resonated with iconic American lore: Jimmy Carter as the Lincolnesque figure who would never lie to you; Ronald Reagan as the cowboy who came to town to clean up the mess made by others; Bill Clinton as the everyman from Hope, Arkansas; Barack Obama as the candidate of "hope" and "change"; Donald Trump as a symbol of the unchecked power of wealth and celebrity in America; and Joe Biden as the blue-collar kid from Scranton, Pennsylvania.

But the advent of social media moved us into a new age when politics is not driven exclusively by television. Today, social media websites like Facebook and Twitter are a major source of news and information. According to a 2020 IPSOS survey, a plurality of Americans (27 percent) say their main source of news comes from social media or digital online sources.[17] Internet activism has emerged on both the left and right as countless numbers of Americans engage in political action.[18]

As we will see in chapter 6, the development of online presidential politics can be traced to the 2004 presidential campaign of former Vermont governor Howard Dean who shocked the political world by taking an obscure, long-shot candidacy to the verge of the Democratic nomination on the strength of hundreds of thousands of supporters who self-organized on the Internet. Four years later, Internet supporters made the difference in Barack Obama's unlikely run against Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination and the presidency. Obama updated his online presence in 2012 to incorporate social media that was in its infancy during his first campaign. In 2016, presidential candidate Bernie Sanders nearly overcame overwhelming odds by garnering supporters and dollars via the Internet in his primary battle against the party favorite, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton. As for Clinton, she hired many of Obama's web-savvy advisors, while her general election opponent, Donald Trump, elevated tweeting into a campaign art form. In 2020, the Trump campaign again relied on mining

data from online users and using his Twitter feed to engage his followers, while Joe Biden beefed up his digital engagement after ending most in-person events during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

Americans have never fully embraced political parties. As we have seen, public distaste for parties lingered throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even as they became more deeply rooted in the political system. Parties were tolerated because they helped create an efficient means of organizing mass-based politics. Just when they reached their zenith, a reform wave swept the nation and systematically dismantled much of the leverage party machines held on the system. Progressives stripped party organizations of their institutional strengths and helped change public attitudes toward them. Direct primaries reduced the capacity of party leaders to control who got on the ballot. Referenda allowed average citizens to go over the heads of elected officials to change public policy. Through it all political parties have proved to be resilient, emerging in the 21st century as strong national institutions.

The long arc of party institutional development has witnessed a shift from local, Jeffersonian-style organizations to national operations that are Hamiltonian in their approach to politics. The national parties now occupy permanent buildings in Washington, D.C., raise enormous sums of money, and play an important role in candidate selection (particularly at the congressional level). Party leaders hold positions of national importance. The chairs of the party committees are key spokespersons for their parties, and they help to establish the party message. Even state parties have assumed more power and have become reliant on help from their national counterparts. This is a profound change from their initial incarnation as grassroots, locally based organizations with little involvement in national affairs.

But chapter 4 will show that when it comes to presidential campaigns, the national parties are not so dominant. Like the transformation of party organizations over the past century, there has been a major upheaval in the way parties choose their presidential candidates. However, instead of centralizing power in the party organizations, these changes have handed control of the nomination process to rank-and-file primary voters, sometimes producing results that party leaders wanted to avoid but were unable to stop.

Nominating Presidents

THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION PROCESS has undergone strange twists and turns ever since the Framers established the Electoral College as the initial means of choosing presidents. Over the years, two questions have guided reforms to the nomination process: what kind of presidents do we want, and what type of nomination process is most likely to produce them. The varied answers to these questions have revolved around Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian perspectives on presidential selection. Should choosing a party's presidential nominee be a national decision? This would be the preferred Hamiltonian method. Or should the presidential nominee be a consensual choice, with the decision left to those representing diverse regions of the country? Jefferson's emphasis on the country's diversity suggests this is the best approach.

In 1912, former president and presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt summarized the Hamilton/Jefferson debate over choosing presidents, indicating his preference for a Hamilton method, which he believed would produce his preferred type of president—a "leader"—and minimize the risk of producing his least-preferred type, a "boss":

> The leader leads the people; the boss drives the people. The leader gets his hold by open appeal to the reasons and conscience of his followers. The boss keeps his hold by manipulation, intrigue, by secret and furtive appeals to the very base forms of self-interest. . . . Leadership is carried on in the open light of day; bossism derives its main strength from what is done under the cover of darkness.[1]

Those who subscribe to a Jeffersonian approach hold a very different view. For them, the selection of a presidential nominee must be consensual, and to accomplish this the deliberations must necessarily be private. Candidates should be judged by their peers, even if that verdict is rendered in closed "smoke-filled" rooms by other elites. From these deliberations a nominee will emerge with

sufficient institutional party backing to mount a winning campaign and form a successful administration.

Over the centuries, presidential selection has transformed from a Jeffersonian model in which states and localities led by party bosses were key to winning presidential nominations to a Hamiltonian approach that places the choice in the hands of primary voters who make a national decision absent many local concerns. The story of this evolution is the main topic of this chapter. To give context to this history, we will begin at the end, with the most recent presidential election, when a global pandemic upended the rules of campaigning and forced the parties to rethink their campaign practices.

The Strange Case of 2020

There was nothing unusual at first about the 2020 presidential primary season. An incumbent president with no serious intra-party challengers[2] faced an out-party with a long list of candidates vying to replace him, many of whom were present or former senators and representatives or governors and mayors with executive experience.[3] Democrats sensed that Donald Trump was vulnerable, so a large field of would-be opponents got to work building organizations and raising money long before the first primary or caucus vote was held. This is how contemporary presidential party politics works. The process of running for president has become so expensive and complex that potential candidacies require years of planning. In fact, Trump announced his intention to run for reelection earlier than any previous incumbent—on the day of his inauguration. Democrats quickly lined up to oppose him, starting with longshot candidate congressman John Delaney in July 2017.[4] Twenty-seven others would eventually follow.

It was the most diverse field in history, featuring six women, three Black candidates, three candidates of Asian ancestry, a Latino candidate, and an openly gay candidate. There were philosophical divisions between candidates who represented the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and those who were more traditionally liberal. At the front of the pack were Biden, the best-known candidate in the field, and his most consequential challenger, Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, the runner-up for the 2016 Democratic nomination. Behind them were a half-dozen or so others who were getting serious attention from voters. As 2019 turned to 2020, it appeared possible that primary voters would not be able to coalesce behind a candidate before that summer's nominating convention.

Then the global pandemic struck and upended everything. In-person campaigning abruptly stopped in March 2020 and was replaced by virtual events. In this vastly altered environment and with the nation in crisis, Democrats quickly brought their contest to an unexpected and unprecedented resolution.

Joe Biden was the unlikely beneficiary of this sudden denouement. He had stumbled badly in the first caucuses in Iowa and Nevada and in the first primary in New Hampshire—so badly, in fact, that no previous candidate had performed as poorly in the early contests and survived to win the nomination. The victor in these early contests was Bernie Sanders, whose favored position in the race concerned some party leaders who feared that a self-described democratic socialist could not win a national election. Then, with the country on the verge of shutting down, Biden pulled off one of the most unlikely comebacks ever recorded. Bolstered by overwhelming support from Black voters and viewed by rank-and-file Democrats as the most likely candidate to defeat Trump, Biden staged a blowout win in the South Carolina primary that gave him the momentum he needed to dominate primaries on what is termed "Super Tuesday," when a host of states from California to Massachusetts held their contests.

These victories permitted Biden to surpass Sanders in the number of convention delegates pledged to his candidacy. His lead soon became insurmountable, and what had been shaping up to be a drawn-out contest came to a sudden halt. In rapid succession, Biden's main challengers dropped out and endorsed him— just in time for Biden to claim the mantle of presumptive nominee before the campaign went dark. The greatest public health crisis in more than a century forced state after state to postpone their primaries during the spring and summer months, and the campaign entered a long, eerie intermission before Sanders bowed to the inevitable and dropped out.

General election campaigning was significantly altered by the pandemic as well. Like William McKinley in 1896, who "stood" for election by campaigning from the front porch of his house, Biden and Trump were initially forced to forego large rallies and dramatically scale down their efforts. Social media events replaced large in-person gatherings, and virtual organizing replaced knocking on doors. Even the lavish quadrennial national conventions were replaced by largely prerecorded television productions. Although Trump resumed campaign rallies in August, Biden continued to avoid large crowds. Drive-in campaign events and virtual fundraising became creative new ways to appeal to supporters. The virtual Democratic Convention presented celebrities and ordinary citizens in short, scripted videos designed to reinforce the party's general election message and

was the first national convention to be nominated for an Emmy. Anita Dunn, a senior adviser to President Biden who had a prominent role in Biden's 2020 campaign, speculated that "we will never go back to a traditional convention."[5] In a post-pandemic world, it remains to be seen if virtual campaigning and fundraising will remain commonplace.

Viewed from a historical perspective, uncertainty caused by the disruptions of 2020 is just a new twist in an evolving presidential nomination process that is a centuries-old work in progress. There was a period in which Congress, after briefly relying on the flawed Electoral College to select nominees, ran the nomination process. This was followed by a convention system where party leaders exercised decision-making power, then a primary-based system that emerged out of reforms designed to empower rank-and-file partisans. The primary system itself has been the subject of perpetual tinkering. These changes determined whether presidential nominees would be chosen by national party leaders responding to national problems, by state leaders responding to local issues, or by rank-and-file voters responding to a combination of both.

At every turn, party reformers have been guided by the twin questions of what kind of presidents we want and what sort of nomination system is likely to produce them. The way the parties answered these questions shaped the kind of candidates produced by the nomination process. And as every set of rules has unintended consequences, subsequent generations of reformers were often left to tinker with the adverse effects of their predecessors' efforts.

What It Takes to Be Nominated

In 1962, a reporter asked President John F. Kennedy what advice he would give to a future president. Kennedy responded, "know the country you seek to lead," adding, "If you find the opportunity to know and work with Americans of diverse backgrounds, occupations, and beliefs, then I would urge you to take eagerly that opportunity to enrich yourself."[6] Six decades later, Americans might still agree with Kennedy's assessment but, unsurprisingly, they have added even more qualifications to his short list. These include having some prior executive experience (such as serving as a vice president, governor, or mayor), being of sound character, and being an effective advocate of policies deemed to be in the public interest. But how to find such persons remains elusive given the marathon nature of today's nomination process. In the sixty years since John F. Kennedy issued his job description, would-be presidents have bemoaned the

fact that to be a *successful candidate* one must foreswear any other occupation, abandon one's family, and single-mindedly devote most waking hours to raising money—requirements that have nothing to do with being a *successful president*.

Time. The 2020 Democratic candidates knew that campaigning would be their new full-time job. Joe Biden could undertake the task because he had no other responsibilities. Senators and representatives who sought the nomination were generally able to take time away from their day jobs. The private citizens who sought to win the party's nod—including entrepreneur Andrew Yang, hedge fund manager Tom Steyer, and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg—were independently wealthy. But those who had executive responsibilities were at a disadvantage because they found it difficult to leave their full-time obligations. Washington State governor Jay Inslee, Montana governor Steve Bullock, and New York City mayor Bill de Blasio all departed the race shortly after they entered. Each discovered that running for president was incompatible with the everyday demands of running a state or large city.

For his part, Donald Trump had been running for president for many years with the help of the media platform afforded him through his starring role as a reality television mogul on *The Apprentice*. In 2000, Trump made an abortive bid for the nomination of the Reform Party (a short-lived third party created by businessman Ross Perot after his unsuccessful 1992 independent presidential campaign).[7] Trump later contemplated a run for the 2012 Republican nomination, eventually bowing out and reluctantly endorsing Mitt Romney. Soon after Romney lost, Trump copyrighted his 2016 slogan "Make America Great Again"—a sign he would spend the next four years seeking to try again.[8] In 2016, Trump was joined by *sixteen* other Republican aspirants who, like many of the 2020 Democrats, often had the word "former" affixed to their titles.[9]

Commitment. Time is not the only thing that keeps prospective presidents from running. Candidates need to be willing to sacrifice their families and devote four, eight, or more years of their lives to seeking the presidency. They need to be willing to do whatever it takes to raise the large sums of money required to run in a marathon contest. They need the determination to compete in a grueling process, a willingness to cede their privacy to cameras and reporters, and the wherewithal to subject themselves to round-the-clock Secret Service protection. In a meeting with then senator Barack Obama prior to his 2008 presidential run, David Plouffe, who would become Obama's campaign manager, told the putative candidate he had two stark choices: "You can stay in the Senate, enjoy your weekends at home, take regular vacations, and have a lovely time with your family. Or you can run for president, have your whole life poked at and pried

into, almost never see your family, travel incessantly, bang your tin cup for do-
nations like some street-corner beggar, lead a lonely, miserable life."[10]

To have a chance of victory, first-time candidates must invest vast quantities
of time and money introducing themselves to the party faithful. In 2020, Min-
nesota senator Amy Klobuchar and California senator Kamala Harris essen-
tially moved to Iowa, the first caucus state, but achieved little success breaking
through with voters. South Bend, Indiana, mayor Pete Buttigieg and Massa-
chusetts senator Elizabeth Warren planted themselves in Iowa as well. Bernie
Sanders had the luxury of rebooting his 2016 organization, but he still needed
to devote considerable attention to the early primary states.

Too Much Money. In 2020, Joe Biden raised $1.625 billion, and Donald
Trump raised $1.094 billion[11]—astronomical sums necessary to run for presi-
dent in the current system, a good portion of which comes from special interest
groups. Apart from the time and commitment required of the candidates to
raise such outsized sums, the amount of money that floods the process can cast
doubts on the system itself. Americans especially resent the influence exercised
by special interests over the presidential campaign process. In 2015, majorities
thought it would be "effective" to reduce the "influence of money in politics"
by placing limits on how much an outside group could spend on a candidate's
campaign, how much a political party could spend, or how much an individual
candidate could spend regardless of where the money came from.[12]

This has not been easy to accomplish. In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled
in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission that political speech and
money went hand-in-hand, and that both are protected by the First Amend-
ment.[13] The impact of this decision was fully evident in the 2020 race, as out-
side sources spent $582 million on behalf of Biden and $320 million support-
ing Trump.[14] Other wealthy individuals contributed vast sums through what
is termed "dark money" by creating ostensibly non-profit organizations and
contributing millions to them for the purpose of advancing the interests of a
particular candidate.

Expenditures of this size and nature are unpopular with the public. Bernie
Sanders premised his two presidential bids on the notion that Wall Street wields
too much power and makes elected officials beholden to big contributors. In his
2015 announcement speech, Sanders declared: "Today, we stand here and say
loudly and clearly that enough is enough. This great nation and its government
belong to all of the people, and not to a handful of billionaires, their Super-PACs,
and their lobbyists."[15] In 2020, Sanders continued to renounce corporate money
while raising an astonishing $211 million, most of it in small dollar increments.[16]

Meanwhile, Donald Trump premised part of his 2016 appeal on the notion that he couldn't be bought because of his personal wealth.[17]

The vast amounts of money required to become president have created a strong public impression that the presidential selection system is broken. This is reinforced by the interminable length of the nominating campaign. When it comes to selecting a chief executive, Americans want the process to be fair, yet provide for majority rule; deliberative, yet quick; representative, but with some having a greater voice than others. Those in the national party establishments have tried unsuccessfully to resolve these contradictory impulses, but as we will see, their discussions have centered around procedural details that fall within the jurisdiction of the party organization which do not address the overarching public concern of creating a process that will produce effective presidents. In recent years, efforts to reform the selection process have focused on matters like which state or states should go first in selecting presidential candidates; when and where the national party conventions should be held; how many party officeholders should be permitted to attend the national conventions and in what capacity; and what proportions of men, women, Blacks, Latinos/as, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other groups should comprise the various state delegations. These concerns are a present-day continuation of a centuries-long effort to get the selection process right, fueled then as now—as we will see— by the debates between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson as to which is the best path to take.

From John Adams to Joe Biden: Enduring Problems in Presidential Selection

The process for selecting presidents hasn't always been as backbreaking as it is today, but if today's method of selecting a nominee may be less than ideal, it is only the latest in a long series of flawed approaches. At no point since the Constitution was ratified in 1789 has the United States employed a consistent method for choosing its presidents, no less a selection system that effectively balances the national character of the presidency with a role for states and localities. For most of American history, nominees have been selected by methods that have been subject to the whims of party elites and the ambitions of individual candidates.

First Attempt: The Electoral College. The Framers understood that finding a method to ensure the selection of a consistently good president was one of the most conspicuous failures of the Constitutional Convention. Convening in Philadelphia in 1787, the delegates considered myriad schemes before finally

settling upon the Electoral College. As devised by the Framers, each state would have a prescribed number of electors equaling its congressional delegation, based on the number of senators (two) plus the number of representatives (which varies from state to state based on its population). Under the Electoral College system, each elector would cast *two* votes for president. The Framers believed that state loyalties would determine the first vote (i.e., votes would go to "favorite sons") but that the second vote would be for someone of national stature. Making his case for presidential selection by the people, Alexander Hamilton wrote in *The Federalist* that the electors' "transient existence" and "detached situation" made the Electoral College a wise instrument for choosing the right kind national leader:[18]

> [The Framers] have not made the appointment of the president to depend on any pre-existing bodies of men, who might be tampered with beforehand to prostitute their votes; but they have referred it in the first act to the people of America, to be exerted in the choice of persons for the temporary and sole purpose of making the appointment.[19]

However, the Electoral College only worked as planned in the elections of George Washington in 1788 and 1792. In each case, Washington won unanimous victories—the only president ever to receive such a distinction. But by 1796, the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties were more organized and vigorously competing for votes—thereby negating Hamilton's intention that the Electoral College would find the best person with the greatest national standing to serve as president. In 1800, the system completely broke down when Thomas Jefferson recruited Aaron Burr to run with him as his intended vice president. Burr broke his promise to defer to Jefferson and have him become president in the event of a tie vote. Instead, Burr sought the presidency outright with the result being a deadlock in the House of Representatives that was broken by the leader of the opposition party, Federalist Alexander Hamilton. By 1804, the Electoral College that had once been the object of Hamilton's effusive praise was completely overhauled when Congress and the states approved the Twelfth Amendment that allowed for "tickets" of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

The experiment of selecting presidential nominees using the Electoral College ended quickly, but the Electoral College still plays a central and at times problematic role in the final selection of the president. After slavery, it is one of the most flawed parts of the original Constitution and the subject of endless reform proposals. Calls for abolishing the Electoral College mount each time

it appears that a presidential candidate could win the Electoral College without winning the most popular votes—something that happened in 1828, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016, and nearly happened in 1960, 1968, 1976, 2004, and 2020. In 2019, 53 percent of Americans preferred doing away with the Electoral College and making the selection of the president solely dependent on the winner of the popular vote.[20]

Given this sentiment, it's not surprising that there has been ongoing tinkering with the Electoral College. In 1972, Maine decided to allocate its electoral votes by congressional district, with the winner of each receiving an electoral vote. Nebraska followed suit twenty years later. Split decisions in those states occurred in 2008 when Barack Obama won one electoral vote from Nebraska; in 2016, when Donald Trump received one electoral vote from Maine; and in 2020, when Trump again received one electoral vote from Maine and Joe Biden received one electoral vote from Nebraska.

In 2020, the Supreme Court considered the issue of "faithless electors," those individuals who did not follow the dictates of their state's popular vote when casting their electoral college votes. Fifteen states had laws penalizing electors who did not vote for the popular vote winner, some of which included financial penalties. In 2016, these penalties did not stop seven electors from bolting from their state's popular vote winner (five from Hillary Clinton and two from Donald Trump),[21] including four electors from Washington State who were fined $1,000 apiece.[22] The Supreme Court unanimously decided that states could require electors to vote for that state's popular vote winner, noting that the US Constitution gives states the right to appoint electors "in such Manner as the legislature thereof may direct."[23]

Yet Congress and the public have failed to sustain serious interest in making major changes to the Electoral College, despite its flaws and unpopularity. Even though it has misfired in two of the last six elections, and despite the fact that Joe Biden could have won a popular vote majority as large as seven million and still lost if a combined forty thousand voters had changed their minds in Wisconsin, Georgia, and Arizona,[24] most proposals to reform the Electoral College have failed. These include:

- Having all states cast their electoral votes on a proportional basis like Maine and Nebraska.
- Creating bonus electors that would be awarded to a candidate who won the national popular vote to ensure the national popular vote winner is elected president.

- Allocating electoral votes based on proportional representation.
- Eliminating the electoral college entirely and electing the president based on the popular vote, with the proviso that if a candidate fails to win a majority, a runoff between the top two candidates would follow.[25]

Second Attempt: The King-Making Caucuses. Legendary party boss William Marcy Tweed once remarked, "I don't care who does the electin' as long as I do the nominatin'."[26] The issue of who should "do the nominatin'" has vexed the American polity for more than two-hundred years. With the emergence of political parties and the collapse of the Electoral College as a means for choosing presidential candidates, attempts to reform the nominating systems set the Hamiltonian perspective on national authority against the Jeffersonian preference for local accountability.

The second try at choosing presidential nominees was the Congressional Caucus (commonly nicknamed the "King Caucus"). It consisted of House and Senate members who belonged to the same party. They would meet, discuss the pros and cons of various candidates, and emerge with a nominee. As a national institution that represented state and local interests, it was thought that a gathering of congressional party leaders to choose a president was a sensible alternative to the Electoral College. Moreover, it was generally assumed that presidents would come from the national legislature, so it seemed only natural that Congress would choose from among the prospective candidates.

The Congressional Caucus functioned relatively well during the period of light inter-party competition during the Era of Good Feelings, producing three consecutive two-term presidents from Virginia. But the system completely broke down in 1824 as the last of the Founding Fathers, James Monroe, was exiting the presidency. That year, the caucus nominated William Crawford, who commanded little support outside the halls of Congress and was badly beaten in the election. A five-way scramble for the presidency ensued, and John Quincy Adams, the son of John Adams, became president. By the late 1820s, the caucus system became a target of supporters of defeated candidate Andrew Jackson who vehemently argued that the entire nominating process epitomized aristocratic rule and thwarted the popular will. Jackson had a point since he decisively won the popular vote in 1824 and finished with the most electoral votes as well.

Third Attempt: Party Conventions. The collapse of the Congressional Caucus created an opening for a new method of nomination. Initially, the youthful parties gravitated toward a Jeffersonian-like convention system that took local sensibilities

into account. Thomas Ritchie, editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, urged a national convention, in a letter addressed to Martin Van Buren dated January 2, 1824:

> Vain is any expectation found upon the spontaneous movement of the great mass of the people in favor of any particular individual, the elements of this great community are multifarious and conflicting and require to be skillfully combined to be made harmonious and powerful. Their action, to be salutary, must be the result of enlightened deliberation, and he who would distract the councils of the people, must design to breed confusion and disorder, and to profit by their dissensions.[27]

In Ritchie's view, party conventions allowed for a successful fusion of Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism. The convention could speak with an authoritative voice in selecting the nominee, but individual states maintained their sovereignty in choosing the delegates. In 1831, the Anti-Masonic Party held the first political convention in Baltimore. A year later, the Democratic Party followed suit. The Democrats were driven toward the convention system not only because it seemed more "democratic" but because President Andrew Jackson wanted to replace Vice President John C. Calhoun who had become an outspoken administration critic. One key Jackson operative pointed out "the expediency, indeed absolute necessity, of advising our friends everywhere to get up a national convention to convene at some convenient point, for the purpose of selecting some suitable and proper person to be placed upon the electoral ticket with General Jackson, as a candidate for the vice presidency."[28] Eventually, the convention was held and the delegates chose a Jackson loyalist, Martin Van Buren, for the vice-presidential slot.

Over the years, nominating conventions became vital party instruments by providing a forum for making key decisions about who would head the presidential ticket, what issue positions the party would emphasize, and how their nominee would be supported if elected. Conventions are still held today, in mid-summer before the general election, usually in one of the nation's largest cities in an important electoral state. In 2020, Democrats planned to hold a convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Republicans intended to gather in Charlotte, North Carolina, before both locations were scrubbed due to the pandemic. As we will see, however, conventions no longer serve the purpose of selecting nominees.

Until the 1970s, state and local party leaders chose convention delegates. These party leaders ran the show, instructing delegates on what platform positions to support and which candidates to back. Leaders were guided by local

considerations, especially which of the candidates would run best in their own communities. With delegates representing numerous and diverse states and localities, deal-making would ensue among party leaders and the identity of the presidential nominee was often unknown as the convention convened. During the early twentieth century when party bosses wielded their greatest power, Democrats took an average of ten ballots to select their nominees; Republicans took five. As boisterous and contentious as these gatherings could get, conventions were a way of reconciling local and national interests to nominate a winner, a fusion of Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian thinking.

Initially, the Republican Party of the late nineteenth century was most hospitable to Alexander Hamilton's notion of a national family. Republicans viewed their party as a national organization that was critical to selecting successful presidential tickets. During a credentials fight at the 1876 Republican Convention, one delegate asked, "whether the state of Pennsylvania shall make laws for his convention; or whether this convention is supreme and shall make its own laws?" The delegate answered his own question with a distinctly Hamiltonian flourish, saying: "We are supreme. We are original. We stand here representing the great Republican Party of the United States."[29]

Democrats adopted a wholly different approach, believing they should adhere to the traditions of their progenitor, Thomas Jefferson. At their first convention in 1832, the party adopted a rule under which no candidate could be nominated for president unless two-thirds of the delegates agreed. Democrats also invented the "unit rule," a device that allowed a state to cast all its votes for one candidate if a majority so desired. These changes presented considerable difficulties in getting the southern and northern wings of the party to agree on nominees. Thus, it took forty-nine ballots to nominate Franklin Pierce in 1852 and seventeen to select James Buchanan four years later. The two-thirds rule and the unit rule accentuated the federal character of the Democratic Party's nominating process—something the party desperately sought to protect. Rising to defend the unit rule, a delegate to the 1880 Democratic Convention excoriated the Republicans as "a party which believes . . . that the states have hardly any rights left which the Federal Government is bound to respect . . . [and] that the state does not control its own delegation in a national convention. Not so in the convention of the great Democratic Party. We stand, Mr. President, for the rights of the states."[30] Jefferson couldn't have said it better.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the debate intensified over which approach to take in nominating presidents—one rooted in Hamilton's idea of nationalism or Jefferson's preference for localism. The struggle took place not

only between the two parties but within them. During the first years of the twentieth century, the Republican Party developed a growing Progressive faction that wanted to nationalize party affairs since local politics was often rife with corruption. Progressive leader Theodore Roosevelt advocated the creation of a national presidential primary in 1912. Failing that, Progressives wanted state parties to establish a direct primary, believing that Teddy Roosevelt would dominate them. Fourteen states followed this route, and Roosevelt beat incumbent William Howard Taft in all the primaries. But Republican stalwarts, led by Taft, preferred having state GOP leaders retain their decisive voice in selecting presidential candidates. Taft's dismal third-place finish in 1912 resulted in a further nationalization of the nominating process. Progressive advocacy of the direct primary was extended to most elective offices, including the presidency. By 1916, twenty-three states with 65 percent of the delegates had adopted presidential primaries, though the party bosses still retained their power to determine the party nominee. Even so, a slow process had begun whereby party regulars would be shown to the convention exits.

Democrats, meanwhile, continued to support a Jeffersonian-like approach in choosing their presidents. Although Woodrow Wilson backed Theodore Roosevelt's call for a national primary, the 1912 Democratic platform upheld the rights of the states and condemned as a "usurpation" Republican-inspired efforts "to enlarge and magnify by indirection the powers of the Federal Government."[31] Thus, any attempt to nationalize the party's rules would be turned aside. In fact, southern leaders blocked the nomination of Speaker of the House Champ Clark, who was unable to obtain the two-thirds support from the delegates needed to win the nomination. Seeking compromise, the delegates turned to New Jersey Democratic governor Woodrow Wilson, whose birthplace was Staunton, Virginia.

But not all was harmonious within the Democratic ranks. Waves of immigration wrought havoc in Democratic Party councils. These foreign-born Americans, mostly Roman Catholics, gravitated to the Democrats early and sought a voice in their state and national conventions. Most supported New York governor Alfred E. Smith in his quest for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1924. But the two-thirds rule prevented Smith from capturing the nomination. After 103 ballots, an exhausted convention finally turned to John W. Davis, a well-known lawyer whose views on race were acceptable to the South.

The many attempts to quell these internal party squabbles did not solve the nominating dilemma, because the argument between the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian perspectives became linked to the ongoing debate about what kind

of president we should have. Those advocating a Hamiltonian nation-centered system believed leaders with popular support make the best presidents, even if they aren't likely to be beholden to party bosses. Those who subscribed to a Jeffersonian approach held that candidates need sufficient institutional backing to mount a winning campaign and form a successful administration.

Interlude: Presidential Selection and the Rise of Hamiltonian Nationalism. During the nineteenth century, the youthful parties zigzagged between the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian approaches to presidential nominating, never quite sure how to balance the two. But during the Progressive Era, Hamiltonian nationalism started to gain the upper hand. Recall that the principal goal of the progressive movement was to create a more open and democratic electoral process. One means to accomplish this was to allow average voters a say in nominations. By 1912, a dozen states adopted presidential primaries, and a few years later about one-half followed suit.

Back then, the outcome of these primaries was only advisory, as convention delegates were not automatically assigned to the winners, making them little more than political "beauty contests." The results provided information to party leaders as to which candidates were popular, but convention delegates were not bound to support them. This gave local party leaders bargaining leverage at the conventions. Although the growth of presidential primaries was at first only a symbolic step toward a national nomination process, it was an important one for what it foreshadowed.

Beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Democratic Party adopted a Hamiltonian approach to picking its presidential candidates. In 1936, Roosevelt succeeded in having the Democratic Convention strike down the two-thirds rule, despite vigorous resistance from southerners. Former navy secretary and ambassador to Mexico Josephus Daniels spoke for the administration: "The Democratic Party today is a national party, and Northern, Southern, and Western states would have greater representation in the party conventions under a majority rule."[32] Southerners argued that revoking the two-thirds rule would drastically reduce the role of individual states in the nomination process. On the surface, it was a call to a Jeffersonian-like system. Below the surface, Southerners realized that if a two-thirds majority was needed for the nomination, they could act in unison to veto any nominee they did not like, most pointedly nominees who held liberal positions on racial issues. The end of the two-thirds rule was a blow to these efforts.

Following Roosevelt's four successful presidential campaigns, Democrats continued in the Hamiltonian tradition as their nominating process became

increasingly nationalized. In 1952, a Democratic National Committee member lost his seat because he supported Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower for president. Four years later, the Democratic Convention passed a resolution that required a state to list the party's presidential nominee on its ballot for its delegates to be seated in the convention hall.[33] A major step toward nationalizing the parties occurred in 1964, when the so-called Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party claimed to be more representative of that state's Democratic voters than the "regulars" who ran the state Democratic Party. Asked to settle the dispute between the two factions, the 1964 Democratic Convention passed a resolution forbidding discrimination in choosing delegates. Henceforth, delegates would be chosen without regard to their race, creed, or national origins. If a state delegation did not comply with the new rule, it could be ejected from the convention hall. A committee chaired by New Jersey governor Richard Hughes would be responsible for implementing the rule. On July 2, 1967, Hughes wrote to the DNC and all state Democratic Party chairs outlining six requirements each state must meet to comply with the charge of the 1964 convention. Failure would mean that the seats would be vacated and filled by the convention—an unprecedented act at that time.

Not all states met Governor Hughes's criteria. In 1968, the Democratic Convention tossed out all the Mississippi and half of the Georgia delegations for violating the Hughes resolution. In addition, the delegates abolished the 146-year-old unit rule that permitted a state to cast all its votes for a presidential candidate even if other candidates had support within the delegation. Then, in the aftermath of what became a violent and tumultuous national convention, Democrats went so far as to authorize the creation of the McGovern-Fraser Commission that would recommend dramatic reforms to the nominating process.

Fourth Attempt: The McGovern-Fraser Commission. At first, it appeared that the 1968 convention would be a dull affair because Lyndon B. Johnson, the sitting Democratic president, gave every indication of seeking another term of office, and not since Chester Arthur in 1884 had a party denied an incumbent president renomination. However, Johnson's plans were upended when Eugene McCarthy, a little-known senator from Minnesota, decided to run against him as an anti-Vietnam War candidate. McCarthy had few resources and even less backing from party leaders. But with a battalion of antiwar activists drawn from college campuses, McCarthy opposed Johnson in the New Hampshire primary. Johnson defeated McCarthy as expected, but his margin of victory was a miniscule eight points—an extremely poor showing for an incumbent president. Johnson read the result as a sign that a successful reelection campaign would be difficult to wage, and in a dramatic turn of events, he stunned the country by

saying in a nationally televised address, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president."[34]

Johnson's departure did not mean that most Democratic Party leaders were ready to back McCarthy—quite the contrary. If Johnson was out, the choice of establishment Democrats was his second in command, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. Given the relative unanimity of party leaders supporting his candidacy, Humphrey did not need to campaign in any of the seventeen states holding primaries in 1968. This infuriated anti-Vietnam War demonstrators among the Democratic Party rank-and-file, who charged that Humphrey was a member of the Johnson administration that had escalated US involvement in Vietnam. Robert F. Kennedy, the brother of the late president and a US senator from New York, entered the primaries and, along with McCarthy, fueled an anti-Humphrey movement. For a while, it looked as though Kennedy had a chance to win the nomination. He drew large crowds, received substantial media attention, and won most of the primaries he entered. Whether Kennedy would have been nominated is left to historical debate, as an assassin ended his life on the night he won the California primary.

Kennedy's assassination left the nation in a state of shock and the Democratic Party in tatters. So deep were the internal party divisions that essentially two conventions were held in Chicago during the summer of 1968: the traditional one in the convention hall, and an anti-party protest in the streets outside. Mayor Richard J. Daley, Chicago's Democratic boss, refused to grant the crowds of young college students who descended upon the city a permit to demonstrate against the Vietnam War, but the students demonstrated anyway. Daley's police attacked them with clubs and tear gas, creating what authorities subsequently described as a "police riot." Inside the hall, in a jarring contrast to the violence outside, party leaders nominated Humphrey amid the usual convention hoopla. Presidential chronicler Theodore H. White wrote darkly that Humphrey has been "nominated in a sea of blood."[35]

The protests in the streets, a widespread perception that Humphrey won his party's nod unfairly because he had not competed in a single primary, and raucous dissent within the Democratic ranks led to the creation of the McGovern-Fraser Commission. As George McGovern, then a US senator from South Dakota, recalled, "Many of the most active supporters of Gene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy and later of me, believed that the Democratic presidential nominating process was dominated by party wheel horses, entrenched officeholders, and local bosses. They believed that despite the strong popular showing of McCarthy and Kennedy in the primaries, a majority of the convention delegates were

selected in a manner that favored the so-called establishment candidates."[36] The
McGovern-Fraser Commission, which he led, arrived (not surprisingly) at a sim-
ilar conclusion. In evocative language, it urged Democrats to change their ways:
"If we are not an open party; if we do not represent the demands of change, then
the danger is not that the people will go to the Republican Party; it is that there
will no longer be a way for people committed to orderly change to fulfill their
needs and desires within our traditional political system. It is that they will turn
to third and fourth party politics or the anti-politics of the street."[37]

Chaired first by McGovern and later by Minnesota congressman Donald
Fraser, the commission (which was officially called the Committee on Party
Structure and Delegate Selection) adopted several recommendations that fur-
ther nationalized presidential politics, including:

- A reaffirmation of the abolition of the unit rule, an action already approved
  by the 1968 Democratic Convention.
- Refusing to seat delegates chosen in backrooms.
- Prohibiting certain public or party officeholders from serving as delegates
  to county, state, and national conventions by virtue of their official position.
- Banning proxy voting, a practice used by party bosses to cast votes on behalf
  of absent delegates often without their knowledge.
- Ordering states to choose delegates during the calendar year in which the
  convention is held.
- Requiring states to post public notices announcing the selection of a dele-
  gate slate that would be committed to a particular candidate and inviting
  the rank and file to participate in the selection process.
- Creating a Compliance Review Division within the DNC to ensure that
  states obeyed the McGovern-Fraser recommendations.

In effect, the McGovern-Fraser Commission told the party establishment to
"reform or else." As McGovern recalled: "In public statements, speeches, and
interviews, I drove home the contention that the Democratic Party had but two
choices: reform or death. In the past, I noted, political parties, when confronted
with the need for change, chose death rather than change. I did not want the
Democratic Party to die. I wanted our party to choose the path of change and
vitality. That was the function of the reforms."[38]

But behind the reforms lay another agenda: removing the so-called "Old
Democrats"—mostly white, middle-aged, establishment types who supported
the Vietnam War—and replacing them with "New Politics Democrats" who
were younger, college-educated professionals, women, and minorities who were

anti-war, anti-establishment, and anti-party. The commission exceeded all expectations in achieving this objective. At the 1968 Democratic Convention, just 14 percent of the delegates were women, two percent were under age thirty, and only 5 percent were Black. Four years later, women accounted for 36 percent of the delegates; those under age thirty, 23 percent; Black delegates, 14 percent.

But increased diversity came with a high electoral price tag. In an unprecedented act, the 1972 Democratic Convention voted to exclude the delegates from Cook County, Illinois (including Chicago), led by Chicago party boss Richard Daley, and replaced them with pro-McGovern delegates led by a young civil rights activist named Jesse Jackson. The US Supreme Court subsequently affirmed the convention's right to do this using decidedly Hamiltonian language: "The convention serves the pervasive national interest in the selection of candidates for national offices and this national interest is greater than any interest of any individual state."[39] Establishment Democrats were astounded at the convention's actions and their ratification by the Supreme Court. Daley delegates had won the Illinois primary, whereas Jackson's slate had not even competed.

Moreover, Daley was viewed as key to winning this electoral vote-rich state in the fall. As it turned out, McGovern (who won the 1972 nomination in part by understanding the new rules better than anyone) lost Illinois (and forty-eight other states) to Republican Richard M. Nixon. But by removing the Daley delegation on the grounds that it had less than the requisite number of women, young, and Black delegates, the convention opened a Pandora's box on the matter of representation and delegate selection. As McGovern later acknowledged, "Whatever the commission originally intended, in administering the guidelines on minorities, women, and young people, it eventually moved very close to adopting a de facto quota system."[40]

Today, the issue of representation remains at the forefront of Democratic Party politics. In 2020, Democratic Party rules required each state party reach out to historically under-represented groups and that delegate selection should prioritize "African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and women." Moreover, each state delegation should be evenly divided between men and women.[41]

Along with mandating specifics of the composition of each state's delegation, the commission also sought changes in how they were to be selected. The 1968 fiasco drove home to the reformers that party bosses held the power to select nodminees in a closed process. The commission's proclamation that delegate selection must be "open, timely, and representative" was somewhat vague, but there was no doubt that it was written with the intention of opening windows in

the proverbial smoked-filled room. As few states wished to jeopardize their role at the next convention by violating the spirit of the McGovern-Frasier reforms, most state Democratic Party leaders shrugged their shoulders and abandoned their state conventions in favor of primaries and caucuses where the rank and file would make their presidential preferences known. As compensation, these leaders would retain a decisive voice in selecting their own candidates for state and local offices.

The shift from party leaders to primary voters deciding who would be the next president has been significant. In most of the states that hold primaries, voters choose how many delegates each candidate will have at the nomination convention. A candidate who nets 50 percent of the primary votes, for instance, will receive 50 percent of the state's delegation. The actual delegates themselves are usually selected by state party meetings and conventions, but, unlike the "advisory" primary system of the Progressive Era, they are bound to support the candidate they were sent to support, at least on the first ballot. Other states have a "pure" primary system whereby voters directly elect delegates to the national convention, with each would-be delegate's candidate preference listed on the ballot. Delegates chosen under this system are duty-bound to support their affiliated candidate.

Republicans Follow the McGovern-Fraser Lead. The gusts of change blowing through Democratic Convention halls rattled Republican windows, too. Although not subject to the recommendations of the McGovern-Fraser Commission, Republicans felt its effects when state legislatures passed laws mandating state presidential primaries. Several state legislatures, largely controlled by Democrats, passed laws mandating presidential primaries for both parties. Republicans also engaged in a modest effort to alter their rules in the name of fairness. The 1972 Republican convention authorized the creation of a Delegate-Organization (DO) Committee. The purpose of the DO Committee (called the "Do-Nothing Committee" by critics) was to recommend measures for enhancing the numbers of women, youth, and minority delegates at future Republican conventions. The committee proposed that traditional party leaders be prohibited from serving as ex-officio delegates; that party officials should better inform citizens how they could participate in the nomination process; and that participation should be increased by opening the primaries and state conventions to all qualified citizens.

But the 1976 Republican Convention rejected several of the committee's more important recommendations, including allowing persons under twenty-five years of age to vote in "numerical equity to their voting strength in a

state;" encouraging equal numbers of men and women delegates; and having one minority group member on each of the convention's principal committees. Later, the RNC rejected a recommendation that it review state affirmative action plans, and the GOP has refused to abolish winner-take-all primaries.

Today, Republicans continue to have winner-take-all primaries in selected states. In 2020, Donald Trump called for an end to primaries and caucuses, preferring to have state party conventions choose the delegates instead. Failing that, Trump argued for more winner-take-all primaries, in a successful effort to quash any significant intra-party challenges to his renomination.[42]

The Unintended Consequences of the McGovern-Fraser Reforms

In its effort to open the presidential selection process to the party-in-the-electorate, the McGovern-Fraser reforms unleashed several unintended consequences. These include the end of political conventions as the locus of the nominating process; the creation of today's marathon nomination schedule; the emergence of outsider candidates; and a power shift from party elites to media elites and social networking activists.

The Demise of Conventions. In the 1965 edition of *The World Book Encyclopedia*, nominating conventions were described as forums for allowing "all citizens an opportunity to observe one of the processes of representative government. And when two strong candidates seek nomination, a national convention is more exciting than a World Series."[43] But it has been years since a convention has been more exciting than a World Series. In 1972, Richard Nixon anticipated contemporary party conventions by scripting every moment of the event for television. Nixon faced no serious opposition in his quest for renomination and viewed the convention as a four-day infomercial in which his party could message voters and produce dramatic images (including a huge balloon drop at the end). Since then, conventions gradually became staged opportunities for parties to showcase their best arguments and images. But scripted conventions held no suspense and therefore no news value, and over time television networks cut back on their coverage as ratings steadily fell. In 2020, just 24.6 million viewers watched the Democratic Convention compared to 29.8 million in 2016. Similarly, 23.8 million watched the 2020 Republican Convention compared to the 32.2 million that viewed the proceedings in 2016. Viewership on social media enhanced these figures but accounted for people watching only select moments of the conventions rather than the gavel-to-gavel viewership they once commanded.

A Proliferation of Primaries. The McGovern-Fraser Commission had not intended to create a marathon presidential campaign, but that has been the effective result of substantially increasing the number of presidential primaries. In 1960, John F. Kennedy could announce his presidential campaign early in the year and win his party's nomination after running in only three primaries. As we have seen, the 2020 presidential campaign started just as the 2016 campaign ended, and the 2024 campaign (at least on the Republican side) is already underway.

In 2020, forty-seven of the fifty states scheduled Democratic primaries—only Iowa, Nevada, and Wyoming held caucuses—and Republicans generally followed a similar path (although several primary dates were moved to mid-and late summer, and some Republican primaries were canceled in favor of state party-run conventions because of the pandemic). While 2020 presented its own unique set of circumstances, it remains true that successful presidential candidates must run virtually everywhere, meaning that in years without a public health crisis they must have a presence in two, or three, or even four different places at once.

Primary and caucus dates change every presidential election cycle, but custom and tradition keep Iowa and New Hampshire at the top of the schedule as the first caucus and primary states, respectively. To add diversity to these two small states with mostly white non-urban populations, the Democratic Party has ensured that Nevada and South Carolina follow them. Their addition also adds regional balance to the early primary calendar. Democrats are currently debating whether Nevada and South Carolina should be moved ahead of Iowa and New Hampshire and whether the Iowa caucus should be scrapped altogether in favor of a primary. Such debates follow a pattern: since 1972, the rules for conducting presidential contests have undergone revisions every four years.

In 2020, Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina held their contests during the month of February. There is a clear advantage to going early because candidates who do poorly early on find it difficult to raise money and tend to lose supporters, so as the primary calendar progresses the field of potential nominees shrinks. This motivates states to hold their primaries and caucuses as early as possible after the first four and has led to a glut of contests typically on the same day in early March, dubbed "Super Tuesday" (in 2020, there were sixteen Super Tuesday primaries).[44]

Primary rules affect candidate strategies and can complicate the marathon presidential contest. Historically, Republicans have preferred winner-take-all primaries with the popular vote winner receiving all of that state's delegates. Democrats adhere to a 15 percent rule whereby candidates must win 15 percent

of the vote in a congressional district to earn delegates. The more votes above 15 percent, the more delegates awarded. This complicated process requires an intricate familiarity with the election calendar and party rules. Some states hold open primaries whereby anyone can vote. Others have semi-open primaries where only registered party members and independents can participate. Still others have closed primaries where only individuals registered with the party can cast ballots.

Caucus states require party members to assemble in public forums, which can last for several hours, and openly declare whom they support. Unlike primaries, which are state-run elections, caucuses are party-run affairs, and they tend to attract activists and strong partisans who do not mind devoting an evening or an afternoon to participating. Once fairly widespread, caucuses have fallen out of favor. In 2020, the Iowa Democratic party had difficulty tallying and reporting their results, causing a long delay in announcing the winner and further undermining the reputation of caucuses as a means for selecting convention delegates.

The Emergence of Outsider Candidates. The McGovern-Fraser Commission facilitated George McGovern's insurgent anti-Vietnam War candidacy in 1972. It would not be the last time an outsider would be favored by the rules his commission had put in place. Successful insurgent candidacies have included Democrat Jimmy Carter and Republican Donald Trump. Other insurgencies have made establishment favorites work hard to win their party nomination. In 1976, Ronald Reagan ran as an insurgent against incumbent President Gerald Ford and nearly defeated him for the Republican nomination. Forty years later, Bernie Sanders waged a spirited insurgency against the highly favored Hillary Clinton that took the entire primary season to resolve. And we saw how Joe Biden, a forty-plus-year political veteran, was seriously challenged by Sanders, as well as by Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, and newcomer Pete Buttigieg. In the post-McGovern-Fraser world, no establishment-backed candidate is ever certain to win their party's nomination because the primary process gives outsiders an opportunity to capture a political moment in time and parlay it into a presidential nomination.

The Press and Social Media Play Important Roles. As the nomination process became primary-centered, it also became candidate-centered, with candidates needing to appeal directly to voters to win primaries and amass delegates rather than working within party structures to win the support of party leaders. This shift caused candidates to turn to the media to broadcast their message to voters to earn their support. Initially, the process was driven by television. Today, social media has assumed an important role.

One unanticipated result of the party reform process is that instead of shifting control over the nominating system from party elites to the rank and file, reform efforts have transformed individual candidates into free agents who campaign on television and online, unwittingly making media elites important power brokers. This development has thrust both journalists and social media influencers into the heart of the process, replacing party elders as the new kingmakers. Collectively, these reporters and influencers exercise a form of "peer review," acting as political analysts who send cues about who is (and who is not) a serious candidate. Candidates play to these influencers and amplify their positive messaging on their social media feeds.

Traditional political reporters are fascinated with the campaign horserace—who's up, who's down, and why. In the months before primary voting begins, they look at metrics like which candidates raised the most money and how they rank in public opinion polls to assess whose future looks bright and whose star is fading. In fact, this preprimary period has been dubbed the "money primary" where criteria for success include a candidate's standing in the national polls, how much money they have raised, and the strength of their respective organizations.

Once the primaries begin, these same reporters assess a candidate's viability by looking at wins and loses measured against prior expectations of how they believed candidates would perform. In 2016, Donald Trump's unexpected first-place New Hampshire finish gave him an added bump in media coverage (and campaign donations). Four years later, Pete Buttigieg received a polling "bounce" from his unexpected (to reporters) photo finish in Iowa. Eight days later, Bernie Sanders, Buttigieg, and Amy Klobuchar found themselves in the media spotlight after beating press expectations in New Hampshire. Outsider candidates who can maintain a level of overperformance can parlay press attention into a long run through the primary season—and possibly into a party nomination. This gives journalists and social media influencers the ability to broker outcomes in a manner once reserved for party elites.

Reforming the Reforms: Democrats Tinker with the Rules

The unintended consequences of the McGovern-Fraser reforms have not stopped Democrats from continuously tinkering with their presidential nomination system. The 1972 Democratic Convention authorized the creation of a Commission on Delegate Selection and Party Structure chaired by Baltimore's then city councilwoman Barbara Mikulski. The Mikulski Commission reaffirmed the idea of choosing convention delegates through direct primaries and state party

caucuses and having a delegate's presidential preference clearly expressed on a state ballot. But even more radically, the commission recommended that anyone receiving 10 percent of the primary or caucus votes receive a proportionate share of the delegates. The DNC agreed with the basic thrust of the recommendation but raised the threshold to 15 percent. This furthered the revolution in the nominating process that began with the McGovern-Fraser Commission, putting party bosses out of business and giving candidates motivated more by ideology or opportunity than pragmatism a realistic opportunity to seize the reins of power.

Taken together, these changes banished much of the Democratic Party establishment from the convention proceedings. Before the McGovern-Fraser Commission, 83 percent of Democratic governors, 68 percent of senators, and 39 percent of representatives attended the 1968 Democratic Convention as delegates or alternates.[45] In 1984, *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker wrote that the Democratic Party's obsession with representation in the selection process had overcome its desire to win presidential contests: "[Democrats have become] *a party of access* in which the voiceless find a voice while Republican control of the presidency has permitted them to maintain enough coherence and unity to become a *party of government*."[46]

Jimmy Carter's 1980 landslide loss to Ronald Reagan prompted the creation of the Hunt Commission, chaired by North Carolina governor James Hunt, which undertook to restore some modicum of elite influence to the nominating process. It called for the creation of "superdelegates"—that is, Democratic officials and party officeholders who would be automatic convention delegates. Not officially bound to any candidate, superdelegates could, in theory, reverse the verdict of the rank-and-file primary voters in a closely contested nomination

This did not work out well for Democrats, who went on to lose all but one presidential election in the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, they kept trying to adjust the nomination process to produce competitive candidates. Reform commissions abounded. In 1975, Democratic National Committee chairman Robert Strauss created the Commission on the Role and Future of Presidential Primaries, chaired by Morley Winograd, the Michigan State Democratic chair. The Winograd Commission recommended that each state Democratic Party "adopt specific goals and timetables" to carry out affirmative action programs, citing women, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans as groups for which remedial action was needed to overcome the effects of past discrimination. Upon receiving the commission report, the DNC immediately ordered that state delegations comprise equal numbers of men and women (a rule that continues to be enforced).

caucuses and having a delegate's presidential preference clearly expressed on a state ballot. But even more radically, the commission recommended that anyone receiving 10 percent of the primary or caucus votes receive a proportionate share of the delegates. The DNC agreed with the basic thrust of the recommendation but raised the threshold to 15 percent. This furthered the revolution in the nominating process that began with the McGovern-Fraser Commission, putting party bosses out of business and giving candidates motivated more by ideology or opportunity than pragmatism a realistic opportunity to seize the reins of power.

This did not work out well for Democrats, who went on to lose all but one presidential election in the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, they kept trying to adjust the nomination process to produce competitive candidates. Reform commissions abounded. In 1975, Democratic National Committee chairman Robert Strauss created the Commission on the Role and Future of Presidential Primaries, chaired by Morley Winograd, the Michigan State Democratic chair. The Winograd Commission recommended that each state Democratic Party "adopt specific goals and timetables" to carry out affirmative action programs, citing women, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans as groups for which remedial action was needed to overcome the effects of past discrimination. Upon receiving the commission report, the DNC immediately ordered that state delegations comprise equal numbers of men and women (a rule that continues to be enforced).

Taken together, these changes banished much of the Democratic Party establishment from the convention proceedings. Before the McGovern-Fraser Commission, 83 percent of Democratic governors, 68 percent of senators, and 39 percent of representatives attended the 1968 Democratic Convention as delegates or alternates.[45] In 1984, *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker wrote that the Democratic Party's obsession with representation in the selection process had overcome its desire to win presidential contests: "[Democrats have become] *a party of access* in which the voiceless find a voice while Republican control of the presidency has permitted them to maintain enough coherence and unity to become a *party of government*."[46]

Jimmy Carter's 1980 landslide loss to Ronald Reagan prompted the creation of the Hunt Commission, chaired by North Carolina governor James Hunt, which undertook to restore some modicum of elite influence to the nominating process. It called for the creation of "superdelegates"—that is, Democratic officials and party officeholders who would be automatic convention delegates. Not officially bound to any candidate, superdelegates could, in theory, reverse the verdict of the rank-and-file primary voters in a closely contested nomination

race. They were an important part of the 2016 contest between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. That year Clinton won overwhelming support from the superdelegates.[47] Many were reluctant to support Sanders given that he served as an independent in the Senate who caucused with Democrats but did not identify as one. Sanders' supporters cried foul and rejected the concept of superdelegates on the grounds that they were not selected by primary voters. Clinton and Sanders struck a deal to create a new Unity Commission that would dramatically reduce the number of superdelegates and bind them to the results of their respective state primaries and caucuses, thus moving the Democratic Party 180 degrees away from the reforms of the Hunt Commission. In 2020, there were just 771 Democratic superdelegates out of a total of 4,750, and they were precluded from voting on the convention's first ballot. Under the new rules, only if a convention were deadlocked and required more than one ballot could superdelegates cast a vote.[48] Sanders and his reformers understood how unlikely that was to occur. No party convention has required a second ballot since 1952, effectively making the superdelegates superfluous.

Looking to the Future

After centuries of altering the method of selecting presidential nominees and multiple reform commissions, the riddle that confronted the Framers remains: How do we find an optimal way to select the president and what characteristics do we want the president to have? As the nationally elected executive, we might side with the Hamiltonian perspective that the president should be a leader who can articulate issues and solutions that are in the national interest. But who gets to define the "national interest"? Is it the individual and corporate contributors whose dollars fuel successful presidential campaigns? Is it reporters and social media influencers who set the terms of success in nomination campaigns? Is it those few individual candidates willing to endure a grueling selection process for the chance of being the one left standing at the end? Or is it state and local party leaders who believed that winning candidates were good for their party and the country?

When it comes to choosing a president, the focus on the individual rather than the party, which has prevailed since 1968, complicates answers to these questions. The Framers' attempt to devise a presidential selection system that would create a presidency free of partisan constraints resulted in the creation of the Electoral College, which failed to work almost as soon as parties developed. By the mid-1800s, political parties became more firmly rooted in American

tradition, and the party convention, which emphasizes group activity rather than individual choice, supplanted the congressional caucus. The party convention enjoyed a long life, in part because it fused a Jeffersonian-like federalism with Hamiltonian nationalism and became a source of social activity in an era when parties were an important socializing force. But as a collective decision-making entity the traditional convention is no more—a victim of reform and the ambitions of would-be presidents. Today, conventions ratify; they do not decide.

While ambition has always been a characteristic of presidential candidates, today's system rewards those with unquenchable determination like never before. No longer do presidential candidates wait in line for party leaders to tell them it's their turn. In 1960, reporter Richard Reeves wrote that the most important feature of John F. Kennedy's career was his ambition:

> He did not wait his turn. He directly challenged the institution he wanted to control, the political system. After him, no one else wanted to wait either, and few institutions were rigid enough or flexible enough to survive impatient ambition-driven challenges. He believed (and proved) that the only qualification for the most powerful job in the world was wanting it. His power did not come from the top down nor from the bottom up. It was an ax driven by his own ambition into the middle of the system, biting to the center he wanted for himself. When he was asked early in 1960 why he thought he should be president, he answered: "I look around me at the others in the race, and I say to myself, well, if they think they can do it why not me? 'Why not me?' That's the answer. And I think it's enough."[49]

Since Kennedy uttered those words, every presidential candidate has said, in effect, "Why not me?" In presenting themselves to the public, these driven contenders have relied on their own personas, rather than their party affiliations, to help them get elected. Celebrity politics is entertaining, but it is not party politics. While Donald Trump was morphing from a cultural figure into a serious presidential candidate, his ties to the Republican Party were, at best, nominal. Trump had previously given campaign contributions to many *Democrats*, including Hillary Clinton, and he had changed party registration five times, having been alternately a Democrat, a member of the Reform Party, an independent, and a Republican. Meanwhile, Bernie Sanders came close to winning the Democratic nomination in 2016 and 2020, despite having had no previous affiliation with the party.

The investment required to run for president can yield dividends for candidates even if they lose, making the decision to run attractive to ambitious

politicians. Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, and Chris Christie all became media personalities after their unsuccessful 2016 presidential runs. Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, and Andrew Yang saw their public profiles enhanced by their failed 2020 candidacies. For Buttigieg, running unsuccessfully for president led to a high-profile cabinet appointment in the Biden administration. Harris, of course, became vice president.

More than two centuries after looking to the Electoral College as a means for choosing presidents, the nomination system remains an imperfect work in progress. There almost certainly will be future tinkers, and besides wondering what kind of president we want, we may also be wise to ask "How do we get a president who can govern effectively?" Because the way the selection process rewards some candidates and punishes others is directly related to the skills the winner will bring to the office. Systems of presidential selection have sequentially rewarded individuals of strong reputation with ties to a congressional elite, then insiders with strong connections to power brokers, and then popular figures with a media presence who can raise a lot of money and speak directly to voters. As these criteria shifted control of the selection process from elites and insiders to candidates and their supporters, political parties have lost the ability determine who will win the most coveted prize in politics: nomination by a major party for the presidency of the United States. The dilemma of trying to create a nomination system that fuses Hamiltonian nationalism with a Jeffersonian concern for state and local sensibilities remains unsolved in favor of the Hamiltonian approach now favored by both Democrats and Republicans.

CHAPTER 5

Party Brand Loyalty and the American Voter

HISTORICALLY, ELECTION NIGHTS have been exciting affairs. But in 2020, election night turned into election week, as millions of voters, seeking to avoid the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, cast their ballots by mail. Those who turned out in person voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, creating what some analysts described as a "red mirage" as state after state reported these same-day votes immediately, giving the incumbent an early lead. Then, as predominantly Democratic mail-in ballots were tallied in the hours and days after the polls closed, the contours of the election came into focus. Joe Biden won the presidency by a resounding seven million popular votes, but his margins of victory in such swing states as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Arizona, Nevada, and Georgia were tantalizingly close. Donald Trump refused to accept the results, and the post-election chaos that resulted—including an insurrection at the US Capitol as the electoral votes were being certified—ignited a combustible political atmosphere. Two months after the election, two-thirds of Republicans believed that Biden's election was not legitimate while 97 percent of Democrats said it was.[1]

As the post-2020 election drama indicates, we are living through an especially charged partisan moment, when the two major parties consist of nonoverlapping coalitions of voters who would move the country in diametrically opposite directions. This has divided the nation into two camps and turned national elections into existential all-or-nothing events. We see the divide in historically low defection rates among Republican and Democratic voters, with few abandoning their party to support the opposition. In 2020, 94 percent of Democrats supported Joe Biden while 94 percent of Republicans backed Donald Trump.[2] This high level of party unity has been consistent in twenty-first century presidential elections, and it is a sharp break from several post–World War II elections of the twentieth century when crossover party voting was much more widespread. In 2020, there were virtually no Joe Biden Republicans or Donald Trump Democrats when voters marked their ballots.

89

Although we may be living in a time of hyper-partisanship, it is hardly the first time Americans have been strongly divided by party identification. We have seen how the vociferous disagreements between Hamilton and Jefferson the dawn of the party age sharply divided Hamilton's Federalist Party from Jefferson's Democrats. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, voting was not a soul-searching exercise for Americans who maintained consistent political identities.

This chapter treats voters as political consumers and explores how they relate to partisanship and political parties. We will consider the process by which party brand loyalty develops and examine how scholars have sought to measure it. Then, we will examine how lasting, long-term individual changes in partisanship can lead to enduring shifts in party coalitions, or what we call partisan realignment. Finally, we will describe the electoral coalitions that have emerged to shape today's politics. Throughout history, the sharp divides exhibited by Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson have generated passion and drama, as voters evaluate the positions of the parties and decide which to support.

The Importance of Party Identification

There is a rich intellectual history that endeavors to understand why people identify with a political party by examining their political attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Bernard R. Berelson and Paul F. Lazarsfeld pioneered the study of how people make voting decisions in the 1940s.[3] They developed a sociological model in which socioeconomic standing (education, income, and class); religion (Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish); and place of residence (rural or urban) formed an "index of political predisposition" that often determined party identification, which, in turn, strongly influenced choices made at the ballot box. Thus, a well-educated, white, upper-class Protestant from upstate New York would most likely be a Republican, whereas a Black, blue-collar worker from Detroit would most likely be a Democrat. Their approach to voting behavior emphasized the importance of political predispositions over the persuasive elements of political campaigns. Identifying with a political party was regarded as a declaration about who you were and where you were born, making voters largely impervious to the campaign pleas of Democrats and Republicans.

The sociological model explained the partisan leanings that existed from the post–Civil War era until the New Deal. During this period, Republicans shouted at other like-minded Republicans to vote for their candidates, and Democrats did much the same—but few minds were changed. Although it may

have resonance in today's deeply divided electorate, the sociological model fell out of favor with the weakening of party loyalties during the 1950s and into the 1960s and 1970s.[4] In 1952, millions of Democrats voted for Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower, giving the World War II hero a landslide ten-point victory. What influenced so many Democrats to back Eisenhower were *issues*—especially the Korean War. The Gallup Organization found that 65 percent of voters felt Eisenhower was the best candidate able to break a vexing stalemate in Korea.[5] Four years later, Eisenhower defied the existing Democratic majority to win again by fourteen points. Eisenhower's landslide victories illustrated the deficiencies associated with the sociological model. While race, ethnicity, and location mattered in helping to form partisan inclinations, voter attitudes about candidates and issues could also be important factors in determining who would be victorious. This raised important substantive and methodological questions: what individual political attitudes mattered, and how could they be measured?

Some answers were contained in *The American Voter,* a seminal work published in 1960. Authors Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes presented a sociological-psychological model of voting behavior. They agreed with Berenson and Lazarsfeld that demographics factor into voting behavior, but they also believed that partisanship had a strong psychological dimension. Thus, children of parents with strong partisanship tended to identify with their parents' political party, whereas the children of parents without a clear partisan preference tended to be ambivalent about politics. Once established, party identification (or what is often referred to as party ID) frequently persisted throughout a person's adult life. Using data gathered in the 1950s, Campbell and his colleagues found that nearly 85 percent of respondents stuck with the same party throughout their lives, and a majority never voted for a candidate of the other party.[6]

The American Voter is considered an important work because it introduced a new way of understanding how people vote. Ethnicity, race, region, religion, different economic structures (including education, occupation, and class), and historical patterns (including parental partisanship and social class) converge in an individual's durable identification with a party. Once partisanship is formed, it serves as a filter to screen information about politics through the lens of one's preferred party. These partisan lenses are evident to students of twenty-first century politics. The Gallup Organization, which has measured the partisan approval gap dating back to Dwight D. Eisenhower, reported that Donald Trump posted a then-record 77 percentage-point gap in approval ratings between Democrats and Republicans during his presidential term. In the early months of the

Biden presidency, 96 percent of Democrats approved of Joe Biden's performance while just 10 percent of Republicans did so—a record partisan gap of 86 points.[7]

From its inception, *The American Voter* provided a baseline to measure how a person's party identification influenced individual voting choices. But like Berelson and Lazarsfeld before them, Campbell et al. were influenced by the prevailing political conditions of the time, which in their case was the relatively placid late 1950s. Subsequent research would challenge and refine their conclusions. In 1971, Gerald Pomper found a significant increase in the correlation between individual policy preferences and party identification. Pomper examined seven issues (federal aid to education, government provision of medical care, government guarantees of full employment, federal enforcement of fair employment, housing policy, school integration, and foreign aid) and found a linear relationship between issue preferences and party identification existed on every issue except foreign aid, whereas in the 1950s only one issue was correlated with party ID. Additionally, the proportion of voters viewing Democrats as the more liberal party increased since 1956, which Pomper took to mean that between the 1950s and 1960s "considerable political learning" had taken place.[8]

But voters don't always have the time or inclination to ferret out a candidate's position on the issues. Anthony Downs, in his 1957 book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, offered a rational choice theory of voting behavior, arguing that the benefits of arriving at a "correct" voting decision that aligns with a voter's preferences may not be worth the costs of compiling extensive information on the candidates.[9] Most voters want to cast an informed vote, but often lack the time or energy to sift through the complex details of each candidate's policy stands and personal character. Party identification gives the busy voter a quick and easy solution. Voters can take an information shortcut by understanding the basic contours of what each party stands for, match that information with their own values (thereby developing a party identification), and then vote for the candidate that aligns with their party ID. Thus, an Election Day decision can be made in a few quick seconds because the voter need only know each candidate's party to cast an "informed" vote.

Measuring Party Identification

While questions of how party identification is acquired and how it influences vote choice have long dominated the study of political behavior, scholars have also engaged in a closely related debate over how to measure party identification. The most common technique employs a seven-point ordinal scale developed by

public opinion pollsters. Voters are classified by their answers to two questions. First, respondents are asked if they consider themselves Republicans, Democrats, or independents. Those who answer that they are either Republicans or Democrats are asked a follow-up question about how strongly they identify with their chosen party. Those who classify themselves as "independent" are subsequently asked whether they are closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Respondents are then grouped into one of seven categories: (1) strong Democrat, (2) weak Democrat, (3) independent-leaning Democrat, (4) true independent, (5) independent-leaning Republican, (6) weak Republican, and (7) strong Republican.

The advantage of this approach is that it suggests degrees of partisanship. It is reasonable to assume that some Democrats and Republicans are more closely connected to their parties than others, and that many so-called independents lean more toward one of the parties. According to one poll taken during the 2020 presidential campaign, 42 percent of Americans identified as Democrats and 38 percent identified as Republicans. But when we break down these figures by strength of partisanship, we find that 25 percent said they were "strong Democrats;" 6 percent said they were "not very strong Democrats;" 11 percent were "independents who leaned toward Democrats;" 23 percent said they were "strong Republicans;" 5 percent identified as "not very strong Republicans"; and 10 percent said they were "independents who leaned toward Republicans." Just 13 percent identified as true "independents."[10]

The Making of an Idea: Party Realignment

We have discussed how individuals form partisan attachments, but what about the electorate as a whole? Taken together, the party affiliations of the entire body politic—collectively, the party in the electorate— form an underlying structure of voting behavior. This structure can endure over long periods of time, but it is fluid enough to change in response to shifting conditions. The structure of voting behavior can determine which party has the advantage in electoral competition, the policies that are favored to emerge from government, and even whether voters prefer Hamiltonian nationalism or Jeffersonian localism when it comes to what they believe the federal government ought to do or not do. Sometimes these changes are momentary, but other times they reflect deep seated shifts in voter preferences and can be enduring. How can we tell the difference? It may require the passage of time to know. After Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1936 landslide re-election victory, one analyst declared that he could "see no interpretation of the

returns which does not suggest that the people of America want the president to proceed along progressive or liberal lines."[11] In fact, voters had concluded they wanted the federal government to act aggressively to combat the Great Depression, and they rewarded Roosevelt by returning him to office two more times.

In 1980, Republican pollster Richard Wirthlin interpreted Ronald Reagan's stunning victory as "a mandate for change . . . [that meant] . . . a rejection of the New Deal agenda that had dominated American politics since the 1930s."[12] This assessment came to pass when Republicans won landslide presidential victories in the next two elections over liberal Democrats. In both cases, political scientists ultimately concluded that the structure of the American party system had undergone a significant and lasting transformation. The 1936 and 1980 contests gave way to historic changes in party identification that reshaped the party coalitions.

It is possible that the 2020 election represents another such juncture, with the public turning away from the less-government Jeffersonianism of the Reagan era in favor of Hamiltonian activism to address long-neglected issues in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, mounting economic inequalities, and a reckoning on racial inequality. We will consider this possibility in the book's conclusion.

V. O. Key and the Concept of Party Realignment

Political scientist V. O. Key Jr. was the first to argue that some elections were more important than others. Few may remember that Franklin Pierce won the presidency in 1852, or James Buchanan in 1856, or James Garfield in 1880, but history notes Abraham Lincoln's realigning election victory in 1860. From Key's perspective realigning elections stand out for their lasting significance in the arc of political history, where crisis and catastrophe play a significant role in shuffling the electoral deck for generations.

Lincoln's victory in 1860 under the banner of the new Republican Party was one such election. Lincoln's successful prosecution of the Civil War and his proclamation of a "new birth of freedom" in the Gettysburg Address convinced a majority of voters that Republicans could be trusted to steer the ship of state into the future. For decades thereafter, Republicans dominated their opponents in federal elections, relegating the once-majority Democrats to second-tier status.

Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932 produced the same result for Democrats. Previously a party devoted to a Jeffersonian "states' rights" platform, FDR's Hamiltonian New Deal agenda to combat the Great Depression convinced a majority of voters that the Democratic Party could best handle the nation's

economy and look after the interests of the average American, ending decades of Republican dominance.

Key explained the process of realignment through a concept he described as critical elections. His initial understanding was that critical elections are characterized by sharp reorganizations of party loyalties over short periods of time in response to traumatic national events that the previous alignment of political parties was unable to successfully manage. In these contests, voter turnout is high, and new, long-lasting party coalitions are formed. Subsequently, Key modified his original idea to allow for the possibility that lasting changes in partisanship are sometimes not so dramatic. Rather, party loyalties can erode among some groups and regions over many years. Key termed these changes secular realignments, defining them as "a movement of the members of a population category from party to party that extends over several presidential elections and appears to be independent of the peculiar factors influencing the vote at individual elections."[13] Key placed no time limit on the pace of this change, noting that it could take as long as fifty years.

Key's ideas about critical elections and secular realignments gained widespread notice among political scientists. Enhancing its appeal was the pro-party argument that underpinned realignment theory. Parties were credited with being important agents in maintaining the stability of the constitutional order. Instead of resorting to arms or tearing up the US Constitution whenever catastrophe struck, political scientists believed that voters used political parties to engineer significant policy changes. The US Constitution works because political parties work, or so went the argument.

As analysis of electoral change expanded to include polling data that could pinpoint changes within narrowly defined population groups (e.g., white non-college educated vs. white college educated voters), party realignment took on added significance. Walter Dean Burnham, a major proponent of the realignment concept, published *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (1970), in which he transformed Key's simple idea of critical elections into a generalized theory of party realignment. Burnham outlined five conditions that characterized the "ideal-typical" partisan realignment:

- There are short, sharp reorganizations of the major party voter coalitions that occur at periodic intervals.
- Third-party revolts often precede party realignments and reveal the incapacity of "politics-as-usual."

- There is abnormal stress in the socioeconomic system that is strongly associated with fundamental partisan change.
- Ideological polarizations and issue distances between the major parties become exceptionally large by normal standards.
- Realignments have durable consequences and determine the general outlines of important public policies in the decades that follow.[14]

Using this classification scheme, Burnham cited the elections of Andrew Jackson in 1828, Abraham Lincoln in 1860, William McKinley in 1896, and Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 as having met the conditions of party realignment. In each case, voter interest and turnout were high, there were significant third-party revolts either in the actual election or in the contests leading up to it, and the differences between the parties were exceptionally large, even considering the Hamiltonian-Jeffersonian divide. In making his calculations, Burnham discovered a rhythm to US politics–namely, that realigning elections occur once every twenty-eight to thirty-six years. Thus, if a realigning election happened in 1932 as Burnham suggests, one could expect another realignment to occur circa 1968.

Indeed, an argument can be made that Republican Richard M. Nixon's close victory over Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968 met the conditions of a classic party realignment. The differences between the two parties on issues such as civil rights, the Vietnam War, and what became known as the "social issues" (crime, abortion, pornography, etc.) were significant. Moreover, there was a major third-party revolt by supporters of Alabama governor George C. Wallace, whose presidential candidacy garnered 14 percent of the popular vote (a feat not surpassed until 1992 when Ross Perot captured 19 percent of the ballots cast). As Republican political analyst Kevin Phillips perceptively wrote in his 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority*, "Far from being the tenuous and unmeaningful victory suggested by [some] critical observers, the election of Richard M. Nixon as president of the United States in November 1968 bespoke the end of the New Deal Democratic hegemony and the beginning of a new era in American politics."[15]

But if 1968 was a realigning election it had a quite different feel from those that preceded it. Although Republicans began a string of presidential victories, Democrats retained comfortable majorities in both houses of Congress for many years afterwards. Democrats controlled the Senate from 1968 to 1980, narrowly losing control in the 1980 Reagan landslide but reclaiming majority status in 1986, and they held the House majority until 1994. Reagan won reelection in a landslide in

1984, but Democrats maintained a seventy-one-seat margin in the House—the largest edge for a party that did not control the White House since 1895.

Thus, while the party system created by Franklin D. Roosevelt had died, the "ideal-type" of partisan realignment forecast by Burnham failed to materialize. Scholars tried to resolve this inconsistency.[16] Some attributed the Republican failure to produce a classic realignment to the aftereffects of Watergate. In 1974, Democrats added forty-nine seats in the House—enough to ensure control for twenty years until Newt Gingrich and his Republican allies took over. Others attributed the failure of either party to achieve a classic realignment to presidents who were all too willing to eschew their party affiliations to win more votes. This begs the question of why they would do this if they felt they could assemble winning coalitions with the support of their fellow partisans in the electorate—a question that speaks to changes in the strength of partisan preferences that we will address shortly.

If Nixon's 1968 election marked the beginning of a realignment, and if Burnham is correct that realignments occur once every twenty-eight to thirty-six years, then we might have expected another realigning election to have occurred by 2004 (the outside limit of the thirty-six-year period). However, the evidence is mixed. Democrats did win the presidency in 2008, 2012, and 2020, and Republicans have not won a popular vote presidential majority since 2004. In 2016, Donald Trump prevailed in the Electoral College, but lost the popular vote by 2.9 million—a margin almost six times greater than George W. Bush's popular vote loss to Al Gore. In 2020, Biden accrued more popular votes than any presidential candidate in history. At the same time, control of Congress has toggled back and forth between the parties, making divided government the norm.

Challenges to Party Realignment Theory

Despite the attempts of Key and Burnham to develop a predictive theory of party realignment, one problem persisted: voters refused to cooperate. This was partly the result of waning voter attachment to either party. From the late 1960s through the early 1980s, there was a dramatic decline in the percentage of voters who identified as Democrats or Republicans, choosing instead to identify as independents. This was a period of *dealignment*—meaning that voters were moving away from both political parties. One 1983 poll found most respondents said there was "no difference" between Democrats and Republicans when it came to reducing crime, stopping the spread of communism, dealing effectively

with the Soviet Union, providing quality education, reducing the risk of nuclear war, providing health care, reducing waste and inefficiency in government, or protecting the environment.[17] During this period, many voters either stopped regarding themselves as Democrats or Republicans or they adopted neutral attitudes toward the parties.

The failure of party realignment to live up to expectations caused many political scientists to question the concept. In a major critique of party realignment theory entitled "Like Waiting for Godot," political scientist Everett C. Ladd maintained that Key and Burnham's emphasis on party realignment modeled after the New Deal period had been "mostly unfortunate."[18] In Ladd's view, the New Deal was a unique period when parties mattered, and Franklin D. Roosevelt loomed large over the political horizon. Ladd contended that by applying the party realignment model to more recent elections, political scientists had been asking the wrong question. Rather than wonder whether a party realignment had occurred, Ladd suggested that it would be better to ask the following:

- What are the major issues and policy differences between the two major parties, and how do these separate political elites and the voting public?
- What is the social and ideological makeup of each major party at both the mass and elite levels?
- What are the principal features of party organization, nomination procedures, and campaign structure?
- In each of the previous three areas, are major shifts currently taking place? What kind? What are their sources?
- Overall, how well is the party system performing?[19]

Political scientist David R. Mayhew echoed Ladd's criticism of party realignment theory, arguing that narrowly studying these critical elections missed important contextual elements—such as the midterm elections of 1874, which resulted in a Democratic takeover of the House of Representatives during a period of Republican dominance, and the surprising victory of Harry S. Truman in 1948 thanks to a shift within the Democratic Party favoring civil rights. Mayhew tested the assumptions made by realignment advocates and concluded that they do not apply broadly across American political history. Only the New Deal realignment of the 1930s came close, and that, Mayhew argued, was a unique moment.[20]

Ladd and Mayhew's critiques notwithstanding, political scientists persist in their efforts to find elections that conform to the traditional understanding of partisan realignment or to revise and update the concept. During the Reagan

era, John Kenneth White and Richard B. Wirthlin coined the phrase "rolling realignment" to describe the electoral changes taking place.[21] Building on Key's concept of secular realignment, they described a rolling party realignment as a process involving four distinct stages:

1. *A change in the political agenda.* During the 1930s, Americans embraced the idea that government works. By 1981, most Americans agreed with Ronald Reagan when he declared in his inaugural address, "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem."[22] The Reagan Revolution consisted of limiting the expansion of federal responsibilities and a Jeffersonian return of power to state and local governments or the individual.

2. *A change in partisan self-identification as expressed in public opinion polls.* The question, "In politics do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, independent, or something else?" is a subjective query. When the political agenda changes, partisan identification will inevitably change with it as one party becomes identified with the new political thinking.

3. *Changes in party registration.* Frequently, party registration is a lagging indicator of partisan change. For example, although Ronald Reagan had been campaigning for Republicans since 1952, it took him ten years to formally switch his California party registration from Democrat to Republican. Similarly, many southern Democrats supported the Reagan agenda years before formally changing their party registrations.

4. *Changes at the bottom of the ballot.* Every state ballot lists offices that are virtually invisible. New Yorkers elect their local county coroners; Texans vote for railroad commissioners; in Illinois, state university trustees are elected posts. In such races, party identification means everything. Thus, when voters place an X next to the names of these obscure candidates, they often are expressing a partisan preference. Long-lasting changes in these races suggest that a party realignment is underway.

The stages White and Wirthlin described are not linear, that is, voters could move back-and-forth amongst them. But the combined result can indicate a party realignment—however slowly and imperfectly it may be taking place. Yet the rolling Republican realignment they envisioned failed to materialize. By the time Reagan left office in 1989, Republicans held fewer seats in the House and Senate than they did after he won the presidency in 1980. George H. W. Bush suffered a massive rejection at the polls in 1992, winning just 38 percent of the ballots. Even after Republicans seized Congress in 1994, GOP identifiers failed

to increase measurably. In 2000, George W. Bush lost the popular vote to Al Gore. And in 2004, Bush was able to muster a bare majority of the popular vote (51 percent). Although White and Wirthlin were right to suggest that successive realignments to the New Deal were not going to be the short, sharp reorganizations of party loyalties akin to those of the 1930s, something went awry in the inevitable steps toward a Republican realignment that they believed would follow, however slowly, in Reagan's wake.

Today, the debates about whether a party realignment is occurring still persist. Is a partisan realignment, as originally conceived by Burnham and Key, still possible? Do the Democratic victories in the presidential contests of 2008, 2012, and 2020, and their sizable popular vote majorities in 2016 and 2020, herald a long-term change in electoral preferences? Or are they particular to the candidates rather than a reflection of the standing of the parties? And does any of this mean that a new realignment is imminent?

Beginning with Barack Obama's election in 2008, more scholars began to pay attention to a sharpening electoral divide based on demographic differences and who turns out to vote. Factors like race, religious preferences, lifestyle (e.g., whether you were married or not, or whether you owned a gun or not), regional differences, age, and gender have been strong predictors of electoral choices since 2008, when Barack Obama won overwhelming support from Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. He was the preferred candidate of those who either seldom or never attended church services; dominated among voters who were not married (especially single women) and among young voters; was preferred by those who did not own guns; ran strongly in the Northeast, upper Midwest, and along the Pacific coast; and did far better among women than men.[23] With several of these demographic entities on the rise, their strong support for Obama suggested that the makings of a new Democratic era could be underway.[24] But the 2020 election was inconclusive and subsequent elections will be necessary to determine whether the rising American electorate of minorities, single voters, women, and young people is enough to power the Democrats to sustained victories.

Given these trends, the question of who votes has become increasingly important. Can Democrats turn out high numbers among the groups of voters that favor them? Can Republicans find increased numbers of rural, non-college educated white voters and blue-collar workers to counterbalance demographic trends favoring Democrats? The answer to these questions will help future political scientists understand the shifting plates of contemporary partisan politics.

The Rise of Hamiltonian Nationalism in A Polarized Age

Barack Obama entered the presidency in 2009 determined to rise above the partisanship of the George W. Bush years. But his call for an end to excessive partisanship fell on deaf ears. Democrats strongly supported Obama (including the rank and file and members of Congress), while Republicans unified in their opposition (both inside Washington and in the country at large). Journalist Robert Draper writes that on inauguration night 2009 Republican leaders gathered for a dinner on Capitol Hill. Lamenting their fate, these party leaders agreed that Republicans would stick together to unanimously oppose Obama on all his policy initiatives with the goal of making him a one-term president. As future House Speaker Paul Ryan put it: "The only way we'll succeed is if we're united. If we tear ourselves apart, we're finished."[25]

Like Obama, Joe Biden issued a call for an end to partisanship, saying in his 2020 victory speech that while he was a "proud Democrat," he would govern as an "American President." While Biden has called for an end to "a grim era of polarization,"[26] Senate Republican minority leader Mitch McConnell says he is "100 percent" focused on "stopping" any Biden administration legislative initiatives—a promise that, as of this writing, McConnell and his fellow Republicans have largely kept.[27]

What is certain is that the last two decades have witnessed the emergence of a polarized electorate and strong national parties, especially when it comes to party organization. The twenty-first century has seen the creation of an enhanced Hamiltonian-like party system where partisan activities are directed from the top down. The national parties have become mobilization machines with the Internet becoming an ever more important tool in mobilizing base voters. Debates about party realignment theory may continue, but there is little debate about the intensity of voter preferences or the depth of the partisan divide. Partisanship matters, and the parties' abilities to use the tools of the Internet and mobilize supporters (both inside and outside of Washington, DC), are the subjects of the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 6

Parties and Social Media

H AD DONALD TRUMP run for president in 2004, he would have been without his most potent media weapon. Throughout the 2016 campaign, Trump masterfully drew attention to himself through Twitter, sending his unfiltered thoughts to followers and driving the traditional news agenda with the help of reporters who couldn't resist discussing the latest outrageous thing he said. Sometimes his tweeting got him in genuine trouble, as when he responded to Hillary Clinton's allegation that he had mistreated former Miss Universe Alicia Machado with an overnight Twitter explosion where he ranted about Machado's appearance and incorrectly asserted that she had made a "sex tape."[1]

In the final days of the 2016 campaign, Trump's advisors kept the candidate off Twitter to tone down his over-the-top persona so as not to frighten late-breaking undecided voters.[2] But for his ability to make others respond to him on his terms, Trump's use of social media was as brilliant as it was unprecedented. The reality television host understood how to leverage millions of followers and the unparalleled visibility of a presidential race to maximum advantage. He continued to use Twitter to maintain a real-time connection to his supporters throughout his presidency, making Twitter a governing tool that replaced conventional communication vehicles like press conferences and media events, and he relied on it heavily during his 2020 re-election campaign. When he was banned from the platform after the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol, he lost his primary means for influencing the news agenda and remaining in the headlines as a private citizen. As a former president, Trump sued Facebook, Twitter, and Google in a long-shot attempt to regain access to those platforms, recognizing how difficult it is to reach his erstwhile followers without a social media platform.

In keeping with the candidate-centered nature of contemporary campaigns and the personality-centered nature of the presidency, Trump's use of social media was thoroughly individualistic. Twitter gave Trump freedom from the

institutional constraints sometimes exercised by parties or the media by making him a free agent with respect to the Republican Party and a gatekeeper with equal power to journalists. If his presidential campaigns and administration had a messaging strategy, it was executed by Trump himself at the rate of 280 characters at a time, not by political professionals. He understood that social media rewards outrageous claims and had no problem playing to the norms of Twitter in defiance of long-established standards of how presidential candidates and presidents would act.

Although this may have brought him condemnation from his opponents, it enabled him to set the terms of the debate. Whether it was Hillary Clinton reacting to the latest Trump campaign tweet rather than advancing a vision for her presidency or journalists magnifying the latest outrageous Trump pronouncement from the White House, Trump understood that reporters and supporters would not be able to resist his Twitter eruptions and the fallout they created. His followers who received them directly, and millions more who heard about them through mainstream reporting, would consume Trump's brash, over-the-top utterances like the latest installment of a reality TV show.

Donald Trump's use of Twitter was the latest development in a rapidly changing media environment that has left candidates and parties struggling to figure out how to maximize the political potential of the Internet and keep up with its expanding scope and shifting shape. His freeform social media efforts represent one type of opportunity afforded by the Internet to candidates interested in seeking office as a free agent without the backing of traditional parties. Another type of opportunity for political expression is represented by a highly developed set of online institutions created by parties and grassroots organizations that harness the bottom-up collective action capabilities of cyberspace and bring them to bear on campaigns and public policy.

Collectively, these individual and coordinated efforts represent the range of social media influence on our politics. On the right, President Trump excelled in using social media to advance his America First agenda and keep core supporters engaged in his presidency. On the left, progressive groups have built an impressive online organizational presence that mobilized to push the Democratic Party in a progressive direction during the 2016 campaign, served as the basis for political resistance in the Trump era, and pressures the Biden administration on policy goals. To understand how we arrived at a place where presidents and ordinary people alike have access to media tools that allow them to shape political agendas, it is worthwhile to go back to the late 1990s, when the Internet was a curiosity, to retrace the steps that brought us to this moment.

Dean Unlocks the Genie

The Internet always had potential as a political medium, but like television and radio before it, people first needed to figure out how to use the Internet for political purposes. Just as Republicans proved adept at harnessing the power of television advertising in the 1950s and direct mail and cable technology in the 1980s, conservatives were first movers in online politics and had a more extensive Internet presence in the 1990s. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, Democrats and their progressive allies had caught up. Later, the right would re-emerge as skillful practitioners of social media tools.

During the 1996 election season, the RNC homepage received 75,000 hits a day—a meager number by contemporary standards but a huge figure back then. Republicans used the Internet to broadcast immediate responses to Bill Clinton's State of the Union address in 1997, and the RNC chair held regular online chats. By 2000, the GOP site boasted numerous links to allow users to make financial contributions, find facts about policy topics, buy GOP-related products, and—significantly—communicate by email. This may sound unimpressive today, but two decades ago it was revolutionary. The Republican website was regarded as so substantive that it was dubbed "Best Party Site" by *Campaign and Elections* magazine.

By 2002, the RNC had spent some $60,000 to create gopteamleader.com, designed to give nearly 100,000 activists information on how to contact radio stations and newspapers to disseminate Republican views on a range of issues. The site also offered incentives such as mouse pads and fleece pullovers for users who completed "action items" listed on the site. Points were awarded, for example, for recruiting GOP activists or for emailing members of Congress to support Republican initiatives.[3]

Democrats found themselves playing catch-up, as they had with previous technological innovations. In 1996, the DNC's website received only fifty thousand hits per day. One year later, the DNC updated its homepage to include a user survey, volunteer sign-up sheet, and a help page with voter registration forms from the Federal Election Commission. By 2002, visitors could access daily news briefings and links to other state and local Democratic Party organizations, and even take a chance at winning $1,000 for the most creative flash animation. Taking a cue from Republicans, they turned to the Internet to organize rudimentary grassroots efforts on their website, Democrats.org.[4] These improvements helped the DNC reach parity with the RNC. But the Internet didn't emerge as a contemporary political force until an obscure former Vermont

governor named Howard Dean came out of nowhere on the strength of an Internet campaign to become a frontrunner for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination.

Dean was an opinionated politician who was not afraid to challenge his party's orthodoxy, and his outspokenness contributed significantly to his online appeal. Appearing before party activists at the Democratic National Committee's Winter Meeting in February 2003, Dean gave voice to what many were saying privately about how Democrats approached the Bush administration. "What I want to know," a full-throated Dean told his audience, "is why in the world the Democratic Party is supporting the president's unilateral attack on Iraq. What I want to know is why are Democratic Party leaders supporting tax cuts . . . I'm Howard Dean, and I'm here to represent the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party."[5]

Dean's remarks struck a nerve. For liberals disenchanted with what they regarded as tepid opposition to the Bush administration, Dean offered something new: a Democrat not afraid to take on his party in full view of key party figures. All they needed was a way to organize and express their support, and the Internet provided them with a vehicle. The venue they found to connect with each other was as unlikely as the candidate himself: Meetup.com, a nonpolitical site designed to unite people with common interests. The concept was simple: type in the activity you're interested in and your zip code, and the website returned a date and time for like-minded others to meet in the real world. By making it possible for disparate people with the same concerns to find each other and facilitate in-person meetings, Meetup.com coincidently addressed the initial organizational problem faced by supporters of an obscure candidate, and soon after Dean's DNC address, "Howard Dean" rapidly became a prominent meet-up category.[6]

The Dean meet-up effort expanded exponentially, and the candidate's small staff struggled to remain one step ahead of what their supporters were building. Working around the clock, they launched the weblog "Blog for America" to serve as a nerve center for the blossoming online campaign.[7] The blog provided a way for the Burlington staff to keep supporters apprised about what they were doing, but more importantly it gave them a way to connect with each other and self-organize. Blog for America hosted diary and comment features, permitting supporters to initiate their own topics and respond to what others were writing. And respond they did—to everything ranging from policy ideas, to the candidate's polling numbers, to how the mainstream media was covering their candidate, to ideas for political action.[8] At its peak, hundreds of thousands had

taken it upon themselves to engage in Internet-based campaigning, creating a citizen army that multiplied the efforts of the candidate's staff and propelled the Vermont governor to frontrunner status weeks before the 2004 Iowa caucus.[9]

They also raised money in unprecedented amounts and in an entirely new way—through small-dollar contributions made by ordinary citizens who responded to the candidate's online pitch for cash. The campaign developed a convention whereby they would post a baseball bat icon on the blog whenever they wanted to raise funds and fill the bat in with red ink proportional to the percentage of the goal they had achieved. After a while, some blog readers began asking the campaign to "put up a bat" to raise money off an achievement like strong polling numbers or a particularly impressive public performance by their candidate.[10]

Despite these virtues, Internet activism came with risks to the campaign's leadership. If a supporter said something off-message or did something embarrassing that was caught on video, the campaign organization would have to address it. Furthermore, the rapid acceleration of Dean's online movement outpaced the campaign's ability to hire and train full-time staff, leaving Dean's staff exhausted and always trying to keep pace with its Internet growth.[11] These factors combined to make Dean's Internet supporters both a necessary blessing and a source of constant strain.

Ultimately, Dean's opponents resorted to traditional political methods—a withering television advertising attack on the frontrunner—to undermine his campaign. Dean experienced the limitations of Internet politics as well. As the primary season approached, the once-exponential growth in his supporters flattened considerably, in part a reflection of the limited reach of high-speed Internet access in 2003. As a result, Dean was unable to withstand the assault waged by his opponents and finished a distant third in the Iowa caucuses when just weeks before he had been favored to win. His fate was sealed when he addressed his supporters with a loud yelp of support designed to lift their spirits that made the candidate appear unhinged on camera. A video of the moment went viral on the Internet overnight; in an ironic twist, the medium that made the Dean campaign possible had helped bury it.

Although Dean failed, he turned traditional campaigning on its head. Ever since party reforms turned presidential campaigns into candidate-centered affairs with the rise of primaries and concomitant decline in the influence of party elites, ingenious long-shot candidates like Jimmy Carter occasionally succeeded in upending more seasoned opponents. But no one had ever done it like Howard Dean, on the strength of bottom-up political fundraising and citizen-initiated

organizing channeled through the Internet. It set the stage four years later for a more advanced Internet effort by another long-shot candidate, Barack Obama. And it heralded the arrival of an online activist infrastructure, which would self-organize in a manner similar to the Dean campaign and challenge the autonomy of the two parties from without.

Obama Sets the Standard

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Republican vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin mocked Barack Obama for having been a community organizer. It turned out that Obama's knowledge of bottom-up organizing meshed perfectly with the advantages of Internet politics, enabling him to leverage the medium to identify and mobilize millions of new voters en route to the first successful Internet-fueled presidential victory.

But Obama's shrewd understanding and skillful manipulation of the Internet generated unprecedented amounts of money while identifying and mobilizing millions of voters. Like Dean before him, Obama excelled at building an online presence that encouraged his partisans to form an army of supporters. Benefitting from a more advanced Internet that reached more people, and a campaign team that had learned from Dean's successes and failures, Obama blended traditional candidate-centered, television-based campaigning with a powerful Internet operation that proved effective enough to win the nomination and capture the presidency.

Obama sought to avoid the pitfalls that dogged the Dean campaign without extinguishing his supporters' enthusiasm and initiative. The effort required finding the right combination of empowerment and control, balancing a campaign's need for top-down coordination with the decentralization necessary to take advantage of the Internet's social networking capabilities. The engine running this effort was Obama for America (OFA), a state-of-the-art website offering a host of online tools through which supporters could customize their contribution to the campaign without the risk that their actions would run the campaign off the rails. Where the Dean campaign outsourced its networking through Meetup. com, Obama's website integrated social networking tools. Through MyBO (pronounced "my boh" and standing for "my Barack Obama"), supporters could customize their web presence and participate in the campaign's version of Facebook—or link directly to Obama's actual Facebook page. Users could establish a profile, write their own campaign blog, comment on the blog posts of others, find other Obama supporters in their zip code, and identify and join local Obama

groups with people who had similar interests, ranging from Veterans for Obama to Environmentalists for Obama.[12] The Obama campaign was the first to have profiles on AsianAve.com, MiGente.com, and BlackPlanet.com, social networking sites targeting the Asian, Latinx, and Black communities.

This organizational structure liberated Obama from relying on local party operatives to perform the fieldwork for primary and caucus challenges, enabling him to build his own organizational structure from the ground up with the help of volunteers who came to the campaign through the Internet. The same held true for the campaign's sophisticated turnout operation, which funneled responsibility for identifying and mobilizing voters to low-level volunteers operating within a highly differentiated organizational structure, balancing the freedom of supporters to self-motivate with traditional elements of campaign command-and-control. The Obama campaign made the unprecedented decision to share its turnout goals—considered confidential by campaigns worried about underperforming—with volunteers who in turn felt empowered by the campaign's decision to entrust them with getting voters to the polls. "If we tell a team leader that the vote goal for this neighborhood is 100 votes," said one of the campaign's state directors, "and we give them a list with 300 names of supporters and persuadable voters on it, they respond with, 'Wow, I can make this happen.'"[13]

After he was elected president and became de facto head of the national Democratic Party, Obama retooled his website and folded it into the everyday operation of the DNC, as we mentioned in chapter 3. This signaled his intention to keep a social networking presence alive during his presidency while remaking the party in the image of his successful Internet model. Rechristened Organizing for America, OFA worked alongside the administration from its new home inside Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington to build support for key Obama initiatives, notably the healthcare reform effort that dominated politics in 2009.

As the 2010 congressional midterm elections drew near, OFA went to work on behalf of congressional Democrats, applying social networking tools to mobilize first-time voters who were inspired by Obama in 2008, gambling that Obama's bottom-up mobilization approach would work without the president's presence on the ballot. The results were not good. Facing a strong headwind in the form of a poor economy and widespread anger from swing voters who felt the administration had over-reached and overspent, OFA was unable to mobilize the 2008 electorate that put Obama in office, and Democrats suffered historic losses in congressional and state contests.

The Netroots Challenge Democrats

Advances in the availability of high-speed Internet access during the first decade of the twenty-first century facilitated the growth of a virtual space where ordinary people could engage in political discourse, venting about things they did not like and planning to take action to change them. As like-minded individuals on the left and right began publishing political blogs, and as a few of these blogs developed into sizable virtual communities, a political blogosphere took shape. Reflecting deeply held partisan feelings on both sides, bloggers on the left would link to each other with abandon while generally refusing to link to bloggers on the right to avoid giving them additional traffic that would inflate the size of their community. Bloggers on the right reciprocated, generally refusing to link to liberal blogs. As a result, two distinct hemispheres evolved in political cyberspace: a conservative or "right blogosphere" and a progressive or "left blogosphere."

Although they emerged simultaneously, they differed in size and structure. Like the Republican Party, conservatives were first to establish a notable presence in cyberspace; in the years immediately following the turn of the century, the largest and most active blog communities were on the right; as with previous technological innovations, the left found itself playing catch-up. However, animated by opposition to the Iraq War and the Bush Administration in general, a vital left blogosphere took shape by 2005, and between 2003 and 2005, a period when overall political blog traffic increased six-fold, progressive online sites increased their traffic at a much higher rate than comparable conservative sites.[14]

Moreover, the left blogosphere was developing in a horizontal fashion suitable to taking advantage of the social networking capabilities of the Internet. By 2010, the top blogs of the left were all community blogs, meaning they permitted ordinary users to post original ideas in diaries rather than restricting that function to "front page" bloggers formally affiliated with the sites, and allowed people to post comments about blog posts, diaries, and even the comments of other users.[15] Over time, this structure birthed a movement, which self-consciously modeled itself on the twentieth-century reform-minded Progressives we discussed in chapter 3. Emerging online from the grassroots, the progressive "netroots" (or "Internet grassroots") movement came to life via the left (or progressive) blogosphere. Structurally, the netroots encompass a web of national, state, local, and issue-oriented blogs, along with like-minded progressive organizations with a strong web presence, like Moveon.org (which formed to oppose Republican

efforts to impeach Bill Clinton during the modern Internet's infancy in the late 1990s), Act Blue (a website for directing small-dollar campaign contributions to progressive candidates), and Democracy for America (an online organization devoted to identifying, recruiting, and funding progressive candidates that grew out of the Dean campaign). In keeping with the horizontal structure of the netroots, they developed as the organic product of many people using the Internet to work toward a shared set of goals,[16] and by linking to each other, these sites enhanced each other's visibility and effectiveness. In recent years, the progressive netroots have become more centralized and coordinated as first-generation organizations matured into professionalized institutions with paid staff and consultants working on behalf of online progressive advocacy groups. But they originated with the uncoordinated efforts of people with an activist bent at a time when it was easy for them to establish their presence on the Internet.

The right blogosphere emerged differently, owing in part to the existence of a long-standing conservative movement operating within and outside the Republican Party. From elected Republicans to conservative think tanks, talk radio, and other media outlets, conservatives had fashioned an idea and messaging apparatus that operated with great efficiency and effectiveness. The right blogosphere developed within this vertically organized structure, offering conservatives a new outlet for messaging and maintaining interest among the faithful. However, the hierarchical structure of the existing conservative movement had the effect of limiting the development of community blogs on the right, restricting the emergence of new voices, and limiting the number of venues where many voices would gather to argue and debate as in a virtual town hall.[17] Consequently, the preeminent ideas expressed in the right blogosphere typically mirrored those expressed by Republican politicians.

Not so for the netroots. As a movement that developed online without mainstream party support, netroots progressives often found themselves at odds with elected Democrats. Animated by challenges to corporate influences they feel tip the political balance of power away from ordinary citizens, netroots activists have been willing to take on the Democratic Party whenever they feel it tilts too heavily toward the interests of the privileged, to the point of recruiting and raising funds for primary challenges to Democrats who otherwise would not feel the heat of accountability to progressive interests. During the 2006 election cycle, the netroots channeled their organizing and fundraising toward winning a Democratic majority in the House and Senate, but once that objective was realized, their attention shifted to pushing Congress in a progressive direction by supporting "better Democrats" over incumbents who in their view worried

more about what others in Washington thought about them than the concerns of progressive voters.

As they entered the second decade of the twenty-first century, the netroots proved to be a factor in Democratic primary contests, at times challenging incumbent Democrats supported by Democratic party insiders. One of the ironies of these efforts is how they came at the expense of Barack Obama, a Democratic president who owed his election victory to a sophisticated understanding of Internet politics. This rift owes more to the inside-outside dynamic separating the Washington political establishment from the netroots than to an appreciation of how to use the Internet as a political tool. As party leader, it was Obama's responsibility to protect the Democratic congressional majorities he inherited when he was elected in 2008. Given the high rate of incumbent reelection over time, the path of least resistance to maintaining that majority would ordinarily be to discourage primaries that, if successful, create open seats that the party would have to defend without the advantages of incumbency. From the president's perspective, stumping for Democratic incumbents was in the best interest of the party.

However, those engaged with the Internet left see things like activists, not partisans. They regard blind support for incumbents as counterproductive to maintaining congressional majorities, believing that selectively promoting progressive primary challengers is an effective way of advancing movement goals, despite the aggregate odds favoring incumbents. And they believe that having more progressive candidates in Congress would work to strengthen the long-term political prospects of the Democratic Party. These strategic differences put them at odds with many party regulars, even a Democratic president who was a pioneer in online organizing.

Differences between mainstream Democrats and netroots activists extended beyond campaigning to legislating. Nowhere was this more evident than during the long campaign to enact healthcare reform in 2009 and 2010, when an online push for reform often clashed with administration efforts, and bloggers who had supported Barack Obama's election found themselves deeply at odds with his governing approach. Netroots activists wanted to secure passage of healthcare reform with a strong public component—initially a single-payer plan, then, when the administration took this option off the table, a public insurance option or wider accessibility to Medicare. The administration wanted to pass a healthcare plan—period. They needed to compromise to get anything done, and a public plan was opposed by powerful interests.

A sophisticated inside-outside strategy developed online through the network of progressive sites that had previously engaged in political action. Working on the

inside, the netroots partnered with the congressional progressive caucus, a large but—in the view of netroots activists—generally ineffectual group that tended to give in to more conservative Democrats, coordinating strategy with congressional progressives while pressuring them to hold the line on progressive objectives. Operating from the outside, they used their online resources to raise money for Democrats who supported a public option while organizing against sending progressive dollars to those who did not.[18] These efforts revealed the reach and limitations of online activism, as they helped keep the healthcare initiative on track but were insufficient to get a public healthcare option over the finish line.

When the large 2020 field of presidential hopefuls took shape, it looked like Democrats were heading for another conflict between its online grassroots supporters and party insiders. Netroots progressives were especially loyal to senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, while party elites were apprehensive about either candidate's ability to win a general election. The candidate with the least evident netroots support[19] was the candidate who insiders believed had the best chance of winning—Joe Biden, the older white male insider not known for having a progressive record. This division was especially worrisome to longtime political practitioners because, as we have seen, party elites long ago lost control of the presidential nominating process.

Perhaps this conflict would have come to fruition under normal conditions, but as the pandemic shut down the country and Biden recovered from near-defeat to emerge as a consensus candidate, online progressives got behind him to avoid what they considered a greater evil—the reelection of President Trump. For his part, Biden acknowledged their support by listening to their concerns. He invited Elizabeth Warren to be an influential campaign advisor and reached out to Bernie Sanders. He stopped looking backwards to the Obama years—a characteristic of his primary campaign that turned away progressives—and recast himself as a bridge to a progressive future. Once in office, he brought progressives into his government and advocated policies that might have seemed more likely to emerge from a Warren or Sanders administration on matters like healthcare, the environment, civil rights, and political reform. Consequently, in the early months of his administration, Biden avoided the conflicts with online activists that pockmarked the Obama years.

The "Tea Party" Challenges Republicans

Although sometimes equated in the press with netroots progressives for their mirror-image political objectives, "Tea Party" conservatives—who emerged as a

viable political force during the 2010 election cycle—did not exclusively begin as an online movement. Several websites claimed a version of the Tea Party name and purported to be home to the movement, including Tea Party Patriots (teapartypatriots.com) and Tea Party Nation (teapartynation.com). These sites, like their counterparts on the left, hosted discussion forums, provided action alerts and information on movement activities, and housed blogs with discussion threads. Unlike the netroots, however, some groups flying the Tea Party banner were funded and organized by Washington insiders.[20]

Where netroots activists worked to reduce corporate influences in the Democratic Party as they pursued progressive legislation, Tea Party activists emerged as an ideologically conservative influence on mainstream Republicans. In a remarkably brief time, they made their mark on electoral politics, advancing a brand of libertarian conservatism that challenged the constitutionality of all but the most essential activities of the federal government, condemned deficit spending and high taxes, and rejected Obama administration efforts to expand the government's role in healthcare and energy policy.

Like the progressive netroots, Tea Party candidates targeted wayward incumbents for defeat, and with visible success. In several high-profile primary contests, Tea Party-backed candidates upset candidates who had the backing of national Republican Party officials. Energized and mobilized, Tea Party supporters were reliable general election voters, eager to vote during normally low-turnout off-year elections. However, as they picked off more mainstream Republican candidates in primaries, they made it harder for Republicans to win over voters in the political middle who are decisive in close contests, while forcing the Republican Party to expend resources contesting elections that might not have been close with more conventional nominees.

Netroots and the Tea Party: Jeffersonian Politics on a Hamiltonian Scale

For the Tea Party activists and netroots progressives, the image of an ideal America could not be more different. The Tea Party would move America in the direction of a rugged individualism without much taxation or the social safety net it supports, where states would be free to make decisions without the interference of the national government, businesses would be less burdened by regulatory control, and individual and corporate taxes would be reduced. Netroots progressives envision an America based on community, where taxes and regulation are necessary to support a commons that would be destroyed if government were

downsized and where government would serve popular rather than corporate interests. It is a vision rooted more directly in Hamiltonian nationalism, where the nation is a family presided over by a strong central government, than in Jeffersonian localism, which in turn is closer to the libertarian bent of the Tea Party. In this regard, the two groups line up with the long-standing alignment of Hamiltonian-minded Democrats and Jeffersonian Republicans. Beyond these generalizations, however, distinctions between the two groups are less clear. Tea Party activists are far more comfortable with the unfettered capitalism promoted by Hamilton, while netroots activists share with Jefferson an abiding faith in the goodness of ordinary citizens. And each group poses a bigger threat to the party to which it is closest than to the other side.

As for their means, Internet politics—regardless of the ends to which they are applied—enable people to come together in virtual gatherings for the purpose of taking collective social action. It is in this respect a sort of twenty-first century town meeting—the Jeffersonian commons in cyberspace—where anyone of like mind with Internet access can read a blog, post a diary, engage in spirited exchanges on comment threads, plot strategy, give money, and mobilize and motivate friends, relatives, and strangers. By virtue of its scale, however, it is something more than a town hall; rather, it is a national forum independent of location, an organic meeting that people enter and exit at will, unbounded by the limitations of space or time. It is something neither Jefferson nor Hamilton could have imagined: a town meeting with national reach, Jeffersonian localism on a Hamiltonian scale.

This is also the aspirational side of Internet politics. There is a dark side as well. An unregulated commons can be a forum for misinformation, a place where conspiracy theories grow. In the years following the emergence of the Tea Party, we have seen the Internet function as a place where political speech has been used to persuade and organize—as well as deceive. This is especially so with social media, which came to prominence along with the rise of Donald Trump, who subsumed the Tea Party, coopted the Republican Party, and waged the first Twitter presidential campaign in the later part of the decade.

Trump Takes to Twitter and Takes over a Party

Where the Tea Party upended Republican Party politics in the early years of the 2010s, Donald Trump consumed the party in the later portion of the decade by building an unbreakable bond with Republicans in the electorate. Much of his success could be attributed to the enormous following he developed on Twitter,

the medium that was Trump's communication lifeblood during his presidency and two presidential campaigns. Trump used Twitter to stay in the spotlight, establish himself as the primary gatekeeper of news, set the agenda for his administration, and motivate his followers to political action. So extensive was his use of Twitter and so central to his style of campaigning and governing that it is impossible to imagine the Trump years without it.

Because Twitter is designed to communicate brief ideas in real time, it provides skilled users with the opportunity to create an ongoing monologue with committed followers, which can expand into dialogues with other followers through reactions and retweets. But to use Twitter to maximum effect—to get tweets to go viral—requires spontaneity, irreverence, direct language, and a certain lack of restraint. These qualities came naturally to President Trump, who campaigned and governed as a disruptive agent opposed to the status quo. For conventional politicians, who need to be guarded in what they say, a Twitter feed could be a resource for disseminating information and keeping in touch with supporters. For someone like President Trump, the constant stream-of-consciousness contact was the basis for a deeper and more intimate virtual connection that helped cement the loyalty of his followers.

Trump's ability to command the attention of millions had profound ramifications for the Republican Party. When he sought the Republican presidential nomination in 2016, Trump was an outsider who was as critical of Republicans as Democrats. He aimed his populist rhetoric at party stalwarts like former Florida Governor Jeb Bush,[21] using his opponent's dynastic position as the son and brother of former Republican presidents to attack establishment privilege and—on Twitter—demean Bush as a "loser" and a "whiner"[22] as part of a larger effort to turn his supporters against the party status quo. Over time, the technique worked. Trump was once the target of vehement opposition by Republican fixtures like South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham and Texas senator Ted Cruz, but the loyalty exhibited by Trump's supporters in the electorate turned these erstwhile opponents in government into vocal supporters, even though Trump was unapologetic about attacks he leveled against them and the party orthodoxy they represented. They needed the support of Trump's loyalists, too, because over time the Republican base had become the Trump base.

Twitter also enabled Trump to rival traditional gatekeepers of information in the press and set the news agenda for his administration. By tweeting his thoughts directly to the public, he could sidestep journalists, editors and news producers and get his ideas directly to his supporters. The more outrageous and outspoken Trump's tweet storms, the harder it was for traditional journalists to

avoid covering them, thereby magnifying his Twitter presence through conventional news coverage, and ensuring that the agenda he set would reach beyond his followers to people who got their news from legacy media like television and newspapers.

Driving the news agenda through social media permitted President Trump to be an arbiter of facts, which proved to be a critical and controversial element of his presidency. All presidents are subject to critical coverage, but where his predecessors might have confronted negative stories head-on, President Trump would denounce news he did not like as false or fake. By one count, President Trump used the phrase "fake news" almost 2,000 times during his presidency.[23]

Most notably, in the final weeks of his administration, when he was insisting that the 2020 election was rigged, Trump repeatedly took to Twitter to denounce mainstream news reports of his defeat as fake. "The only thing more RIGGED than the 2020 Presidential Election is the FAKE NEWS SUPPRESSED MEDIA," he tweeted on December 4, 2020, using all caps to emphasize the emotional quality of the message.[24] "Everyone is asking why the recent presidential polls were so inaccurate when it came to me," Trump tweeted several weeks earlier, "Because they are FAKE, just like much of the Lamestream Media!"[25] On other occasions during his presidency, Trump blamed the media for presenting fake facts about the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller into his alleged ties to Russian interference into the 2016 election, allegations that he was accepting money in exchange for presidential pardons, unfavorable economic news, criticism of his administration's approach to the pandemic—essentially anything that conflicted with the positive narrative he wanted to present to the public.[26]

In addition to complicating the ability of social media users to decipher facts from falsehoods, the proliferation of claims about false news and direct challenges to the authority of journalists to report the facts raised doubts about the veracity of an independent press. Perhaps not surprisingly, rank-and-file Republicans at the end of the Trump administration were less likely than Democrats and independents to believe mainstream news reporting. A 2020 survey conducted by the Gallup Organization found that two-thirds of Republicans held an unfavorable view of the press and were less likely than others to believe news reports are objective.[27] If the onset of Internet politics at the turn of the century witnessed the political division of cyberspace into left and right blogospheres, which years later had developed into nonoverlapping political ecosystems, by the end of the century's second decade the social media revolution left the country divided by party over fundamental questions of factual truth.

Trump's Twitter assault on facts came to a dangerous and ironic end in the final days of his administration when he incited supporters at a rally outside the White House to march on Congress and challenge the certification of electoral votes that enshrined Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election.[28] The subsequent insurrection at the Capitol by his supporters, who believed through Trump's repeated claims on social media that the election had been stolen, resulted in Trump's permanent suspension from Twitter—along with Facebook and other large social media platforms—to prevent "the risk of further incitement of violence."[29] Within a week, the House of Representatives had impeached President Trump—for the second time—for incitement of insurrection. The vote was bipartisan, with ten Republicans joining every Democrat.

With the Republican Party divided and about to be turned out of power, the man who had dominated it for the previous five years was quiet. The Capitol rebellion had terminated his social media presence and silenced his voice. But the world had changed because of his aggressive use of social media tools and because of a revolution in the availability of information. Apart from providing the president with a loud and instantaneous bully pulpit, the constant presence of viral images and messages added an edgy and chaotic element to campaign politics and governance. More than simply engaging the base, viral content like memes and stories—sometimes containing false information, sometimes specifically planted by candidates or their surrogates—served to accentuate the division of the country into red and blue camps based on the social media people consumed.

Meanwhile, the campaigns and parties perfected the art of raising funds and messaging online, through targeted solicitation on social media sites like Facebook. The Trump and Biden campaigns both used microtargeting techniques that enabled messages to ricochet through echo chambers on the right and left that trace their roots to the right and left blogospheres of the prior decade but with far greater ability to influence by virtue of how fragmented the media environment has become and how much easier it is to acquire and analyze user information. Data-mining techniques, whereby the campaigns and parties could identify and micro-target supporters and opponents by analyzing patterns of online media use, gave them unprecedented access to granular information about voters and allowed them to use that information to customize their fundraising and turnout messages. Finding patterns in huge datasets enabled campaign planning with unprecedented precision. But it also allowed campaigns to target recipients with messages designed to inflame and motivate them to either give money or turn out on Election Day.

The Internet, which less than twenty years earlier was a curious new technology ready to be exploited for political purposes by the first groups that figured out how it worked, had by 2020 become the primary means by which parties and candidates communicated with voters and raised money. However, while it helped raise unprecedented amounts of campaign cash and mobilize voters at a rate unseen in modern times, social media also produced an information environment where increasingly people on both sides of the political divide stopped engaging with each other. A technology born of the hope that it would unite people around political action still holds that promise, but recent years have demonstrated just how alienating it can be when people are brought together around messages and ideas designed to divide as they mobilize.

CHAPTER 7

Campaign Finance and Transitional Political Parties

A S PARTIES ARE BUFFETED by a changing media environment, so also are they shaped by a gusher of money that has flooded the political system in breathtaking amounts. An avalanche of funds has strengthened and professionalized the national party committees, giving them unprecedented access to resources they lacked for much of their history and fueling a Hamiltonian-style nationalization of the parties. At the same time, individual candidates are also collecting unprecedented amounts of cash. Much of this money comes from individual donors contributing online, while mega-wealthy individuals have taken advantage of campaign finance rules that permit them to donate millions without any public knowledge.

These developments have added intensity to an ongoing debate about the role of money in our political system. Reformers view large and hidden campaign contributions as a vehicle for bending the system to the interests of contributors, which may be at odds with the interests of the broader public. They have suggested numerous proposals to correct this, including limits or bans on large-dollar contributions, public financing of federal campaigns, and better government enforcement and oversight of campaign finance laws. Their efforts have been countered by a Supreme Court that views campaign spending as a form of protected expression and a Congress that has been reluctant to alter the political playing field by tinkering with campaign finance rules, especially while under pressure from large contributors who do not want to see their influence undermined.

The debate over the appropriate role of money in politics can be boiled down to the following questions:

1. How much money given to a political candidate is too much?
2. Are corporate donations inherently corrupt?
3. What limits, if any, should be placed on corporate and/or individual donations to political candidates?

4. Should federal campaigns rely mostly on local contributions?
5. Is money a form of speech that deserves protection under the First Amendment?
6. If money is a constitutionally protected form of speech, does this protection permit unlimited contributions to political candidates?
7. At what point do large contributions become a form of political bribery?

Jeffersonian Localism and Early Campaigns

Early political campaigns were local affairs conducted through newspapers. During much of the nineteenth century, Jeffersonian localism defined every aspect of running for office: control of local newspapers, disbursement of local party jobs, and mobilization of local volunteers. It was an amateur enterprise, but it was highly effective.

As we saw in chapter 1, the surest way to win favorable attention for candidates in the early days of the republic was to own a newspaper or sponsor the editor. Thus, in 1791, Thomas Jefferson gave Philip Freneau a part-time clerkship in the State Department so that he would move to Philadelphia to become editor of the *National Gazette*, the paper that became the mouthpiece for Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party. Alexander Hamilton, meanwhile, was a major financial backer of the competing *Gazette of the United States*. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers were a major source of campaign expenditures. When a wealthy backer wanted to aid the presidential candidacy of James Buchanan in 1856, he contributed $10,000 to start a sympathetic newspaper. Likewise, Abraham Lincoln secretly purchased a small Illinois newspaper to advance his presidential ambitions in 1860.[1]

"Treating" was another common form of electioneering during the early days of the republic. Candidates would sponsor events at which voters would be treated to lavish feasts.[2] Thus, when George Washington ran for the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1751, he reportedly purchased a quart of rum, wine, beer, and hard cider for every voter in the district (a manageable task because there were only 391 voters).[3] In 1835, Ferdinand Bayard, a Frenchman traveling in the United States, commented that "candidates offer drunkenness openly to anyone who is willing to give them his vote."[4] Besides owning newspapers and treating political supporters, candidates also sent mailings to voters, printed pamphlets for distribution, and organized rallies and parades. By the 1840s, pictures, buttons, and novelty items were widely distributed.

Although it was costly to purchase newspapers and distribute campaign paraphernalia, collecting massive sums of money was unnecessary. Prior to 1828, only white males could vote, there were property qualifications in some states, and voting was even restricted in some places to those belonging to a particular religious denomination.[5] Fewer voters meant fewer expenditures. Modes of communication were limited to word of mouth and the print media. After the formation of the spoils system in the 1830s (whereby party workers were rewarded with government jobs), volunteers were called upon to organize parades and get voters to the polls. Entrenched party loyalties made it easy to identify supporters, as there was little partisan movement from one election to the next and straight-ticket voting was the norm.

Mark Hanna, the Campaign of 1896, and the Rise of Hamiltonian Nationalism

Mark Hanna is often credited with being the first campaign consultant in U.S. history, having orchestrated William McKinley's 1896 presidential victory.[6] He also helped transform the role of money in politics, once famously saying, "There are two things that are important in politics—the first is money, and I can't remember what the second one is."[7] This was an astonishing statement, given the secondary role of money in elections during the first century of our nation's history. Why did this change?

A tremendous surge in campaign funds coincided with the vast transformation of the U.S. economy following the Civil War. By the 1870s, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, the nation's industrial infrastructure was booming, and Americans were migrating to the nation's largest cities. Relationships were forged between party machines and captains of industry, in which the latter pumped money into party coffers with the understanding that elected officials would not interfere with the free market.

The election of 1896 marked a turning point in the tale of money and politics. William McKinley pledged to continue the GOP's laissez-faire economic policies, whereas William Jennings Bryan, McKinley's Democratic opponent, wanted more government regulation of business. Fearing a Democratic Party groundswell would threaten the free-market economic system should Bryan become president, Republicans mounted the best-bankrolled campaign to date. For the first time, corporations made political contributions directly from their company treasuries. Mark Hanna met with financiers like J.P. Morgan and John

D. Rockefeller to solicit funds.[8] The return was enormous, including $250,000 from Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company; $174,000 from western railroads; even $50,000 in cash from a single railroad executive.[9]

The Republicans' massive war chest, estimated at $3.5 million, allowed Hanna to sponsor hundreds of speakers for small gatherings and debates, produce more than 200 million pamphlets (the GOP headquarters employed over 100 full-time mail clerks) and hundreds of thousands of posters, buttons, and billboards; invest heavily in newspaper advertising; and hire legions of workers to register new Republicans and get them to the polls.[10] McKinley simply stayed at home in Canton, Ohio, where trainloads of supporters numbering 750,000 in total (or one out of every 20 voters), were brought to his front porch. Many carried envelopes of cash.[11] In September alone, McKinley and the Republicans raised $570,000, while the Democrats raised a mere $650,000 for their entire campaign.[12] Bryan accused McKinley of trying to buy the presidency,[13] but to no avail. McKinley won with 51.7 percent of the vote, the highest Republican percentage since the reelection of Ulysses S. Grant in 1872.[14]

Mark Hanna's efforts were significant in two ways. First, the 1896 election was the first time that systematic fund-raising techniques were used in a presidential campaign. No longer would party operatives wait for the money to come in; instead, they would go out and get it. Second, Hanna demonstrated that political advertising could rule the day. Word-of-mouth campaigning and relying on volunteers were becoming obsolete. Press releases, direct mail, billboards, soon radio, and later television and the Internet, would transform electioneering by creating national messages that were developed by strategists at the highest levels and could be disseminated to voters using new messaging tools.

In addition to a shift in campaign tactics, the US was experiencing a rapid expansion of the electorate thanks to immigration and women's suffrage. With more voters to reach, political parties needed more resources, and an age of aggressive fund-raising began. It was once reported that when a union leader came to a US senator to urge support for protections against child labor at the turn of the century, the senator supposedly replied, "Sam, you know damn well as I do that I can't stand for a bill like that. Why those fellows this bill is aimed at— those mill owners are good for $200,000 a year to the party. You can't afford to monkey with a business that friendly.[15]

Hanna and the Republican Party created a new type of political campaign in the image of Hamiltonian nationalism. By designing a centralized campaign structure and using new, top-down techniques to communicate with a mass electorate, Hanna and his colleagues began a rapid retreat from locally based

campaigning that grew with the passage of time and vastly transformed American politics. Going forward, political parties became professional organizations and a nexus for gathering large sums of money. Elections would be conducted by party professionals, and the party machines would exert considerable control over policymaking. Party bosses expected those in government to ante up, and anyone interested in shaping public policy was expected to woo them. Party coffers were filled through small numbers of huge contributions from so-called fat cats. By 1928, over half the funds in the Democratic and Republican treasuries came from contributions of $5,000 or more—a sum that could buy 10 family cars at that time.[16] The cornerstone of Hamiltonian parties is money—and lots of it.

Television Marketing and the Skyrocketing Costs of Campaigns

If the cost of elections rose during the Industrial Revolution, it skyrocketed during the technological revolution that has transformed American politics in the twenty-first century. In 2020, Joe Biden raised over $1.6 billion, with over $1 billion coming from individual donors to his campaign.[17] Donald Trump raised $1.045 billion, with $774 million coming from individual contributors.[18] Indeed, the cost of running for every political office has grown at a staggering rate. In 2020, more than *$7 billion* was spent on congressional races.[19]

The single greatest force behind these outsized sums is media expenditures. Most voters hear from politicians through television, radio, and social media, while the Internet allows campaigns to acquire digital information about individual voters. Advertising and information acquisition costs can be enormous. Veteran political strategist Roger Stone, later pardoned by Donald Trump for making false statements and tampering with witnesses in the federal investigation of Trump's 2016 campaign, explained why the costs of media advertising have risen exponentially:

There's so much competition in the marketplace in terms of information. There's information overload. There's 100 cable channels, there's digital TV, there's your tablets, your Netflix type sites, your Twitter, your Facebook. I mean, we're bombarded with information from everywhere. There's a magazine [and a website] for every discipline you can think of. You want a magazine for biking? There's a biker's magazine. You want a motorcycle magazine? There's a motorcycle magazine. If you're into fly-fishing, there's a fly-fishing magazine. Knitting, there's a knitting magazine. So, I mean, it's a lot harder to reach people because they have all this

information at their fingertips, and therefore everything takes greater rep-
etition, far greater than it used to, say, when television was in its infancy.[20]

The emergence of professional campaign consultants has also fueled election
costs. In 1896, Mark Hannah could singularly organize and run a presidential
campaign. Today, campaigns require a team of media gurus, pollsters, fundrais-
ing professionals, legal advisors, and direct mail experts. These professionals do
not come cheap. Consider what it cost Donald Trump to run for re-election.
During the first ten months of 2020, the Trump campaign spent $1.4 billion on
media professionals, legal bills, and direct payments to Trump-owned properties
for campaign events. These included $41 million for legal matters; $55 million
for payroll and associated fees, and $17 million for one-time campaign manager
Brad Parscale's digital and consulting firm. American Made Media Consultants,
a firm established by the Trump campaign to handle its advertising and paid
media, was paid a whopping $453 million. Because of this profligate spending,
by mid-October the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee
were left with only $223.5 million of the $1.6 billion they had raised since 2017.[21]

The Rise of Political Action Committees

Interest groups have played an important role in funding elections for over a
century. During the Industrial Revolution, businesses, trade associations, and
labor unions channeled large donations to parties and their candidates. Even
though reform measures limited direct contributions from corporations, banks,
and labor union, many loopholes existed. In 1943, the Congress of Industrial
Organizations (CIO) circumvented contribution restrictions by creating a sep-
arate fund to receive and spend voluntary contributions—a new organizational
unit it called the political action committee (PAC). It was legal, the CIO argued,
because none of the monies used to support the group or given to candidates
came directly from the labor union itself.

By the late 1950s, scores of businesses and professional associations began to
develop their own PACs.[22] But the real growth period began in the 1970s. In 1974,
there were roughly 600 PACs.[23] Today, 5,738 so-called "Super PACs" are regis-
tered with the Federal Election Commission. These Super PACs can receive un-
limited contributions from individuals, corporations, and labor unions and spend
that money independently of a specific campaign in support of a candidate. In
addition, 70,943 so-called "Hybrid PACs" are registered with the Federal Election

Commission. These Hybrid PACs solicit money from individuals, corporations, and labor unions, and use that money to support candidates for political office.[24]

Today, outside groups are a major source of funding for political campaigns. For example, in 2020, America First Action, Preserve America, and the Committee to Defend the President spent a combined total of $270 million on Trump's behalf.[25] Joe Biden's campaign had help from Future Forward, Priorities USA, and American Bridge, which spent a combined $368 million to advocate for his candidacy.[26]

Congress, the Supreme Court, and Campaign Finance

What difference does it make whether some outside groups or individuals give money during elections while others do not? One could argue that contributing money is one way citizens can participate in the democratic process. This argument is often heard from opponents of campaign finance reform who claim that the more money there is in electoral politics, the better off the system is. After all, they reason, is not the act of contributing money an exercise of freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment? Viewed from this perspective, the massive influx of money into campaigns is nothing more than democracy churning on all cylinders.

Most Americans do not share this upbeat view. In 2019, three-in-four Americans opposed Supreme Court decisions that allowed for unlimited amounts of money to directly support or oppose political candidates.[27] These results are hardly surprising, since there remains a long-standing belief that money plays a competing role in the development of public policy and should be subject to government regulation. Americans are suspicious of money in politics, as the vast majority never contribute to a candidate or a political party. According to a 2020 Pew Research survey, only 20 percent of Americans gave money to a candidate running for office in the past year.[28]

Prior to the Progressive Era, there were few efforts to curb the flow of money in elections. In 1867, Congress passed legislation prohibiting assessments on navy yard workers. Nine years later, the ban was extended to all federal employees.[29] The most prominent of these reforms occurred in 1883 when Congress, prompted by the 1881 assassination of President James A. Garfield by a disappointed office seeker, passed the Civil Service Reform Act. Besides creating the civil service, the law continued the ban on assessing federal government employees for political contributions.[30]

In 1907, Congress passed the Tillman Act, which made it a crime for any corporation or national bank to contribute to either congressional or presidential candidates. A Senate report concluded that "[t]he evils of the use of [corporate] money in connection with political elections are so generally recognized that the committee deems it unnecessary to make any argument in favor of the general purpose of this measure. It is in the interest of good government and calculated to promote purity in the selection of public officials."[31] Three years later, Congress required House candidates to disclose the source of their party committee contributions if they operated in two or more states—but only after the elections. The law, passed by a Republican-controlled Congress, was strengthened in 1911 when Democrats came to power. The new law established spending limits and required pre-election disclosure of finances in House and Senate races.[32]

The Teapot Dome scandal that gripped the Warren Harding Administration led to additional cries for reform. In 1925, Calvin Coolidge signed the Federal Corrupt Practices Act into law. This legislation required quarterly reports (even in nonelection years) of contributions to federal candidates and to multistate political committees. The law reaffirmed the spending limits, but it was easily circumvented as candidates established a multitude of supporting committees, thus making it hard to determine the total amount of receipts and expenditures in any given campaign.[33]

Another flurry of reform measures occurred during the late 1930s and early 1940s—most notably the Hatch Act of 1939, officially called the Clean Politics Act. This measure made it a crime for any federal employee to become an active political participant, and for anyone to solicit funds from people receiving federal relief. Within a year, several amendments were added—including the first federal limit on contributions from individuals (they could give no more than $5,000 to a candidate for federal office), and a prohibition on contributions from banks and corporations to include labor unions as part of the Taft-Hartley Act. Congress enacted the measure over the veto of President Harry S. Truman, who warned that the expenditure ban was a "dangerous intrusion on free speech."[34] During the Trump years, the Hatch Act was repeatedly violated as administration officials undertook political activities, even using the White House as a backdrop—violations that were not prosecuted by the Justice Department. Calls to reform the Hatch Act have become more frequent, but no legislation has been passed by Congress.

In fact, attempted campaign finance reforms have largely been meaningless. The flow of large sums of money into campaigns has not slowed down; rather, it is simply channeled along different paths.[35] Although the names given these statutes sound impressive, they failed to create public authorities responsible for

collecting the disclosure reports and prosecuting any illegal activity. Moreover, the laws were fraught with many loopholes. One was a provision that limited reporting requirements to "campaign periods," allowing contributors to evade the law by donating to candidates prior to the start of any designated period. Moreover, expenditure limits applied only to a particular candidate, not to the separate committees that sprang up on a candidate's behalf (e.g., "Friends to Elect Mary Smith to Congress"). Additionally, corporations evaded contribution prohibitions by reimbursing corporate executives who sent money to candidates. Under-the-table gifts were also commonplace. Finally, there was a lack of will among elected officials to enforce the existing regulations. There is no record of a single prosecution for campaign finance violations from the passage of the Corrupt Practices Act of 1925 until the 1970s.

Watergate and Campaign Finance Reform

By the 1970s, reform was back on the congressional agenda. Spending on television was increasing campaign costs, while incumbents from both parties were worried that well-financed challengers could connect with voters through the mass media and toss them out. The shocking disclosures of fat-cat contributions, including businessman Clement Stone's $3 million gift to Richard M. Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, added to the pressure for reform.

Two significant measures became law in 1971. The Revenue Act created a fund for presidential campaigns and allowed voters to check off a one-dollar donation on their tax forms to help support the fund (it was increased to three dollars in 2001), and the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) was an ambitious attempt to tighten reporting requirements and limit campaign media expenditures. Unlike prior disclosure laws, FECA mandated that all campaign expenditures and contributions of over $100 be disclosed, regardless of when they were given. Moreover, reports would be filed with the General Accounting Office and made public within 48 hours. Media expenditures—including television, radio, billboards, and newsprint—would be limited to $50,000, or 10 cents per voting-age resident (whichever amount was larger).[36]

The FECA did increase disclosure levels, but the law had little impact on the 1972 elections. As in the past, candidates found different channels through which to spend their funds. But the story of campaign finance reform was about to take a dramatic turn. Investigations of Nixon's involvement in the cover-up of the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Hotel revealed that the Committee to Reelect the President (CREEP) had

established its own secret fundraising program. Of the $63 million collected by Nixon, $20 million came from 153 donors who gave $50,000 or more. Commenting on the breadth of the Watergate scandal, John Gardner, head of the public interest group Common Cause, said: "Watergate is not primarily a story of political espionage, nor even of White House intrigue. It is a particularly malodorous chapter in the annals of campaign financing. The money paid to the Watergate conspirators before the break-in—and the money passed to them later [to keep quiet]—was money from campaign gifts."[37]

A shocked public, together with a Democratic-controlled Congress, led a reform effort and passed legislation establishing contribution limits and a regulatory system for enforcement (see Table 7.1). Despite his reservations, President Gerald R. Ford signed it into law, noting that "the times demand this legislation."[38]

A Challenge to the Supreme Court: Buckley v. Valeo

This moment of reform did not last long. As soon as FECA took effect in 1976, it was challenged in the courts. The case was brought by a diverse set of plaintiffs, including U.S. senator James Buckley, a conservative Republican from New York; US senator Eugene McCarthy, a liberal Democrat from Minnesota; the New York Civil Liberties Union; and *Human Events*, a conservative publication. In Buckley v. Valeo (Francis R. Valeo was the secretary of the Senate),[39] Buckley and his allies maintained that campaign spending was a form of speech protected by the First Amendment. The government argued that democracy required a level playing field, and this meant limits should be placed on both campaign contributions and expenditures.

On January 30, 1976, the Supreme Court found that some, but not all, of the FECA restrictions were constitutional. They let stand limits on how much money individuals and political committees could contribute; they permitted public financing of presidential elections, so long as it was voluntary (meaning that candidates could refuse public monies and spend their own campaign dollars instead); and they required disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures of more than $100. But the Supreme Court also struck down several features of the new law, including the overall spending caps; limits on what candidates and their spouses could contribute to their own campaigns; and limits on individual expenditures.[40] Concerning its rejection of overall spending limits, the Court noted, "A restriction on the amount of money a person or group can spend on political communication during a campaign necessarily reduces the quantity of expression by restricting the number of issues discussed, the depth of their exploration and the size of the audience reached."[41]

TABLE 7.1 Highlights of the 1974 Campaign Finance Reform

Created a Federal Election Commission consisting of six members (three Democrats and three Republicans) and charged them with enforcing federal election statutes.

Set an individual contribution limit of $1,000 per primary, runoff, and general election not to exceed $25,000 to all federal candidates annually.

Set a contribution limit of $5,000 per political action committee (PAC) to federal candidates with no aggregate limit.

Set a $1,000 independent expenditure limit on behalf of a federal candidate.

Banned any contributions to federal candidates from foreign sources.

Set a $10 million spending limit per presidential candidate for all presidential primaries.

Set a $20 million limit per presidential candidate for the general election races.

Set a $100,000 limit for US Senate primary candidates.

Set a $150,000 limit for US Senate general election races.

Set a $70,000 limit for US House primary races.

Set a $70,000 limit for US House general election.

Limited party spending to $10,000 per candidate in US House elections.

Limited party spending to $20,000 per candidate in US Senate elections.

Limited party spending to two cents per voter in presidential general elections.

Expanded public funding of presidential elections (both primary and general). Primary elections would allow private funds to be matched with public funds to a certain level.

Created an extensive list of disclosure and reporting requirements. Each campaign must have one central committee through which all contributions and expenditures on behalf of a candidate must be reported to the Federal Election Commission.

SOURCE: Mary W. Cohn, ed., *Congressional Campaign Finances: History, Facts, and Controversy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1992), 44–46. These were amendments to the 1971 FECA law.

Reforming the Reforms: The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2001

New reforms emerged from public opposition to the increased amounts of money given to candidates and campaigns during the 1980s and 1990s, largely from several novel types of campaign contributions which found their way around existing laws. One of these was "soft money," which was not regulated by

the Federal Election Commission. Soft money was collected by the national parties—including the Democratic National Committee, the Republican National Committee, and their corresponding House and Senate committees—and used for party-building activities ranging from public education to voter mobilization. "Hard money," in contrast, refers to contributions made by individuals to federal candidates that are subject to the caps imposed by FECA and are monitored by the Federal Election Commission.

From 1994 to 2000, the total amount of soft money raised by the Democratic and Republican parties rose more than fourfold from $102 million to $495 million.[42] Disgusted by the bipartisan evasion of FECA, consumer activist Ralph Nader ran for president in 2000, contending that the campaign finance system was broken and corrupted the system of checks and balances created by the U.S. Constitution. Said Nader: "If we don't have a more equitable distribution of power, there is no equitable distribution of wealth or income. And people who work hard will not get their just rewards. And the main way to shift power, if you had to have one reform, is public financing of public elections." Nader was not alone in his assessment. Elected officials from both parties agreed that the system was broken and in need of reform. Former senator Warren Rudman (R-New Hampshire) said it best: "You can't swim in the ocean without getting wet, you can't be part of this system without getting dirty." Even donors acknowledged that money bought access. As one of them put it, "As a result of my $500,000 soft money donation to the Democratic National Committee (DNC), I was offered the chance to attend events with [President Clinton], including events at the White House a number of times."[43]

Prior to the 2000 election, senators John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, and Russ Feingold, a Democrat from Wisconsin, led a bipartisan effort to change the campaign finance laws. They were joined in the House by Representatives Christopher Shays, a Republican from Connecticut, and Martin Meehan, a Democrat from Massachusetts. Spearheading the opposition was Senator Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky. Clinging to the idea that money is a form of free speech, McConnell, along with a handful of Republicans, filibustered the McCain-Feingold effort. Unless they could muster sixty votes needed to end a McConnell-led filibuster, campaign finance would go nowhere.

The election of 2000 was pivotal. Democrats made gains in both houses of Congress, with many of the newcomers pledging to "clean things up." Debate on the reform measure was finally set for March of 2001. After nearly two weeks of compromise, McCain and Feingold were able to break the filibuster and win over enough moderate Republicans by increasing the cap on individual contributions

from $1,000 to $2,000. But the battle was far from over. House Republicans offered an alternative to the Shays-Meehan plan that allowed contributions to the party committees above the proposed $90,000 limit. This less sweeping measure was meant to appeal to Black and Hispanic Democratic legislators, since the national party committees were instrumental in mobilizing minority communities to get out the vote. But Shays and Meehan knew that their bill would have to be identical to the one passed in the Senate to avoid a House-Senate conference committee that could potentially kill the measure. After months of further debate, Congress finally passed the legislation in 2002. McCain-Feingold, officially called the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) became law.

The final version of the law included a ban on contributions to any national political party. The bill also banned issue advocacy ads thirty days before primary elections and sixty days prior to a general election. However, the ban on soft money did not apply to PACs, which were free to raise unlimited amounts of money. Even so, the passage of McCain-Feingold created its own set of controversies. The very day that the BCRA was signed into law, Mitch McConnell and a host of other federal legislators, along with various interest groups and minor parties, challenged it in the federal courts. The core of their complaint was that McCain-Feingold represented an assault on free association and expression. This was based on the restrictions the new law placed on issue advocacy and expressed advocacy for a given candidate sixty days prior to an election.[44] Previously, the Supreme Court ruled that political parties could spend unlimited amounts on issue advocacy advertisements so long as they were not done in concert with any candidate's campaign.[45]

In the 2003 case of McConnell v. Federal Election Commission, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of keeping McCain-Feingold's ban on soft money contributions. Writing for a five-to-four majority, Justices John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor condemned the use of soft money in political campaigns:

> Just as troubling to a functioning democracy as classic *quid pro quo* corruption is the danger that officeholders will decide issues not on the merits or the desires of their constituencies but according to the wishes of those who have made large financial contributions. . . . The best means of prevention is to identify and remove the temptation. The evidence set forth . . . convincingly demonstrates that soft-money contributions to political parties carry with them just such a temptation.[46]

But the final paragraph of the majority opinion contained a prescient prediction: "Money, like water, will always find an outlet."[47] The flow of money into

campaigns would continue, and McConnell v. FEC would not be the last word from the Supreme Court on the subject of campaign finance.

Gutting the Reforms: The Supreme Court Weighs in

Evidence that the Supreme Court decision in McConnell v. FEC was beginning to fray mounted during George W. Bush's second term. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor retired, Chief Justice William Rehnquist died, and President Bush filled the vacancies with conservatives Samuel Alito and John Roberts. This rapid turnover shifted to Court to the right.[48]

By 2007, the Roberts-led Court struck down as unconstitutional the McCain-Feingold ban on using a candidate's name in issue advocacy advertisements thirty days before a primary and sixty days prior to a general election. In a five-to-four decision, the Supreme Court declared: "Discussion of issues cannot be suppressed simply because the issues may also be pertinent in an election. Where the First Amendment is implicated, the tie goes to the speaker, not the censor."[49] It was the first of several decisions that would effectively open the spigot for money to flow to parties and campaigns.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission. Four years later, the Supreme Court dealt an even more profound blow to campaign finance reform in the landmark 2010 case Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission. The case arose out of a campaign movie about then 2008 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton financed by the conservative group Citizens United. The film (called *Hillary, The Movie*) depicted Clinton in a negative light, claiming she was "driven by power," "steeped in sleaze," "deceitful," and "would lie about anything."[50] In January 2008, Citizens United sought to broadcast its movie on video-on-demand channels provided by cable service providers. Citizens United wanted to purchase advertisements to promote the film. Both were scheduled to air within thirty days of the first presidential primaries, violating the provision in the McCain-Feingold Act that prohibited third-party groups from broadcasting advertisements advocating either for or against a candidate immediately before an election. Although the words "vote against" were not found in the film, the message was clear that Clinton should be defeated.

The Supreme Court used the case to issue a sweeping five-to-four decision claiming that the First Amendment included the right of corporations and others to engage in free unregulated speech,[51] and determined that the portion of McCain-Feingold act making it a felony to expressly advocate either for or against candidates (either thirty days before a primary or sixty days before a

general election) violated the First Amendment.[52] Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy declared: "No sufficient governmental issues justified limits on the political speech of non-profit corporations. . . . For these reasons, political speech must prevail against laws that would suppress it, whether by design or inadvertence. . . . There is simply no support for the view that the First Amendment, as originally understood, would permit the suppression of political speech by media corporations."[53]

Virtually the only portion of the McCain-Feingold law the Court left intact was its disclosure requirements. Justice Kennedy found that disclosure did not inhibit political speech, noting that "disclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way. This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages."[54] But even this point was vigorously contested by Justice Clarence Thomas, who argued that disclosures of political contributions supporting California's Proposition 8, a 2008 law that overturned the California Supreme Court's decision legalizing gay marriage, resulted in intimidation and harassment. Said Thomas: "I cannot endorse a view of the First Amendment that subjects citizens of this Nation to death threats, ruined careers, damaged or defaced property, or pre-emptive and threatening warning letters as the price for engaging in core political speech, the primary object of First Amendment protection."[55]

The majority view was countered by Justice John Paul Stevens, who maintained that Congress was entirely correct to view unregulated sums of campaign money as a corrupting influence:

> [O]ver the course of the past century Congress has demonstrated a recurrent need to regulate corporate participation in candidate elections to "[p]reserv[e] the integrity of the electoral process, preven[t] corruption, . . . sustai[n] the active, alert responsibility of the individual citizen, protect the expressive interests of shareholders, and [p]reserve[e] . . . the individual citizens' confidence in government. . . . Time and again, we have recognized these realities in approving measures that Congress and the States have taken.[56]

Stevens noted that corruption "can take many forms," adding, "Bribery may be the paradigm case. But the differences between selling a vote and selling access is a matter of degree, not kind. And selling access is not qualitatively different from giving special preference to those who spent money on one's behalf."[57] Thus, he argued that unrestricted campaign dollars would result in widespread

public "cynicism and disenchantment, an increased perception that large spenders 'call the tune' and a reduced 'willingness of voters to take part in democratic governance.'"[58] In a parting shot, Stevens bluntly stated: "While American democracy is imperfect, few outside the majority of this Court would have thought its flaws included a dearth of corporate money in politics."[59]

McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission. In 2014, the Supreme Court took aim at the contribution limits in the McCain-Feingold law. The vehicle was a case involving Shaun McCutcheon, an Alabama resident who donated to various Republican Party committees, including the Republican National Committee and its congressional counterparts. In the 2011-2012 cycle, McCutcheon contributed $33,088 to sixteen federal candidates, and wanted to contribute to twelve more Republicans running for congressional office, seeking to give each a symbolic $1,776 contribution. The Alabama Republican also contributed $27,328 to several non-candidate committees, and $25,000 in total to the Republican National Committee, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, and the National Republican Congressional Committee. McCutcheon said his objective was to encourage Republican candidates to adhere to the doctrine of "smaller government and more freedom."[60]

But McCutcheon wanted to spend even more and was forbidden from doing so by a portion of the McCain-Feingold law that capped individual contributions to all federal candidates at $48,600 and limited individual contributions to political parties to $74,600. Joined by the Republican National Committee, McCutcheon contended these limits violated his First Amendment rights. In McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission, the Supreme Court sided with McCutcheon. The five-to-four decision left intact limits on individual contributions to specific candidates for federal office but lifted the $48,600 and $74,000 individual limits placed on total contributions to all candidates and to political parties respectively.

Chief Justice Roberts spoke for the majority:

> To require one person to contribute at lower levels because he wants to support more candidates or causes is to penalize the individual for robustly exercising his First Amendment rights. In assessing the First Amendment interests at stake, the proper focus is on an individual's right to engage in political speech, not a collective conception of the public good. The whole point of the First Amendment is to protect individual speech that the majority might prefer to restrict, or that legislators or judges might not view as useful to the democratic process.[61]

Roberts added that the only congressional interest when it came to regulating campaign money is preventing quid pro quo corruption. But allowing individuals, including McCutcheon, to spend large sums of money does not fall within that purview: "no matter how desirable it may seem, it is not an acceptable governmental objective to 'level the playing field,' or to 'level electoral opportunities,' or to 'equalize the financial resources of candidates.'"[62]

In his dissent, Justice Stephen Breyer noted that the decision "creates a loophole that will allow a single individual to contribute millions of dollars to a political party or to a candidate's campaign. Taken together with *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* . . . today's decision eviscerates our Nation's campaign finance laws, leaving a remnant incapable of dealing with the grave problems of democratic legitimacy that those laws were intended to resolve."[63]

Aftermath: A Torrent of Cash

Not surprisingly, the flow of money into campaign coffers has escalated with each passing year. In 2000, George W. Bush became the first Republican presidential candidate to refuse federal financing for his primary campaign.[64] In 2004, Democrat Howard Dean raised an astounding $45 million, largely from small online contributions, becoming the first Democratic primary candidate to forego federal matching funds.[65] In 2008, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton raised more money than all their Democratic competitors *combined*.[66] That fall, Obama became the first major party nominee to forego federal financing of his general election campaign. Four years later, both Obama and Mitt Romney eschewed federal funding of their campaigns. In 2016, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton did the same, as did Trump and Joe Biden in 2020. Federal funding of presidential contenders—either in the primaries or general election—has become essentially meaningless because candidates can raise so much money from individual donors either in large or small quantities. In 2020, the average donation to the Trump campaign and related party committees supporting them was $71; similarly, the average donation to Biden's candidacy and related party committees was $76.[67] Because serious candidates are no longer accepting federal funds, there has been a significant decline in the number of citizens checking off the three-dollar contribution on their tax returns—down from 28 percent in 1976 to 4 percent in 2018.[68]

Meanwhile, money continues to flow in other ways designed to evade federal laws. So-called 527 groups, a name that refers to a provision in the federal tax code, are one means. These tax-exempt organizations are not subject to any

limits in the amounts they receive or how they spend them. Citizens United, on the right, and MoveOn.org, on the left, are examples of such organizations. In 2020, progressive 527 groups spent $1.568 billion to advocate or oppose ideologically compatible candidates; conservative organizations spent $1.272 billion.[69]

Campaign money has found several other creative ways to flow like water. So-called 501c groups (also named after a provision of the Internal Revenue Service code), labor unions, trade associations, or social welfare organizations can raise and spend virtually unlimited sums of money so long as it is not their "primary activity" or "major purpose."[70] The principal difference between 527 groups and 501c groups is that 527s are required to disclose the identities of their donors; 501cs are not. Moreover, 501cs are not required to disclose their expenditures. This so-called "dark money" has become an important factor in campaigns—an avalanche of funds that rivals or even exceeds reported small-dollar donations from individuals. The public does not get to see who is contributing dark money or how it is spent. Some wealthy individuals with strong political interests, like oil magnates and Republican donors Charles and David Koch, find this to be a preferred means of exercising their political influence without making their intentions (or dollars) known to the public.[71]

Dark money flows even when there are no active campaigns underway. As President Biden was seeking congressional enactment of the infrastructure proposals in his American Jobs Plan and Build Back Better plan, dark money groups called Unite the Country Now, Building Back Together, the American Working Families Action Fund, and Real Recovery Now! were planning to spend millions in unreported cash advocating Biden's plans. Amanda Loveday, one of the Democratic operatives working with Unite the Country Now, said her group intended "to expand our efforts beyond our election work to educating Americans about how President Biden and his administration is getting America back on track and building better opportunities for middle-class Americans."[72]

Any possibility that either Citizens United or McCutcheon would be overturned vanished when Donald Trump added three conservative justices to the Supreme Court. Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett are all likely to uphold the Court's position on campaign finance laws. Likewise, Congress has been unable to pass significant reforms that might withstand the free speech issues raised by the Court. Republican-controlled Congresses have blocked any effort to address the effects of money in politics. Democratic-controlled Congresses have suffered a similar fate. Any legislation that would make it to a president's desk has been blocked by the Senate filibuster.

And should a Republican occupy the White House, any proposed law that might make it there is subject to an all-but-certain veto.

But limited prospects for success have not dampened congressional reform efforts. The "For the People Act," which passed the House of Representatives in 2021, would ban campaign contributions from foreign nationals, require additional disclosure of outside groups sponsoring political advertisements, ban dark money by requiring all organizations to disclose their large donors, and provide public funds to finance all federal campaigns for office. The measure would also break a longstanding partisan deadlock on the Federal Election Commission, which has all but stopped enforcing campaign law violations, by reducing the number of commissioners from six to five. Federal Election Commissioner Ellen Weintraub has called the agency dysfunctional, as irreconcilable ideological differences between Democratic and Republican commissioners have brought the FEC to a standstill.[73]

When the For the People Act reached the Senate, all fifty Democrats voted to debate the measure and all fifty Republicans opposed, far short of the sixty votes needed to prevent a filibuster. The future of the bill will turn on the willingness of Democrats to eliminate or modify the sixty-vote threshold and enable the measure to advance to a vote. Outside groups mobilized to pressure senators to act, but the Senate rejected any modification of the sixty-vote threshold needed to pass any reforms. Absent a change of mind, the status quo will remain in place and an ever-higher deluge of dollars will continue its cascade to campaigns and the political parties who sponsor them.

Elected Officials in an Age of Hyper-Partisanship

IN THE LATE EVENING HOURS of January 6, 2021, following the attack on the US Capitol by a mob of angry citizens incited by Donald Trump and enraged by what they believed was the theft of the 2020 election, members of Congress resumed the work of certifying the electoral votes that would finalize Joe Biden's presidential victory. A bitter partisanship hung heavily over the proceedings. Eight Republican senators joined with 139 House Republicans to challenge the electoral votes from Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin based on the same false claims that instigated the rebellion just hours earlier.[1] Just one week later, the House voted to impeach Trump a second time, charging him with sedition and inciting a riot. Every Democrat supported impeaching Trump; only ten Republicans joined them.

Partisanship has rarely been this toxic, but the reinvention of American parties as Hamiltonian-like national organizations has upended the way Congress and the presidency operate. It has turned congressional party leaders into partisan national figures, giving them a national prominence that is almost unprecedented in American history, and has elevated the importance of the president's role as party leader. Congress was designed to be a relatively decentralized Jeffersonian-like institution; partisanship has transformed it into a centralized body that Hamilton might have praised. The result is a de facto "responsible party" system where party members vote in lockstep and exhibit the kind of party discipline one would expect to find in parliamentary systems like that of Great Britain. But this pseudo-parliamentary approach has been grafted onto the presidential system set forth in the US Constitution with its separation of executive and legislative powers that assumed institutional loyalty rather than partisan allegiance.

The result is an angry gridlock. Extreme party discipline exhibited by members of Congress reflects a hyper-partisanship that has made it extraordinarily difficult for Congress to act. Majorities and minorities both have tools they can use to obstruct the other side when partisanship demands that the other side not get its way. In Congress, the majority party gets to chair all the committees

and determine the legislative agenda. This gives the majority party tremendous authority over policy outcomes and intensifies partisan polarization. At the same time, the Senate's supermajority requirement of sixty votes to pass non-budgetary laws makes it simple for unified minorities to derail even widely popular legislation.

It was not supposed to work like this. As we have seen, the writers of the US Constitution eschewed political parties and warned that party competition corrupts leaders and prevents them from acting in the national interest. This is why political parties are not mentioned in the Constitution, why federal institutions like Congress and the Electoral College were designed without political parties in mind, and why George Washington warned that partisan conflict could endanger the republic, agreeing with Alexander Hamilton that it was best to select leaders based on their character as distinguished citizens concerned with the national interest.

This chapter examines the operation of the party-in-government in an age of hyper-partisanship. We will explore how partisanship has turned Congress into a sclerotic institution and examine the elevation of the president's role as national party spokesperson. Over the years, presidents have promised to put the interests of country ahead of their party, and this has been possible to do in less divisive times. In the best of cases, party allegiances can even boost a president's effectiveness. But at moments like ours when the country is deeply divided, the Framer's concerns are validated, as roiling partisanship makes effective governing difficult, if not impossible.

The President as Party Leader

In a supercharged partisan atmosphere, the president's party leadership role can assume outsized importance, especially when it comes to advancing their party's agenda, which is set by the president and ratified by Congress. In 2009, no Republicans voted for Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), which was enacted entirely by Democrats. In 2017, Donald Trump received unanimous Republican support for his $1.4 trillion tax cut legislation. Among Democrats, no Senator supported the law, and in the House just twelve Republicans opposed it.[2] Joe Biden's ambitious American Relief Plan to combat the COVID-19 pandemic made its way to the president's desk thanks to overwhelming Democratic support. In the House, only one Democrat opposed the measure while every Republican voted no. In the Senate, the bill won the backing of every Democrat but no Republicans.

In addition to being important, the party leader role can also be divisive in times of extreme partisanship. With voters unlikely to split their tickets between presidential and congressional candidates, members of Congress of the president's party are likely to come from states carried by the president. Presidential party leadership exercised under these circumstances can serve to intensify partisan divisions, as shared partisan interests between the president and members of Congress often override institutional loyalties. In 2020, only voters in Maine split their tickets between the presidency and the Senate, choosing Democrat Joe Biden and reelecting Republican Susan Collins.[3] Voters in every other state aligned their Senate preferences with their presidential vote.

Presidents have been party leaders as long as there have been political parties, but the role is not especially intense in less-polarized times when political parties are viewed as necessary mechanisms that make government work rather than opposite camps engaged in zero-sum conflict. In his 1913 inaugural address, when Democrats held the presidency and both houses of Congress for only the second time since the Civil War, Woodrow Wilson acknowledged his role as party leader, saying: "No one can mistake the purpose for which the Nation now seeks to use the Democratic Party. It seeks to use it to interpret a change in its own plans and point of view."[4] More than a decade later, a conservative Republican president, Herbert Hoover, likewise saw his party as an indispensable partner: "We maintain party government not to promote intolerant partisanship but because opportunity must be given for the expression of the popular will, and organization provided for the execution of its mandates. It follows that Government both in the executive and legislative branches must carry out in good faith the platform upon which the party was entrusted with power."[5]

Becoming leader of one's party is one of the most important roles assumed by any president. As political scientist Clinton Rossiter noted: "No matter how fondly or how often we may long for a President who is above the heat of political strife, we must acknowledge resolutely his right and duty to be leader of his party. He is at once the least political and most political of all heads of government."[6] Presidential candidates ascend to party leadership upon accepting the nomination of their party, and if elected they become the face and voice of their party while in office. Presidents nominate party stalwarts to chair their party's national committee, and their choices are automatically ratified. As party leader, presidents set the legislative agenda, command the television airwaves, assume a dominant social media presence, and often dictate the political discussion.

Some presidents have used their role as party leader to great effect. In his inaugural address, Franklin Roosevelt called for "action, and action now," noting

that the Great Depression created conditions whereby he would "wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe."[7] When Roosevelt's bank reform bill was introduced shortly afterwards, a Democratic House member reportedly said: "Here's the bill. Let's pass it!"[8] And that's what happened without a word of the new law being read by most legislators. In a similar way, unified Democrats passed President Biden's nearly $2 trillion American Rescue Plan designed to combat the economic crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Echoing FDR, Biden declared, "I am going to act, and I am going to act fast."[9]

Party unity allowed Ronald Reagan to change the direction of the country when he assumed the presidency in 1981, rallying fellow Republicans to support tax cuts, increased defense spending, and higher federal deficits—dramatically shifting priorities from the previous five decades of liberal government. In 2001, George W. Bush took a page from Reagan and won quick congressional approval of tax cuts during a five-month period when Republicans controlled both houses of Congress and were united in supporting their new president.[10]

Some presidents have not worn the role of party leader well. Richard Nixon cast the Republican party aside and created his own personal organization, the Committee to Reelect the President, which became ensnared in the Watergate scandal. Barack Obama did little to build his party's brand at the state level, presiding over the loss of thirteen governorships and over 800 state legislative seats—the worst performance for an incumbent party since Dwight Eisenhower.[11] Donald Trump was more vested in his own fate than in the fortunes of the Republican Party. Following his reelection defeat, Trump complicated Republican chances of holding onto their Senate majority by not wholeheartedly campaigning for the party's candidates in two decisive Georgia Senate races.

The Party in Congress

Just as a president's party affiliation counts for nearly everything in a supercharged political environment, political parties matter more than ever in today's Congress. Parties determine the leaders of the House and Senate. The majority party controls all committee and subcommittee chairs, and committee chairs are expected to support their party's candidates and raise money to help elect them. Candidate recruitment, once a Jeffersonian process decentralized around state and local parties, has evolved into a Hamiltonian process centralized around national party campaign committees, who recruit candidates and shower them with cash. This gives the national party committees outsized responsibility in

congressional politics, and they do not hesitate to insert themselves into selecting those House and Senate candidates they believe have the best chance of winning.

Congressional parties developed almost immediately after the US Constitution was ratified in response to the philosophical divisions that arose over major issues during the first years of the constitutional republic. We have seen how Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, rapidly unified in opposition to their Democratic-Republican rivals, led by Thomas Jefferson. As their policy disagreements intensified, party voting quickly became the norm. From the Third United States Congress that convened in 1793 through the Seventh Congress that ended ten years later, Federalists voted together between 83 and 90 percent of the time. Likewise, Democratic-Republicans voted together between 73 and 80 percent of the time.

Looking at this period, political scientist John F. Hoadley writes that congressional party development passed through four distinct stages: (1) factionalism, (2) polarization, (3) expansion, and (4) institutionalization. In the first stage, factions developed and were centered on a variety of disparate issues and charismatic personalities. But these divisions were rarely organized and lasted only a short while. In the second stage, the factions stabilized into permanent groups that opposed each other on a broad range of issues. During the expansion phase, the public was drawn into partisan arguments. Finally, in the institutionalization phase, a permanent linkage was made among the party organizations, the party-in-the-electorate, and the party-in-government.[12]

Formalized party structures have developed over the centuries in Congress as well as in forty-nine state legislatures (Nebraska has a nonpartisan unicameral legislature). Both parties meet every two years at the beginning of each congressional session to select House and Senate leaders. The senior leader in the House of Representatives is the Speaker, the only constitutionally mandated leadership position that technically could be filled by anyone (the Constitution doesn't even require the Speaker to be a sitting member of Congress) so long as she is the choice of the majority party.[13] The Speaker sets the agenda for the House, rules on points of order, announces results of votes, refers legislation to committees, names lawmakers to serve on the committees, and maintains order and decorum. By controlling the powerful Rules Committee and chairing her party's committee assignment panel, the Speaker can bestow (or withhold) tangible and intangible rewards to members of both parties.

Although Republicans and Democrats will nominate candidates, only the majority party will have enough votes needed to elect the Speaker. The losing minority party candidate becomes the minority leader, while the House majority

leader serves as second in command and works closely with the Speaker. House majority and minority whips, along with their deputies, encourage party discipline, gather intelligence, promote attendance at important votes and party events, maintain headcounts to make sure legislation has enough support to pass, persuade colleagues to support party-sponsored measures, and forge lines of communication between the rank-and-file and party leaders. Each party has policy and campaign committees, whose chairs round out the House leadership. Policy committees develop a legislative plan, while campaign committees raise and distribute funds to help their party members win reelection.

Because partisan loyalty requires fidelity to the party caucus's choice, defections on leadership votes or other matters of partisan importance are especially rare, and bucking the party's leadership can generate serious consequences. In 2021, Congresswoman Liz Cheney held the position of House Republican Conference chair, the third-highest leadership rank in the minority party. But Cheney was appalled at the Capitol insurrection and voted to impeach Donald Trump, whom she held responsible—a position at odds with her fellow Republican leaders and most of the Republican caucus. House Republicans were so incensed that they took the unusual step of voting to remove Cheney from her leadership position, replacing her with New York congresswoman and Trump loyalist Elise Stefanik, who promised to work closely with the Republican leadership team. In an equally unusual move, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi subsequently appointed Cheney to a select committee investigating the events of January 6, which she established when congressional Republicans balked at a bipartisan investigation. It is rare for a party leader to assign a member of the opposition to a committee or for a member to accept such a nomination. Ostensibly a bipartisan choice, Pelosi was playing to the hyper-partisan conditions that saw Cheney expelled from Republican leadership in the first place by using the Cheney nomination to claim Republican support for an investigation that Republicans sorely wanted to avoid.

In the Senate, the Constitution stipulates that the vice president serves as the presiding officer and, in case of a tie, casts the deciding vote. In practice, the vice president attends Senate sessions only on ceremonial occasions or when votes are expected to be close. During eight years as vice president, Joe Biden never had to break a tie. However, by June of 2021, with each party holding fifty Senate seats, Vice President Kamala Harris had already cast six tie-breaking votes.[14]

When the vice president is absent, the Constitution stipulates that a "president pro tempore" preside. By custom, this officer is a member of the majority party with the longest continuous service. Today, that person is Pat Leahy, a

TABLE 8.1 Party Leadership Positions in the House and Senate, 117th Congress

House	Senate
Speaker: Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	Majority Leader: Chuck Schumer (D-NY)
Majority Leader: Steny Hoyer (D-MD)	Majority Whip: Richard Durbin (D-IL)
Majority Whip: Jim Clyburn (D-SC)	Minority Leader: Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
Minority Leader: Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)	Minority Whip: John Thune (R-SD)
Minority Whip: Steve Scalise (R-LA)	President Pro Tempore: Pat Leahy (D-VT)
Minority Conference Chair: Elise Stefanik (R-NY)	

Vermont Democrat who was first elected to the Senate in 1974. In practice, junior members of the Senate typically preside over the chamber because the job is considered more of a chore than an honor.

As in the House, both parties in the Senate separately choose their leaders biennially by secret ballot. The Senate majority leader heads the majority party; the Senate minority leader leads the opposition. The remaining Senate leadership posts are much the same as in the House. There are whip organizations and chairs of policy committees and campaign committees. Table 8.1 notes the leadership of both parties in the 117th Congress.

Divided Parties in Congress, 1937–1994

For much of American history, there was sufficient ideological overlap between the parties that interparty coalitions were decisive in determining legislative outcomes. During most of the twentieth century, *intra-party* divisions required members of Congress to seek allies from outside their parties to pass legislation. From 1937 until 1994, Congress was functionally controlled by a coalition of "Dixiecrats"—an alliance of conservative Southern Democrats and old-guard Republicans who opposed Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, especially when it came to civil rights legislation. Virginia Democrat Howard Smith was a potent symbol of the Dixiecrat coalition. As chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee, Smith refused to consider legislative proposals presented by

Democratic presidents and congressional leaders and even opposed the elections of John F. Kennedy in 1960 and Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. With Smith and the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition in opposition, President Kennedy (who had previously served in both the House and Senate) lamented:

> The fact is that the Congress looks more powerful sitting here than it did when I was there in Congress. But that is because when you are in Congress you are one of 100 in the Senate or one of 435 in the House. So, the power is divided. But from here I look at Congress, particularly the bloc action, and it is a substantial power.[15]

As Kennedy's frustrations demonstrate, it can be challenging for presidents to overcome partisan obstacles in Congress. It can take a grave national crisis (such as both World Wars, the Great Depression, the September 11 terrorist attacks, or the COVID-19 pandemic), a rare foreign policy consensus (as was the case during the cold war), or a period of political abnormality (such as Lyndon Johnson's 1964 Democratic landslide or Ronald Reagan's 1980 Republican sweep) to overwhelm the congressional tendency for delay and inaction.

Advocacy for Responsible Party Government

By the mid-twentieth century, the inability of both parties to produce a truly party-oriented government frustrated political scientists and led them to search for ways to achieve greater party accountability. Those who believed parties should have the decisive role in making public policy advocated for "responsible party government," where the party in power manages the government and enacts the program spelled out in its platform. For its part, the opposition party develops alternative policies and makes its case to the voters. At the next election, the public is asked to judge whether the party in power has done a good job and which party has the better program for the future.

The doctrine of responsible party government was best expressed in a 1950 report commissioned by the American Political Science Association (APSA) titled *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System.*[16] This report was the capstone of a multiyear effort by the APSA-sanctioned Committee on Political Parties, consisting of the leading party scholars of that time. In a dramatic departure from the vision of the founders, it treated parties as "indispensable instruments of government."[17] and stated that if the parties were in trouble, so was the nation's system of government. To support this claim, the report noted doubts that surrounded Democratic president Harry S. Truman's ability to lead following

the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the division of power created by the 1946 elections when Republicans assumed control of Congress while Democrats held the presidency, and the inability of either branch to agree on much-needed civil rights legislation. By the time the report was published in 1950, the APSA committee concluded that both parties had disintegrated to the point where they could no longer effectively address the problems facing the country. The report warned that unless the party system was overhauled, three disastrous consequences would follow: (1) the delegation of "excessive responsibility to the president," who would have to generate support for new public initiatives through personal efforts without the benefit of party; (2) continued disintegration of both major parties caused by their relative ineffectiveness; and (3) a presidential-congressional logjam that "might set in motion more extreme tendencies to the political left and the political right."[18]

In the decades following its publication, party scholars extolled the report for its analysis of the problems parties faced, and they saw its warning of a weaker party system fulfilled in a more powerful but party-less presidency. In reality, the APSA committee stifled what was once a lively debate about the role parties should play in government that began at the turn of the twentieth century. Back then, scholars viewed the responsible party doctrine with considerable skepticism. As one wrote, "This theory [of responsible party government] appeared alluring enough to be adopted by some writers of prominence, and expanded in certain cases, with brilliancy of literary style. It has, however, one defect: it is not borne out by the facts."[19]

One early advocate of responsible parties was Woodrow Wilson. A prominent political scientist who served as APSA president before he was president of the United States, Wilson told the Virginia Bar Association in 1897: "I, for my part, when I vote at a critical election, should like to be able to vote for a definite line of policy with regard to the great questions of the day—not for platforms, which Heaven knows, mean little enough—but for men known and tried in public service; with records open to be scrutinized with reference to these very matters; and pledged to do this or that particular thing; to take a definite course of action. As it is, I vote for nobody I can depend upon to do anything—no, not even if I were to vote for myself."[20] A decade later, Wilson added: "There is a sense in which our parties may be said to have been our real body politic. Not the authority of Congress, not the leadership of the President, but the discipline and zest of parties has held us together, has made it possible for us to form and to carry out national programs."[21]

The doctrine of responsible party government held a powerful grip on mid-twentieth century scholars, even as events made the idea of a strong party-in-government unlikely at the time. During forty consecutive years of Democratic Party control of the House of Representatives from 1954 to 1994, responsible party government had little meaning. Instead of relying on their party to win, Democrats used the tools of incumbency to preserve their offices. Congressional staffs became a kind of permanent campaign staff—answering mail, acting as ombudsmen, and serving as the "eyes and ears" of the legislator in the district. Money also helped Democrats win, as interest groups steered their dollars to all-but-certain-to-win incumbents.

But once in Congress, Democrats ignored party appeals. Southerners had long abandoned their Democratic loyalties, as exemplified by the emergence of the Dixiecrat coalition. By the 1970s, Democrats began stripping congressional leaders of their powers. Following the Watergate-dominated elections of 1974, a crop of newly elected Democrats was determined to sacrifice party leadership for the purpose of more openness and accountability. They flexed their muscle by deposing three incumbent committee chairs in a bold repudiation of the once ironclad seniority rule that assured the chairmanship to the most senior committee member of the majority party. Moreover, they adopted a Subcommittee Bill of Rights that reduced the power of the Speaker and the committee chairs. These changes allowed committee Democrats to pick their chairs and to fix the jurisdictions of subcommittees so that their ability to control certain subjects could not be given to another committee by party leaders. They also gave each subcommittee a budget it controlled, created more staff positions, and guaranteed members of every committee at least one choice subcommittee assignment. These reforms stripped recalcitrant conservative Southern Dixiecrats of their jealously guarded powerful committee chairmanships. But in so doing, reform-minded Democrats fragmented power within their own party.

By 1994, party leadership in Congress was at a low ebb. A series of weak Democratic speakers were held hostage by stubborn committee chairs who were quite willing to resist demands for party loyalty. Bill Clinton, who had high hopes that unified Democratic Party control of the presidency and Congress would result in significant legislative accomplishments, found those hopes dashed when his 1993 healthcare initiative went down in flames. The Democratic Party was repudiated in the 1994 midterm contests, as voters handed control of the House to the Republicans for the first time in forty years.

The Arrival of Responsible Party Government, 1994–Present

The 1995 Republican takeover of Congress was more than a shift from one party to another. The incoming seventy-three Republican freshmen differed significantly from their predecessors in both style and ideological persuasion. Stylistically, many saw themselves as "citizen politicians" dispatched by their constituents to Washington, DC, for a brief period before coming home. To fortify themselves from becoming too comfortable in the nation's capital, many Republican newcomers chose to live in their congressional offices, sleeping on their couches by night and showering in the House gymnasium by day. Their choice not to live year-round in (or near) the capital precluded them from developing the close personal relationships that could smooth over professional differences and maintain collegiality—a stark difference from the past. During the 1960s, for example, House Republican leader Gerald R. Ford moved with his wife, Betty, from their native Michigan to Alexandria, Virginia, where they raised their four children alongside other congressional families. Once, President Lyndon Johnson called from the White House during a Thanksgiving recess and thought he had reached Ford in Grand Rapids when, in fact, Ford was just a few miles away.[22]

But it was in their politics that the Republican freshmen were uniquely different. Motivated by conservative principles, the 1994 class was especially responsive to pleas to keep the faith when it came to implementing their legislative agenda. Of thirty-three House roll calls taken in 1995, House GOP members were *unanimous* on sixteen. For the entire series of roll calls, the median number of Republican dissents was *one*.[23] On average, 97 percent of the Republican freshmen voted in lockstep with their party, and no one fell below 90 percent.[24]

This uniformity gave Speaker Newt Gingrich an opportunity to assume powers that none of his Democratic predecessors dared to imagine. He twice passed over the ranking Republican on the Judiciary and Commerce committees and installed his own loyalists as committee chairs.[25] On the all-important Appropriations Committee, Gingrich let his colleagues know that he was in charge by promoting a Republican who was *fifth* in seniority to be its chair.[26] Then, Gingrich required each Republican committee member sign a "letter of fidelity" that gave him the final say over how much the federal budget would be cut."[27]

Gingrich rewarded his freshmen firebrands with unusual access. In a highly irregular move, the most powerful and exclusive committees of the House—Rules, Ways and Means, and Appropriations—got new freshmen members over the objections of their Republican chairs. As one grateful recipient observed,

"Newt really enjoys seeing some of us work because he sees the same rabble-rouser that he was a few years ago. Without Newt, the class wouldn't be such a dynamic class. Newt Gingrich asks: 'What do the freshmen think?' And he's giving us more than anyone else would have."[28] Such largesse paid off handsomely, as Gingrich was able to keep his fellow Republicans in line.

The Republican takeover coincided with a rise in party-centered voting that began during the 1980s among Republicans who were part of Ronald Reagan's conservative activist following, which has since grown in strength. Donald Trump enjoyed near-unanimous Republican loyalty in Congress. Trump's 2017 plan to enact a massive tax cut was supported by all but twelve House Republicans and every Senate Republican.[29] Trump enjoyed similar party unity in the Senate when it came to confirming federal judges. His centerpiece pledge to repeal the Affordable Care Act, also had strong party support, although not quite enough to win approval of the controversial measure.[30]

As Republicans became more ideologically conservative, Democrats moved in a more liberal direction. Democrats were forged into a homogenous group by the exit of Southern conservatives from the party's congressional ranks, the rising prominence of social and cultural issues (such as abortion and LGBTQ rights), the party's near-unanimous opposition to the Iraq War, and the two Trump impeachment trials. By 2019, there were effectively no conservatives remaining in the caucus. That year, Democrats in the House and Senate earned a paltry three percent positive rating from the American Conservative Union.[31]

Over time, partisanship has upended the way Congress conducts its business. Members now vie for appearances on cable news shows and are adept at using social media to score clicks and retweets. Democratic congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez skillfully uses Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to communicate with her constituents and with a much broader national audience. The New York representative has twelve million followers on Twitter (nearly double Speaker Pelosi's seven million followers).[32]

Republicans have proven themselves to be just as capable at using social media. In 2021, newly elected House freshman Madison Cawthorn announced, "I have built my staff around comms [communications] rather than legislation." Another freshman member, Marjorie Taylor Greene, garnered tremendous media attention in the first days of the 117th Congress. Greene, a supporter of the conspiracy group Q-Anon who "liked" social media posts advocating the assassinations of Nancy Pelosi, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton, posted a video of her harassing David Hogg, a political organizer and survivor of the Parkland, Florida, school shooting.[33] Arriving in Washington, DC, Greene live-streamed herself walking through

a Capitol hallway wearing a facemask below her chin that read "Censored." Republican leadership refused to strip Greene of her committee assignments for her behavior, but Democrats used their majority power to do so, noting that Greene's threats against the lives of Pelosi and others were beyond the pale.

For Greene and her avid followers, legislating is not the point. As one *Washington Post* writer put it, "She's not here to legislate; she's here to livestream."[34] This is consistent with an argument made by two congressional scholars, Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, who wrote that the "Republican Party has become an insurgent outlier—ideologically extreme; contemptuous of the inherited social and economic policy regime; scornful of compromise; unpersuaded by conventional understanding of facts, evidence, and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition."[35]

As congressional partisanship has increased, disillusionment among members of Congress has risen with it. In 2021, Ohio Republican senator Rob Portman surprised his colleagues by announcing he would not seek reelection, saying this is "a tough time to be in public service." Portman blamed partisanship for his withdrawal: "We live in an increasingly polarized country where members of both parties are being pushed further to the right and further to the left, and that means too few people who are actively looking to find common ground."[36] Others echo privately what Portman has said publicly.

The Rise of the Public Speakership

One consequence of the acute partisan warfare in Washington, DC, has been a more visible House Speakership. During the long reign of Democratic Party rule prior to 1994, House Speakers ceded much of their power to committee chairs. This suited most Speakers, as many of them were old-style operatives who worked behind closed doors. Sam Rayburn, one of the most powerful of the Democratic Speakers during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, had what was known as his "Board of Education" where favored members would privately gather to discuss pending business and make deals over bourbon and branch water. But Rayburn kept an exceptionally low public profile. Once, when asked to appear on a Sunday political talk show, Rayburn responded:

> I do appreciate your wanting me to be on *Meet the Press*, but I never go on programs such as yours. . . . The trouble about my going on one program is then I would have no excuse to say to the others that I could not go on their program. It is a chore that I have never relished and one I doubt would be

any good. . . . I would have to tell you what I tell all the others, and that is that I do not go on these programs.[37]

This began to change in 1981 when House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill found himself as the senior Democrat in Washington following Ronald Reagan's 1980 landslide, which saw Republicans win the White House and the US Senate. As the major opposition voice to the new president, O'Neill beefed up his communications staff, worked on his speaking style, and began regularly appearing on television and cable news programs to push back against Reagan's conservative agenda.

A decade later, Speaker Newt Gingrich took the public Speakership further, making an unprecedented nationally televised address and sharing a debate stage with President Clinton to discuss campaign finance reform. As Gingrich later acknowledged, "The most accurate statement of how I see the Speakership [is] somebody who could somehow combine grassroots organizations, mass media, and legislative detail into one synergistic pattern."[38] Gingrich redesigned the Speaker's office to accommodate his desire to "go public" by creating four media-oriented staff positions: press secretary, deputy press secretary, press assistant, and communications coordinator. The effects were immediate: during his first three months in power, Gingrich was mentioned in an unprecedented 114 stories on the three nightly network news programs.

When Democrats won control of the House in 2018, but with Republicans still in charge of the Senate and White House, Nancy Pelosi assumed a public role like the one Tip O'Neill had during the Reagan years. Pelosi's voice in speaking for her party was especially important during the first impeachment trial of Donald J. Trump. After 2020, with Democrats in control of the White House and Congress, President Biden assumed the role of chief party spokesperson, and Pelosi maintained a lower profile while remaining a power to be reckoned with in the House.

Congress and the "Little Arts of Popularity"

As politics has succumbed to hyper-partisanship, party disagreements have become disagreeable. After the January 6 riots, the tension on Capitol Hill was palatable. Metal detectors were installed, and some members refused to pass through them to gain access to the floors of Congress. Democrats felt threatened by Republican members who insisted on bringing guns into the House chamber. Informal interactions with members from the opposite party all but ceased.

This ugly partisanship is far different from what the Founders envisioned. Writing in *The Federalist*, Alexander Hamilton declared that the best legislators were those who vote their consciences for policies they believed to be in the national interest and ignore pleas to do otherwise. Hamilton derided "the little arts of popularity"[39]—a dig at those who paid too much attention to public opinion—preferring strong congressional leaders who could muster support for unpopular positions that would benefit the nation. (Recall that Hamilton himself was instrumental in House support of Jefferson's 1800 election as president over rival Aaron Burr.)

On the other hand, Thomas Jefferson was much more sensitive to the need of lawmakers to pay attention to the folks back home—undoubtedly one reason why he was elected president and Hamilton was not. Given his predilection for viewing the country as a diverse collection of communities, Jefferson believed legislators should act as delegates from their respective states. In 1825, he wrote that the "salvation of the republic" rested on the regeneration and spread of devices like the New England town meeting.[40] He is reputed to have told a nephew: "State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules."[41]

The rise of Hamiltonian nationalism and national congressional leaders who constantly bicker with one another has produced a public backlash. A 2021 survey found just 36 percent approved of Congress's job performance.[42] After Joe Biden was elected, 71 percent wanted congressional Republicans to "find ways to work" with him; just 25 percent said it was more important to keep Biden "in check."[43] But at the outset of the Biden presidency there are few signs that congressional partisanship will give way to bipartisan cooperation, despite Biden's hope to unite the country across party lines in a way that the past three presidents could not.

With the parties in government becoming polarized and nationalized, it is reasonable to ask if the high level of rancor we are experiencing is sustainable, and whether a third party might emerge to compete with Republicans and Democrats. That prospect will be explored in the next chapter.

Third Parties in the Twenty-First Century

D URING MOMENTS OF INTENSE PARTISANSHIP, people can rebel against the choice between Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism if they feel the parties are too extreme in their views. On such occasions third parties can gain some traction, despite the many obstacles the two-party system has placed in their way. Americans generally like the idea of third parties because they prefer more options when they vote. According to a 2020 survey, one-in-five individuals would have backed an independent third-party congressional candidate if one had been listed.[1] But few third-party congressional candidates find much public support come Election Day, and those who do win find themselves outsiders in an institution built by and for the two major parties.

Even though they rarely elect candidates, third parties can make a difference in electoral outcomes. In 2020, Libertarian Party candidate Jo Jorgensen received 38,491 votes in Wisconsin, more than Joe Biden's winning margin of 20,682 votes. In Arizona, Jorgensen received 51,465 votes, again far greater than Biden's winning margin of 10,457 votes. Similarly, in Georgia, Jorgensen got 62,229 votes, nearly six times more than Biden's plurality of 11,779 votes. And in Pennsylvania, Jorgensen received 79,441 votes, nearly equal to Biden's winning margin of 82,155 votes. If all these Libertarian-minded voters had supported Donald Trump, he would have been reelected with 289 electoral votes—19 more than the necessary 270, despite losing the popular vote by more than seven million.

Third parties can also matter in Congress. Presently, three US senators serve without having been elected on a major party label—Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Angus King of Maine, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. But all have cast their lot with the major parties (Sanders and King are independents who caucus with the Democrats, and Murkowski is a Republican who lost her party's primary but won election as a write-in candidate). They know that remaining outside the major party caucuses offers little in the way of access to power.

On rare occasions, elected members will leave a major party. Two House Republicans left their party during the 116th Congress to become independents after disputes with their leadership. Michigan Republican Justin Amash broke with Donald Trump in 2019 and called for his impeachment.[2] Amash was promptly excluded from the Republican conference, and his defection was greeted with derision by his former GOP colleagues. Donald Trump labeled him "one of the dumbest and most disloyal men in Congress."[3] At the end of the congressional session, Amash was joined by fellow Michigan Republican Paul Mitchell who left the party after Donald Trump's repeated assertions that Joe Biden's victory was fraudulent. Mitchell argued that Trump and like-minded Republicans were doing "long term harm to our democracy" with their baseless accusations of voter fraud.[4]

Despite the precarious position of third-party officeholders, third parties continue to form and some even endure. This is particularly true at the state and local level. In the last quarter century, independent and minor party candidates have won the governorships of Maine, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Rhode Island and have run credible campaigns in other states. Political scientist Richard Davis notes that there are several states where third parties have made their presence known. For example, in Oregon, the Independence Party organized in 2007; in Rhode Island, the Moderate Party formed in 2009; in South Carolina, the American Party started in 2014; in Utah, the United Utah Party formed in 2017; and in Minnesota, the Reform Party has reconstituted itself into the Independence Party.[5] The Libertarian and Green Parties have also run candidates at the state and local level.

When we speak of *third parties* or *minor parties* (the terms can be used interchangeably) we refer to entities that, like Republicans and Democrats, have formal organizational structures and procedures, write platforms, nominate candidates for office, and have formal officers, like state party chairs. (Independents, on the other hand, are typically well-known free agents who run for office without the support of formal party structures.) They persist for long periods of time—far longer than one election.

Splinter parties differ from minor parties in that they are "one-hit wonders" that emerge when candidates with a following set aside their major party affiliation and go it alone, typically because they are unable to resolve a significant disagreement with the major party. Notable splinter presidential candidates include J. Strom Thurmond in 1948, who deplored Harry S. Truman's embrace of civil rights and splintered from the Democratic Party to run for president as a Dixiecrat; George C. Wallace in 1968, a Democrat who rejected Lyndon B.

Johnson for the same reason and ran for president on the American Independent Party; and John B. Anderson in 1980, a Republican who disagreed with the conservative policies of Republican nominee Ronald Reagan.

Splinter parties can exert influence in national politics when the major party coalitions fracture and they play a spoiler role. One such example happened in 1912 when Theodore Roosevelt ran as a third-party Bull Moose Progressive. Although Roosevelt lost, he split the Republican vote, denying incumbent Republican president William Howard Taft a second term.

Minor party candidates can also play spoiler when elections are remarkably close. In 2000, Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader castigated the Clinton administration for not seriously pursuing campaign finance reform and becoming too strongly associated with corporate interests—a charge that redounded to the detriment of Clinton's vice president and 2000 Democratic nominee Al Gore. Nader won backing from progressives who were disenchanted with what they saw as the conservative direction the Democratic Party had taken under Clinton. With their support, Nader won 2.7 percent of the popular vote—more than the margin of victory in a close presidential election won by George W. Bush.

Why Third Parties Form

Playing a spoiler role is consequential, but why do third parties form in a political system where two large parties win almost every election? Political scientist Clinton Rossiter once described the United States as having a "tyrannical" two-party system, where "we have the Republicans and we have the Democrats, and we have almost no one else . . . in the struggle for power."[6] Still, in 2020, Libertarian presidential nominee Jo Jorgensen appeared on all fifty state ballots and the District of Columbia; Green party nominee Howie Hawkins appeared on thirty state ballots; even Kanye West was on the ballot in twelve states. They all lost (Kanye won a paltry sixty thousand votes). So, why go to the effort?

The answer is that, despite the famous adage, winning isn't always everything. Some third parties compete because their adherents feel the major parties do not speak to their concerns. We will see that the history of splinter parties encompasses a litany of grievances against one or both major parties, often short-lived but intensely held. So, for instance, if you were a segregationist in 1948 and could not support the Democratic candidacy of a president who had advanced a civil rights agenda, but did not align politically with the Republican alternative, you had a rationale for supporting the Dixiecrats. Or, if you were a supporter of

balanced budgets in 1996 and felt that neither major party was serious about your concerns, you may have been drawn to the Reform Party and the candidacy of Ross Perot.

In other instances, third parties draw adherents from people with ideological views that are not addressed by the major parties. This explains the appeal of the Green Party, whose environmental agenda extends beyond the policy positions of the Democratic Party. It explains why Bernie Sanders, the democratic socialist who twice sought the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, has throughout his career been elected to public office as a socialist. His views have historically placed him to the left of the most liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

Third-party leaders and the voters who support them understand that the odds of victory are long, because third parties face enormous institutional barriers and constraints imposed by American political culture. In this chapter, we will examine significant third parties in American history and explore the institutional and cultural obstacles to their success.

Institutional Barriers to Third Parties

Several institutional and cultural factors make it difficult for third parties to compete with Republicans and Democrats. In some instances, these barriers are intentional, placed there by the major parties for the express purpose of maintaining their dominance. In other cases, the barriers are rooted in American political culture and development. Institutional barriers include single-member electoral districts, the Electoral College, the executive-centered nature of American governance, ballot access restrictions, direct primaries, campaign finance laws, and restrictions placed on third parties barring participation in the presidential debates. Cultural barriers include the tendency for voters to seek compromise and the historically centrist nature of American public opinion that has reinforced the dominance of two large political parties that until recently have looked for supporters in the middle of the political spectrum.

Single-Member Electoral Districts. In some democracies—including Austria, Germany, Japan, and Israel—a voting system known as proportional representation is used to elect legislative candidates who, in turn, choose the leader of the government. This system has two important components that influence party formation. First, more than one elected official is sent to the national or provincial assembly from each legislative district. Second, the number of representatives elected is directly proportional to the votes that a party receives on election day. If, for example, the Socialist Party of Austria receives 20 percent

of the ballots, and a district has five members, then the Socialists can expect to send one member to parliament from that district. The key element that fosters minor party activity is that there are benefits even when the party does not win a plurality of votes. Extremist or rigidly ideological parties are encouraged to participate because the multimember proportional representation system makes it possible for them to achieve representation in the legislature and participate in government.

This is in sharp contrast to the United States, which relies on a winner-take-all single-member district system for choosing most of its officeholders. Single member districts, like US House districts, send only one member each to the legislature. This system awards all the representation for that district to the plurality vote winner—the candidate receiving the most votes. No matter how hard candidates of minor parties might work, they will not receive any representation unless they win the most votes on election day, and as minor parties this outcome is very unlikely. This is why Duverger's Law, named after political scientist Maurice Duverger, states that in winner-take-all systems two large parties that can assemble broad coalitions of voters are likely to form, while third parties will be discouraged from competing.

To better illustrate the contrast between the multimember proportional representation system and the winner-take-all single-member district method, imagine a situation in which four parties are competing for a single seat. Let's say that Party A is at the far left of the ideological spectrum (the most liberal); Party B, left-of-center; Party C, right-of-center; and Party D, the far right (the most conservative). In this hypothetical election, Party A wins 20 percent of the votes; Party B, 30 percent; Party C, 27 percent; and Party D, 23 percent. Under the proportional system, each party will receive roughly the same number of legislators in the national assembly, with a small edge going to Party B. Under the winner-take-all single-member district system, only Party B would send legislators to the capitol. The British, who use the winner-take-all method, liken such electoral outcomes to horse races and have characterized winners in their system as being "first past the post."

In a winner-take-all single-member district system, there are strong incentives for political parties located near each other on the ideological spectrum to merge. Using the previous example, operatives from Party C might say to Party D, "You know, we don't agree on everything, but we think alike. If we joined forces, we could surely overtake Party B. After all, they netted only 30 percent of the vote in the last election, whereas together we grabbed 50 percent." Under these rules, Party C's operatives know that it does not matter whether

there are four, fourteen, or forty parties vying for support. In a winner-take-all single-member district system, there is no payoff for coming in second.

The Electoral College. At the presidential level, the Electoral College compounds the institutional barriers to minor party success. Recall from chapter 4 that most states award their electoral votes on a winner-take-all basis, and winning candidates need a majority of electoral votes to be elected president. This system punishes candidates like Ross Perot, who ran competitively nationwide but not at the level he needed to achieve to compete in the Electoral College. Perot won an impressive 19 percent of the vote in 1992, and his support was broad-based, but he didn't win any electoral votes because he didn't finish first in any state. Alternatively, third-party candidates with regional strength may finish first in some states and win some electoral votes but almost never in enough states to compile an Electoral College majority. Teddy Roosevelt won 88 electoral votes in 1912 on the strength of his standing as a former president, but it wasn't close to what he needed to be elected.

Nor would third-party candidates likely be favored in the unlikely situation that they could prevent the major candidates from winning an Electoral College majority. Even if no candidate were to win an electoral vote majority and the presidential election was decided by the House of Representatives (this happened only once in the disputed presidential election of 1824, when the House chose John Quincy Adams), it is hard to imagine that a body composed entirely of Democrats and Republicans would select a third-party candidate.

The "I Don't Want to Waste My Vote" Syndrome. Given the dominance of the two major parties, voters often do not want to "waste their vote" on a third-party candidate who is unlikely to win because there is so much at stake. The "I don't want to waste my vote" phenomenon was very much in evidence in 2020. Because Donald Trump dominated the election landscape, and voters were of a mindset to vote either for or against Trump, third-party candidates found themselves shut out of the conversation. Billionaires, including Michael Bloomberg, Mark Cuban, and Howard Schultz decided to forego independent bids so as not to play spoiler and knowing that the "I don't want to waste my vote" syndrome would doom their potential candidacies.

Ballot Access Restrictions. Regulations to limit ballot access also restrict minor party development. Getting a new party on the ballot and keeping it there poses extraordinarily difficult legal challenges. The major parties do not have this problem, as they have automatic ballot access by virtue of their dominance. For example, some states stipulate that a party whose gubernatorial candidate wins 10 percent of the vote is automatically listed on the next election ballot. Because

Democrats and Republicans almost always garner that many votes, they have virtually automatic ballot access. But minor parties must work to get on the ballot, and the process can be complex. In 2020, the Green Party was denied ballot access in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin because it had filed improper paperwork. Petitions by the party to state courts were rebuffed.

Direct Primaries. In political systems where nominations are controlled by party elites, intra-party dissidents can leave to form their own parties. In the United States, the direct primary system has the effect of channeling dissent into the two major parties.[7] Frustrated voters can support a maverick candidate in a major party primary—and maverick candidates may be drawn to major party primary competition in order to be relevant, as happened in 2016 and 2020 when Bernie Sanders—a rare third-party candidate elected repeatedly to Congress as a socialist—left his long-standing position outside of the two major parties to compete in the Democratic Party's presidential contests.

Campaign Finance Laws and Presidential Debates. The presidential campaign finance system poses another institutional barrier to minor party success. The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) stipulates that a presidential candidate is eligible for public funds, provided that the party's nominee receives a given percentage of votes in the previous election. For "major parties," a 25 percent threshold is required. If this goal is met, then the nominee is entitled to full funding (although neither major party has accepted this money since 2012).[8] For minor party candidates, the threshold is only 5 percent, but the amount they receive from the federal government is far less than what their Democratic or Republican counterparts get. Ross Perot, who won 19 percent of the vote in 1992, was given $29 million in public funds in 1996—less than half of what Bill Clinton and Bob Dole received. Ralph Nader, who won 2.7 percent of the popular vote as the 2000 Green Party candidate, was not eligible for federal funds in 2004. Neither the Libertarian nor the Green Parties received public funding in 2020, and thanks to their poor showings (1 percent and .25 percent of the popular vote respectively), neither will receive public funds in 2024.

The inability of the minor parties to receive a share of public funding is a prime example of how Democrats and Republicans write the rules to oppose changes that would benefit others. The financial obstacles third parties must overcome have only increased since the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission. Today, with the cost of seeking the presidency exceeding $1 billion dollars for each major party, candidates need to rely on small dollars from activists and mega-dollars from wealthy donors. Minor parties have little access to either monetary source. Without help from the

federal government, they must try to gain as much media attention as possible to be visible to the public. But political journalists devote their time and attention to candidates they believe can win, putting third-party candidates in a catch-22.

This dilemma has also presented itself when third-party candidates have asked for time on the presidential debate stage. In 1996, the Commission on Presidential Debates (a private organization) ruled that Ross Perot was not a serious contender and declined his request to participate in the televised debates. A similar situation occurred in 2000, when the Commission on Presidential Debates ruled that Green Party candidate Ralph Nader was ineligible. The commission even denied Nader a seat in the audience for the first George W. Bush–Al Gore face-off, causing Nader to loudly complain about the unfair treatment. In 2020, no third-party candidate appeared on the debate stage with Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

Cultural Barriers to Third Parties

Institutional constraints like single-member districts, the Electoral College, direct primary laws, and ballot access restrictions perpetuate the existence of the two-party model in the United States. Cultural barriers present an additional obstacle to third-party development. A nation's political culture encompasses the fundamental values and beliefs that influence society and guide political behavior. It is the umbrella under which political activities take place and where public questions are resolved. Several core values help maintain a two-party system, including adherence to peaceful resolution of conflicts, acceptance of compromise and incremental change, and a strong endorsement of the nation's governing framework.

Americans accepted the constitutional arrangements that the Framers instituted in 1787 and, in 1801, peacefully recognized the transfer of power from the Federalists to the Democratic-Republicans—a transfer of power from one party to another that remains a rarity in today's world. From these origins, Americans came to expect that power would be peacefully passed following legitimately held elections, which historically has had a moderating influence on public opinion.

Stability in the scope of political discourse has also contributed to the endurance of the two major parties. Despite a tumultuous history, American political debate has remained narrowly defined by the struggle between Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism. The battle between the two camps has attached to a wide range of issues, but the essential nature of the conflict about

the proper place for the federal government vis-à-vis the states has endured. The dominance of the two paradigms has left little room for third parties to mature and become established in the American firmament.

Significant Third Parties in US History

Although history has not been kind to minor parties, several have changed the direction of political debate and influenced election outcomes. From the Anti-Masons of the 1820s through to the present day, the history of our two-party competition has been periodically influenced by the emergence of third parties that, while too weak to win elections, were influential enough to shape them.

The Anti-Mason Party. For decades prior to the Revolution, nearly every large community had a Masonic Lodge, or what was called a Freemason organization. These secretive clubs were composed of middle-and upper-class white Protestants, often the leading businessmen of their communities who were interested in the issues of the day and had a strong belief in moral self-improvement. Prominent Masons included George Washington, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson. According to historian Phyllis F. Field, "In a nation with high rates of geographic mobility, Masonry provided a convenient way for nomadic American middle-class men to integrate themselves quickly into a new community and feel at home there."[9]

But Masonic elitism and secret rites created a public backlash—especially among religious fundamentalists. An anti-Mason movement was born following the mysterious disappearance of New York Freemason William Morgan in 1826, after he threatened to reveal the secret rituals of the group. Anti-Masons maintained that secretive cliques were conspiring against the working class and, through their bizarre rituals such as frequent cross burnings, were a threat to Christianity. Within four years of their humble beginnings in 1826, the anti-Masons became a powerful political force—the first significant minor party to emerge in the young nation. In 1831, they held a presidential nominating convention—a novel idea for its day—and chose as their candidate former attorney general William Wirt.

The Anti-Mason Party finished a distant third in the 1832 presidential election when Wirt proved to be an ineffectual campaigner. It garnered 100,000 votes (8 percent) to finish behind Democrat Andrew Jackson and Whig Party candidate Henry Clay. However, Wirt finished first in Vermont, winning that state's seven electoral votes—the first time a third-party candidate had amassed

any support in the Electoral College. The Anti-Masons fared better in state contests, winning the governorships of Vermont and Pennsylvania, and several congressional and state legislative seats in New York, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

By the mid-1830s, the Anti-Mason Party began to fade, partly because President Andrew Jackson endorsed policies that gave political leverage to working-class voters. More than anything else, the Anti-Mason Party disappeared because the Freemason movement was out of step with the democratic impulses of the 1830s. There was less public concern about elitism in the years after Jackson's election established the broad-based citizen-centered political party.

The Free-Soil Party. Several antislavery groups nipped at the edges of the political system prior to the 1840s. The most notable of these were the Barn-burners, the Conscience Whigs, and the Liberty Party. Controlled by extremists and religious fanatics whose ideas about ending the interstate slave trade were considered radical—even in a time of rising opposition to slavery—these groups were relatively short-lived.

The Free-Soil Party had better luck. The impetus for their founding in 1848 was the debate over the Wilmot Proviso, which limited the extension of slavery into the new western territories. Operating on a platform of "free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men," the Free-Soil Party combined opposition to slavery with a desire for cheap western land. As the Free-Soil Party gained followers, it became more pragmatic than its abolitionist predecessors. It advocated policies that would allow Blacks to vote and attend school. At the same time, Free-Soilers bowed to existing racial prejudices by arguing that the Wilmot Proviso would keep Blacks in the South.[10] Free-Soilers did not endorse the abolition of slavery, nor did they denounce either the Fugitive Slave Act, or the three-fifths clause of the US Constitution (which counted Blacks as "three-fifths" of a person for the purpose of determining representation in the House). Other planks that broadened the Free-Soil Party's appeal included cheaper postage rates, reduced federal spending, tariff reform, the election of all civil officers, and free homesteading in the west.[11]

In 1848, the Free-Soil Party held a convention in Buffalo, New York, with nearly 20,000 delegates and spectators in attendance. Hopes were high when they nominated former president Martin Van Buren for president and Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy Adams and grandson of John Adams, for vice president. Despite the ticket's high name recognition, Van Buren and Adams won just 10 percent of the popular vote and failed to carry a single state. Congressional results were equally disappointing, as the party won a mere twelve seats.

Shortly after the 1848 election, the Free-Soil Party disappeared. Most Free-Soilers returned to the parties they previously supported, albeit with a renewed determination to change their parties' respective stands on slavery-related issues. This movement back to the major parties caused considerable strife that resulted in the current two-party alignment of Republicans and Democrats when Republicans replaced the Whigs and Democrats became the party of the South.

The American (Know-Nothing) Party. For many Americans living in urban areas, immigration was a primary concern prior to the Civil War. A vast number of working-class, native-born Protestants were deeply troubled by the heavy influx of Irish Catholics beginning in the early 1840s. Jobs, cultural differences, and the transformation of the United States into an ethnic polyglot became contentious political issues. In 1854, the American Party emerged in response to these anxieties. Originally organized around two groups known as the Supreme Order of the Star-Spangled Banner and the National Council of the United States of America, adherents were dubbed the Know-Nothings after a reporter asked a member about their secret meetings only to be told that he "knew nothing." The party's core philosophy was simple: "Americans should rule America. . . . Foreigners have no right to dictate our laws, and therefore have no just ground to complain if Americans see proper to exclude them from offices of trust."[12] The Know-Nothing platform included planks mandating that immigrants live in the United States for twenty-one years before being allowed to vote; that they never hold public office; and that their children should have no rights unless they were educated in public schools. Taking aim at Catholics and their allegiance to the Pope, the Know-Nothings declared, "No person should be selected for political station (whether of native or foreign birth), who recognizes any alliance or obligation of any description to foreign prince, potentate or power."[13]

The popularity of the Know-Nothings is one of the darker tales in US history. In 1854, the party achieved extraordinary success by capturing scores of congressional and state legislative seats, mostly in the Northeast. In Massachusetts, where immigrants were pouring in at a rate of one hundred thousand per year, the Know-Nothings won an astounding 347 of 350 state house seats and all the state senate, congressional, and statewide contests, including the governorship. In New York, they elected forty members of the state legislature and took control of the governorship. The party also won the governorships of Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut.

In 1856, the Know-Nothings became caught up in the politics of slavery. At the party's convention in Philadelphia, Northern delegates wanted to nominate a presidential candidate who opposed the extension of slavery into the

new western territories. Southerners blocked the move, and Northern delegates bolted out of the convention hall. The remaining Southern delegates nominated former president Millard Fillmore as their candidate for president and Andrew Jackson Dodelson of Tennessee for vice president. The Fillmore-Dodelson ticket captured 875,000 votes, or 21 percent of the popular vote, and eight Electoral College votes (from the state of Maryland). After two stunning showings at the polls, the Know-Nothings faded rapidly. Passage of the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act accentuated the slavery issue and created deep sectional divisions within the party. The Republicans—a Northern, antislavery party—burst on the scene, and most Northern Know-Nothings joined their ranks. In the South, the Know-Nothings were absorbed by the former Whigs. By 1860, the Know-Nothings were no more.

The Greenback and Populist (People's) Parties. During the early 1870s, the nation entered hard times, and midwestern farmers suffered from plummeting crop prices. Railroads were the only means by which to ship midwestern farm goods to major markets in the East, and privately owned companies charged exorbitant rates. Adding to the farmers' plight was a deflation of the currency, which made it difficult for them to pay their high bills.

The first efforts to organize agricultural interests culminated in the formation of hundreds of local groups called farmers' alliances, or granges. Mixing political and social activities, the granges united farmers into a cohesive voting bloc. Many who belonged to the granges were supportive of a third party, and after the economic panic of 1873 the Greenback Party was created. The Greenback Party (also known as the Greenback-Labor Party) proposed an inflated currency based on cheap paper money known as "greenbacks" that were first introduced during the Civil War.[14] Their argument was simple: by making the greenback legal tender, there would be enough money in circulation to ease the burden of indebted farmers and laborers.

In 1878, Greenback congressional candidates won more than one million votes and fourteen US House races. Two years later they nominated General James Weaver of Iowa as their presidential candidate. By that time, however, the national economy improved, and the Greenback Party lost its initial appeal. Weaver won just 300,000 votes, and the Greenbacks sent just eight members to Congress. In 1884, the Greenbacks found their presidential support almost cut in half.

Overproduction and increased world competition led to another agricultural crisis in the early 1890s. The remaining Greenbacks merged with a new party called the Populists, or People's Party, in 1891. Unlike the Greenbacks, the

Populists' demands were more radical and far-reaching: "We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. . . . From the womb of governmental injustice, we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires."[15] Among other things, the Populist platform proposed public regulation of railroads and telegraphs; free coinage of silver and gold (to increase currency in circulation); creation of postal savings banks; prohibition of alien ownership of land; a graduated federal income tax; direct election of US senators; and a reduction of the workday to eight hours.

The Populists readily won adherents in the Midwest, West, and even the South. One historian summarized the new party's appeal this way: "The Populist Party was the embodiment of an attitude, a way of looking at life that had been prevalent for almost 20 years, and a general position taken against concentrated economic power."[16] The Populists selected former Greenback James Weaver as their 1892 presidential nominee. Weaver won just 8 percent of the popular vote (about a million votes) and twenty-two Electoral College votes, with nearly all his support coming from western states. But the Populists effectively split the Republican vote, giving Democrat Grover Cleveland a chance to capture the presidency. Democrats also won control of both houses of Congress—a rarity in this Republican-dominated era. Populist strength grew in 1894, when they won nearly 1.5 million votes and elected six US senators and seven House members, all from the West.

Then, in 1896, something unusual happened: both the Populists and the Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan for president. Bryan endorsed many Populist planks, most notably, the elimination of the gold standard.[17] Although Bryan lost, many of the Populist Party's proposals were accepted by both parties and incorporated into law during the twentieth century.

The Progressives: 1912–1924, 1948, and Today. In chapter 3, we outlined the rationale behind the Progressive movement, its numerous successes against machine-dominated locales, and its eventual coalescence into a third party in 1912 behind former President Theodore Roosevelt. Calling for a "new nationalism," Roosevelt bolted the Republican Convention to form the Progressive (Bull Moose) Party, running on a platform that promised stricter regulation of corporations; downward revision of tariffs; popular election of US senators; women's suffrage; and support for the referendum, ballot initiatives, and recall elections. With 27 percent of the popular vote and eighty-eight Electoral College votes, Roosevelt finished in second place behind Democrat Woodrow Wilson. William Howard Taft, the Republican nominee, finished third—the first time that had happened to a GOP presidential candidate since the party's inception.

Roosevelt's strong showing in 1912 was the high point of the Progressive movement. Thereafter, President Woodrow Wilson pursued a Progressive agenda—including passage of new antitrust laws, banking regulations, and scores of business reforms. But the Progressive Party did not die completely, especially in states with strong populist traditions. In 1924, Robert La Follette—a former US representative, US senator, and governor of Wisconsin—became the Progressive Party's presidential nominee. La Follette was an articulate champion of labor reform, business regulation, a graduated income tax, and a constitutional amendment providing for direct election of judges to the federal courts. His party's platform proposed public ownership of the nation's waterpower, strict control and conservation of natural resources, farmers' cooperatives, and legislation to make credit available to farmers and small businessmen. La Follette captured 17 percent of the popular vote (4.8 million ballots) but won only thirteen Electoral College votes (from his home state of Wisconsin). With his death in 1925, La Follette's brand of progressivism died as well. Though his children and grandchildren became active in politics and continued to push the Progressive agenda, they did not attract much attention beyond the Wisconsin borders.

In 1948, the Progressive Party reemerged. That year, a left-wing group led by former vice president Henry A. Wallace bolted from the Democratic Party. At issue was President Harry S. Truman's "get tough" policy toward the Soviet Union, which Wallace strongly opposed. The Progressive Party accused Truman of being vociferously anticommunist, which they said stemmed from "the dictates of monopoly and the military" and resulted in "preparing for war in the name of peace."[18] To the utopian-minded Progressives, peace was "the prerequisite of survival."[19] The Progressive Party called for a wholesale reversal in how the US government dealt with domestic communism. It favored eliminating the House Un-American Activities Committee and rejected any ban of the US Communist Party, or the required registration of its members, likening such legislation to the Alien and Sedition Acts.

In July 1948, Progressive Citizens of America selected Wallace as its presidential candidate. As the Progressive Party standard-bearer, Henry Wallace drew large crowds including many young liberals, blue-collar workers, and Black voters. His liberal supporters worried Truman, who would need them to win, and Truman attempted to undermine Wallace by linking him to the US Communist Party. At campaign stops, Truman vowed, "I do not want, and I will not accept the political support of Henry Wallace and his communists."[20] Wallace's public statements made Truman's task an easy one. A Gallup poll taken shortly

before the Progressive convention found 51 percent agreed that the Progressive Party was communist dominated.[21]

Despite Wallace's political shortcomings, he influenced the election result. When the ballots were counted, Wallace received 1,157,172 votes (slightly more than 2 percent). This was enough to throw three states to GOP presidential nominee Thomas E. Dewey: New York, Maryland, and Michigan. If Wallace had done somewhat better in California and had not been kept off the Illinois ballot, the 1948 contest might have been decided in the House of Representatives.

Progressive ideas have been a recurring force in US politics, although progressivism has assumed different meanings in different eras. Originally, its focus was centered in the religious belief that the human condition could be infinitely improved. By the end of the nineteenth century, progressivism meant ridding the political system of corrupt influences. At the turn of the twentieth century, Progressives wanted greater participation by average citizens in government affairs, and they believed government could be improved by bringing scientific methods to bear on public problems.

In the late twentieth century, a new progressivism emerged in the image of nineteenth-century progressivism, centered around the desire to rid the political process of the influence of big money in order to make it more responsive to ordinary voters. In 1991, the Progressive Caucus was created in the House of Representatives. Today, it has 94 House members and one US senator, Bernie Sanders, making it the largest group within the House Democratic caucus.[22] Its core principles are fighting for immigrant rights and reforms; making voting easier; advocating fair trade; promoting climate justice; supporting labor unions; universal healthcare; racial equality; and criminal justice reform.[23] Given the split within the Democratic Party between moderates and progressives, the Progressive Caucus has assumed growing importance as more members have joined its ranks. With Congress so evenly divided between the parties, progressive support, with backing from more moderate members, is essential to pass any legislation.

States' Rights Party (1948) and the American Independent Party (1968). After the Civil War, the roots of the Democratic Party became deeply planted in the South. During the 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt broadened the Democratic coalition to include labor, middle-and lower-class urban residents, Catholics, Blacks, and Jews, transforming the Democratic Party into a majority coalition. Relations between progressive Northern Democrats and conservative Southern Democrats became a marriage of convenience. Northern Democrats controlled

the White House, thanks to their Southern partners, and Southern Democrats chaired important congressional committees, thanks to their party's majority status and adherence to the seniority rule.

By the late 1940s, the marriage between Northern and Southern Democrats was heading for divorce. Civil rights split the two factions apart in 1948, when the Democratic Convention adopted a strong pro-civil rights plank. Many southern delegates walked out and reconvened in Birmingham, Alabama. The gathering adopted the name States' Rights Party and quickly became known as the Dixiecrat Party, given its overwhelming southern base of support. The convention reiterated a Jeffersonian plank extracted from the 1840 Democratic Party platform: "Congress has no power under the Constitution to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several states, and . . . such states are the sole and proper judges of everything appertaining to their own affairs and not prohibited by the Constitution."[24] This states' rights argument was designed to keep racial segregation intact.

The delegates nominated J. Strom Thurmond, then governor of South Carolina, as their presidential candidate. On Election Day, Thurmond garnered 1.1 million votes (2.4 percent) and won thirty-eight Electoral College votes from five southern states. The party closed shop after the 1948 election, and Thurmond went on to have a successful political career in both major parties while retaining his segregationist views. In 1954, Thurmond won a write-in Senate campaign after the state Democratic Party rejected him.[25] Ten years later, Thurmond formally switched his party registration from Democratic to Republican. In 2002, he retired from the US Senate as a Republican at age one hundred.

The final blow to the Democratic coalition assembled by Franklin Roosevelt came in 1968. Once again, the breakdown centered on efforts to broaden legal protections for Blacks. The American Independent Party was established in 1968 as the personal organization of Alabama governor George C. Wallace. Elected governor in 1962 as a Democrat and ardent segregationist, Wallace entered the national spotlight one year later when the federal government ordered the integration of public colleges. In a televised display of defiance, Wallace and his state troopers blocked access to the University of Alabama to two incoming Black students before eventually stepping aside.

After an unsuccessful (but impressive) primary campaign against Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, Wallace abandoned the Democratic Party in 1968 to form his own party, which followed his get-tough, law-and-order, segregationist beliefs. With old-time populist themes and a powerful gift for oratory, Wallace won nearly ten million votes, or 13.5 percent of the total. His forty-six electoral votes

from five southern states came from Democrats who used the Wallace candidacy as a way station before entering the Republican Party. In 1972, Richard M. Nixon won the vast majority of the 1968 Wallace supporters. By the 1980s, Wallace voters began supporting Republicans for other offices such as governor, members of Congress, and state legislature. Wallace, meanwhile, reentered Democratic presidential politics in 1972, only to be shot and permanently paralyzed at a rally in Maryland. Although he later won the Alabama governorship as a Democrat, Wallace's days in presidential politics were over. His American Independent Party and its offshoot, the American Party, continued to nominate candidates for a while before fading into obscurity.

The Reform Party. Billionaire businessman Ross Perot's two presidential bids illustrate the difference between independent candidacies and minor parties. In 1992, Perot ran for president as a free agent without fielding candidates for other offices or establishing party institutions. Using his hefty pocketbook to finance his campaign, Perot ran on a platform that emphasized the importance of a balanced budget during a time of economic difficulty and the need to enact campaign finance reform. His foremost strength was his charisma and can-do attitude.

After winning an impressive 19 percent of the vote, Perot organized a new political party centered on his signature issues of a balanced budget and campaign finance reform. Labeled the Reform Party, by 1996 it qualified to run slates of candidates in all fifty states. It had a national organization, developed formal rules, and held a convention to nominate its presidential candidate, who, not surprisingly, was Perot. This time, however, Perot accepted federal funds, thus saving him from once again having to finance his own campaign. But Perot received only 8 percent of the vote, a signal that the days of the Reform Party were numbered.

Because the party received $12.6 million from the federal government for the 2000 general election (based on Ross Perot's 1996 showing), it became a target for would-be candidates looking for a vehicle for a presidential run. Some of these candidates held views that were far removed from the party's original emphasis on eliminating deficit spending. Donald Trump became a member of the party and established an exploratory committee in 1999 before eventually dropping out. Republican speechwriter Patrick J. Buchanan, who unsuccessfully sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1992, competed for and won the 2000 Reform Party nomination by defeating physicist John Hagelin, who had been the 1996 Natural Law Party's candidate for president.

The contest over the Reform Party nomination divided Perot supporters. In a convention marred by physical confrontations, both Buchanan and Hagelin

claimed to have enough support to clinch the nomination. Ultimately, the Federal Election Commission decided that Buchanan was the legitimate nominee and awarded him the $12.6 million. Disgusted at the turn of events, Perot refused to back Buchanan and endorsed Republican nominee George W. Bush. Meanwhile, professional wrestler Jesse Ventura, who had been the Reform Party's greatest success story after winning the governorship of Minnesota as a Reform candidate, left the party—calling it "hopelessly dysfunctional."[26] Buchanan fared poorly in the 2000 election, winning fewer than one million votes out of more than one hundred million cast, and the Reform Party faded into obscurity.

The Green Party. During the Clinton administration, some Democrats became restive with the president's abandonment of traditional New Deal liberalism. In 1996, the Green Party echoed this sentiment and selected Ralph Nader as its presidential candidate. Nader did not actively seek the presidency; rather, he let his name appear on the ballot and made no campaign appearances. Nader's presence likely cost Clinton a victory in Colorado but had no effect on the overall outcome.

Things were different in 2000. With Republicans in control of Congress, Bill Clinton was compelled to strike deals with them, telling confidants, "Strategically, I want to remove all divisive issues for a conservative [Republican presidential] candidate, so all the issues are on progressive terrain."[27] But Nader and the Greens complained that far from being progressive, both Clinton and the Republicans sided with corporate interests. Nader decided to confront the Clinton-Gore administration, charging that its obsession with deficit reduction and not using the powers of government more forcefully when it came to protecting the environment and promoting campaign finance reform had transformed the Democrats into a "me-too" party that emulated the Republican's embrace of corporate and Wall Street interests.[28]

Nader won 2.73 percent of the total popular votes cast in 2000, making him a "spoiler" in the race. The 97,488 votes Nader received in Florida made a real difference, given that George W. Bush's statewide margin was 537 votes out of nearly 6 million cast. Nader had a similar effect in New Hampshire, where his 22,198 votes far exceeded Bush's winning margin of 7,211. Had Gore won either state he would have been elected president.

Democrats were aware of their missed opportunity to win the White House in 2000, and they made sure their supporters were not tempted to vote for Ralph Nader in 2004. That year, Nader did run again, but received less than 1 percent of the vote. By 2008, Nader abandoned the Green Party and ran as an independent, garnering 739,278 votes—the most of any of the third-party candidates,

but still just one-half of 1 percent of the total votes cast. It was his last foray into presidential politics.

In 2016, the Green Party enjoyed a resurgence, having been energized by the failed Democratic bid made by Vermont senator Bernie Sanders. With Sanders out of the running, some of his supporters gravitated to the Green Party nominee, Dr. Jill Stein, who cast herself as a Sanders ally, telling supporters that "the Bernie Sanders movement lives on outside the Democratic Party." Like Sanders, Stein castigated the power exercised by Wall Street, supported measures to eliminate student debt, endorsed the Black Lives Matter movement, opposed Donald Trump's plan to build a wall on the US-Mexican border, and called for clean, renewable energy sources.[29] Both Clinton and Sanders made strong arguments to potential Green Party supporters not to waste their votes on a third-party candidate. Sanders explicitly told supporters that while the Green Party is "focusing on very, very important issues . . . you're going to end up having a choice. Either Hillary Clinton is going to be president, or Donald Trump."[30]

As late as early October, polls showed Stein winning 3 percent of the national vote.[31] But by Election Day, Stein's vote share fell to a mere 1 percent. Still, her presence arguably made a difference in two states—Michigan and Wisconsin—where Stein's total exceeded Trump's margin of victory. Four years later, Democrats promised action on climate change, racial justice, and economic inequality, and Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins barely made a dent in the presidential race. Such appropriation of a third-party agenda is typical of how major parties have reacted throughout history to threats posed by minor parties.

A Third-Party Revival?

Could we be entering a period of third-party revival? A 2021 Gallup poll found 62 percent feel a third party is needed because the two major parties do a poor job of representing the American people —the highest percentage Gallup has ever recorded. The survey also found that favorable views of the Republican Party had declined to a mere 37 percent (Democrats were at a comparatively healthy 48 percent). Fully 50 percent of respondents described themselves as independents, also the highest percentage Gallup has recorded in a single poll.[32]

Historically, third parties have won public support when voters found the major parties lacking in their responses to the major issues of the day. Abolitionist parties developed because of slavery, the Populists and Greenbacks because of economic issues, the Progressives because of corruption, and segregationist parties in response to civil rights legislation. Although the winner-take-all electoral

system, the Electoral College, barriers to ballot access, and a host of historical and cultural forces sustain the two-party model, minor parties have played a critical role at key moments before fading into the history books.

Several scholars have explored the idea that minor parties help shape the party system in ways major parties cannot. Theodore J. Lowi, a former president of the American Political Science Association, writes, "New ideas and issues develop or redevelop parties, but parties, particularly established ones, rarely develop ideas or present new issues on their own. . . . Once a system of parties is established, the range and scope of policy discussion is set, until and unless some disturbance arises from other quarters."[33] The "disturbance" Lowi speaks of is the development of aggressive third parties. Lowi notes there have been four historical eras where Democrats and Republicans have been especially innovative: 1856–1860; 1890–1900; 1912–1914; and 1933–1935. During these years, party leaders became more susceptible to mass opinion because of third-party competition. Once the policy innovations were achieved, however, third parties withered away.

How will third parties fare in an era when Americans say they are dissatisfied with the two major parties? Certainly, today's social networking capability makes it easier for minor party leaders to connect with potential supporters at a minimal cost. Certain ballot reforms may also be a boon to third parties. Ranked-choice voting, first used in Maine and now adopted in other jurisdictions like Alaska and New York City, allows voters to select second and third choices. If no candidate receives 50 percent of the vote, the second and third preferences of voters who supported candidates at the bottom of the list are added to the tally of the candidates at the top, until a candidate crosses the 50 percent threshold. This system gives voters an incentive to select third-party candidates as their first choice, potentially overcoming the "wasted vote" syndrome that has bedeviled third parties who have succumbed to Duverger's Law.

One tantalizing possibility is that former Republicans pushed out of their party by Donald Trump will feel motivated to start a third party with the intention of marginalizing post-Trump Republicans. During his four years in the White House, Trump recast the Republican Party in his image, making it more reactionary and beholden to a populist base. In this regard, today's Republicans look more like third-party insurgencies of the past and less like the large, catch-all parties favored by the winner-take-all electoral system. More than one-hundred former Republican officials have discussed forming a "center-right" third party. Former GOP representative Charlie Dent explains that these disgruntled leaders "want a clean break from President Trump, and we are rallying around some core founding principles like truth and honesty, and democracy and rule of law."[34] For

his part, Trump has threatened to form a "Patriot Party," leading a third-party movement that would threaten the ability of more establishment-minded Republicans to win elections.[35] Whether either third party will come to pass is unclear, but the fracturing of the Republican Party creates the potential for a third party that could reshape American politics in the coming decade.

Whatever may happen, the obstacles that prevent the creation of a viable third party are daunting. Over the past three decades, the centralization and professionalization of electoral politics has accentuated a profound shift toward Hamiltonian nationalism. Major party candidates must amass huge war chests, with successful presidential campaigns having to raise extraordinary amounts of money just to be competitive. These efforts are beyond the reach of most third parties, despite the fervent backing of their most ardent supporters. Congressional failure to pass meaningful campaign finance reform legislation means that the torrent of cash flooding into the major party coffers will continue. In addition, the centralization of the two major party committees gives Democrats and Republicans a tremendous advantage. Third parties are often decentralized organizations that have very little power at the top. For these reasons, it is most likely that minor parties will continue to exert their greatest influence at the margins, even if such marginal influences are at times profound.

Where Are We Going?

THIS BOOK BEGAN by addressing the formative conflicts between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson that led to the establishment of American political parties, then explored how Hamiltonian nationalism and Jeffersonian localism have evolved through the centuries. While the issues confronting us today may be unique to the twenty-first century, the essence of the founders' disagreement remains the same: what is the desired balance between government action and individual rights, and between centralized control and personal freedom? Alexander Hamilton wanted a strong federal government acting with dispatch in the interest of every citizen. Thomas Jefferson preferred a weaker federal government with greater deference paid to state and local entities.

As an *institutional* matter, the parties have resolved this dispute decidedly in Hamilton's favor. Originally small, localized, Jeffersonian institutions, political parties have grown through the years to become larger, more organized, and more centralized at the federal level. From their origins in Jefferson's "nature tour," through the development of mass-based parties under Andrew Jackson, to the professionalization of party activities under William McKinley, to the nationalization of the parties in the twentieth century, party *organization* has assumed a clear Hamiltonian perspective—a national approach to political activity with the party committees exercising real power. The centralization of party organizations at the federal level is now fueled by a stream of cash that flows regularly into party coffers. It is likely irreversible.

As a *policy* matter, however, the debate between Hamilton and Jefferson rages on. In terms of what the parties advocate, we have seen periods when Hamiltonian nationalism has eclipsed Jeffersonian localism and times when Jefferson's perspective was ascendant. Likewise, we have seen Democrats and Republicans switch their positions over time as to which of the founders they identify with more when it comes to the role government should play in the lives of ordinary Americans. During the New Deal era initiated by Franklin

Roosevelt, the electorate wanted a bigger, more active, and socially responsible federal government. By the Reagan years, majorities had come to see government through the eyes of accountants, believed it taxed and spent too much, and wanted to see it restrained.

Where are we now? Are the Jeffersonian values of the Reagan era behind us? Do voters prefer a more Hamiltonian active government? How will the parties respond to profound generational and demographic changes? Is a realignment underway that can answer these questions, or will the hyper-partisanship that defines this moment in political history blunt the forces of change? Is a realignment even possible in today's supercharged partisan and information-driven environment?

The last question is particularly important, as it concerns the shattering of norms that once prevailed when it came to the *conduct* of the two major parties, especially today's Republican party. Consider the unprecedented events emanating from Donald Trump's 2020 defeat in the context of party behavior, and ask: What would drive President Trump to call for an insurrection to stop the certification of his electoral loss? What would lead his fellow rank-and-file Republicans to carry it out? Why would some congressional Republicans vote to reject the electoral votes of states he lost without any confirmed evidence of vote fraud? Why would some of them perpetuate the false narrative that the election had been stolen to justify Trump's actions and avoid convicting him in an impeachment vote? Given such conduct, it is reasonable to wonder if we are experiencing the collapse of regular party competition as we have come to know it. Can our two-party system survive this fraught moment? And, if not, what might replace it?

The party system in place since the Reagan years appears to be at an inflection point where a new alignment is guaranteed. But unlike other periods of disruption, there is no guarantee of a system-affirming outcome. The behavior of the Republican party-in-government and party-in-the-electorate raises the question of whether the party system can handle the stress of a political party gone rogue. What if it cannot? We will consider four possibilities for the future of the party system, ranging from the extraordinary to the conventional: the emergence of a new conservative third party to fill the political space vacated by Republicans as they move farther right; the total collapse of the Republican Party following their inability to compete for the votes of a diverse, progressive electorate; the collapse of the constitutional order following a successful challenge to the political system itself; and a peaceful party realignment around the interests and issues of an emerging electorate.

To understand how we got here, it is worthwhile to look back at the remarkable parallels in the rise and fall of the last two party systems: the center-left New Deal coalition forged by Franklin Roosevelt, which was validated by Dwight Eisenhower, expanded by Lyndon Johnson, challenged by Richard Nixon, and collapsed under Jimmy Carter, and the center-right coalition forged by Ronald Reagan, which was validated by Bill Clinton, expanded by George W. Bush, challenged by Barack Obama, and collapsed under Donald Trump.

As with any party system, the Roosevelt and Reagan coalitions inevitably declined as new situations emerged, which they were either unable or unprepared to address. The crucial difference in the arc of the two systems is how the majority party responded to this decline. Democrats, who maintained residual strength in the House of Representatives and at the state level well into the 1980s, refused to acknowledge their loss of major party status until they suffered a string of lopsided presidential defeats, giving the ascendant Reagan coalition space to take root. As that coalition lost strength around the turn of this century, Republicans dedicated themselves to retaining power in the minority. This choice has become increasingly harder to sustain through normal electoral channels, placing the political system under increasing stress.

The New Deal Party System: 1933–1980

Franklin D. Roosevelt established a Democratic Party coalition built on Hamiltonian nationalism that dominated politics in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Although FDR is remembered for his 1933 inaugural address in which he uttered the famous words, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," the sentence that gained the most applause on that cold March day from an audience devastated by the Great Depression was this: "I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis—broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe."[1]

Roosevelt's promise of decisive action met the moment. In his first hundred days, FDR enacted much of his New Deal program. A host of alphabet soup agencies were created by a Democratic-controlled Congress motivated to act with a minimum of debate. The Works Progress Administration (WPA), Public Works Administration (PWA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Youth Progress Administration (YPA), Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), and National Recovery Act (NRA) all became law, followed by the creation of Social Security.[2]

Republicans committed to a small Jeffersonian-style government lambasted the new laws, believing they infringed on individual freedoms. But Roosevelt's call for "action, and action now"[3] gained the Democratic Party broad public support. In his 1936 reelection campaign, FDR won forty-six of forty-eight states, and Democrats increased their congressional majorities to record levels. The only president to win the White House four times, Roosevelt eventually forced Republicans into a "me-too" posture, promising that, if elected, they would not eliminate FDR's initiatives. This came to pass when Dwight Eisenhower, the first Republican to hold the Oval Office in two decades, stated: "Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history."[4]

When Barry Goldwater pushed back against Republican "me-tooism" as the party's 1964 presidential nominee, he went down to a resounding defeat at the hands of Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson. Seeking the presidency in his own right, Johnson previewed his vision for expanding the New Deal into a Great Society, which he envisioned as "a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents . . . where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community."[5] In the aftermath of his 1964 landslide victory, Johnson followed the Roosevelt model and proposed a slew of federal programs designed to promote Black voting rights, eliminate racial discrimination, build more public housing, clean the nation's air and water, and enhance the federal government's role in public education. He realized major legislative accomplishments, including passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the establishment of Medicare and Medicaid.

But the demise of the New Deal coalition was evident even before Johnson's accomplishments took hold, the product of its own success in creating a relatively comfortable middle class and confronting racial inequities. In a final political strategy meeting in the White House just days before he was assassinated, John F. Kennedy fretted about his standing in the nation's burgeoning suburbs where middle class homeowners replaced their need for government assistance with worries about taxes.[6] To woo these voters, Kennedy proposed a middle-class tax cut, a law Lyndon Johnson signed in the months following Kennedy's death. Concurrently, white southerners, who had long resisted efforts by Democratic administrations to advance civil rights, began peeling away, supporting George Wallace's racially charged third-party challenge in large enough numbers to throw the 1968 election to Republican Richard Nixon.

In office, Nixon attempted to consolidate a new coalition of southern and suburban whites into a lasting coalition. His efforts were derailed by Watergate, but they anticipated the coalition that would power Ronald Reagan to victory in 1980 as majorities soured on the policies of the Great Society and white southerners realigned as Republicans. Jimmy Carter tried to govern and win reelection with a fragmented and flailing New Deal coalition, but it proved impossible. Democrats would continue to nominate New Deal liberals, but they would never again elect one.

The Reagan Party System: 1980–2020

Running for president in 1980, Ronald Reagan cited Kennedy's tax cut as one of the few areas of agreement he had with the late President. Reagan's decisive win began a revival of Jeffersonian localism, put the Republican party firmly in charge of the presidency, and laid the groundwork for eventual Republican control of Congress. Inaugurated in 1981, Reagan directly repudiated the New Deal governing philosophy, bluntly stating: "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."[7]

Most Americans agreed. In a stunning reversal, polls found a dramatic shift regarding the respective roles of the federal and state governments. In 1936, 56 percent favored a concentration of power in the federal government; 44 percent preferred power be left to the states. By 1987, the positions were reversed: 63 percent wanted power concentrated in state governments; just 34 percent preferred the federal government.[8] This was reflected in other polls. In 1985, 57 percent agreed that "Washington is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and private businesses;" just 38 percent wanted more government involvement to solve the country's problems.[9]

At the start of the Reagan era, Republicans had a natural electoral majority that developed out of a long stretch of economic stagnation and white pushback to the civil rights gains of the 1960s. Between 1968 and 1988, Republicans won five of six presidential elections, four by landslide margins. The Republican base splintered when George H. W. Bush raised taxes, opening the door to Ross Perot's third-party challenge and allowing Bill Clinton to sneak into the presidency by winning 43 percent of the vote in 1992—2.5 points less than the previous Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis had secured enroute to losing forty states.

To win the presidency, Clinton had to resort to the same "me-too" tactics Eisenhower used during the New Deal alignment. He promised to be a "New Democrat" who would not rely on the federal government to solve problems. At

first, Clinton violated that promise by trying to overhaul the healthcare system, a project that ended in defeat and left his presidency in tatters. Clinton recovered by acknowledging the country was living through a Jeffersonian moment and turned his attention to reducing the federal deficit, working with the Republican-controlled Congress to make reductions in federal spending. Seeking reelection in 1996, Clinton told the Congress that the "era of big government is over"—a line that could have been easily uttered by Reagan.[10]

But the electorate was becoming more diverse, and by 1996 Clinton was able to win close to a majority of the vote. The next two presidential elections would be tight and competitive, and by the turn of the twenty-first century, Republicans could no longer count on a natural majority to keep them in power. Their presidential victory in 2000 was facilitated by a 5-4 ruling in the Supreme Court that broke along ideological lines. Republicans have not won a popular vote majority in the four elections since George W. Bush's narrow reelection victory in 2004.

Aspiring to the presidency in 2008, Barack Obama recognized Bill Clinton's supporting role in political history, saying, "I think Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way . . . that Bill Clinton did not."[11] Obama hoped to be a transformational president. But like Nixon in 1968, he was able to dent but not transform the electoral status quo, anticipating but not solidifying the coalition that twelve years later would elect his vice president, Joe Biden. In 2010, Obama achieved a crucial legislative milestone with the passage of the Affordable Care Act, but he also succeeded in uniting Republicans in opposition to his administration and powered the Tea Party rebellion that same year, handing Republicans the House and Senate.

Normally, back-to-back defeats like Republicans suffered in 2008 and 2012 would lead a party to reassess itself, and Republicans did make an attempt at self-examination following their second loss to Barack Obama. In a report titled the Growth and Opportunity Project, the Republican National Committee committed to expanding its appeal to a nation becoming younger and more diverse.[12] National Republicans recognized they were going to have to adjust to remain competitive as the Reagan coalition aged and disappeared and concluded that perceived racial, gender, religious, and social intolerance was costing them a generation of supporters. Party leaders understood that if they did not moderate their positions on immigration, race, and social issues they potentially faced political oblivion. However, large numbers of Republicans in the electorate were uninterested in a modified agenda, and four years after issuing a call for moderation, Republicans nominated Donald Trump and committed to a more radical vision of racial politics.

Despite warnings against sliding deeper into the politics of white grievance, Republicans began exploring ways to exercise power while slipping into the minority, making a reckoning with the party platform less urgent. As the country changed around them, a geographic fluke concentrated an emerging information age majority of young, multicultural, and secular voters in a minority of states, thereby greatly underrepresenting them in institutions like the Senate and the Electoral College. And the overwhelming Republican victories in the 2010 midterm elections gave Republicans in states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Florida, and Texas control of redistricting following the decennial census, permitting them to draw congressional boundaries to allow House Republicans to be overrepresented with respect to their share of the aggregate congressional vote.

Gerrymandering certainly wasn't new, and it was hardly the exclusive province of Republicans, but the extent and degree of gerrymandering was so pronounced that it began to disrupt the ordinary functioning of the two-party system. In extremely gerrymandered districts, where Democrats could not win, Republican incumbents feared primary challenges from their right far more than they feared Democratic challengers on their left, pushing them away from the center and dramatically reducing any incentives to compromise. The ingredients for radicalization were there even before Donald Trump stole the Republican base from a leadership that found itself powerless to contain him.

Unable to recalibrate in a way that would expand their appeal, Republicans became increasingly dependent on utilizing their power to bend the institutions of government to their advantage. Voter ID laws that disproportionately disenfranchised voters of color and extensive purges of voter rolls became more aggressive when the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act[13] on the strength of a majority made possible by holding the White House after losing the Electoral College in 2000. When that majority was threatened by the death of Antonin Scalia during the last year of President Obama's term, the move toward undermining republican institutions took an ominous turn. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell used his power to prevent a hearing on Obama's nomination of Appellate Court judge Merrick Garland to fill the seat, justifying his actions through a questionable precedent about not seating a new justice in an election year. Four years later, McConnell dispatched with this rationale and expedited confirmation hearings for Trump nominee Amy Coney Barrett following the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg while early votes were already being cast in the 2020 election.

The mechanisms that permitted Republicans to remain in power as a minority were beginning to compound one another. In the Barrett case, the nominee of a president who attained his office without benefit of the popular vote was confirmed by a Senate in which California, the most populous state, has equal representation to Wyoming, the least populous, despite having sixty-eight times the population and in which Republicans managed to gain two seats in the 2018 election despite losing the aggregate Senate vote by eight points.[14] Prior to the Barrett nomination, McConnell had used a legislative majority representing a minority of the country to fill the federal courts with the nominees of a president elected by a minority of the country, after having previously used that same minority to block the nominations of Trump's Democratic predecessor, who had twice been elected by a popular majority.

Republicans, of course, did not create republican institutions like the Senate and the Electoral College, but their increased reliance on mechanisms designed to amplify minority rights to establish minority rule was an unhealthy sign for a political party operating in a democratic system. It is a short but significant step from bending the system to breaking it entirely and the logical next step when the returns on undermining the system diminish. The breaking point came when four years of the Trump presidency saw Republicans cede control of the White House, the House, and the Senate. After Trump rejected his defeat, party elites could have rejected him, but doing so would have ignited a rebellion by the Republican base. So, they were silent or encouraging while Trump made every attempt to overturn the election outcome. When lawsuits failed, when pressure on state election officials failed, when pressure on state and national Republican elected officials failed, when multiple state recounts failed, when Trump failed to stop the casting of electoral votes in November, and when he failed to convince Vice President Mike Pence that he had the authority to throw out electoral votes in his capacity as president of the Senate, Trump found himself out of options with the clock ticking down. At that moment, with the tacit endorsement of his party, years of undermining the political system turned to overthrowing it as a last resort to cling to power.

In their rejection of the difficult work of moderating and modernizing their party—a project that almost certainly would have required a stretch in the political wilderness—it was inevitable that the interests of a Republican Party that lost its grip on the future would be increasingly at odds with the necessities of republican governance, like honoring election outcomes and recognizing the legitimacy of the opposition. Instead of recalibrating, Republicans resorted to

limiting ballot access in many states, making it harder for minorities to vote, reducing early voting, reducing the availability of drop boxes where voters could place their absentee ballots, and, in Georgia, even prohibiting distribution of food and water to those waiting in long lines to vote.

Most ominously, some states moved the legal responsibility to certify election results from independently elected secretaries of state to gerrymandered Republican-controlled state legislatures. If these laws had been in effect in 2020, it is easy to see how Republican legislative majorities in Arizona, Georgia, and Wisconsin could have refused to certify Joe Biden's Electoral College victory in those states and plunged the country into a constitutional crisis. Congress could override these measures by passing the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, but the Republican representation advantage in the Senate, coupled with the effects of the filibuster, makes doing so difficult. Democrats can fight Republican voter suppression acts in federal and state courts, but those efforts were complicated in 2021 when the Supreme Court—on the strength of the appointees secured by McConnell's strongarm tactics—further gutted the Voting Rights Act in a way that requires challengers to prove the intent of the new laws is discriminatory.

Collectively through these actions, the Republican Party has telegraphed its intention to defer any attempt to modernize in a way that would make it competitive in an electorate that increasingly rejects the core Jeffersonian philosophy of the Reagan era. In doing so, the party has positioned itself to retain power as a minority entity through the use and abuse of republican institutions or possibly, as the failed insurrection suggests, through force. What happens next? We will consider four scenarios.

Scenario One: Emergence of a Third Party

If it is true that politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum, there is an opportunity for a third party to emerge to fill the gap on the center-right created by the growing radicalization of the Republican Party. During the Trump years, the Republican Party departed from the conservative moorings of Reaganism, becoming a radical party and leaving ideological conservatives politically homeless.

While it is not uncommon for a once-dominant party to lose intellectual energy as a party system ends, it may not be an exaggeration to say that post-Trump Republicans have cast aside the touchstone values of fiscal conservatism and personal responsibility that were once the party's hallmark to become a vehicle for the grievances of those resistant to the racial, cultural and economic changes

enveloping the country. As the party slips from its intellectual roots, party politics becomes fixed on the expression of outrage rather than on the discussion of issues or the search for policy solutions. Performance, not policy, is valued. Matters rise to prominence if they channel the anger and frustration of the base, such as whether critical race theory should be taught in public schools, whether transgendered kids should be required to use bathrooms that conform to their birth gender, or whether a "cancel culture" discriminates against those who do not share prevailing cultural values. Matters like these do not present themselves as topics for serious policy consideration but are effective for riling up the party base on social media. Donald Trump understands this dynamic, as do Republicans like Marjorie Taylor Greene and Matt Gaetz.

This poses an acute dilemma for those who place themselves to the right of the Democratic Party but who have no interest in a reactionary politics of social or racial grievance. The formation of a new conservative party to fill the void would seem like a natural response to their dilemma, save for two problems: there may not be enough voters to support a viable third party, and as we noted in chapter 9, the obstacles to the development and efficacy of a third party are legion.

It is noteworthy that a new center-right party has not emerged as of 2021, even though the conditions favoring it have been present for some time. At the elite level, there has long been a vocal contingent of "Never Trump" Republicans—opinion leaders like George Will and William Kristol, and political operatives like one-time Bush and McCain advisor Steve Schmidt—who have renounced the Republican Party as dangerously anti-democratic. They have invested in anti-Trump organizations like the Lincoln Project, an affiliation of disaffected Republican operatives committed to preventing Trump's re-election. But they have not extended their well-bankrolled efforts to the formation of a political party.

The reason why rests at the grassroots level. There may not be enough "homeless" conservative voters among the party-in-the-electorate to support a viable third party, as large numbers of Republicans remain supportive of Donald Trump. A conservative party cannot be competitive unless it can peel off conservative-leaning Democrats on its left or conservative-leaning Trump supporters on its right. But as we have seen, as the parties have sorted themselves ideologically, few conservative Democrats remain. And those who support Donald Trump do not prioritize a conservative policy agenda.

Without sufficient support in the electorate, it would be a quixotic undertaking for conservative elites to invest in developing a party organization given

the expense and work it would require. The institutional barriers to the formation of third parties are enormous, and the likelihood of more than momentary success is small.

Scenario Two: Collapse of the Republican Party

A more extreme possibility would be the demise of the Republican Party as an electoral force, something we have not seen since the Whig Party disintegrated in advance of the Civil War. As far-fetched as this may sound, Republicans are not set up to compete effectively on a level playing field and have made themselves anathema to the two generations of voters that will soon constitute a majority of the population.

Although the Supreme Court, Senate, Electoral College, and House gerrymanders will continue to pay Republicans institutional dividends into the immediate future, they cannot indefinitely stave off the demographic tidal wave that grows with every election cycle. Furthermore, these efforts can be mitigated legislatively by Democrats should they deliver tangible results that satisfy their activist base and appeal to more independent-minded voters. Making government work is a top priority for the Biden administration with "deliverables" on COVID relief, economic injustice, and infrastructure reform—items which Biden has characterized as "shots in arms and money in pockets," as well as shovels in the ground.[15] Democrats will have to address divisions in their own coalition about how to address obstacles presented by the sixty-vote Senate filibuster threshold, but if they succeed in delivering results, the Republican party will find itself increasingly at odds with public sentiment and will struggle to survive at the national level.

Democrats and their allies in the electorate could also take direct aim at Republican efforts to disenfranchise voters. They could advance legislative initiatives designed to expand the electorate and protect the right to vote, although these efforts face the same legislative hurdles as Biden's policy proposals. Passage of the "For the People Act" would make it easier to register and vote and would place congressional redistricting in the hands of nonpartisan commissions, effectively ending partisan gerrymanders. Passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act would restore and expand the protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that were removed by the Supreme Court.

Grassroots political action to combat the new restrictive voting laws, register new voters, and help Democratic voters navigate their way through unchartered territory would empower emerging electorates across the Sun Belt, making

Democrats more competitive in states like Georgia, Arizona, and Texas where dramatic demographic changes have been met with voter suppression efforts. Judicial reform initiatives, potentially including expansion of the Supreme Court, would rebalance the Court in response to the Garland and Barrett nominations, although President Biden and some congressional Democrats have been resistant to such a change. Statehood for the District of Columbia and, if they so choose, Puerto Rico would marginally correct representation inequities in the Senate (along with bringing full citizenship to residents of both jurisdictions). The Senate held a hearing on DC statehood in 2021, the farthest such a proposal has ever advanced, but resistance among some Senate Democrats makes enactment unlikely. Likewise, 52 percent of Puerto Ricans supported statehood in 2020, but that proposal, too, faces congressional obstacles.[16]

The political will to pass these measures may not be evident today, but politics is a fluid enterprise and political circumstances change. It would not take much padding to the Democrats' slender congressional majorities to bring about meaningful political reform and make it increasingly hard for Republicans to hold power by aggressively working the rules of the game to their advantage.

Would they collapse under these circumstances? History suggests they are more likely to adjust. The story of major party competition is one of change and adaptation. Only the Federalists, who failed to organize effectively, and the Whigs, who were torn in half by slavery, disappeared after being major players in two-party competition. And the emergence of modern parties makes it less likely for one to vanish than was the case 160 years ago. Institutionally, party organizations are far more entrenched today than they were in the 1850s, and there are states and localities where the Republican Party will thrive regardless of what happens at the national level. Obstacles to the emergence of a third party that we discussed above make it unlikely that Republicans will be challenged by a new party the way antislavery Republicans challenged the Whigs.

But it is also clear that Republicans are dependent on a base that rejects compromise. Neglecting their wishes would make it impossible for the party to compete. If at the same time Democrats can consolidate power around their fledgling majority, it's not difficult to imagine a situation where Republicans can't win elections with or without their base. What then?

While it is theoretically possible for the Republican party to wander into oblivion while the Democratic tent expands to encompass the center-right in a twenty-first century version of the Era of Good Feelings, this is unlikely to be a sustainable arrangement. Two-party systems need two parties to be effective—and they need both parties to buy into the fundamental tenets of democracy.

That the Republican Party as currently constituted has demonstrated a willingness to embrace anti-constitutional ends opens the possibility that the Constitution rather than the party could collapse.

Scenario Three: Collapse of the Constitutional Order

The most alarming possibility is that a party of the center-right does not form, political reform does not happen, the Biden administration is unsuccessful, and Republicans return to power while still committed to Trumpism. In this scenario, the embrace of the authoritarianism that motivated the Capitol insurrection could reestablish itself, either behind Trump or a Trump acolyte who coopts the allegiance of core Trump supporters.

This possibility is viable as long as the objective of the Republican Party is to prevent the emerging electorate from holding power, which as demographic trends advance will be possible only by disenfranchising increasingly large numbers of voters. The Trump years offer a blueprint for how this might unfold. Prior to the 2016 election, Donald Trump made it clear to his supporters that the only way he could lose is if the election were rigged. In office, he made the unsubstantiated claim that he won the popular vote in 2016 because millions of votes for Hillary Clinton were fraudulent. He repeated the claim of fraud prior to the 2020 election, and when he lost, he alleged that a great victory had been stolen from him and his supporters—a stance he continues to maintain and amplify. Conservative media has intensified these claims. Most elected Republicans, fearing Trump's wrath and the anger of their constituents, are unwilling to acknowledge that the election was clean, and Biden won. During the congressional certification of the electoral vote on January 6, many Republicans challenged the electoral count. Today, a Republican Party fearful of alienating its core voters is extremely wary of provoking Trump's wrath, as he can doom their reelection bids by endorsing primary challengers he finds sympathetic. Their only move is to stand by and support him if they hope to have a future in the Republican Party.

Constitutional democracy is directly threatened by this marriage of charismatic leader, legislative enablers, and a base that regards remaining in power as the only way to fend off existential danger. It is a combination that was not present during Reagan's ascendency at the end of the New Deal alignment, nor was it a factor during the FDR realignment despite the dire conditions of the Great Depression. If there is a resonant moment in our history, it is the Republican realignment of 1856–1864, when a new party coalition was born out of civil war.

But if the constitutional order is strong enough to resist the threat posed by the presence of an anti-constitutional political party, it is also possible that this disruptive moment will resolve itself in a familiar way resembling other rocky but successful transitions between political systems.

Scenario Four: Conventional Realignment

We have noted that new party systems emerge when declining systems become unable to address new challenges, and that aptly describes this moment. President Biden took office during a time of overlapping emergencies that his Republican predecessor was ill-equipped to manage: the worst public health crisis in a century and the attendant economic carnage caused by the pandemic; a racial justice crisis elevated in salience when the murder of George Floyd at the hands of white policemen sparked sustained protests; and a looming environmental catastrophe underscored by the collapse of statewide infrastructure after a freak ice storm shuttered Texas in early 2021, followed by record-shattering temperatures across the Northwest the following summer. How effectively Biden manages these challenges will determine whether the multicultural and intergenerational coalition that elected him becomes a permanent electoral force. The task ahead for Biden is enormous, but crises of this magnitude create opportunities for parties if they can effectively address them.

Biden started with important advantages, notably high levels of public support personally and for his key initiatives. After nearly six months in office, 55 percent approved of Biden's performance, and approval of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic stood at 68 percent.[17] Sizable majorities supported his priorities to increase the minimum wage to $15 per hour (61 percent); reenter the Paris Climate Agreement (63 percent); allow children illegally brought into the US to remain and apply for citizenship (83 percent); permit undocumented immigrants to become citizens (65 percent); reverse Donald Trump's Muslim ban (57 percent);[18] and enhance Obamacare (68 percent).[19] As Biden turned his attention to dealing with the nation's crumbling infrastructure and combating climate change through his $2.3 trillion American Jobs Plan, he was buoyed by 56 percent support for his efforts; only 34 percent opposed.[20]

Biden's ascendency dovetails with a decline in the Republican Party's fortunes. At the start of his presidency, 63 percent said the Republican Party was on the "wrong track, and 54 percent wanted Donald Trump to "remove himself from politics entirely." Following the January 6 insurrection, Republican registration figures dropped precipitously, and a survey sponsored by The Economist/You

Gov found the number of Americans calling themselves Republicans declined five points to 37 percent between November 2020 and February 2021.[21]

These numbers reflect an early embrace of the Biden agenda and widespread public rejection of Trump and his policies. But something more is at work. During the 2020 campaign, Biden linked the pandemic and attendant economic devastation to the racial injustice and climate crises he would assume as president. In so doing, he advocated a comprehensive, activist approach to government the likes of which we have not seen a president advance since the New Deal. His agenda is breathtaking in scope: an overhaul of the nation's infrastructure, including building electric automobile charging stations; an immigration bill that provides a path to citizenship to undocumented workers; expanding the nation's broadband capabilities to underserved rural communities; new civil rights and voting rights acts; and an expansion of Obamacare. It is not coincidental that Biden hung a portrait of FDR in the Oval Office, along with statutes of civil rights icons Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Robert Kennedy, and Caesar Chavez—all proponents of an expansive federal government role.[22]

To this end, it is noteworthy that the opening legislative move on the COVID-19 relief package moved swiftly through Congress to Biden's desk. Presidents Obama, Clinton, and Carter, who had many more congressional Democrats to work with, met with far more internal resistance for their large initiatives. But, as we saw, they were operating in different political eras, with Carter dependent on the warring factions of a deteriorating New Deal coalition, and Obama and Clinton representing the minority party when the prevailing assumptions of the Reagan era were still robust. While Biden's Democratic congressional majorities are slender in a way Franklin Roosevelt's were not, the substantial public support for his initiatives suggests that the foundation may exist for a new political alignment.

The crises Biden inherited in 2021 were on a scale not seen since the Great Depression, and their emergence may have increased the public appetite for a Rooseveltian-style Hamiltonian nationalism. In a reversal from the Reagan years, the public is voicing its support for more government activism. Prior to the 2020 election, the Gallup Organization registered 54 percent support for the position that the federal government "should do more" to solve the country's problems, whereas only 41 percent thought it was doing too many things that "should be left to individuals and businesses."[23] When things are going well, voters are inclined to sit back and voice skepticism about government and its associated costs. But when things are going poorly, voters demand action.

Ultimately, the public will register a verdict on Biden's efforts, both in the midterm election of 2022 and the presidential election in 2024. Much will rest on how quickly America achieves post-pandemic normalcy, and whether that brings new possibilities for economic and social justice. If Biden falls short, a turn toward greater divisiveness is likely, and each of the scenarios discussed above becomes more possible. But if he is successful, Republicans will become, in the words of Biden senior advisor Mike Donilon, "a party shrinking its appeal." Republicans have opted to oppose Biden's initiatives the same way they opposed his two Democratic predecessors, but the risks of obstruction will escalate because the political circumstances are different. As Donilon observed, "Opposing President Biden's American Rescue Plan only exacerbate[s] Republicans' predicament. The GOP is putting itself at odds with a rescue package supported overwhelmingly by the American people."[24] The same logic applies to Biden's infrastructure and climate change plans.

During the past forty years, the party in power typically suffers losses in midterm elections. It may require an exception to that pattern for Republicans to reevaluate their political viability. Should Republicans lose congressional seats in 2022, it would be a sign that the political system is responding to public opinion and the party system is functioning as it has in the past, with a turn toward a new party alignment built on a strong Hamiltonian role for the federal government.

In the final words of his inaugural address, President Biden said:

We will be judged, you and I, for how we resolve the cascading crises of our era. Will we rise to the occasion? Will we master this rare and difficult hour? Will we meet our obligations and pass along a new and better world for our children? I believe we must, and I believe we will. And when we do, we will write the next chapter in the American story.[25]

What that next chapter will look like, and how our political parties adapt to the new realities of our time, will likely turn on whether Biden is correct.

NOTES

Preface: How We Got Here

1. See Carroll Doherty and Amina Dunn, "What Biden and Trump Supporters Tell Us in Their Own Words about America's Political Divisions," Pew Research Center, December 17, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/17/what-biden-and-trump-supporters-tell-us-in-their-own-words-about-americas-political-divisions/

2. George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 17, 1796. For a transcript of Washington's speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address.

3. William L. Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 25–26.

4. Michelle Obama, *Becoming* (New York: Crown, 2018), 33–34.

5. Ipsos poll, January 21–30, 2021. Text of question: "Compared to past presidential elections during your lifetime, do you see the 2020 election as the single most important election of your lifetime, more important than most other elections, about as important as other elections, or less important the most other elections?" The single most important election of your lifetime, 28 percent; more important than most other elections, 38 percent; about as important as other elections, 28 percent; less important than most other elections, 4 percent; refused, 2 percent.

6. Bill Clinton, "State of the Union Address," Washington, DC, January 23, 1996. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-10

7. Suffolk University, poll, February 15–20, 2021. Text of question: "President Biden says he wants to pursue bipartisanship and reduce the nation's polarization. Which comes closer to your view? Congressional Republicans should do their best to work with Biden on major policies, even if it means making compromises; congressional Republicans should do their best to stand up to Biden on major policies, even if it means little gets passed." Work with Biden, 26 percent; stand up to Biden, 62 percent; undecided, 12 percent. Survey of Trump voters only.

8. Cited in E. J. Dionne Jr., *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 70–71.

9. Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, reprint ed. (New York: Archon Books, 1963), 29.

Introduction: An Election Like No Other

1. Mark Danner, "Be Ready to Fight," *New York Review of Books,* February 11, 2021, 4.

2. Joe Biden, "Inaugural Address," Washington, DC, January 20, 2021. For a transcript of Joe Biden's speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-53

3. Quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg, "Why Obama Fears for Our Democracy," *Atlantic*, November 16, 2020.

4. Lara Trump, "Address to the Republican National Convention," August 26, 2020. For a transcript of Lara Trump's speech, see https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/lara-trump-2020-rnc-speech-transcript

5. Edward J. Larson, *A Magnificent Catastrophe: The Tumultuous Election of 1800, America's First Presidential Campaign* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 106.

6. James MacGregor Burns, *Cobblestone Leadership: Majority Rule, Minority Power* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 29.

7. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955), 7.

8. Quoted in Everett Carll Ladd, *The American Ideology: An Exploration of the Origins, Meaning, and Role of American Political Ideas* (Storrs, CT: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1994), 32.

9. Quoted in John Gerring, "A Chapter in the History of American Party Ideology: The Nineteenth Century Democratic Party, 1828–1892," paper presented at the Northeastern Political Science Association, Newark, New Jersey, November 11–13, 1993, 36–37. Cass made these remarks on September 2, 1852.

10. See Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 323.

11. Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," Washington, DC, February 2, 1953. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-the-congress-the-state-the-union-16

12. Daniel M. Shea, ed., *Mass Politics: The Politics of Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 207.

13. Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist Number 70," in *The Federalist*, ed., Edward Mead Earle (New York: Modern Library, 1960), 454.

14. Robert Kennedy, *To Seek A Newer World* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 56.

15. James Reston, "Liberty and Authority," *New York Times*, June 29, 1986, E-23.

16. Wilson Carey McWilliams, "The Old Populism vs. the New," *Commonweal*, June 2, 1995, 24.

17. Michael Lind, "Trumpism and Clintonism Are the Future," *New York Times*, April 16, 2016.

18. Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 1.

19. Hillary Clinton, "Speech on the Alt-Right Movement," Reno, NV, August 25, 2016. For a transcript of the speech see https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/25/hillary-clintons-alt-right-speech-annotated/

20. Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's*, November 1964, 82.

21. Dominick Mastrangelo, "Trump Jr.: Trump Supporters in D.C. 'Should Send a Message' to GOP 'This Isn't' Their Party Any More," *The Hill*, January 6, 2021, https://thehill.com/homenews/532886-donald-trump-jr-gathering-of-trump-supporters-in-dc-should-send-a-message-to-gop.

22. Quinnipiac University, poll, February 11–14, 2021. Text of question: "Would you like to see Donald Trump play a prominent role in the Republican party, or not?" Republicans: yes, 75 percent; no, 21 percent; don't know/no answer, 4 percent.

23. CBS News, poll, February 5-8, 2021. See https://www.cbsnews.com/news/impeachment-trial-trump-conviction-opinion-poll/.

24. Committee on Political Parties, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1950), 94.

25. See Daniel A. Cox, "After the Ballots Are Counted: Conspiracies, Political Violence, and American Exceptionalism," Survey Center on American Life, February 11, 2021, https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/after-the-ballots-are-counted-conspiracies-political-violence-and-american-exceptionalism/.

26. See Cox, "After the Ballots Are Counted."

27. Chuck McCutcheon, "Future of the GOP," *CQ Researcher*, Volume 24, Issue 38, October 24, 2014, 891.

28. James MacGregor Burns, *The Vineyard of Liberty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

CHAPTER 1

1. George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 17, 1796. For a transcript of the speech see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address

2. Abraham Lincoln, "Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois," in *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858* ed., Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1989), 32–33.

3. See James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987), 39.

4. See Max Farand, ed., *The Record of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 1: 299.

5. U.S. Census Bureau, "A More Efficient Census of Governments." See https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/2016/comm/cog_infographic.pdf. Accessed June 11, 2020.

6. John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

7. Donald J. Trump, *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 98.

8. James Madison, "Federalist 10," in *The Federalist*, ed. Edward Meade Earle (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 77.

9. Madison, "Federalist 10," 59.

10. Madison, "Federalist 10," 61.

11. James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (New York: New American Library, 1974), 263.

12. George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 17, 1796. For a transcript of Washington's speech see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address

13. David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 422.

14. See A. James Reichley, *The Life of the Parties: A History of American Political Parties* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 29.

15. David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1995), 537.

16. Barack Obama, "Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention," Boston, July 27, 2004. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/barack-obamas-keynote-address-at-the-2004-democratic-national-convention

17. President Ford Committee, "Ford Campaign Strategy Plan," August 1976. Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library.

18. NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, poll, May 28–June 2, 2020. Text of question: "Do you consider yourself to be more a supporter of Donald Trump or more a supporter of the Republican party?" Supporter of Donald Trump, 52 percent; supporter of the Republican Party, 38 percent; both (volunteered), 4 percent; neither (volunteered), 4 percent; not sure, 2 percent.

19. Donald J. Trump, "Acceptance Speech," Republican National Convention, Washington, DC, August 27, 2020. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-republican-presidential-nomination-4

20. Joe Biden, "Acceptance Speech," Democratic National Convention, Wilmington, DE, August 20, 2020. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-republican-presidential-nomination-4

21. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Sergel, 1891), 119.

22. Amicus curiae brief filed by the Committee for Party Renewal in Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. Federal Election Commission, February 1996, 3. John K. White, personal copy.

23. Megan Brenan, "Economy Tops Voters' List of Key Election Issues," Gallup, October 5, 2020, https://news.gallup.com/poll/321617/economy-tops-voters-list-key-election-issues.aspx.

24. "Democratic Party Platform, 2020," accessed September 3, 2020, https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/party-platform/

25. In an unprecedented move, Republicans did not adopt a 2020 platform saying they stood by President Trump's "America First agenda." See Republican National

Committee, "Resolution, Regarding the Republican Party Platform," August 24, 2020, https://prod-cdnstatic.gop.com/docs/Resolution_Platform_2020.pdf.

26. "Republican Party Platform," accessed July 30, 2016, https://prod-cdn-static.gop.com/media/documents/DRAFT_12_FINAL%5B1%5D-ben_1468872234.pdf.

27. See Everett Carll Ladd with Charles D. Hadley, *Transformations of the American Party System* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 1.

28. The PIE, PO, PIG model was first developed by Ralph M. Goldman in 1951. See Ralph M. Goldman, *Party Chairmen and Party Faction, 1789–1900* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1951), introduction and Ralph M. Goldman, *The National Party Chairmen and Committees: Factionalism at the Top* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

29. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

30. "The Professional and Technical Workforce: By the Numbers," Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO, 2021 Fact Sheet, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d10ef48024ce300010f0f0c/t/61523a1c51633b57b4df9ffb/1632778782192/The+Professional+and+Technical+Workforce+2021.pdf.

31. See https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm. Last modified date Janaury 22, 2021.

32. Drew DeSilva, "Ten Facts about American Workers," Pew Research Center, August 29, 2019. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d10ef48024ce300010f0f0c/t/61523a1c51633b57b4df9ffb/1632778782192/The+Professional+and+Technical+Workforce+2021.pdf.

33. Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Political Parties and the Winning of Office* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1991).

34. Leon D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1990).

35. John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?:The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

36. Edmund Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents" (1770), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 317.

37. Jay M. Shafritz, *The Dorsey Dictionary of American Government and Politics* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1988).

38. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* ed. Richard D. Heffner, (New York: New American Library, 1956), 90.

39. Joe Biden, "Announcement Speech," Philadelphia, PA, April 25, 2019. For a transcript of the speech, see https://transcripts.cnn.com/show/ath/date/2019-04-25/segment/01.

40. Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

41. Daniel Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 14.

42. William Nisbet Chambers, "Party Development and the American Mainstream," in *The American Party Systems*, ed. William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 6.

43. Gerald Strouzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970), 16.

44. See Morton J. Frisch, ed., *Selected Writings and Speeches of Alexander Hamilton* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1985), 316.

45. Ted Morgan, *FDR: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 38.

46. Richard Reeves, *The Reagan Detour* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 19.

47. Robert F. Kennedy, *To Seek A Newer World* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 56.

48. James A. Reichley, "Party Politics in a Federal Polity," in *Challenges to Party Government*, ed. John Kenneth White and Jerome M. Mileur (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1992), 43.

49. "Read the Full Transcript of Barack Obama's High School Commencement Speech," *New York Times*, May 16, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/16/us/obama-graduation-speech-transcript.html.

50. "1936 Republican National Platform," as reprinted in the *New York Times*, June 12, 1936, 1.

51. Alfred M. Landon, "Text of Governor Landon's Milwaukee Address on Social Security," *New York Times,* September 27, 1936.

52. Annie Linskey, "A Look Inside Biden's Oval Office," *Washington Post*, January 21, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/20/biden-oval-office/.

CHAPTER 2

1. E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government: American Government in Action* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942), 1.

2. Axios/Ipsos, poll, January 11–13, 2021. Text of question: "How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like me." Strongly agree, 38 percent; somewhat agree, 40 percent; somewhat disagree, 17 percent; strongly disagree, 3 percent; no answer, 2 percent.

3. Howard Bement, ed., *Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America* (Norwood, MA: Ambrose and Company, 1922), 45, 54–55, 61.

4. David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 422.

5. "Essays of Brutus, October 18, 1787," in *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*, ed. Robert Ketcham (New York: Signet Classics, 2003), 277.

6. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, "Federalist 57," *The Federalist*, ed. Edward Mead Earle (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 370.

7. A. James Reichley, *The Life of the Parties: A History of American Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 42.

8. McCullough, *John Adams*, 422.

9. Cited in Thomas E. Patterson, *The American Democracy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 350.

10. James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (New York: New American Library, 1974), 276.

11. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 108–9.

12. Donald Sisson, *The American Revolution of 1800: How Jefferson Rescued Democracy from Tyranny and Faction and What This Means Today* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 11.

13. Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 204.

14. Marbury v. Madison, 1 Cr. 137 (1803).

15. See A. James Reichley, "Party Politics in a Federal Polity," in, *Challenges to Party Government*, ed. John Kenneth White and Jerome M. Mileur (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 44. The originator of the phrase was New York governor William Marcy, a close Van Buren ally.

16. George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party 1854–1964* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 26.

17. Elinor C. Hartshorn, "Know-Nothings," in *Political Parties and Elections in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Garland, 1991), 549.

18. William E. Gienapp, "Formation of the Republican Party," in *The Encyclopedia of American Political Parties and Elections*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Garland, 1991), 399.

19. James Albert Woodburn, *Political Parties and Party Problems in the United States* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 416–17.

20. "Guest Opinion: Jefferson Democrats' Dark History of Using Mob Rule to Silence Dissenting Press," Red State, January 12, 2021, https://redstate.com/redstate-guest-editorial/2021/01/12/308876-n308876.

21. Joan McCarter, "McConnell's White Supremacist Roots are Showing in His Filibuster Fight," Daily Kos, February 22, 2021, https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2021/1/22/2011214/-Obama-called-the-filibuster-a-Jim-Crow-relic-He-s-right-It-s-time-it-was-gone.

CHAPTER 3

1. William Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 91–93.

2. Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall,* 1–3.

3. Progressive Party, "Progressive Platform, 1912," in *National Party Platforms, 1840–1968*, ed. Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 173.

4. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Why Americans Still Don't Vote, and Why Politicians Want It That Way* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 8.

5. On June 22, 2020, Trump tweeted: "Because of MAIL-IN BALLOTS, 2020 will be the most RIGGED election in our nations [*sic*] history—unless this stupidity is ended. We voted in World War One & World War Two with no problem, but now they are using Covid to cheat by using Mail-Ins," CNN, June 22, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/22/politics/trump-voter-fraud-lies-fact-check/index.html.

6. Carl Smith, "Is America Ready to Vote by Mail," Governing, April 15, 2020. https://www.governing.com/next/The-2020-Elections-Is-America-Ready-to-Vote-by-Mail.html.

7. See "Voting Laws Roundup: May 2021," The Brennan Center for Justice, May 28, 2021, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-may-2021.

8. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address," Washington, DC, January 6, 1941.

9. Barry M. Goldwater, "Acceptance Speech," Republican National Convention, San Francisco, CA, July 16, 1964.

10. Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

11. Philip A. Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956–1993* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 39.

12. A. James Reichley, *The Life of the Parties: A History of American Political Parties* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 356.

13. Paul S. Herrnson, *Party Campaigning in the 1980s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 37.

14. "Republican National Committee: Fundraising Overview, 2020 Cycle." See https://www.opensecrets.org/parties/totals.php?cycle=2020&cmte=RNC. Accessed January 18, 2021.

15. Reichley, *The Life of the Parties*, 365.

16. "Democratic National Committee: Fundraising Overview, 2020 Cycle." See https://www.opensecrets.org/parties/totals.php?cmte=DNC&cycle=2020. Accessed January 18, 2021.

17. IPSOS, poll, June 5–8, 2020. Text of question: "Which of these is your main source of news?" Fox News, 12 percent; CNN, 7 percent; MSNBC, 3 percent; ABC/CBS/NBC News, 24 percent; *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, 2 percent; digital or online news, 17 percent; your local newspaper, 3 percent; public television or radio, 9 percent; social media, 10 percent; other, 5 percent; none of these, 7 percent.

18. Matthew R. Kerbel, *Netroots: Online Progressives and the Transformations of American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

CHAPTER 4

1. James W. Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 176.

2. Trump had three challengers for his renomination: former Massachusetts governor William Weld, radio talk show host Joe Walsh, and former representative Mark Sanford.

3. The Democratic candidates were former vice president Joe Biden; Vermont senator Bernie Sanders; Representative Tulsi Gabbard; Senator Elizabeth Warren; former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg; Senator Amy Klobuchar; former South Bend, Indiana, mayor Pete Buttigieg; Tom Steyer; former Massachusetts governor Duval Patrick; Andrew Yang; Senator Michael Bennet; Representative John Delaney; Senator Cory Booker; Marianne Williamson; former Housing and Urban Development (HUD) secretary Julian Castro; Senator Kamala Harris; Montana governor Steve Bullock, former representative Joe Sestak; Wayne Messam; former representative Beto O'Rourke, Representative Tim Ryan; New York City mayor Bill de Blasio; Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Representative Seth Moulton; Washington governor Jay Inslee, former governor John Hickenlooper; Representative Eric Swalwell, and Richard Ojeda. See https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/us/politics/2020-presidential-candidates.html.

4. This was Maryland congressman Delaney who announced his presidential candidacy on July 28, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/31/us/politics/john-delaney-drops-out.html.

5. Peter Marks, "Democratic Convention Team Tries for an Emmy Win as Well," *Washington Post,* June 27, 2021, E-1.

6. Fred Blumenthal, "How to Prepare for the Presidency," *Parade Magazine*, 1962. Reprinted in *The World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1965), 678–79.

7. See Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher, *Trump Revealed: The Definitive Biography of the 45th President* (New York: Scribner, 2017), 285–87.

8. Kranish and Fisher, *Trump Revealed*, 292.

9. The lengthy list of Republican candidates included former Florida governor Jeb Bush, neurosurgeon Ben Carson, Texas senator Ted Cruz, Ohio governor John Kasich, former Virginia governor Jim Gilmore, Florida senator Marco Rubio, real estate entrepreneur Donald Trump, former Texas governor Rick Perry, Wisconsin governor Scott Walker, Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal, South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham, former New York governor George Pataki, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum, Kentucky senator Rand Paul, former Hewlett Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, and New Jersey governor Chris Christie.

10. John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 63.

11. See "2020 Presidential Race," Open Secrets, accessed December 23, 2020, https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race. Figures represent combined candidate campaign committee money and outside expenditures.

12. Associated Press-National Opinion Research Center, Money in Politics Survey, November 2015. Text of question one: "Here are some possible ways to change the current system of financing political campaigns in the United States. How effective do you think each of the following would be in reducing the influence of money in politics? Extremely effective, very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, not effective at all? Limits on how much an outside group can spend on a candidate's campaign." Extremely effective, 25 percent; very effective, 29 percent; somewhat effective, 33 percent; not very effective, 8 percent; not effective at all, 5 percent. Text of question two: "Here are some possible ways to change the current system of financing political campaigns in the United States. How effective do you think each of the following would be in reducing the influence of money in politics? Extremely effective, very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, not effective at all? Limits on how much a political party can spend on a candidate's campaign." Extremely effective, 23 percent; very effective, 29 percent; somewhat effective, 35 percent; not very effective, 8 percent; not effective at all, 5 percent. Text of question three: "Here are some possible ways to change the current system of financing political campaigns in the United States. How effective do you think each of the following would be in reducing the influence of money in politics? Extremely effective, very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, not effective at all? Limits on how much a candidate can spend on his or her campaign, regardless of the source of the money." Extremely effective, 25 percent; very effective, 26 percent; somewhat effective, 33 percent; not very effective, 9 percent; not effective at all, 6 percent.

13. Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 558 U.S. 50 (2010).

14. See "2020 Presidential Race."

15. Bernie Sanders, "Announcement Speech," Burlington, Vermont, May 26, 2015. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.c-span.org/video/?326214-1/senator-bernie-sanders-i-vt-presidential-campaign-announcement#

16. See "Bernie Sanders (D)," Open Secrets, accessed August 10, 2020, https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race/candidate/bernie-sanders?id=N00000528.

17. Donald J. Trump, *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 98.

18. Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist 68," in *The Federalist*, ed. Edward Meade Earle (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 50.

19. Hamilton, "Federalist 68," 442.

20. NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, poll, April 28–May 1, 2019. Text of question: "U.S. presidential elections are determined by the Electoral College where the candidate

that wins a state receives votes based upon that state's population. This means our constitution allows for a president to be elected without winning the national popular vote. Which approach do you prefer in electing a president. . .continuing to use the Electoral College or amending the constitution to determine the winner by national popular vote?" Continuing to use the electoral college, 43 percent; amending the constitution to determine the winner by national popular vote, 53 percent; note sure, 4 percent.

21. These included one Clinton elector from Hawaii (who voted for Bernie Sanders), four Clinton electors from Washington State (three who voted for Colin Powell and one for Faith Spotted Eagle, a Native American); and two Trump Texas electors (one who voted for John Kasich; another who sided with Libertarian Ron Paul).

22. Three electors voted for former secretary of state Colin Powell and one elector voted for Faith Spotted Eagle, a Native American from South Dakota. Meanwhile two Trump electors in Texas did not vote for him and one elector in Hawaii sided with Bernie Sanders. See https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/four-washington-electors-break-ranks-and-dont-vote-for-clinton/. Accessed August 7, 2020.

23. See Chiafalo et al. v. Washington, No. 19-465. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/19-465_i425.pdf. Accessed August 7, 2020.

24. If that had happened, there would have been a 269-269 tie in the Electoral College and the election would have been decided in the House of Representatives where each state delegation had one vote. Although Democrats controlled the House, Republicans controlled more state delegations which would have allowed Trump to win.

25. For more on some of these proposals see Paul Schumaker, "Analyzing the Electoral College and Its Alternatives," in *Choosing a President: The Electoral College and Beyond*, ed. Paul D. Schumaker and Burdett A. Loomis (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2002), especially 10–30.

26. James MacGregor Burns, *The Power to Lead: The Crisis of the American Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 220.

27. Ceaser, *Presidential Selection*, 147.

28. *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren,* vol. 2, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (New York: DeCapo Press, 1973 edition), 584.

29. Howard L. Reiter, *Selecting the President: The Nominating Process in Transition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 133–34.

30. Reiter, *Selecting the President*, 134.

31. Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, *National Party Platforms, 1840–1968* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 169

32. Charles R. Michael, "Majority Will End Two-Thirds Rule," *New York Times*, June 23, 1936, 13.

33. Some southern states, in a protest to the Democratic Party's pro-civil rights stance, refused to list Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson on the ballot in 1952.

34. Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address to the Nation," Washington, DC, March 31, 1968. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/

the-presidents-address-the-nation-announcing-steps-limit-the-war-vietnam-and
-reporting-his.

35. Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1968* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 376.

36. George McGovern, *Grassroots: The Autobiography of George McGovern* (New York: Random House, 1977), 130. Eugene McCarthy became a candidate in November 1967; Robert Kennedy entered in mid-March 1968; Lyndon Johnson withdrew from the race on March 31; Hubert Humphrey became an official candidate in late April (after most of the primary deadlines had passed). The charge that Humphrey was not a representative candidate of the Democratic Party rank and file remains a contested one. Humphrey easily led McCarthy in the Gallup polls as the party's choice for the presidential nomination and was competitive in a three-way contest involving Eugene McCarthy, Robert Kennedy, and Humphrey. For more information see Richard Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

37. Democratic National Committee, Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection to the Democratic National Committee. *Mandate for Reform: A Report of the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection to the Democratic National Committee* (Washington, DC: Democratic National Committee, April 1970).

38. McGovern, *Grassroots*, 137.

39. Cousins v. Wigoda, 419, U.S. (1975).

40. McGovern, *Grassroots,* 48.

41. Democratic National Committee, "Delegate Selection Rules for the 2020 Democratic National Convention," adopted by the Democratic National Committee, August 25, 2018. https://democrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2020-Delegate-Selection -Rules-12.17.18-FINAL.pdf. Accessed January 15, 2022.

42. See "Republican Delegate Rules," Ballotpedia, accessed August 8, 2020, https:// ballotpedia.org/Republican_delegate_rules,_2020.

43. Walter F. Morse, "Political Convention," *The World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 15 (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1964), 553–54.

44. These were Alabama, American Samoa, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Democrats Abroad, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia.

45. Nelson W. Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 114.

46. Tom Wicker, "A Party of Access?" *New York Times*, November 25, 1984, E17.

47. See https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/graphics/2016-delegate-tracker/. Accessed September 21, 2016.

48. See "Republican Delegate Rules."

49. Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 14.

CHAPTER 5

1. Quinnipiac poll, January 15–17, 2021. Text of question: "Do you think Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election is legitimate or not legitimate?" Legitimate, 64 percent; not legitimate, 31 percent; don't know/no answer, 5 percent. Democrats: Legitimate, 97 percent; not legitimate, 0 percent; don't know/no answer, 2 percent. Republicans: Legitimate, 28 percent; not legitimate, 67 percent; don't know/no answer, 5 percent.

2. Edison Research, exit poll, November 3, 2020.

3. See Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard R. Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940); and Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

4. See, for example, Walter DeVries, and V. Lance Tarrance, *The Ticket-Splitter: A New Force in American Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1972).

5. Gallup poll, October 9–14, 1952. Text of question: "Which presidential candidate—Stevenson or Eisenhower—do you think could handle the Korean situation best?" Eisenhower, 65 percent; Stevenson, 19 percent; no difference (volunteered), 8 percent; no opinion, 8 percent.

6. Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 148.

7. See Jeffrey M. Jones, "Biden Sparks Greater Party, Education Gaps than Predecessors," Gallup, April 15, 2021, https://news.gallup.com/poll/346622/biden-sparks-greater-party-education-gaps-predecessors.aspx. Accessed June 23, 2021.

8. Gerald M. Pomper, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System? What, Again?" *Journal of Politics* 33 (1971): 936.

9. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

10. NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, survey, August 9–12, 2020. Text of question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or something else? (If Democrat or Republican ask:) Would you call yourself a strong (Democrat/Republican) or not a very strong (Democrat/Republican)? (If not sure, ask:) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party, closer to the Democratic Party, or do you think of yourself as strictly independent?" Strong Democrat, 25 percent; not very strong Democrat, 6 percent; independent/lean Democrat, 11 percent; strictly independent, 13 percent; independent/lean Republican, 10 percent; not very strong Republican, 5 percent; strong Republican, 23 percent.

11. Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 16.

12. "Moving Right Along? Campaign '84's Lessons for 1988: An Interview with Peter Hart and Richard Wirthlin," *Public Opinion* (December/January 1985): 8.

13. V. O. Key Jr., "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *Journal of Politics* 21 (May 1959): 199.

14. Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970), 10.

15. Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 25.

16. See for example Byron E. Shafer, *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

17. Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, survey, September 20–22, 1983. Text of question: "Do you feel that the Democratic Party or the Republican Party can do a better job of handling . . . or don't you think there is any real difference between them?" The "no difference" results were as follows: reducing crime, 58 percent; stopping the spread of communism, 52 percent; dealing effectively with the USSR, 48 percent; providing quality education, 47 percent; reducing the risk of nuclear war, 46 percent; providing health care, 46 percent; reducing waste and inefficiency in government, 45 percent; protecting the environment, 45 percent.

18. Everett C. Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot: The Uselessness of Realignment for Understanding Change in Contemporary American Politics," *Polity* 22, 3 (Spring 1990): 512.

19. Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot," 518.

20. See David R. Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 141.

21. John Kenneth White, "Partisanship in the 1984 Presidential Election: The Rolling Republican Realignment," paper prepared for the 1985 Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Political Science Association, March 20–23, 1985, Houston, Texas.

22. Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," Washington, DC, January 20, 1981. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-11

23. John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Scribner, 2002).

24. John Kenneth White, *Barack Obama's America: How New Conceptions of Race, Family, and Religion Ended the Reagan Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009) and John Kenneth White, *What Happened to the Republican Party? (And What It Means for Presidential Politics)* (New York: Routledge, 2016). See also Stanley B. Greenberg, *America Ascendant* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2015).

25. Robert Draper, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do* (New York: Free Press, 2012), xviii.

26. Joe Biden, "Victory Speech," Wilmington, DE, November 7, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/07/annotated-biden-victory-speech/.

27. Allan Smith, "McConnell Says He's '100 Percent' Focused on 'Stopping' Biden's Administration," NBC News, May 5, 2021. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/joe-biden/mcconnell-says-he-s-100-percent-focused-stopping-biden-s-n1266443.

CHAPTER 6

1. Louis Nelson, "Trump Assails Former Miss Universe and Clinton in Early Morning Tweet Blitz," *Politico*, September 30, 2016, http://www.politico.com/story/2016/09/trump-alicia-machado-clinton-tweet-attack-228940.

2. Maggie Haberman, Ashley Parker, Jeremy W. Peters, and Michael Barbaro, "Inside Donald Trump's Last Stand: An Anxious Nominee Seeks Assurance," *New York Times*, November 6, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/07/us/politics/donald-trump-presidential-race.html?_r=0.

3. Chuck Raasch, "Political Parties Deploy Web Erratically, Study Says," Gannett News Service, April 11, 2002.

4. Raasch, "Political Parties Deploy Web Erratically."

5. Governor Howard Dean, Remarks, Democratic National Committee Winter Meeting, Washington, DC, February 21, 2003. https://p2004.org/dnc0203/dean022103spt.html. Accessed January 15, 2022.

6. Joe Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2008), 85–86.

7. Trippi, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, 89.

8. Matthew R. Kerbel and Joel David Bloom, "Blog for America and Civic Involvement," *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10, 4 (2005): 3–27.

9. Trippi, *The Revolution*, 141–45.

10. Matthew R. Kerbel, *Netroots: Online Progressives and the Transformation of American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 135.

11. Trippi, *The Revolution*, 157–79.

12. Kerbel, *Netroots,* 138–39.

13. Cited in Sean Quinn, "On the Road: Toledo, OH," FiveThirtyEight, October 14, 2008. See Matthew R. Kerbel, *Netroots: Online Progressives and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 174.

14. Chris Bowers and Matthew Stoller, "Emergence of the Progressive Blogosphere: A New Force in American Politics," New Politics, August 10, 2005. http://www.newpolitics.net/node/87?full_report=1, 15.

15. Bowers and Stoller, "Emergence of the Progressive Blogosphere."

16. Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke, *Beyond the Echo Chamber: Reshaping Politics Through Networked Progressive Media* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

17. Matthew R. Kerbel and Christopher J. Bowers, *Next Generation Netroots: Realignment and the Rise of the Internet Left* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

18. Matthew R. Kerbel, "The Dog That Didn't Bark: Obama, Netroots Progressives, and Healthcare Reform," presented at the 2010 Dilemmas of Democracy Conference, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, March 2010.

19. See, for instance, monthly reader polls conducted by the progressive website Daily Kos. Among community members, Biden consistently polled as an afterthought.

20. Christopher Snow Hopkins, "Twelve Tea Party Players to Watch." National Journal, February 4, 2010.

21. Quint Forgey, "Trump vs. the Bushes: A Political Rivalry of It's Time," Politico, December 1, 2018, https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/01/trump-bush-rivalry -1037143.

22. Colin Campbell, Donald Trump Went on a Day-Long Assault of Jeb Bush on the Eve of the Next All-Important Primary," *Business Insider*, February 8, 2016, https:// www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-jeb-bush-new-hampshire-primary-2016-2.

23. Alex Woodward, "'Fake News': A Guide to Trump's Favourite Phrase— and the Dangers It Obscures," *Independent*, October 2, 2020. See https://www .independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-election/trump-fake-news-counter -history-b732873.html.

24. Trump, Donald (@realDonaldTrump). 2020. "The only thing more RIGGED than the 2020 election is the FAKE NEWS SUPPRESED MEDIA." Twitter, December 4, 2020, 2:55 p.m.

25. Trump, Donald (@realDonaldTrump). 2020. "Everyone is asking why the recent presidential polls were so inaccurate when it came to me. Because they are FAKE, just like much of the Lamestream Media!" Twitter, November 11, 2020, 6:51 p.m.

26. See Donald Trump's Twitter archive, Factba, https://factba.se/biden/topic/ twitter. Accessed September 1, 2021.

27. "American Views 2020: Trust, Media and Democracy," Knight Foundation, August 4, 2020. See https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2020-trust -media-and-democracy/.

28. "Capitol Riots: Did Trump's Words At Rally Incite Violence?," BBC News, January 13, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55640437.

29. Twitter Permanent Suspension of @realDonaldTrump, https://blog.twitter.com/ en_us/topics/company/2020/suspension.html.

CHAPTER 7

1. Herbert E. Alexander, *Financing Politics: Money, Elections, and Political Reform*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1984), 5–6.

2. Robert J. Dinkin, *Campaigning in America: A History of Election Practices* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 8.

3. Center for Responsive Politics, *A Brief History of Money in Politics* (Washington, DC: Center for Responsive Politics, 1999), 3.

4. As cited in Dinkin, *Campaigning in America*, 13.

5. Center for Responsive Politics, *A Brief History of Money in Politics*, 3.

6. For more on this see Karl Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley: Why the Election of 1896 Still Matters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).

7. As cited in Center for Responsive Politics, *A Brief History of Money in Politics*, 3.

8. See Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley,* 333.

9. Cited in Paul W. Glad, *McKinley, Bryan, and the People* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1991), 168.

10. See Glad, *McKinley and the People*, p. 169 and Kenneth Jost, "Campaign Finance Debates," *CQ Researcher* 20: 457–80, accessed July 7, 2010, http://library.cqpress.com/proxycu.wrlc.org/cqresearcher/cqresre2010052800.

11. Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley*, 373–74.

12. Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley*, 333.

13. Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley*, 338.

14. Rove, *The Triumph of William McKinley*, 262. For an interesting discussion of the role of money in the 1896 election, see Keith Ian Polakoff, *Political Parties in American History* (New York: Wiley, 1981), 259–66.

15. The union leader mentioned here was Samuel Gompers, founder and first president of the American Federation of Labor; the senator was Boies Penrose. The quotation is cited in Center for Responsive Politics, *A Brief History of Money in Politics*, 5. See also George Thayer, *Who Shakes the Money Tree? American Campaign Practices from 1789 to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

16. The study was conducted by Louise Overacker. See Frank J. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman/Little Brown College Division, 1988), 16–25.

17. See https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race/joe-biden/candidate?id =N00001669. Accessed January 29, 2021.

18. See https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race and https://www.open-secrets.org/2020-presidential-race/donald-trump/candidate?id=N00023864. Accessed January 29, 2021.

19. See Open Secrets, "Cost of Election," https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-over-view/cost-of-election?cycle=2020&display=T&infl=N. Accessed January 29, 2021.

20. William J. Feltus, Kenneth M. Goldstein and Matthew Dallek, *Inside Campaigns: Elections through the Eyes of Political Professionals* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2019), 134.

21. See Soo Rin Kim, "How Trump's Team Spent Most of the $16 Billion It Raised over Two Years," ABC News, October 24, 2020, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trumps-team-spent-16-billion-raised-years/story?id=73795897. Accessed January 29, 2021.

22. PACs are defined in the law as organizations that receive contributions from fifty or more individuals and contribute money to at least ten candidates for federal office.

23. "Number of Federal PACS Increases," Federal Election Commission, press release, March 9, 2009.

24. See https://www.fec.gov/press/resources-journalists/political-action-committees -pacs/; https://www.fec.gov/data/committees/?committee_type=O; and https://www .fec.gov/data/committees/. Accessed January 29, 2021.

25. See https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race/donald-trump/candi-date?id=N00023864. Accessed January 29, 2021.

26. See https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race/joe-biden/candidate?id =N00001669. Accessed January 29, 2021.

27. Marquette Law School, poll, September 3–11, 2019. Text of question: "Do you favor or oppose the recent Supreme Court decisions that decided that corporations and unions can spend unlimited amounts of money to directly support or oppose political candidates?" Strongly favor, 3 percent; somewhat favor, 11 percent; somewhat oppose, 22 percent; strongly oppose, 53 percent; don't know, 10 percent.

28. Pew Research Center, poll, July 27–August 2, 2020. Text of question: "Here's a list of activities some people do and others do not. . . . Contributed money to a candidate running for public office or to a group working to elect a candidate." Yes, in the past year, 20 percent; no, not in the past year, 80 percent.

29. See Kenneth Jost, "Campaign Finance Debates," *CQ Researcher* 20: 457–80, accessed July 7, 2010, https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id =cqresrre2010052800.

30. Under the spoils system, it was common for public employees to kick back a portion of their salary to the party machine. This practice remained commonplace at the local level.

31. Cited in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 558 U.S. 50 at 42 (2010).

32. See Jost, "Campaign Finance Debates."

33. The Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925 applied only to congressional candidates. It said nothing about presidential campaigns.

34. Cited in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 558 U.S. 50 at 27 (2010).

35. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections*, 26.

36. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections*, 26.

37. Cited in Mary W. Cohn, ed., *Congressional Campaign Finance: History, Facts, and Controversy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1992), 42.

38. As cited in Alexander, *Financing Politics*, 38.

39. Buckley v. Valeo, 424 U.S. 1 (1976).

40. The Supreme Court also ruled that only the president, not Congress, could appoint members of the Federal Election Commission.

41. Buckley v. Valeo, 424 U.S. 1 (1976).

42. Maisel and Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America*, 150.

43. Ralph Nader, *Crashing the Party: Taking on the Corporate Government in an Age of Surrender* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 289.

44. Issue advocacy advertisements do not expressly tell voters to vote for or against a particular candidate. Rather, they imply such a position by featuring a candidate's position on an important issue. Thus, an issue advocacy advertisement can say, "Candidate Jones supports a balanced budget amendment." Or, "Candidate Smith opposes a balanced budget amendment."

45. See Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. FEC, 518 U.S. 604 (1996). The Court ruled that as long as the issue advocacy advertisement did not say the words, "elect," "vote for," "defeat," or "vote against," they were permitted. Many believed that the Court's decision erased the wall between issue advocacy and expressed

advocacy (i.e., vote for candidate X) that had been constructed in several previous court cases (including Buckley v. Valeo).

46. Quoted in Maisel and Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America*, 164.

47. Maisel and Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America*, 164.

48. See Adam Liptak, "Court Under Roberts Is Most Conservative in Decades," *New York Times*, July 24, 2010, 1.

49. Federal Election Commission v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc. 551 U.S. 449 (2007).

50. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOYcM1Z5fTs. Accessed December 22, 2016.

51. The five justices in the majority were Anthony Kennedy, John Roberts, Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia, and Samuel Alito. The four dissenters were John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Sonya Sotomayor, and Stephen Breyer.

52. McCain-Feingold restricted television advertisements that were capable of reaching fifty thousand people in the thirty-or-sixty-day period prior to a primary or a general election. These advertisements were banned if there was "no reasonable interpretation other than as an appeal to vote for or against a specific candidate."

53. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 37 (2010).

54. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 55.

55. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 6.

56. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 56.

57. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 57.

58. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 60.

59. Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 50 at 90.

60. Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Strikes Down Political Donation Cap," *New York Times*, April 2, 2014. See https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/03/us/politics/supreme-court-ruling-on-campaign-contributions.html. Accessed September 1, 2021.

61. McCutcheon v. FEC, 572 U.S. (2014). The five justices in the majority were John Roberts, Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito. The four justices in the majority were Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Stephen Breyer, Sonya Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan.

62. McCutcheon v. FEC, 572 U.S. (2014).

63. McCutcheon v. FEC, 572 U.S. (2014).

64. Year 2000 Republican presidential candidate Steve Forbes also refused to accept federal matching funds.

65. For more on this see Joe Trippi, "Down from the Mountain," speech, February 9, 2004, https://archive.org/details/digidemo2004-trippi. Accessed May 21, 2017.

66. See http://www.opensecrets.org. Accessed March 18, 2010.

67. Shane Goldmacher, Ella Koeze, Rachel Shorey and Lararo Gamio, "The Two Americas Financing the Trump and Biden Campaigns," *New York Times*, October 25, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/25/us/politics/trump-biden-campaign-donations.html. Accessed January 29, 2021.

68. See https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxvox/rethinking-presidential-election
-campaign-fund. Accessed January 29, 2021.

69. See https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/summ.php?cycle=2020&disp
=O&type=P&chrt=. Accessed January 29, 2021.

70. See Maisel and Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America,* 188.

71. See Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the
Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Doubleday, 2016).

72. See https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-sneak-peek-d7bc6417-0f8a-4ea4-
b27f-4c9aa860687c.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_cam-
paign=newsletter_axiossneakpeek&stream=top. Accessed June 29, 2021.

73. Ellen Weintraub, "Trump's Pick for White House Counsel Is Wrong for the
Job," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/
i-worked-with-trumps-pick-for-white-house-counsel-he-doesnt-care-about
-corruption/2016/12/09/76f0793c-bcac-11e6-94ac-3d324840106c_story.html.   Ac-
cessed September 1, 2021.

CHAPTER 8

1. Harry Stevens, Daniela Santamarina, Kate Rabinowitz, Kevin Uhrmacher, and
John Muyskens, "How Members of Congress Voted on Counting the Electoral Col-
lege Vote," *Washington Post*, January 7, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/
graphics/2021/politics/congress-electoral-college-count-tracker/.

2. See Thomas Kaplan and Alan Rappeport, "Republican Tax Bill Passes Senate in
51-48 Vote," *New York Times*, December 19, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/19/
us/politics/tax-bill-vote-congress.html and Christina Wilkie and Jacob Pramuk, "House
Votes to Send Massive Tax Overhaul to Trump's Desk," CNBC, December 20, 2017.

3. Woodrow Wilson, "Inaugural Address," Washington, DC, March 4, 1913.
For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/
inaugural-address-47

4. Kaplan and Rappeport, "Republican Tax Bill Passes Senate in 51-48 Vote" and
Wilkie and Pramuk, "House Votes to Send Massive Tax Overhaul to Trump's Desk."

5. Woodrow Wilson, Inaugural Address, Washington, DC, March 4, 1913.
For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/
inaugural-address-47

6. Stanley Kelley Jr., *Interpreting Elections* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
Press, 1983), 127.

7. Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency*, rev. ed. (New York: New American
Library, 1962), 28.

8. Adam Cohen, *Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That
Created Modern America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 40.

9. Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 251.

10. Joe Biden, "Remarks by President Biden on the State of the Economy and the Need for the American Rescue Plan." Washington, DC, February 5, 2021. See https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/05/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-state-of-the-economy-and-the-need-for-the-american-rescue-plan/

11. Republican control of the Senate was short-circuited when Vermont senator Jim Jeffords left the GOP to become an independent and affiliated himself with the Democrats.

12. "Analysis on the Election from the State Perspective," National Conference of State Legislatures, November 14, 2016, https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Statevote/StateVote_Combined%20Presentation.pdf.

13. See John F. Hoadley, "The Emergence of Political Parties in Congress, 1789–1803," *American Political Science Review* 74 (1980): 761, 768–769.

14. Interestingly, the provision does not require that this person be an actual member of the House, although all Speakers have been members.

15. See https://www.senate.gov/legislative/TieVotes.htm. Accessed June 28, 2021.

16. Dale Vinyard, *The Presidency* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 107.

17. Committee on Political Parties, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System* (New York: Rinehart, 1950).

18. Committee on Political Parties, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, 15.

19. Committee on Political Parties, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, 92, 94, 95.

20. M. I. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Party System* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 380.

21. Woodrow Wilson, "Leaderless Government," *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1, 336–59.

22. David E. Price, *Bringing Back the Parties* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1984), 103.

23. See Michael R. Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963–1964* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 64.

24. Gerald M. Pomper, "Parliamentary Government in the United States?" *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 260.

25. See John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "The Transition to Republican Rule in the House: Implications for Theories of Congressional Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 112 (Winter 1997–1998), 563. In fewer than a hundred days, eight of the contract's ten items had been approved by the House, thanks to nearly unanimous support from the GOP freshmen. Only two measures failed: term limits, thanks to the opposition of Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde, and a provision prohibiting the Pentagon from using funds for UN peacekeeping operations.

26. These were Henry Hyde and Thomas Bliley.

27. This was Robert Livingston of Louisiana.

28. Nicol C. Rae, *Conservative Reformers: The Republican Freshmen and the Lessons of the 104th Congress* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1998), 69.

29. Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 70–71.

30. See Kaplan and Rappeport, "Republican Tax Bill Passes Senate."

31. See https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2017/h256. Accessed February 8, 2021.

32. See http://acuratings.conservative.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/04/CLA _ratingsofcongress_2019_web.pdf. Accessed February 8, 2021.

33. See https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/twitter/profiles/detail/138203134-aoc. Accessed February 8, 2021. Also see https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/twitter/pro-files/detail/15764644-speakerpelosi. Accessed February 8, 2021.

34. See John Kenneth White, "In Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Glimpse of the Future," *The Hill,* February 5, 2021.

35. Simon van Zuylen-Wood, "Marjorie Taylor Greene Isn't Here to Legislate. She's Here to Livestream," *Washington Post*, February 5, 2021.

36. Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse than It Was* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), xv.

37. https://www.portman.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/portman-statement -political-future. Accessed February 8, 2021.

38. Douglas B. Harris, "The Rise of the Public Speakership," *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1998), 198.

39. Randall Strahan, *Leading Representatives: The Agency of Leaders in the Politics of the U.S. House* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 142.

40. Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist 68," in *The Federalist*, ed. Edward Meade Earle (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 414.

41. Robert F. Kennedy, *To Seek a Newer World* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 56.

42. See https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/i-would-rather-be-judged-12-farmers-12-scholars-spurious-quotation. Accessed June 28, 2021.

43. Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, poll, January 28–February 1, 2021. Text of question: "Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job? Would you say you approve of the way Congress is handling its job strongly or just somewhat? Would you say you disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job strongly or just somewhat?" Strongly approve, 7 percent; somewhat approve, 29 percent; strongly disapprove, 25 percent; somewhat disapprove, 25 percent.

44. Monmouth Polling Institute, January 21–24, 2021. Text of question: "Do you think it is more important for Republicans in Congress to find ways to work together with Joe Biden or more important for them to keep Biden in check?" Find ways to work together with Joe Biden, 71 percent; keep Biden in check, 25 percent; don't know, 4 percent.

CHAPTER 9

1. NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*/Telemundo, poll, September 13–16, 2020. Text of question: "If the choice in your district had the following, would you be more likely to vote for a Republican candidate for Congress, a Democratic candidate for Congress or an independent third-party candidate for Congress?" Republican candidate, 20 percent; Democratic candidate, 51 percent; independent/third-party candidate, 20 percent; not sure, 9 percent.

2. Justin Amash, "Our Politics Is in a Death Spiral. That's Why I'm Leaving the GOP," *Washington Post*, July 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/justin-amash-our-politics-is-in-a-partisan-death-spiral-thats-why-im-leaving-the-gop/2019/07/04/afbe0480-9e3d-11e9-b27f-ed2942f73d70_story.html.

3. Karen Zraick, "Justin Amash, a Trump Critic on the Right, Leaves the GOP," *New York Times*, July 4, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/04/us/politics/justin-amash-trump.html.

4. Nicholas Fandos, "Representative Paul Mitchell Leaves Republican Party Over Its Refusal to Accept Trump's Loss," *New York Times*, December 14, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/14/us/representative-paul-mitchell-leaves-republican-party-over-its-refusal-to-accept-trumps-loss.html.

5. Richard Davis, ed., *Beyond Donkeys and Elephants: Minor Political Parties in Contemporary American Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020), 2–3.

6. Clinton Rossiter, *Parties and Politics in America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 3.

7. This argument is made in John F. Bibby and L. Sandy Maisel, *Two Parties—Or More? The American Party System* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 58.

8. Barack Obama became the first major party nominee not to accept federal funding in 2008, as Obama was able to raise a total of $747.8 million for his entire campaign. Today, the Federal Election Campaign Act is essentially null and void, as neither major party is willing to accept public funding for either the primaries or the general election.

9. Phyllis F. Field, "Masons," in *Political Parties and Elections in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Garland, 1991), 641–42.

10. Robert J. Spitzer, "Free-Soil Party," in *Political Parties and Elections in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Garland, 1991), 409–10.

11. Edward W. Chester, *A Guide to Political Platforms* (New York: Archon Books, 1977), 58.

12. See Elinor C. Hartshorn, "Know-Nothings," in *Political Parties and Elections in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Garland, 1991), 549–50.

13. See Chester, *A Guide to Political Platforms,* 70.

14. Earl R. Kruschke, *Encyclopedia of Third Parties in the United States* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1991), 71.

15. Chester, *A Guide to Political Platforms,* 121–35.

16. Frederick J. Augustyn Jr., "Populists (People's) Party," in *Political Parties and Elections in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Garland, 1991), 849–50.

17. But in a strange twist, the Populists refused to endorse the Democratic vice-presidential candidate, Arthur Sewall, a banker from Maine.

18. "Progressive Party Platform, 1948," in Kirk H. Porter and Donald Brace Johnson, eds., *National Party Platforms: 1840–1968* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 437.

19. "Progressive Party Platform, 1948," in Porter and Johnson, *National Party Platforms: 1840-1968*, 439.

20. Harry S. Truman, "St Patrick's Day Address," New York City, March 17, 1948. For a transcript of the speech see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/ st-patricks-day-address-new-york-city.

21. Gallup poll, June 16–23, 1948. Text of question: "Do you think that the Henry Wallace third party is run by Communists?"

22. Chris Moody, "Election Results Confirm House Democratic Caucus in 2011 Will Be Smaller, More Liberal," *Daily Caller*, November 4, 2010.

23. For more, see https://progressives.house.gov/what-we-stand-for. Accessed January 30, 2021.

24. Kruschke, *Encyclopedia of Third Parties in the United States*, 183.

25. Thurmond's record stood until 2010, when Lisa Murkowski won reelection to her US Senate seat from Alaska on a write-in campaign. Murkowski had been defeated in the Republican primary after former governor Sarah Palin endorsed Murkowski's challenger, Joe Miller.

26. "Ventura Leaves Reform Party," PBS Online NewsHour, December 10, 2002.

27. Michael Waldman, *Potus Speaks: Finding the Words That Defined the Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 181.

28. See Nader, *Crashing the Party*, 289.

29. Jill Stein, "Acceptance Speech," Green Party Convention, Houston, Texas, August 6, 2016. For a transcript of the speech, see https://blog.4president.org/2016/2016/08/ transcript-of-dr-jill-steins-presidential-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-green-party-national-conve.html

30. Eric Levitz, "Sanders Suggests That Voting for a Third-Party Candidate Who Can't Win Probably Not Best Way to Stop Trump," *New York Magazine,* July 26, 2016, http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/07/bernie-gives-supporters-red-light-on-green-party.html. Accessed November 26, 2016.

31. Fox News, poll, October 3–6, 2016. Text of question: "If the 2016 presidential election were held today, how would you vote if the candidates were Democrats Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine, Republicans Donald Trump and Mike Pence, Libertarians Gary Johnson and Bill Weld, and Green Party candidates Jill Stein and Ajamu Baraka? (If don't know ask:) Well, which way do you lean?" Democrats Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine including leaners, 42 percent; Republicans Donald Trump and Mike Pence

including leaners, 40 percent; Libertarians Gary Johnson and Bill Weld including leaners, 7 percent; Green Party candidates Jill Stein and Ajamu Baraka including leaners, 3 percent; other (volunteered), 1 percent; wouldn't vote (volunteered), 2 percent; don't know, 6 percent.

32. Jeffrey M. Jones, "Support for Third U.S. Political Party at High Point," Gallup poll, press release, February 15, 2021.

33. Theodore J. Lowi, "Toward a Responsible Three-Party System," in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary Party Organizations*, ed. John C. Green and Daniel J. Coffey (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 47.

34. See https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/11/politics/republican-officials-discuss-form-ing-party/index.html. Accessed February 12, 2021.

35. Andrew Restuccia, "Trump Has Discussed Starting a New Political Party," *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/trump-impeachment-biden-inauguration/card/90pPMzFPqr5fMzg1Bkbs. Accessed January 30, 2021.

Conclusion

1. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address," Washington, DC, March 4, 1933. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-8.

2. For more information see Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

3. Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address."

4. Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 50.

5. Lyndon B. Johnson, "Commencement Speech," University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, May 22, 1964. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-university-michigan.

6. John Kenneth White, *Barack Obama's America: How New Conceptions of Race, Family, and Religion Ended the Reagan Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 42.

7. Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," Washington, DC, January 20, 1981. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-11.

8. John Kenneth White, *The New Politics of Old Values* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1990), 131.

9. ABC News/*Washington Post*, poll, January 11–16, 1985. Text of question: "Some people think the government in Washington is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and private businesses. Others disagree and think the government should do more to solve our country's problems. Which of these two views is closer to

your own?" Many things should be left to individuals and private businesses, 57 percent; government should do more, 38 percent; no opinion, 5 percent.

10. Bill Clinton, "State of the Union Address," Washington, DC, January 23, 1996. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-10.

11. "In Their Own Words: Obama on Reagan," see https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/us/politics/21seelye-text.html. Accessed February 21, 2021.

12. Republican National Committee, "Growth and Opportunity Project," See https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/624293/republican-national-committees-growth-and.pdf. Accessed September 1, 2021.

13. Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Invalidates Key Part of Voting Rights Act," *New York Times*, June 25, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/26/us/supreme-court-ruling.html.

14. Ari Berman, "GOP Senators Representing a Minority of Americans Are Preventing a Fair Impeachment Trial," Mother Jones, January 22, 2020, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/01/gop-senators-representing-a-minority-of-americans-are-preventing-a-fair-impeachment-trial/.

15. See https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/100000007655482/biden-coronavirus-checks-vaccinations.html. Accessed June 30, 2021.

16. See https://ballotpedia.org/Puerto_Rico_Statehood_Referendum_(2020). Accessed June 30, 2021.

17. Associated Press-NORC, poll, June 10–14, 2021. Text of approval question: "Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as president? Would you say you approve of the way Joe Biden is handling his presidency strongly or do you approve just somewhat? Would you say you disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his presidency strongly or do you disapprove just somewhat? (If don't know/refused ask:) If you had to choose, do you lean more toward approving or disapproving of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as president?" Strongly approve, 26 percent; somewhat approve, 29 percent; do not lean either way, 1 percent; lean toward disapproving, 1 percent; somewhat disapprove, 14 percent; strongly disapprove, 29 percent. Text of coronavirus question: "Overall, do you approve of the way Joe Biden is handling the coronavirus pandemic?" Approve, 68 percent; disapprove, 31 percent; skipped/refused, 1 percent.

18. Tim Malloy and Doug Schwartz, Quinnipiac University poll, February 3, 2021, https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/us/us02032021_uszn68.pdf. Accessed February 19, 2021.

19. Politico/Harvard Public Health poll, December 15–20, 2020. Text of question: "Here are some things being discussed as possible priorities for President-Elect Joe Biden and the new Congress. For each one, please tell me whether or not you think it should be an extremely important priority. How about keeping the Affordable Care Act, also known as the ACA or Obamacare, and making improvements in it? Should that be an

extremely important priority or not?" Extremely important priority, 68 percent; not an extremely important priority, 30 percent; don't know/refused, 2 percent.

20. NPR/PBS News Hour Marist poll, April 7–13, 2021. Text of question: "President Joe Biden announced his American Jobs Plan, a $2.3 trillion plan intended to address infrastructure, climate change, and job creation. From what you've read or heard, do you support or oppose this plan?" Support, 56 percent; oppose, 34 percent; heard of it and unsure, 4 percent; have not heard about it, 6 percent.

21. Mike Allen, "White House Memo: Obstruction Will Cost GOP," Axios, February 17, 2021 and https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/12/a-large-share-of-republicans-want-trump-to-remain-head-of-the-party-cnbc-survey.html.

22. Annie Linskey, "A Look Inside Biden's Oval Office," *Washington Post,* January 21, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/20/biden-oval-office/.

23. Gallup poll, August 31–September 13, 2020. Text of question: "Some people think the government is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and businesses. Others think that government should do more to solve our country's problems. Which comes closer to your view?" Doing too much, 41 percent; should do more, 54 percent; mixed (volunteered), 4 percent; no opinion, 1 percent.

24. Mike Allen, "White House Memo: Obstruction Will Cost GOP," Axios, February 17, 2021, https://www.axios.com/white-house-memo-obstruction-will-cost-gop-6ed83850-4467-40a8-915d-4cae10d10593.html. Accessed September 1, 2021.

25. Joe Biden, "Inaugural Address," Washington, DC, January 20, 2021. For a transcript of the speech, see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-53.