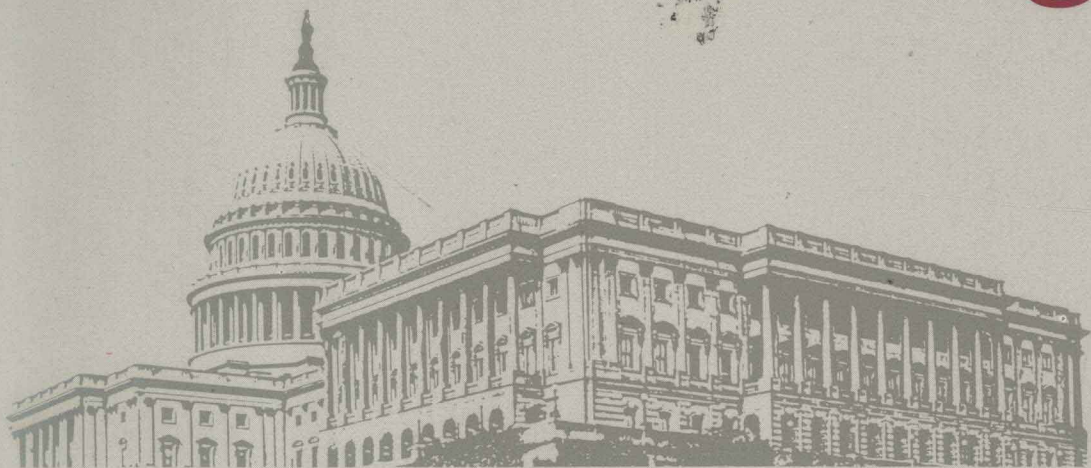


Lowi & Ginsberg



EMBATTLED DEMOCRACY



Politics and Policy
in the Clinton Era



Embattled Democracy

*POLITICS AND POLICY IN
THE CLINTON ERA*



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AND

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PREFACE

In November 1992, Bill Clinton defeated George Bush to become America's first Democratic president in twelve years. With the Senate and House of Representatives remaining firmly in Democratic hands, America's era of divided government also seemed at an end. During the campaign, Clinton had called for change and articulated an ambitious policy agenda. Many observers expected the president and the Democratic Congress to work hand in hand to formulate and enact major new programs. Within a few months, however, bitter struggles had broken out, pitting the White House not only against Republicans in Congress, but also against important forces in the president's own party. Many of the president's policy initiatives were blocked or amended so thoroughly that they bore little resemblance to Clinton's original proposals.

To add to the president's woes, vicious battles developed over a number of his most important appointments; the leadership of the armed forces staged virtually an open revolt over the president's efforts to rescind the military's traditional ban on service by gay men and women; and the national news media presented a series of unflattering accounts of the inner workings of the White House. Everything seemed to be unraveling. And in 1994, everything *did* unravel. The Democrats suffered a stunning defeat as Republicans captured both houses of Congress as well as a number of state legislatures and gubernatorial offices.

This book begins with the 1992 election, discusses the first two years of the Clinton administration, analyzes the 1994 election, and examines the first months of Republican control of the 104th Congress. As we will see in Chapters 2 and 3, the problems encountered by Clinton and the Democrats point to profound changes that are taking place in American politics and in the nature of American government.

This volume is not only an analysis of contemporary political trends, but is also a continuation of our experiment in textbook publishing. It is designed to bridge the gap between the third and fourth editions of our introductory text, *American Government: Freedom and Power*. The third edition of our text was written before the 1994 election, while the fourth edition will not be available for classroom use until spring 1996. We hope that this brief volume, to be used in conjunction with the third edition, will provide readers with the most up-to-date examples and illustrations of the major themes of that book. At the same time, we hope that *Embattled Democracy* will introduce readers to the new analyses, problems, and questions posed by the third edition of *American Government*.

For helping us to undertake this experiment, we are grateful to our colleagues at W. W. Norton. Traci Nagle and Stephanie Larson were instrumental in preparing the volume. Our editor, Steve Dunn, played a critical role in developing the volume. As always, we also want to thank Roby Harrington for his support over the years.



Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Preface | vii |
| 1. Modern Governance: A History of Hope and Failure | 1 |
| National Party Politics, 1968–1992 | 4 |
| The 1992 Election | 9 |
| <i>The Presidential Campaign</i> | 12 |
| <i>Congressional Elections</i> | 14 |
| Clinton's First Two Years: Triumph and Disappointment | 15 |
| <i>Legislative Struggles</i> | 18 |
| <i>The Forces of Resistance</i> | 21 |
| The 1994 Election and Beyond | 30 |
| <i>The Republican Strategy</i> | 31 |
| <i>The 104th Congress: Republicans in Power</i> | 33 |
| 2. Can the Government Govern without Elections? | 41 |
| The Decline of Voting and the Rise of "Politics by Other Means" | 43 |
| <i>Politics outside the Electoral Arena</i> | 44 |
| <i>Revelation, Investigation, Prosecution</i> | 48 |
| <i>Divided Government, 1968–1992</i> | 52 |
| <i>No More Division?</i> | 53 |
| Can Democratic Politics Function without Voters? | 55 |
| Politics and Governance | 58 |
| 3. The State of American Politics Today and Tomorrow | 63 |
| The New National Power Structure | 65 |
| <i>The Liberal Tradition in America</i> | 65 |

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>The Conservative Tradition in America</i> | 66 |
| <i>The New Power Structure and the Clinton Presidency</i> | 71 |
| Bill Clinton: A Man for the Center | 73 |
| The New Political Process: From Innovational to Incremental Politics | 77 |
| <i>The Negation of National Government</i> | 78 |
| <i>The Politics of Incrementalism</i> | 80 |
| What Future for American Politics? | 84 |
| For Further Reading | 86 |



1

*Modern Governance: A
History of Hope and Failure*



Over the past thirty years, the history of the American presidency has been one of disappointment and failure. Of America's last six presidents, five were compelled to leave office sooner than they wished. President Lyndon Johnson, his administration wrecked by the Vietnam War, chose not to seek another term. President Richard Nixon was forced to resign over the Watergate scandal. Presidents Ford, Carter, and Bush lost in their efforts to win re-election. Only Ronald Reagan, among recent chief executives, was able to complete two full terms. And, even Reagan saw his presidency disrupted by the Iran-Contra scandal during his final two years in office.



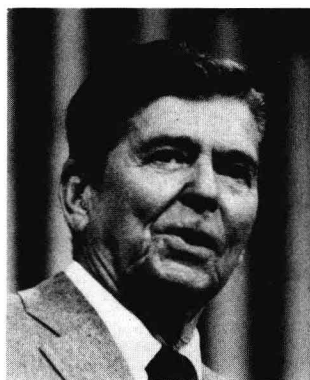
Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton Redefining the Role of Government

Debate over the size, scope, and power of the federal government dominated the American political agenda in the 1980s and 1990s. Ronald Reagan swept into office in 1980 in large part on the promise to reduce government. Twelve years after Reagan's election, Bill Clinton won the presidency based on his pledge to mobilize the resources of government to attack pressing domestic problems.

Ronald Reagan's career in politics extended back to his days as an actor, when he was elected president of the Screen Actors Guild in 1947. He began his political life as a Democrat but formally switched to the Republican party in 1962. He became an ardent supporter of conservative Republican Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1964. Two years later Reagan was elected governor of California, a position he held for eight years. In 1976, Reagan narrowly lost the Republican nomination to incumbent Gerald Ford. Four years later, he captured the nomination and the presidency on the crest of conservative enthusiasm for less government and stronger national defense spending, defeating beleaguered incumbent Jimmy Carter.

In his inaugural address, Reagan stated unequivocally that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." During his first term in office, Reagan won major revisions in fiscal policy and brought about enormous increases in military spending. During his second term, however, most of Reagan's legislative efforts were blocked by Congress, and his administration ended under the cloud of the Iran-Contra scandal. Whether viewed as a success or not, the Reagan administration redefined the American political agenda to one in which more would have to be done with less.

Although considered by many to be a supporter of big government spending, Bill Clinton sought to adapt to the post-Reagan era of limited government by redefining



Ronald Reagan

Despite this unhappy history, Americans continue to see every presidential election as an opportunity to reset the nation's course and correct the mistakes of the past. The public is generally content to listen to the promises of change and "new beginnings" during the new administration's "honeymoon" period, while even the most jaded journalists usually suspend disbelief and write paeans to the new administration's dazzling personalities, policies, and ideas. Yet five times out of six, these hopeful beginnings have ended in conflict and failure.

In November 1992, Americans again elected a new president. During Bill Clinton's first weeks in office, his popular standing was high, his relations with



the Democratic party while still drawing on the party's tradition of activism. Clinton's humble Arkansas roots belied his grand ambitions. A Rhodes scholar and graduate of Yale Law School, Clinton set his sights early on a political career. He became the nation's youngest governor when first elected in 1978. After an unexpected defeat in 1980, Clinton came back two years later to recapture the office, which he held until assuming the presidency.

Despite early political setbacks, Clinton proved to be a tenacious and durable campaigner for the 1992 presidential nomination. By the time he won the Democratic nomination, he stood even with his two rivals, George Bush and Ross Perot. From the end of the Democratic convention to election day, Clinton never trailed in the polls. Sensing that the mood of the country called for governmental leadership to address such pressing domestic problems as economic decline, revamping the nation's creaking health care system, and improving America's competitiveness, Clinton promised in his inaugural address to "resolve to make our government a place for what Franklin Roosevelt called bold, persistent experimentation."

Once in office, Clinton introduced an ambitious package of proposals, including tax and spending increases, changes in America's health care system, and reform of campaign finance and lobbying practices. His proposals were initially greeted with enthusiasm by the media, the public, and members of his own party in Congress. Within several months, however, Clinton faced intense opposition from the Repub-

licans, large segments of the media, and even from key congressional Democrats. Analysts asked whether Clinton's difficulties resulted from the president's own errors or whether they reflected some of the more systemic problems faced by America's government today. Is government the problem as Reagan suggested? Or the solution as Clinton contends? The debate continues. . . .

Source: John Chubb and Paul Peterson, eds., *Can Government Govern?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1989).



Bill Clinton

Congress excellent. The media were describing him as the most skillful politician in America. Indeed, some members of the media compared him favorably to Roosevelt and Lincoln.

Alas, after only a very brief period in office, Clinton's popular standing had plummeted; after only six months it was the lowest of any modern president at a comparable point in his term. His major policy initiatives were in deep trouble in Congress, and the national media were characterizing him as without leadership ability, as inept and lacking a moral compass. Instead of comparing him *favorably* to Roosevelt and Lincoln, the media began comparing him *unfavorably* to George Bush—a president whom the media had previously likened to the hapless Herbert Hoover and James Buchanan.

In November 1994, Clinton's unpopularity contributed to a stunning Democratic defeat in the congressional elections, when Republicans won control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1946. Led by the new House Speaker, Representative Newt Gingrich of Georgia, Republicans unveiled their own ambitious policy agenda aimed at scaling back the federal government. Many Democrats distanced themselves from the president and speculated openly about the likelihood that he would be dropped from the party's 1996 ticket.

What explains this history of hope and failure? Over the past several decades a new political pattern has emerged in the United States, one characterized by low rates of voter turnout, weak political parties, a central role for interest groups and the media, and the use of powerful new weapons of political warfare. These new patterns, as we shall see, are themselves part of a larger political transformation. As we approach the twenty-first century, one epoch of American political history is coming to an end and a new one is beginning. For better or worse, America is leaving the era of politics and entering the age of governance. Before we consider these broader issues, however, let us look at the Democratic party's victory in the 1992 election, the problems President Clinton encountered during his first two years in office, the Republican party's sweep of the 1994 election, and the first few months of the Republican-controlled Congress.

NATIONAL PARTY POLITICS, 1968–1992

The roots of both the Democratic win in 1992 and the Republican victory in 1994 can be traced back to the late 1960s to events that helped to reshape both major American political parties. From the 1930s through the mid-1960s, the Democratic party was the nation's dominant political force, led by a coalition of Southern white politicians and Northern urban machine bosses and labor leaders. The party drew its votes primarily from large cities, from the South, and from minorities, unionized workers, Jews, and Catholics.

Though occasionally winning presidential elections and, less often, control of Congress, the Republicans had been the nation's minority party since Franklin Roosevelt's presidential victory and the beginnings of the "New Deal" in 1933. The Republicans were led by Northeastern and Midwestern Protestants with deep roots in the business community. They drew their support primarily from

middle- and upper-middle-class suburban voters from the Northeast, from rural areas, and from the small towns and cities of the Midwest.

In the 1960s, two powerful tidal waves brought about the reconstruction of both national party coalitions: the anti-Vietnam War movement and the Civil Rights movement. The anti-Vietnam War movement galvanized liberal activists in the Democratic party. These activists attacked and, during the late 1960s, destroyed much of the power of the machine bosses and labor leaders who had been so prominent in Democratic party affairs. Liberal activists organized a number of “public interest” groups to fight on behalf of such liberal goals as consumer and environmental regulation; an end to the arms race; expanded rights and opportunities for women, gays and lesbians, and the physically disabled; and gun control. These groups supported the election of liberal congressional and presidential candidates, as well as legislation designed to achieve their aims. Their efforts were quite effective; during the 1970s liberal forces in Congress were successful in enacting significant pieces of legislation in many of these areas.

For its part, the Civil Rights movement attacked and sharply curtailed the power of the Southern white politicians who had been the third leg of the Democratic party’s leadership trioka. In addition, the Civil Rights movement enfranchised millions of African American voters in the South, nearly all of whom could be counted upon to support the Democrats. These developments dramatically changed the character of the Democratic party.

First, the new prominence and energy of liberal activists in the Democratic party after the late 1960s greatly increased the Democratic advantage in local and congressional elections. Democrats had usually controlled Congress and a majority of state and local offices since the New Deal, and therefore already possessed an edge in elections because of the benefits of incumbency. Because incumbents have many electoral advantages, more often than not they are able to secure re-election. Particularly advantageous, of course, is the ability of incumbents to bring home “pork” in the form of federal projects and spending in their districts. In general, the more senior the incumbent, the more pork he or she can provide for constituents. Thus incumbency perpetuated Democratic power by giving voters a reason to cast their ballots for the Democratic candidate regardless of issues and ideology.

Democrats were also far more successful than Republicans even in contests to fill open congressional and local seats, for which no candidate possessed the advantage of incumbency. Until recent years, at least, these races tended to be fought on the basis of local rather than national issues. Victory, moreover, depended upon the capacity of candidates to organize armies of volunteers to hand out leaflets, call likely voters, post handbills, and engage in the day-to-day efforts needed to mobilize constituent support.

Their armies of liberal activists gave Democratic candidates a ready-made infantry force on the ground that the Republicans could seldom match. Even when incumbent Democrats died or retired, therefore, their seats were usually won by other Democrats. In this way, Democratic control of Congress was perpetuated for decades. Moreover, because the Democratic activists who were so important in congressional races were liberals who tended to favor like-minded candidates, the prominence of somewhat left-of-center forces within the Democratic congressional delegation increased markedly after the 1960s.

The same liberal activism, however, that helped propel the Democrats to victory in congressional elections often became a hindrance in the presidential electoral arena. Particularly after the 1968 Democratic presidential convention and the party's adoption of new nominating rules, liberal activists came to play a decisive role in the selection of Democratic presidential candidates. Although liberal Democrats were not always able to nominate the candidate of their choice, they were in a position to block the nomination of candidates they opposed.

The result was that the Democratic nominating process often produced candidates who were considered too liberal by much of the general electorate. This perception contributed to defeat after defeat for Democratic presidential candidates. In 1972, for example, Democratic candidate George McGovern suffered an electoral drubbing at the hands of Republican Richard Nixon after proposing to decrease the tax burden of lower-income voters at the expense of middle- and upper-income voters. Similarly, in 1984, Walter Mondale was routed by Ronald Reagan after pledging to increase taxes and social spending if elected.

The Democratic party's difficulties in presidential elections were compounded by the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement. The national Democratic party had helped to bring about the enfranchisement of millions of black voters in the South. To secure the loyalty of these voters, as well as to cement the loyalty of black voters in the North, the national Democratic leadership supported a variety of civil rights and social programs designed to serve the needs of African Americans.

Unfortunately, however, the association of the national Democratic party with civil rights and the aspirations of blacks alienated millions of white Democrats, including Southerners and blue-collar Northerners, who felt that black gains came at their expense. White voters defected en masse to support George Wallace's third-party presidential candidacy in 1968. Subsequently, many began voting for Republican presidential candidates.

Efforts by Democratic presidential candidates to rebuild their party's support among Southern whites and blue-collar Northerners were hampered by the harsh racial arithmetic of American politics. In the wake of the Voting Rights Act, the Democratic party depended upon African Americans for more than 20 percent of its votes in national presidential elections. Yet at the same time, and for a more or less equal percentage of votes, the Democrats relied upon whites who, for one or another reason, were unfriendly to blacks. Efforts by Democratic candidates to bolster their support among blacks by focusing on civil rights and social programs wound up losing them as much support among whites as they gained among blacks. Conversely, those Democratic candidates who avoided overtly courting black support in order to maintain white backing were hurt by declines in black voter turnout. For example, in 1984, Walter Mondale assiduously courted black support and was abandoned by Southern white Democrats. In 1988, Michael Dukakis carefully avoided too close an association with blacks, and was punished by a steep decline in black voter turnout.

Thus, liberal activism and civil rights combined to weaken the Democratic party in national presidential elections. From 1968 on, the Republicans moved swiftly to take advantage of this weakness. Their presidential candidates developed a number of issues and symbols designed to show that the Democrats were too liberal and too eager to appease blacks at the expense of whites. For instance, be-

ginning in 1968, Republicans emphasized a “Southern strategy,” consisting of opposition to school busing to achieve racial integration and resistance to affirmative action programs.

At the same time, Republicans took on a number of issues and positions designed to distinguish their own candidates from what they declared to be the excessive liberalism of the Democrats. Republican platforms included support for school prayer and opposition to abortion, advocacy of sharp cuts in taxes on corporations and on middle- and upper-income voters, a watering-down of consumer and environmental federal regulatory programs, efforts to reduce crime and increase public safety, and increased spending on national defense. Accordingly, during the Reagan and Bush presidencies, taxes were cut, defense spending increased, regulatory efforts reduced, support for civil rights programs curtailed, and at least token efforts made to restrict abortion and reintroduce prayer in the public schools.

These Republican appeals and programs proved quite successful in presidential elections. Southern and some Northern blue-collar voters were drawn to the Republicans’ positions on issues of race. Socially conservative and religious voters were energized and mobilized in large numbers by the Republicans’ strong opposition to abortion and support for school prayer. Large numbers of middle- and upper-middle-class voters were drawn to Republicanism by tax cuts. The business community responded positively to Republican efforts to reduce the government’s regulatory efforts and to the prospect of continuing high levels of defense spending. These issues and programs carried the Republicans to triumph in five of six presidential contests between 1968 and 1992. The South and West, in particular, became Republican strongholds in presidential elections and led some analysts to assert that the Republicans had a virtual “lock” on the Electoral College.

Nevertheless, the issues that allowed the Republicans to achieve such an impressive record of success at the presidential level during this period still did not translate into GOP victories in the congressional, state, or local races. Presidential races are mainly media campaigns in which opposing forces compete for the attention and favor of the electorate through television spot ads, media events, and favorable press coverage. This form of politics emphasizes the use of issues and symbols. Congressional and local races, by contrast, were typically fought “on the ground” by armies of volunteers. The national media could devote little attention to any individual local race, while local media tended to focus on local issues and personalities. As a result, national issues, for the most part, had little effect upon the outcomes of local races.

Frequently, Democratic members of Congress, making vigorous use of the federal pork barrel, won handily in the same districts that were carried by the Republican presidential candidate. Presidential and congressional elections seemed to exist in different political universes. Voters who supported a Richard Nixon or a Ronald Reagan at the presidential level seemed still to love their Democratic congressional representatives.

Senatorial elections have some of the characteristics of national races and some of the characteristics of local races. Both media and activists can be important. Therefore, though Republicans had greater success in capturing the White House than the Senate, they had a better record in Senate races than in contests for the House.

Thus, for thirty years, the pattern of American politics was Republican control of the White House and Democratic control of Congress, especially of the House of Representatives. Indeed, this pattern seemed to have become such a permanent feature of the American political landscape that each party began to try both to fortify its own institutional stronghold and to undermine its opponent's. Democrats sought to strengthen Congress while weakening the presidency. Republicans tried to expand presidential powers while limiting those of Congress.

For this reason, Democratic congresses enacted such legislation as the War Powers Act, the Budget and Impoundment Control Act, and the Arms Export Control Act, all of which sought to place limits upon the use of presidential power at home and abroad. In a similar vein, the Ethics in Government Act gave Democratic congresses a mechanism for initiating formal investigations and even the prosecution of executive branch officials—usually Republican appointees. The Iran-Contra investigations, for example, led to indictments of a number of high-ranking Republicans.

For their part, Republicans sought to weaken Congress with sharp cuts in the domestic spending programs upon which congressional Democrats rely to build constituency support. Republicans also built a record of successful presidential *faits accomplis* in foreign affairs, such as the Reagan administration's invasion of Grenada and bombing of Libya. The favorable popular reaction to these presidential initiatives undermined the War Powers Act and untied the hands of the White House in foreign and military affairs.

Although engaged in these sorts of institutional struggles, each party also sought to devise strategies to capture its opponent's political base. Moderate and conservative Democrats argued that the party could win presidential elections if it nominated an ideologically centrist candidate who ran on issues that would appeal to the middle-class voters who had rejected more liberal Democratic nominees. Moderate Democrats organized the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which sought to develop new issues and advance the political fortunes of moderate candidates. Many Democrats also advocated a version of the GOP's "Southern strategy," arguing that a moderate Southerner would be the party's ideal presidential candidate. Such an individual not only might attract middle-class voters in the North, but also might lead Southern whites, who had defected to the Republicans in presidential elections, to return to their Democratic roots.

While Democrats pondered ways in which they might capture the presidency, some Republicans considered strategies that might allow them to storm the seemingly impregnable Democratic fortress on Capitol Hill. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Republican National Committee (RNC) embarked upon an effort to recruit politically attractive candidates for congressional and local races. The RNC also sought to create a national fundraising apparatus to replace, or at least augment, the historically decentralized fundraising that characterized both American political parties. The RNC was able to create a nationwide direct-mail fundraising machine that allowed it to raise millions of dollars through small contributions. These funds could then be allocated to those local races where they might do the most good.

At the same time, Republicans began to reach out to anti-abortion forces and religious conservatives. These groups represented important voting blocs. Even

more important, however, was the possibility that the religious fervor of these groups could be converted into political activism. If so, these forces could become a source of Republican volunteers and activists in the same way that the fervent anti-Vietnam forces fueled Democratic activism for years. In other words, religious conservatives could give the Republicans the infantry needed to compete effectively in local and congressional races.

Finally, Republican strategists looked for ways to “nationalize” congressional and local races. For thirty years, issues such as taxes, defense, and abortion had brought the GOP victory in presidential contests. Yet, these issues did not appear to have much impact at the sub-presidential level. Indeed, local Democratic candidates usually tried to avoid identification with national issues and ideologies, calculating that they could only be hurt by them. The question for Republicans, then, was how to tie popular local Democrats to the national party’s often unpopular issues and ideological stances.

The Democratic Southern/moderate strategy produced two presidential victories: the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, and the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. Carter seemed to be the ideal Democratic candidate. He was a white Southerner with a good civil rights record. His political views seemed to be centrist. Carter’s victory over incumbent Republican Gerald Ford led some Democrats to hope that their party’s presidential problems were over.

Unfortunately, however, the moderate bent that allowed Carter to win the presidential election proved a handicap in office. Carter’s middle-of-the-road programs and policies alienated liberal Democrats in Congress, who quickly attacked his presidency. Liberals were so offended by what they saw as Carter’s conservative leanings that they supported a fierce challenge to his renomination in 1980 and gave him only lukewarm support against Reagan in the general election. Liberal Democrats, it would seem, supported the idea of a centrist campaign but did not go so far as to support a centrist administration. The party’s liberal wing had what appeared to be incompatible goals: they wanted a centrist campaign that would win the election, followed by a liberal administration to govern the nation. In 1992, a solution to this dilemma seemed to be at hand.

THE 1992 ELECTION

By the end of George Bush’s term in office the Reagan coalition had begun to unravel. The two key elements in the electoral appeal of Reaganism had been prosperity at home and strength abroad. But by 1992, these two key elements were gone. The nation was mired in one of the longest economic downturns in recent decades, and the Soviet Union had collapsed, bringing an end to the cold war and diminishing the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

Between 1989 and 1992, virtually every indicator of economic performance told the same story: rising unemployment, declining retail sales and corporate profitability, continuing penetration of American markets by foreign firms and the loss of American jobs to foreigners, a sharp drop in real estate prices followed by a wave of bank collapses, and large numbers of business failures. The poor per-

formance of the American economy during his term in office eroded Bush's popularity and divided the Republican coalition. Business groups that had supported the Republicans since the 1970s began to desert the GOP. During the 1970s, most businesses had perceived government as a threat, fearing that consumer and environmental legislation, which were supported by the Democrats, would be enormously costly and burdensome. Reagan's call for "deregulation" was a major source of the enthusiastic and virtually unanimous support he received from the business community.

By 1992, however, economic hardship compelled small and medium-sized businesses to seek governmental assistance rather than worry about the threat of excessive governmental regulation. In particular, firms facing severe foreign competition in domestic and world markets sought government aid in the form of protection of their domestic markets coupled with vigorous governmental efforts to promote their exports. As a result, the political unity of American business brought about by Reagan was shattered and a major prop of the Republican coalition undermined.

Economic hardship also drove away blue-collar support for the Republican coalition. Traditionally, blue-collar voters had been tied to the Democratic party on the basis of that party's economic stands. During the 1980s, however, Reagan and Bush won the support of many of these voters in both the North and the South by persuading them to put their economic interests aside and to focus instead on their moral and patriotic concerns.

A major function of the Republican "social agenda" of opposition to abortion, support for prayer in the public schools, and unabashed patriotism was to woo blue-collar voters from the Democratic camp by convincing them to regard themselves as right-to-lifers and patriots rather than as workers. Similarly, Republican opposition to affirmative action and school busing was designed to appeal to blue-collar Northerners as well as to traditionally Democratic Southerners offended by their party's liberal positions on matters of race.

By 1992, however, the political value of the social agenda had diminished. Faced with massive layoffs in many key industries, blue-collar voters could no longer afford the luxury of focusing on moral or racial issues rather than on their economic interests. In a number of states, as a result, the racial issues of the 1980s lost their political potency.¹ Indeed, even patriotism gave way to economic concerns as the recession lengthened. This was why George Bush's incredible 91 percent approval rating following the Persian Gulf War fell by as much as 50 points in less than one year. During the 1980s and early 1990s, millions of working-class voters who became unemployed or were forced to find lower-paying jobs deserted the Republican camp.

Middle-class executives and professionals, who are usually fairly well insulated from the economic downturns that often devastate blue-collar workers, also felt the impact of the economic crises of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The cumulative effect of the mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s, the failure of hundreds of banks, corporate restructuring and "downsizing," the massive shift of manufactur-

¹For a discussion of events in one state, see David Broder, "In North Carolina, Racially Coded Wedge Issues No Longer Dominate," *Washington Post*, 13 October 1992, p. A12.

ing operations out of the country, the decline of the securities industry, the collapse of the housing market, and the end of the defense boom meant at least the possibility of unemployment or income reduction for hundreds of thousands of white-collar, management, and professional employees. Even those whose jobs were secure saw their economic positions eroded by the sharply declining values of their homes.

Economic hard times gave middle-class voters another reason for alarm. One of the inevitable consequences of economic distress and unemployment is an increase in crime rates. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, crime rates throughout the United States soared. In 1980, middle-class taxpayers had responded favorably to Ronald Reagan's call for a cap on social spending coupled with a tough approach to crime. For twelve years, limits on domestic social spending were a cornerstone of the Republican program. In 1992, however, rising crime rates despite Republican "get tough" rhetoric allowed the Democrats to persuade many middle-class voters that the expansion of domestic social spending was a price that had to be paid for the preservation of social peace and public safety.

Thus, the decline of prosperity at home caused cracks in the Reagan coalition. Under the pressure of economic distress, groups that had been enthusiastic supporters of Reaganism in the early 1980s broke away from the GOP in 1992.

While the constituency for the Republican social agenda shrank, the moral fervor of the groups most fiercely committed to those issues grew nonetheless. When right-to-life forces launched protests and sought to block the doors of abortion clinics across the nation, President Bush saw no choice but to endorse strongly the activities of these loyal Republicans. However, Bush's support for these groups hurt his standing among rank-and-file Republicans. The Republican party's traditional suburban, upper-middle-class constituency had never been enthusiastic about the social agenda or about the sorts of people it had brought into the party. As the 1992 campaign approached, Bush suffered a considerable loss of support in this stratum, a loss that was only exacerbated by the prominent role assigned to social conservatives at the 1992 Republican convention.

To compound the Republican party's woes, the unity of its coalition was also undermined by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war threat. Particularly when coupled with the poor performance of the American economy, the collapse of the Soviet Union made it impossible for the Republicans to continue to insist on the primacy of international and security issues. Once the threat of war had receded, Americans were freer than they had been in years to focus on problems at home. As a result, working-class voters who had been persuaded to support the GOP despite economic interests that had historically linked them to the Democrats now began to reassess their positions. Many patriots became workers once again.

Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union undermined the second key element of the Republican coalition's political success. For twelve years, the Republicans had emphasized prosperity at home and strength abroad. Now, in 1992, the nation was *not* prosperous, and its unprecedented military strength seemed irrelevant.

As the loyalty of the forces brought into the Republican camp by Reaganite appeals began to wane, President Bush found himself increasingly dependent on a core Republican constituency of hard-line social and political conservatives. Bush