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Edited by Walter Dean Burnham

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Walter Dean Burnham

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Introduction

WALTER DEAN BURNHAM

American Politics in the 1990s

I

The American Prospect was launched in 1990, the tenth year of the Reagan-Bush era, to provide a forum for liberal alternative ideas about politics, government, and (political) economics. At the time of its founding, there was no particular reason for assuming that the conservative era was likely to come to an end any time soon. George Bush was running for reelection. With Desert Shield/Desert Storm boosting the president's approval ratings to nearly 90 percent, who could imagine that Bush was destined not merely to lose, but to suffer one of the truly great electoral routs ever experienced by an incumbent seeking a second term? Certainly not the putative heavy hitters in the Democratic Party's leadership councils of the time: like the guests invited to the king's wedding feast, each found his excuses for not attending the great nomination show of 1992. The rest, as they say, is history, and is briefly analyzed in an essay of mine included in this volume.

Bill Clinton's was a famous victory, but it is much too early in his administration to form any judgment as to what good came of it all. That some good has come of it already is obvious, not only in significant policy changes but in some quite sweeping transformations in the public debate: it really does matter who occupies the White House and its bully pulpit. Moreover, contingency—or in common parlance what we call luck—has been working on Clinton's behalf. Presidential success is greatly helped by having the right man in place at the right time, and it grows daily more clear that the American economy is moving into a recovery/growth mode after close to five years of stagnation. With a restructured, downsized economy marked by durable problems of job creation, this rising economic tide may be less likely than those in the past to lift all boats; but if sustained, it will very probably lift Bill Clinton's. Perhaps he will be reelected in 1996, perhaps not. It is hardly possible to form any opinion about this as yet, but it is not too early to attempt the task of placing Clinton and his initiatives "in political time." Doing so, it is hoped, may provide some basis for judgment and reflection on where we are and whither we seem to be going, even though the picture painted will not be one of unalloyed joy from the liberal point of view.

II

We begin with some basics derived from Government 101 courses. The Constitution was deliberately designed as a power centrifuge and to ensure that any really large-scale or comprehensive transformations in public policy require conditions of abnormally broad, deep, and lasting public support. Thus, for example, the Civil War policy revolution of the 1860s, which went far beyond the war and its "Southern question," was made politically possible because, after secession, Republicans usually enjoyed majorities of three-quarters or more in both houses of Congress. The equally comprehensive changes in government's role and public policy linked to the New Deal likewise required a huge and general social trauma (the Great Depression) and again majorities of three-quarters for the innovating party in both houses of Congress. When the latter condition disappeared after 1938, New Deal innovation was abruptly terminated by the conservative coalition. One can also point to a different "abnormal"—and this time very long-lasting—consensus that produced far-reaching institutional and policy consequences. This was the "anti-totalitarian," very promptly turning into the Cold War liberal, foreign policy consensus that lasted nearly half a century. This war, as Randolph Bourne remarked of World War I, was the health of the state in general and, in this case, of the presidency in particular. Its disappearance along with the USSR itself after 1989 was a cardinal condition for the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. But, as reflection on the Constitution as a bundle of rules that fragment power would have made it possible to predict, the disappearance of the Manichean struggle with godless communism also implied a swing of the internal American power balance away from the presidency and toward Congress. Every time one hears of another military base closing down, one is also witnessing a disappearance of a small bit of presidential power.

The 1992 election was fought in an atmosphere of vast public disgust with a political system widely regarded in the country as having been hijacked by establishment politicians, Beltway bandits, and other insiders cutting deals at the public's expense and ignoring mushrooming domestic needs: hence Ross Perot's 18.9 percent of the vote. Perot's entry meant that, at the end of the day, Clinton won with only 43 percent of the total vote, a figure not very different from the 1968–1988 mean for Democratic presidential candidates. In a similar multiple-race context, 1912, Woodrow Wilson had won with even less. But then, because the insurgent Theodore Roosevelt was not a "lone ranger" like Perot but had a party that fielded numerous congressional candidates, the minority Democratic Party of the time emerged with a huge majority in the House of Representatives and a comfortable one in the Senate. The policy innovations of 1913–1914 rested squarely on that fact.

Ultimately, no matter how much the public may have been dissatisfied with the gridlock and divided-government dynamics of the current degenerate regime order, overall social and economic conditions were simply not in the same league as those of 1932, nor was the political crisis remotely as immense as in the 1860s. Bush's loss in 1992 was—characteristically for our times—a very personal one. Republicans held their own in the Senate, gained 10 seats in the House, and made gains in state and local contests that continued to roll in during the 1993 off-year elections. There was a huge influx of congressional newcomers, 92 of them, the largest in many decades. But, unlike the "classes" of 1946, 1974, and 1980, these newcomers, entering in proportions very close to those of reelected incumbents, tended to fit right into the mainstreams of their legislative parties, making few waves.

What all this adds up to is the ongoing politics of a country about half of whose voters for the first time live in suburbs. Since at least the 1960s, it has been characteristic of this public that it is ideologically hostile to "big government," while demanding the services that only big government can provide. Systematically miseducated by politicians both before and after the Reaganite transformation of 1980 that one can have governmentally facilitated consumption without paying its economic cost, this public prefers to have its cake and eat it too; to have, for example, universal health care coverage with no increases in my taxes, thank you, to pay for it. Only some general systemwide catastrophe might work for a time to override this deep contradiction, but fortunately none has arisen in two generations and none seems imminent.

The existence of "too many Republicans" in the 103rd Congress is one reflection of the balance of forces these underlying realities produce. It has concretely meant a series of absolutely minimal victories for Clinton in 1993 (notably on the budget) and has clearly forecast the deepest sort of trouble for his health care proposals in 1994.

Let us try to put the situation in a nutshell. Beginning with the constitutional rule bundle, American politics in "normal" times is dominated by negative feedback processes (the more you put in to innovate, the less you get per unit as groups with interests opposite to your own mobilize against you). This makes the system extremely conservative and resistant to change, particularly to anything that looks like comprehensive change. The Clinton initiative involves a policy area whose overall price tag is about $1 trillion, or some 17 percent of the national economy. In sheer size, it is the largest effort at comprehensive policy change since the New Deal—if we except, perhaps, Truman's Fair Deal health coverage proposals of 1949. And these, we may remember, got exactly nowhere in an 81st Congress, similar in its partisan distribution to the present one.

The key to success, if there is one, lies in energizing a strong and lopsided public opinion as a counterweight to interest-group influence. Success in this kind of endeavor requires simplicity in program and intense and persistent focus on the issue through every available publicity medium. With luck, one can thus trigger a positive feedback situation (every unit of input produces amplified, spillover, and above all mobilizing effects that can decisively alter the political balance by redefining the identity and number of serious players in a particular policy game). The partisan opposition will always be there, in season and out, as will the interest groups whose reason for being is bound up in keeping change as close to zero as the overall political situation will allow. Presidents, on the other hand, have lots of things to distract them, and the so-called bully pulpit is no real substitute for simplicity of program and permanently organized groups out there capable of mounting a sustained propaganda campaign that is competitive with the other side's.*

But the whole thrust of our current political order is hostile, culturally and operationally, to mobilizing masses of people behind a cause. Demobilization is more the order of the day, and both liberals and conservatives have contributed to it: a prime underlying reason for the bitter public reaction to established politics in 1992.

The bully pulpit is helpful, indeed essential for moving a president's program. But its use is only a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for success. If mobilization of large numbers of ordinary people is needed, organized structures for doing that must be in place or must be created: structures we have conveniently called political parties. But our age is one whose chief defining political characteristic is that parties, at least as mass mobilizers, are really not there any more. Current turnout rates, including those of 1992, give us a good sociological profile—an extreme inequality of voting input along class lines—that gives us some sense of the scope of our modern politics of mass demobilization. The insurance company advertisements against the Clinton health care plan in 1993 and 1994 have brilliantly played to the sociological realities of this selectively demobilized political order. They aim squarely at a relatively affluent, broadly based white middle class, many or most of whose members are relatively satisfied with their current health care programs and are concerned that (1) their taxes will rise and/or (2) the quality and choice they think they get now will be compromised if the Clinton program is adopted.

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* Something perhaps similar, if expressed in the purely religious language of sixteenth-century England, can be detected in a sermon preached by Hugh Latimer in 1548 against the gross deficiencies of the established clergy: "And now I would ask a strange question: who is the most diligentist bishop and prelate in all England that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell for I know him who it is: I know him well.... It is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocese; he is never from his cure; ye shall never find him unoccupied; he is ever in his parish; he keepeth residence at all times; ye shall never find him out of the way, call for him when you will, he is ever at home; the diligentist preacher in all the realm; he is ever at his plough; no lording nor loitering can hinder him; he is ever applying his business, ye shall never find him idle, I warrant you." G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1960), 327. In the language of a twentieth-century secular political scientist such as E.E. Schattschneider, we could say that what Latimer was complaining about was a "structurally induced mobilization of bias."

III

The underlying point of the previous discussion is that it is difficult to make bricks with insufficient straw. No general and acute domestic crisis exists that might force action on a liberal, pro-statist agenda. There are grossly inadequate presidential party (Democratic) majorities in Congress for moving such a reform program, which fact reflects (among other things) this lack of general crisis. Moreover, since more than purely rhetorical reform costs a lot of money, such an effort is in any case very severely constrained by the debt-deficit problem inherited from the Reagan-Bush era. Even as economic recovery develops—itself paradoxically undercutting any pressure for large-scale policy change—the economy remains studded with problems, especially job-creation problems, that make it politically very difficult to propose raising taxes to pay for new initiatives or, in fact, to call proposed taxes by their right names.

To this must be added the underlying reality of American middle-class politicians in the late twentieth century. Survey studies repeatedly show that American anti-state ideology remains very much in the ascendant, as it has through most of our political history. But at the same time, it also shows that the same public tends to prefer various divisible benefits and policy outputs that only big government can provide. To that should be added a general tendency for Americans to want expensive things but not to support tax increases to pay for them. The Reagan-Bush "synthesis" rested fundamentally on giving and getting something for nothing or, perhaps more precisely, on stimulating consumption that was substantially greater than its productive support base. Out of the vortex of these forces came the dominant structural pattern of politics between 1969 and 1993; divided government, with a middle-class public's ideological conservatism reflected in Republican control of the presidency and its operational liberalism reflected in Democratic control of Congress; and, of course, the set of decisions and nondecisions that produced a quadrupling of the national debt. The miseducation of the public during those years was as colossal as the debt was ultimately to become.

This "political time" created the opportunity space for Bill Clinton's election to the presidency, as the economy soured, corporations downsized, and angst grew in the leafy reaches of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and the sunlit coast of San Diego County, California. But political time also surrounds Clinton and his administration, giving the president opportunities but also probable limits on what he can expect to accomplish during his term.

If we view his leadership up to this point in some such terms as outlined here, some features of it may be more sharply defined than they have been in many journalistic accounts. In general, Clinton stands somewhere to the left of the modal opinion center of this era, but also on a number of issues—the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) being the most notorious—to the right of his congressional party. Possessed of apparently inexhaustible energy, Bill Clinton has prevailed on issue after issue by an extraordinary outpouring of executive effort. At times he almost seems a one-man band. Yet these frenetic bursts of activity are ultimately driven by the inadequacy of his political resources on Capitol Hill: not merely the presence of "too many Republicans," but the glaring extent to which leading archons of his own party in the Senate have repeatedly gone into business for themselves and against his interests and policies. A remarkable ad hoc quality has also emerged: pure reliance on Democrats to get his budget enacted, alliance with Republican leaders (and rank and file) against Democrats in the NAFTA struggle, and what will almost certainly be a "mixed grill" coalition on health care, with considerable Republican input at the end of the day. The presidential coopting of traditional Republican themes on welfare and crime in Clinton's 1994 State of the Union address is matched by a budget proclaiming the elimination of more than a hundred federal programs and by evident presidential pride in the reduction of the budget deficit to its lowest share of the GDP since the 1970s. These themes have been duly noted by Republicans worried about losing control of "their" issues and by Democratic liberals in Congress who are plainly unhappy with these initiatives.

One could go on, including a discussion of the Lani Guinier affair and the curious lapse of a year before a successor nominee for the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department was finally selected. But this suffices for the moment. I am less concerned with taking sides on any of

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these initiatives (for most or all of which a case could be made) than in thinking about their deeper implications. If Bill Clinton often seems to resemble the man on the flying trapeze, there are personal, strategic, and structural reasons for it all.

The post-1968 era has been one of normal Republican control of the executive. It is somewhat oversimplistic but, I think still true to say that the Republican Party is much more *monocolore* conservative than its Democratic rival is liberal. The Republicans come relatively close to being a genuine political party by comparative standards; the Democrats are more of a holding company of diverse and often warring interests. This asymmetry extends to quite different levels of cohesion not only among party activists and at conventions but in their electorates. The ultimate reason for this is teased out from comparative inquiry. The social stresses and unequal outcomes in advanced capitalist democracies everywhere produce fairly congruent structures of political oppositions in the electoral/policy market. Almost everywhere but in the United States, this produces an array extending from hard-to-moderate Right, to moderate-to-hard Left; and typically the vast majority is mobilized to come to the polls. In the United States, where social democracy has never been an "OK concept" in the mainstream political culture, we find instead three large groupings. The first, the Republicans, correspond very well on the whole to parties of the Right elsewhere. The second, the Democrats, find themselves in the intrinsically difficult position of representing interests that elsewhere would have their own parties of the Center and the Left: hence one reason for the much greater heterogeneity of the Democrats' electoral base and their greater failure to deliver it in presidential elections. The third component, of course, is the "party of nonvoters," more than 80 million of them in the 1992 election. While nonvoting is found at all levels of society, it is chiefly concentrated toward the bottom; its relative incidence and fluctuation from election to election form the outer limit of a political system thoroughly based on the relatively better off in general and of the Democratic Party in particular.

In a culture so hostile to social democratic ideas and movements, there are other consequences. One of them is that politicians on the Left end of the spectrum are usually very careful to use nomenclature for what they are proposing (and occasionally enacting) that leads away from recognition of the social democratic impulse underlying their efforts. Language that is euphuistic if not downright evasive becomes common currency. Another consequence is that while the system as a whole has a stable anchor on the Right, the situation at the Center and the Left is typically much more fluid and less well defined.

President Clinton recognizes quite clearly that if we are to deal as a country with our larger economic problems in the longer run, the state will have to play a much more important coordinating and facilitating role than would be tolerable to Reagan-Bush orthodoxy. Clinton is also personally committed to the view that government is not exclusively a necessary evil at best, but that it can be a significant force for ameliorating the public condition. On the other hand, there is a great deal of the "New Democrat" in him. He has seemed to spend some considerable effort to distance himself publicly from core Democratic activist constituencies that are also unpopular with the white middle-class center at which he is aiming. He is, in short, a man of the Center in a highly polarized interest-group and partisan world. As such, he inevitably reflects the Center's internal contradictions and limitations, just as his virtuoso performances in forging highly diverse and often supremely narrow majorities demonstrate that he can navigate the multiple shoals and crosscurrents in the stream he is traversing.

There is an Italian political term for this sort of thing: *trasformismo.* Developed to describe a modal political tendency in Italian politics before World War I, and turned into an art form by such skilled coalition manipulators like Giovanni Giolitti, *trasformismo* is the practice of staying on top by turning your winning coalitions inside out as need arises. It has its links with politics in France under the Third Republic, in which a "Left" majority produced by voters in the last election was rather prominently dissipated within the Chamber of Deputies itself and something like the status quo was restored. Frenetic and dramatic activity at the political Center is complemented by considerable substantive immobility, and collective-agenda problems—along with more fundamental steering problems generally—tend to mount over time.

IV

On occasion, time really does run out. Both examples cited previously perished as a consequence of involvement in a world war. Surely, there is no chance of anything of the sort affecting the United States now that the Soviet Union has disappeared and America is the only world superpower? Of course not. But this brings us to the foreign policy dimension of American politics in the contemporary world, one that seems only too likely to have its own non-Soviet dangers during the 1990s.

It is no secret that President Clinton has much less interest in world politics than in the domestic arena or that his "team" in the defense/foreign policy field is notably weaker (at least so far) than the domestic policy "team" is. Changes are rung repeatedly by spokesmen and allies that Clinton was elected to deal with domestic problems. And there is certainly no doubt that foreign and defense policy was less salient in 1992 than in any other election since 1936: one reason, among others, why a

Clinton victory was possible at all. But it is not 1936, much as we could will it otherwise, and Francis Fukuyama to the contrary, history has not come to an end and is not likely to. One is reminded of a parable in the New Testament, that most penetrating of commentaries on human nature: A demon was expelled from a man, wandered desert places looking for a new home, did not find one, and returned. Seeing that the home was now empty, he brought back seven companions, each worse than he was, to fill the void. With the Evil Empire only a memory, virulent nationalism and religious fundamentalism seem poised to make their home in various empty dwellings, starting perhaps with the next Russian presidential election. We may be in a temporary lull between the threat system of the past half century and a newer one that may prove far less stable. Long before the end of this decade, we will know.

Several different aspects of this uncertain world setting lie in wait for President Clinton. The first is the virtually overt alliance between the military and the Republican Party that has emerged in recent years. The second is the abundant potential for becoming "trapped" in open-ended commitments costing American lives and presidential support; yesterday, Somalia; tomorrow, Bosnia? And the third brings us back to the Constitution again.

The military-Republican alliance and its development have had much to do in the longer run with the effects of the takeover of the Democratic Party by anti-Vietnam war forces under George McGovern 20 years ago; and to a lesser extent, the era of being "in the doghouse" following defeat in Vietnam and especially under Jimmy Carter. Since then, Republicans have typically held the "high ground" as far as imperial policy is concerned, an important strategic asset in winning presidential elections as late as 1988. Bill Clinton had, of course, been able to arrange things so that he did not have to serve in the Vietnam war, something that many thousands of others could and did do. His first initiative, revising the existing policy concerning homosexuals in the military, touched off a firestorm of protest in military circles and among their allies, including Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.). And reports have circulated about the unfriendly treatment of senior military leaders when they have visited the White House. Finally, budget decisions have proposed cuts in military spending that go far beyond George Bush's level of comfort. How important this will be in the long run remains to be seen. But it is clear, first, that historically we have never had the level of the American military's political opposition to a commander in chief that now exists, and there is something worrying in this development. Second, this unsatisfactory relationship, given the right circumstances of international military involvement, may prove an Achilles' heel for the political future of the administration as a whole.

This might especially surface if the United States becomes involved, say, in a years-long struggle in the Balkans. Here, as elsewhere, the general rule of such open-ended involvements, with American casualties, has been that they can topple presidencies. It is not difficult to see why President Clinton has been so reluctant to cross this Rubicon in Bosnia, particularly after having been burned in Somalia. Enough has been said to create a widening impression that the credibility of NATO and of Clinton personally have become at risk—an obvious factor in the February 1994 ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs surrounding Sarajevo. At best, the road ahead will seem far more confusing than usual: the half-century bipolarity between the rival superpowers provided a definition of, and public support for, very expensive defense that is no longer available. As in the past, a Democratic president is disproportionately vulnerable to attack for not maintaining control when things take an ugly turn in world politics: More than any other single factor, Jimmy Carter's presidency was sunk by such developments.

The third aspect of world politics, as we have said, is linked to the Constitution as a power centrifuge with very great in-built properties of dynamic equilibrium. Cutting the size of the military-industrial complex in the 1990s is not in principle a partisan issue: debates between Republicans and Democrats are not over whether to cut, say, by the standards of the late 1980s, but by how much. There is, however, one basic paradox in all this. It can be most succinctly expressed by noting that every time a military base is closed, a small fragment of presidential power disappears with it. Overall, our history supports the view that war is the health of the state, and the institutional health of the presidency in particular. The pre-1940 situation was one in which acute conflict was rare and was coupled with great but temporary bursts of state-building and in the relative institutional importance of the presidency vis-à-vis its congressional rivals. Since then, until just a few years ago, the Cold War—a kind of war, after all, which, heated up twice into significant uses of American military power—tilted the power balance, it seemed permanently, away from Congress and toward the presidency.

While we cannot know what lies just over the horizon, it seems unlikely that conditions in the near future will support the enhanced presidential role in American politics that seemed not so long ago to be a permanent feature of "the modern presidency" and recent American politics generally. If this is so, it suggests that Bill Clinton may be the first of a number of institutionally diminished presidents, and Congress's role will acquire proportionately greater importance as the constitutional dynamic equilibrium moves somewhat closer to its traditional balance. Rhetorical "cheerleading" and bully pulpit exercises may somewhat conceal this drift for a time, but the drift continues nevertheless.

V

It may seem to the reader that the foregoing amounts to a counsel of despair insofar as liberals and the liberal agenda are concerned. In reality, nothing is further from the truth. What we have tried to do here is to present a realistic view of the contexts of leadership and of policy delivery in a Democratic administration existing at a specific moment in "political time." If this moment, as I think, is not particularly favorable to the realization of grandiose and integrated objectives, it is well to take this context into account in order not to be unduly disappointed when events fail to live up to predictions. The sociologist Max Weber had it exactly right when he observed that politics is the slow boring of hard boards. If one becomes dissatisfied with our current version of *trasformismo* and what it produces, at least we can appreciate why the present balance of political forces is such that this seems the dominant, and perhaps the only, alternative to outright conservative rule. Of course, the balancing act can be taken too far: leaders of organized labor claimed that it was in the NAFTA struggle. It is also a mistake for leaders to assume that deep-seated historic interests within a major party have nowhere else to go and thus can be discounted in the struggle for dominance over the soft middle of the road. But we need not dwell further on these issues. With a very different cast of characters in the executive high command than George Bush's team, with ample opportunities to make judicial appointments of very different orientation from those of the preceding twelve years, and with what has already been accomplished in public policy, liberals will have made real gains of their own. This is a different political world from that which saw the birth of *The American Prospect* in 1990.

Stephen Skowronek closes his magisterial new book, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), by concluding that secular trends over recent decades in the growth of the state have increasingly acted to impose outer limits on the capacity of presidents to orchestrate genuine politics of reconstruction. This "thickening" of the state parallels arguments made elsewhere (e.g., Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993]) that the radical growth and polarization of interest-group activity since the 1960s has significantly undermined the leverage of the presidency in the achievement of policy transformation. From Skowronek's point of view, the situation suggests the emergence of a dominant presidential stance. This is the politics of preemption, in which the president operates, as it were, outside traditional partisan alignments and commitments. This is a risky strategy indeed, as such diverse historic figures as John Tyler, Andrew Johnson, and Richard Nixon found to their cost. If there is such a movement toward a politics of "perpetual preemption" in the White House, this development would imply that the fragmentation of American politics has now reached the point where the presidency as an institution has become isolated to a degree not seen since Andrew Jackson's elevation in 1828. Preemptors, in Skowronek's vision, have historically been unusual, what he calls the "wild cards" among presidents. If most or all presidents henceforth become "wild cards," the perennial American governing problem cannot but become more acute than ever. Be all this as it may, one has to say that, thus far, Clinton has been acting out a role that looks very like the one Skowronek assigns to presidents now and in the immediate future.

Perhaps all this is so, but one can think of another line of explanation.

As is pretty well known, my own analyses of "political time" have strongly suggested an embedded tension between stasis-prone politics-as-usual and the political effects of dynamic and uneven development of society and economy. Out of this tension comes that remarkable punctuated equilibrium-event sequence, the critical realignment. According to this model, such realignments have broken through the inertia and conservatism of the political system at strikingly regular intervals throughout American history, culminating (thus far) in the New Deal realignment of the 1930s and the "interregnum-state" realignment of the period centering on the 1968 election. But the tensions and dynamics involved extend beyond megaevents such as realignments. They include (and have included since at least the late 1830s) midpoint crises. These mini upheavals occur halfway between one huge realigning "peak" and the next, that is, halfway through the lifetime of a given regime order that occupies a particular stretch of "political time." There was such a midpoint mini upheaval around 1875 in the Civil War era or system, another around 1913 (intimately connected with the Progressive movement) in the "system of 1896," and another around 1951, halfway in the lifetime of the fifth, or New Deal, system.

Such "midlife crises" are genetically akin to critical realignments and arise ultimately from the same root causes embedded in what James Madison once called "our feudal constitution" coexisting with the world's most dynamic private sector. But instead of overthrowing and replacing a whole regime order, as realignments do, these events only modify this still-robust order. One is faintly reminded of Karl Marx's assertion that no social formation is replaced until it has reached impasse and decay, that is, has exhausted all the possibilities inherent in the way it is put together and functions. Historically, it would seem that these midpoint punctuations of change subdivide ongoing regime orders: before they occur, the order is consolidated and maintained; afterward, it tends increasingly toward decay, and eventual overthrow a half-generation later.

Each regime order has its unique time- and context-defined charac-

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