

Third Edition
*A*ERICAN POLITICS
CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

RONALD E. PYNN



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RONALD E. PYNN

University of North Dakota

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Preface

With the bicentennial of the Constitution in 1987 we celebrate two hundred years of continuous government under the same basic principles. We celebrate the Constitution not only for its impressive history but also because it established principles, behaviors, and institutions that for two hundred years have symbolized the United States and that are still at work.

The nation changed a great deal in the eleven years between the beginning of the American Revolution and the Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1787. Another eleven years have passed between my beginning work on the first edition of *American Politics: Changing Expectations* and the publication of this third edition, and during this time America has again changed greatly. In 1976 we were still struggling with the effects of the Vietnam War, Watergate, and scandals in Congress. In the years immediately following, an outsider from Georgia was elected president, the OPEC oil embargo and inflation played havoc with the U.S. economy, and 52 Americans were taken hostage in Iran. In 1980 Ronald Reagan became president, promising to reduce the government, restore prosperity, and act as a global peace-keeper. Still, bewildering events continued to occur, as the federal deficit reached \$200 billion a year and Americans became victimized by international terrorism.

Now, at the bicentennial of our Constitution, our expectations of government are changing once again, with a resurgence of confidence and optimism. Congress is making serious efforts to control and even eliminate the annual deficit. Public opinion has shifted toward approving a leaner role for government. Like the founding fathers in 1787, Americans today sense the opportunity for renewing their faith in their government and for shaping the course of politics for decades to come.

The Text: An Overview

The first edition of *American Politics: Changing Expectations* was written while the country remained in the throes of Vietnam and Watergate, struggling to understand the changes in its political system. The second edition came out just after Ronald Reagan was elected president. Change

was evident in the course of events, if not yet in their magnitude. Reagan proposed a new political agenda, promising less government and greater prosperity. Now in the third edition I examine the altered expectations generated by the Reagan administration in relation to the foregoing decades of turmoil. The text is thus thematic even as it follows a traditional topical outline.

Since this book is intended for an introductory course in American government, it provides basic information as well as analysis and interpretation. Chapter 1 introduces the theme of changing expectations. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the Constitution and the federal system, the historical foundations of American politics. Chapters 4 and 5 are about individual liberties and equality, the two principles that are central to understanding how ideals and reality combine to produce policy. Chapters 6 and 7 consider public opinion and interest groups as vital parts of the political process. Chapter 8 is about the political parties as systems in themselves; in Chapter 9 we consider their role in the electoral process and in changing voting patterns. Chapters 10, 11, 12, and 13 survey the basic institutions of government: the presidency, the bureaucracy, Congress, and the courts. In the final chapter we look ahead and anticipate what changing expectations mean for our system as a whole.

Special Features and Study Aids

To sharpen the focus on change, to make basic concepts and issues clear, and to help bring American government alive in familiar terms, each chapter contains a number of special elements. These include:

- a running glossary of key terms, placed in the margin for easy access
- biographical sketches of important political figures
- a summary of the main points covered in the chapter
- a list of research projects that would enhance the students' understanding
- an annotated bibliography

Throughout the book, additional special features emphasize various topics discussed in the text:

- *Fact files* contain basic tabular data.
- *Public policy essays* analyze such subjects as revenue sharing, social welfare, and national security.
- *Changing consensus* features highlight particular issues and events that show the impact of consensus on real policies.
- *Practicing politics* provide information for the active, involved citizen on such topics as how juries are selected, where information about members of Congress may be found, and how to obtain a passport.
- *Drawings, photographs, and cartoons* are used throughout to illustrate and clarify events, issues, and concepts.

At the end of the book are

- a *glossary* of all the key terms in the text, and
- annotated versions of the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*, the two major documents of American politics.

In addition to the book itself are other aids to teaching and learning, the *Instructor's Manual* and a student *Study Guide*, both by Murray Fishel of Kent State University. The instructor's manual contains chapter summaries, teaching objectives, discussion questions, quiz items, and sources for further reading. The study guide also provides chapter summaries and annotated reading lists, as well as learning objectives, definitions of key terms, review outlines, and self-review tests.

With Thanks

Writing a textbook is never a solitary endeavor. I am indebted to numerous individuals who contributed greatly to this revision, from the production people at Brooks/Cole who labored to put words into print to the classroom instructors who sought to interpret those words to their students.

Several reviewers, many of whom adopted the last edition, made valuable comments on the draft and suggested possible revisions. They are: Larry Gerston, San Jose State University; Lawrence E. Hough, East Carolina University; George Largent, Northeastern Oklahoma A & M College; Elliot E. Slotnick, Ohio State University.

Finally, my wife Scharlene, and my children, Suzanne, Stephen, and Karen, are more insistent than ever that they see their names in print. After all, it is they who bore the brunt of these revisions. Their care and understanding are acknowledged in ways unspoken.

Ronald E. Pynn

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CHAPTER ONE

he Anguish of Change

Political expectations in America are changing. Change is nothing new to American politics, and there always has been a dynamic excitement associated with it. The recent past, however, illustrates both the speed and depth of change within the American political system. It is a change that offers both hope and fear to our political expectations: hope that the future will be brighter and more secure than the past but also fear that we may be unable to control events with the present arrangements of our governing institutions.

The political world of New Deal era politics has crumbled. In the wake of the Great Depression of 1929, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal promoted industrial growth and economic recovery through government involvement. New economic programs were passed that drew upon tax dollars to stimulate business and provide personal protection for incomes. In 1935 the Social Security Act was passed to provide retirement income for the elderly. **Keynesian economics** became the theory of the day: government would do the spending to support the economy if private enterprise would not or could not.

Keynesian Economics:
the theory that government spending should be used to regulate the economy.

As a result government grew. The federal budget tripled between 1930 and 1940 and then expanded by another factor of four in the following decade. The expanding budget paralleled economic expansion, new jobs, and World War II. The political process changed too. Party loyalties realigned into a new Democratic majority supporting the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, and Democrats also controlled Congress. Roosevelt, elected to an unprecedented fourth term in 1944, became the model for a strong, activist president utilizing the resources of the federal government to propel America forward at home and abroad.

By the 1960s, however, American politics were in a state of disarray. The coalition fashioned by Roosevelt was disintegrating, and the power of the presidency was under attack. Keynesian economics was not working. Government had grown in size and cost, but Americans did not feel better for it. In fact, the people felt that they were worse off than at any time in their history.

Liberal attitudes on social issues were giving way to a new conservative respectability; cynicism and distrust of politics and political leaders were also on the rise. Three events from the 1960s and 1970s bring into focus the change that was taking place in our political process: the Great Society program, the Vietnam War, and Watergate.

By the mid-1980s the extent to which these occurrences had changed the political process became clear. A conservative Republican, Ronald Reagan, won the presidency with landslide victories over Democratic challengers, and the U.S. Senate had a Republican majority for the first time in thirty years. The Reagan movement rejected the New Deal approach to politics. Reagan has pressed for large reductions in appropriations for social welfare programs and dismantled part of the federal government, eliminating some of its regulatory authority and "privatizing" (selling to private enterprise) a number of other government functions. The people in the Reagan administration see the federal government and federal spending as major causes of our domestic problems. They believe that the keys to a healthy and prosperous economy are private industry and voluntary assistance, not increased government. With the Reagan years, a new mood of conservatism and faith in America has emerged.

Changing Expectations: The Recent Past

Decades of Turmoil

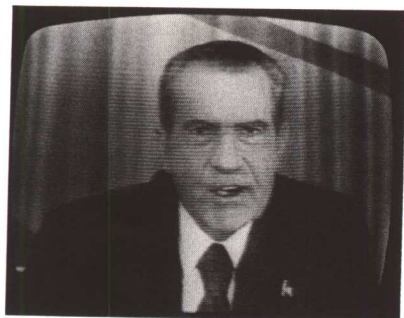
The tumultuous 1960s and 1970s precipitated the decline of post-World War II politics. The experience of these decades has helped us understand better the extent to which the political process has changed since World War II. As Theodore H. White observed, "The postwar world was dead and awaited burial." Let us make a brief survey of the three events that provide the transition to the politics of the present.



The memory of the Vietnam War continues to influence American politics and to touch the conscience of the people.

The Great Society began as a bold program in social engineering. President Johnson announced a war on poverty, and Congress passed the first major civil rights legislation in nearly a hundred years. Medicare was added to the social security system, and food stamps were provided for the unemployed and disadvantaged. Housing and urban mass transit were to be revitalized. In short, as President Johnson described the Great Society, it “rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice—to which we are totally committed.”

Whether because of the escalation of the Vietnam War or poor planning or simple shortsightedness, the Great Society failed to meet expectations. Programs were badly designed; frequently they were funded by federal grants-in-aid to states and local governments with specific proj-



During the Nixon administration the Watergate scandal was exposed through the efforts of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, chaired by Sam Ervin of North Carolina.

ects in mind (categorical grants) but were not coordinated with other programs. Legislative victory appeared to be more important than administrative implementation. More critically, the Great Society raised the hopes of millions of Americans with the pledge of racial justice, jobs for the unemployed, medical care for the elderly, housing for slum dwellers, and the eradication of poverty. It created a climate of rising expectations but left promises unfulfilled. It represented a departure from the New Deal, which distributed money and provided regulation—relatively easily achievable goals within the framework of governmental administrations. But the Great Society required the fundamental reallocation of resources and values. It asked for social change and required governmental social engineering to implement it.

The second transitional event was the Vietnam War. What began in the 1950s and early 1960s as technical assistance to the South Vietnamese government became, under Lyndon Johnson, full-scale combat by U.S. forces in support of the South Vietnamese. Vietnam became for America an unwanted, undeclared, and socially devastating war. The Cold War was fading, and the claim that containment of communism in Asia was critical seemed unconvincing. For many Americans, the Vietnam War was a civil war and not a conflict in which America's national interest was at stake.

The war was divisive. Students and other Americans demonstrated in opposition to it, and opinion polarized between "doves" and "hawks." The Cambodian bombing touched off a wave of new and violent social protest. At Kent State University, four students were killed by National Guardsmen attempting to quell the protests. The Democratic party split over the war.