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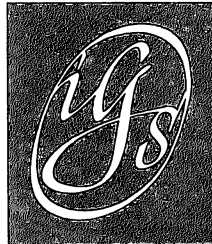
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ERNST FRAENKEL LECTURE, FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN

THE AMERICAN ELECTION OF 1988: OUTCOME, PROCESS AND AFTERMATH

Nelson W. Polsby

University of California, Berkeley

My European friends tell me that because so much in the world depends upon the outcome of the American presidential elections, the rest of the world ought to be able to vote in these elections, just as Americans do. I doubt, somehow, that if we were to enlarge the American electorate in this fashion, the outcome would be any more defensible, sensible, or comprehensible than the situation that currently prevails. It would, however, add a layer of complication to what is already an enormously complicated process. Thus as a political scientist, I must record myself as strongly in favor of the proposal. Anything that makes the American political system a little harder to understand is good for business, and I am all for it. In the meantime, we must scrape by with such complexities as the current system provides.

This lecture will be in the nature of a report to what I nevertheless would like to think of as some of the outlying precincts of the American political system, to people who have every right and many reasons to be concerned, and interested, in the ways in which the American people have exercised their responsibilities of citizenship in the election of 1988.

The outcome has already been disclosed to you: George Bush representing

the Republican party was elected President. By the rules of our constitution Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates are elected together¹ and so by virtue of Bush's victory Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana, who detracted significantly from Bush's popularity and from his margin of victory,² was elected Vice President. The Democratic party -- the majority party in the United States -- gained one seat in the Senate, winning 19 seats, and the Republicans won 14 seats. The new Senate will have 55 Democrats and 45 Republicans. In the House of Representatives, where the Democrats in the last Congress enjoyed a margin of 255 to 177, with three vacancies, the totals are now 260 Democrats and 175 Republicans, for a net gain of 3 Democrats. Democrats also gained a net of one governor: There are now 28 Democratic, 22 Republican governors.

In state legislative elections, very few seats changed parties, with Democrats evidently gaining a net of 10 seats overall. Twenty-eight bicameral state legislatures are now controlled by the Democratic party; only eight are controlled by the Republicans and thirteen are split between the two. The unique unicameral legislature of the State of Nebraska is elected and organized on an officially non-partisan basis.³

What explains this overall pattern of results? I believe we can quickly rule out one theory that is offered by axe-grinders -- mainly Democrats - - to the effect that this election was an ideological referendum in which one ideology emerged triumphant. An important oddity is that on the whole this is not a claim being made by Republicans. I think the reason is this. Claims of this sort are made because they are weapons of combat over

decisions soon to be made within Congress or in the management of the two national parties. When Ronald Reagan brought a dozen new Republican Senators in with him in the 1980 election Reagan supporters sounded the battle cries of party realignment and conservative mandate because these slogans helped to mobilize Congressional Republican votes and to demoralize Democrats in Congress. Today the claim that the election was a referendum on liberalism and liberalism lost is mostly being used as a device by right wing Democrats to attempt to increase their influence on the future of the Democratic party in such matters as the leadership and the activities of the Democratic National Committee.⁴ When we hear, on the other hand, from Jesse Jackson and others that Democratic centrists have had their chance and now it is time to move briskly toward a strong, uncompromising affirmation of left-wing policies we are not really hearing an analysis of the electoral results either.⁵ In fact, the actual picture is quite mixed on the ideological dimension. It is true, I am sure, that most people whose sympathies are on the right voted Republican, but that is also true in years when Democrats win the Presidency. It is true that people who call themselves liberal are many fewer than people who call themselves conservative -- or, especially, middle of the road -- in the population at large but that has been true for about 20 years and it has not stopped Democrats -- even liberal Democrats like, for example, Senator Howard Metzenbaum this year in Ohio or liberal Republicans like Senator-elect Jim Jeffords in Vermont -- from winning elections.⁶

The data on ideology are extremely difficult to interpret. On the whole, American voters are centrist in their ideological dispositions. They frequently want government action in areas that cost money but they don't

like to tax themselves. They have changed their minds over the years on such issues as expenditures for national defense. They support both death penalties and gun control. In short, public opinion on specific issues is ideologically mixed -- if anything with a liberal slant -- but in any case is very much subject to signals from leaders.⁷ As for inferences from the election results themselves, it is hard to harmonize disparate results in which Democrats won and Republicans won, liberals won and conservatives won, into a straightforward and uncomplicated tune such as ideologues wish the Democratic party to sing. So I shall not try to warble further in this vein.

There are, in any case, better and more plausible theories to consider. I shall mention three. They refer, respectively, to peace and prosperity, to the conduct of the campaign, and to structural properties of the parties and the nominating process. And I think all three have merit.

The first theory is refreshingly straightforward. It says, simply, that if nothing is badly disturbing the electorate, then incumbents will do well. George Bush was of course not an incumbent president, but as the sitting Vice President he was as close to an incumbent president as it is possible to be without actually being an incumbent president. In the election incumbents whether they were Democrats or Republicans did extraordinarily well for all offices, as they do in conditions of peace and prosperity. And most, of course were Democrats. Those scholars who use fancy models to attempt to forecast elections have, on the whole, employed assumptions stressing such variables as the condition of the economy somewhat in advance

of the election and they all produced numbers suggesting a Bush victory.⁸ Indeed some of them did so even during the spring and summer months when Michael Dukakis was leading George Bush by a wide margin in the public opinion polls.

The second theory also seems to me entirely plausible. It points out that Vice President Bush ran an effective campaign and Governor Dukakis did not. Jerry Roberts of the San Francisco Chronicle gave an excellent summary of professional opinion on this subject, noting the following features of the Dukakis campaign:

A fatal reluctance to respond to Bush's bare-knuckles attacks. The Republican hit Dukakis as weak on defense and soft on crime, attacking him over the Pledge of Allegiance, prison furloughs and the death penalty. By the time Dukakis fired back in late fall, it was too late. Many voters by then believed the attacks because they had gone unanswered.

A failure to find a consistent campaign theme. Running against peace and prosperity, Dukakis tried campaigning on competence, the middle class squeeze and the unfairness of Bush's attacks before settling on traditional Democratic economic populism in the closing weeks of the race.

A disastrous media campaign. Matched against Bush's state-of-the-art television commercials -- which meshed precisely with the message he was delivering on the campaign trail -- Dukakis' shifting set of ads had little impact. They were produced by a series of media specialists and drafted by

committee, and were criticized as confusing, obscure and without much content.

"We absolutely should have won this race," said California Democratic Party Chairman Peter Kelly. "What happened was George Bush defined Mike Dukakis before Dukakis defined himself."⁹

The technique used by the Bush campaign was not new. Indeed it was precisely the strategy employed by Senator Alan Cranston in his reelection battle in 1986 against the relatively little known Representative Ed Zschau in California. The better known candidate has the strategic opportunity of attempting to characterize his opponent in a negative way at the very start of a campaign, thus requiring the newcomer to waste resources in trying to overcome negative first impressions planted by his opponent. This was, in fact, the Bush strategy. As Bush's political advisor Roger Ailes, said,

We always knew we would have to define Dukakis...and whichever of us defined the other and ourselves most effectively would win...

You've got to understand [Ailes continued] that the media has no interest in substance. Print has a little more interest because they have to fill a lot of lines. But electronic media has no interest in substance.

There are three ways to get on the air: pictures, attacks, and mistakes, so what you do is spend your time avoiding mistakes, staying on the attack and giving them pictures.¹⁰

Dukakis, whose admirable quality of self-restraint served him well during the primary election season, had never before run in an election where the electorate was not completely dominated by Democrats. Entirely confident in his own identity as a frugal and enlightened Democratic centrist with an outstanding record as a public servant (though with no foreign policy record at all), he rejected advice to hit back and early and voluntarily passed up opportunities to explain himself with the broad brush that makes for easy comprehension by the inattentive. He refused help on the patriotism issue from John Glenn and he attacked Bush very little, going so far in one report as to ban the use of the term "country club" in any of his speeches. As a member of the Dukakis team said of the Bush negative campaign: "We used to read this stuff and laugh and say 'How can this be? Why would people take this seriously?'"¹¹

It is possible to dwell too long on particulars of the campaign. There is unusually strong agreement this year among campaign professionals that Dukakis campaigned badly in the general election. This overlooks the fact that he did well enough in the primary season and in dealing with Jesse Jackson thereafter and in his Vice Presidential pick. There is, likewise, strong agreement that the Bush campaign was well tailored to make the best of the Vice President's chances, conveniently overlooking the selection of Dan Quayle. So if we accept the professional assessment of the effects of

the campaign -- as on the whole I do -- we must do so in the face of the fact that every winning campaign looks better in retrospect and every losing campaign looks worse than it probably was.

Of the third theory I am especially fond, because it helps us understand not only the election of 1988 but the entire set of Presidential elections over the last 20 years and not only Presidential elections, where Republicans have been so successful, but also the great and persistent anomaly in the American political system in which there is Republican success in Presidential elections while at the same time Democratic dominance overall, as measured by electoral success at all other levels, party identifications and party registrations.

Because I have written at such tedious length on this subject elsewhere I will try to be brief on this occasion.¹² Essentially, the argument is that since the drastic reforms of the Presidential nominating process that took place in the wake of the chaotic 1968 Democratic National Convention, the system has changed radically from a coalition-building regime to a factional mobilization regime. Over the long run this harms Democrats and helps Republicans in the general election because the Democrats, although they are the larger of the two parties, are also far more factionally fragmented and therefore greatly disadvantaged in a long nomination process in which there are no incentives or occasions for coalition formation. Because the Republicans are much more easily mobilized and coordinated through their basic ideological similarities, the lack of coalition-building incentives harms them less. In the one election since 1968 when Republican

competition was as fierce and as persistent in the nomination process as it always is on the Democratic side, the Republicans lost the general election. That was in 1976. But in all other elections since 1968 it has been the divisions within the Democratic party, and the accentuation of these divisions during a long and arduous campaign for the nomination, that has harmed the chances of the Democratic party to compete successfully in the general elections, and Republicans have won on the strength of Democratic defections at the Presidential level while the Democrats have won elections for most of the other offices on the ballot all over the country.

Before the reforms of 1969-70 there were, to be sure, primary elections. But they occurred in only a few states and most of them were purely advisory and not binding in the selection of delegates to national party conventions. The most important purpose of primaries was to demonstrate the relative popularity of candidates in a trial heat situation so as to supply information to the real decision-makers in the Presidential nomination process -- state party leaders. Party leaders could ignore evidence of popularity if they chose to do so -- and indeed as they did, for example, in the case of Estes Kefauver in 1952. Kefauver was regarded as unacceptable for many reasons, relevant and otherwise, by Democratic party leaders who knew him and did not like or trust him even though he was a highly successful primary campaigner. On the Republican side in that year, party leaders heeded the evidence of the overwhelming popularity of Dwight Eisenhower in the Minnesota primary, where one hundred thousand voters wrote his name on their ballots. This almost certainly turned the tide against "Mr. Republican," Robert A. Taft.

The point is, before the reforms nominations were settled by agreement and by coalition building. The reforms are, many of them, now encoded into state laws but in any event they are centrally enforced by national party officials primarily in the Democratic party and consist of rules governing the seating of delegates to the national party convention. These rules have given powerful incentives for state party leaders to remove themselves from the delegate selection process altogether. And now delegate selection is done mostly through open caucuses and primary elections in which candidates go state by state seeking allies and votes -- mobilizing their factions -- so as to come out ahead of the other candidates who are doing the same thing. In a coalition-building regime, second choices count for a great deal in case during the deliberation process no first choice commands a majority. In a factional mobilization regime, which has no deliberative process, it is first-past-the-post the earlier the better that matters. It is true that delegates may be allocated within states on a proportional scheme, but it is coming out ahead that counts, because what is really important is reaching the electorates in successive primary elections with the free publicity that winning brings. The idea is to develop "momentum," the publicity that helps so much to mobilize the faction in the next trial heat, and the next.¹³ And so what happens early in the game matters enormously because of the publicity generated by these early events.

These forces do not necessarily operate in a perfectly straightforward way, as the events of this year's nominating process illustrate. Party

regulations require that all delegates must be selected in the calendar year of the general election. And the first delegate-selecting events in the nation took place at open caucuses in the state of Iowa.

I went to Iowa, and with a group of other political scientists, watched what happened at one of the four thousand or so caucuses that took place on the night of February 8. I watched the caucus of the Democratic Party of the 4th precinct of Johnson County, 289 or 287 strong, depending on the count you use, all gathered together in the auditorium of the Lincoln School of Iowa City, Iowa. Before the Democrats got their act together, I stuck my head in where the 4th Precinct Republicans were meeting -- in the kindergarten room, as it happens, and there they were, about 60 Republicans, sitting decorously on those tiny little kindergarten chairs, chatting quietly and behaving just as though they were waiting for a string quartet concert to begin. Even in middle class Iowa, the Democrats were more disorderly. They had the task of selecting 9 delegates to the Johnson County caucus of the Democratic party a month hence. The county caucus would send delegates to the congressional district convention a month after that, and they would elect delegates to the Iowa state convention which in turn would send delegates to the national convention of the Democratic party in July.

The candidates, as I have said many times, are as flotsam on a roiling sea of process, and that's a whole lot of process right there. At least on the Democratic side, this process had something to do with the actual selection of actual delegates to the national convention. On the Republican

side there was one major difference. Before they got down to business, they conducted a straw poll ballot, at each precinct caucus. It was the results of this straw poll on the Republican side -- not the real delegate selections -- that were phoned into the networks who in turn reported the Iowa results to the waiting world.

This underscores the fact that the real significance of these early skirmishes is not simply what happens at them -- it is what the news media say about them that matters. As we all know, the big story of Iowa -- and there always has to be one big story -- is that Pat Robertson came in second and George Bush came in third in the Republican straw poll. That's how it played on television that night as the returns came in, and for the rest of the week between Iowa and the New Hampshire primary election. By the way -- at the Republican August Convention itself Robert Dole came out the winner in Iowa -- as he had in the straw poll -- with 16 delegates. But Robertson got only two Iowa delegates and Bush got 12. Nevertheless, February 8th in Iowa was Pat Robertson's night.

Obviously, that was bound to have some impact on the Republican race -- but not as much as on the race on the Democratic side. Because what really happened in Iowa was that the Robertson blip absorbed so much media attention it seriously endangered the Democratic winner, Richard Gephardt's, chances of capitalizing on his Iowa win to become the focal alternative to Michael Dukakis in New Hampshire.

Everybody knew that in the pre-primary period Governor Dukakis was doing

well at mobilizing his faction. He was well financed by money flowing in from Greek-Americans from all over the country, and from contributions from people doing business with the State of Massachusetts. The election calendar was also very much in Dukakis' favor, since the next stop of the marathon -- and the first primary election -- was in New Hampshire.¹⁴ New Hampshire is increasingly an economic and communications satellite of Massachusetts and Dukakis had recently made himself popular with many New Hampshire Democrats by blocking a safety plan necessary for the operation of the Seabrook nuclear reactor in New Hampshire just over the Massachusetts border.

But first there was the rather important Iowa hurdle.¹⁵ Remember in 1984 what happened on the Democratic side: a miserable 15 percent second place showing in Iowa made Gary Hart a media darling and made him the New Hampshire alternative to Walter Mondale. Or remember what happened in 1976 on the Democratic side: fully 38 percent of the Iowans who showed up to a Democratic caucus in that year voted to remain uncommitted.

Here is how Johnny Apple wrote about 1976 in the next morning's New York Times:

Former Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia scored an impressive victory in yesterday's Iowa Democratic precinct caucuses, demonstrating strength among rural, blue-collar, black, and suburban voters.

Mr. Carter defeated his closest rival, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, by a margin of more than 2-1, and left his other four

challengers far behind. The uncommitted vote, which many Iowa politicians had forecast at more than 50 percent, amounted to only about a third of the total, slightly more than that of Mr. Carter.¹⁶

This article, with its strong and coherent story line, cast a long shadow. It contained many elements that in later years would worry journalists -- notably the use of such a word as "impressive" (to whom?) in the lead of what ostensibly was a news story and the belittling of the uncommitted vote because of the disappointed "forecasts" or expectations of anonymous politicians.

Elizabeth Drew's diary for the day after the 1976 Iowa caucuses said:

This morning, Carter, who managed to get to New York on time, was interviewed on the CBS Morning News, the Today Show and ABC's Good Morning America also ran segments on Carter. On the CBS Evening News, Walter Cronkite said that the Iowa voters have spoken "and for the Democrats what they said was 'Jimmy Carter'".¹⁷

I will put those of you who can't remember the actual percentage of the vote that Jimmy Carter won in Iowa in 1976 out of your misery: it was 29 percent.

In 1988 Richard Gephardt got 31 percent in Iowa. The Wall Street Journal reported that in the following week -- leading into New Hampshire -

- the coverage he got on the network evening news programs actually went down from the week preceding -- from 6:05 minutes to 4:55 minutes.¹⁸ This destroyed Gephardt's candidacy; and this is how Pat Robertson came to have more influence on the Democratic nomination than on the nomination of his own party.

It is no secret, I think, that overdependence upon media spin is now part and parcel of how the game of presidential nominations is played. Although this tends to give the news media too much power, and it enormously exaggerates the pathologies characteristic of the news media - pack journalism, the tendency to hyperbole, the great stress on what candidates say, and so on -- it isn't, in my judgment, the fault of American journalists that in the aftermath of the 1968 debacle the political parties -- and especially the Democratic party -- chose to abdicate their responsibility to nominate their candidate for President, and instead gave the power over to mass electorates to do the job for them. But it means that analysts have to spend a lot of time talking about the role of the news media.

It is very frequently said that the media raise the wrong things to talk about, that they are too intrusive, and that they concentrate on personalities and on the horse race questions of who's ahead and who's behind rather than on important things, whatever they are. But why shouldn't they talk about personalities? It seems to me the personalities of prospective candidates should matter a great deal.

Owing to the coincidences of this election year, when we speak of "personalities" or "character" we are probably referring to the publicity surrounding Gary Hart's disastrous candidacy and to whether he went to Bimini on a boat named, or engaged in, Monkey Business, or whether Dan Quayle did or did not dodge the Vietnam draft in an acceptable way. Are these topics the sort of thing that news media should not have covered? I'd like to put that issue into some perspective. We are talking about selecting somebody to be President of the United States, or a heartbeat away from the Presidency, pretty important positions. Presidents get a lot of leeway in deciding how they will do their job, and so what sort of a person a President is will actually matter significantly in job performance.

We decide who gets to be President by having an election, in which roughly 85 million or so Americans make choices between candidates who are total strangers to most of us. Mass electorates also do most of the choosing in the nomination part of the process, since that process is completely dominated by open caucuses and primary elections in which voters state by state vote for these total strangers.

So what do voters do for information that can help them to decide for whom they wish to vote? Virtually none of us have private sources of information. Everything we know is given to us by the news media. They tell us about horse races, true enough. But voters find this information useful since they need to guess which candidates are viable out of what in the early primaries may be a very extensive menu. They want to vote, if

possible, for a candidate likely to survive the winnowing process as time goes on.¹⁹ Of course, these sorts of calculations contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies in which contributions dry up, publicity dries up, and therefore votes disappear for prospective candidates who are behind in the early horse race, and pretty soon they can't overcome the momentum of the competition. And then it's goodbye Al Haig and goodbye Bruce Babbitt, and au revoir Pete DuPont, courtesy of Iowa and New Hampshire, and well before Californians and other participants in the later primaries have a chance to express their preferences. So the order in which the state selection processes are run has a big influence on the outcome.

What about the criticism that the news media dwell too much on "character" and "personalities"? The argument here is that they shouldn't mention character because a politician's character is somehow private and nobody's business. I don't see how anybody can possibly believe this argument. Because character isn't just monkey business. It's also whether a candidate is flexible or frozen, selfish or public spirited, cooperative or a loner, grim or humorous, lazy or industrious, truthful or an exaggerator, possessed of a normal ego or a stuffed shirt, bright or dim, scrupulous or a con man, cynical or idealistic, shadow or substance, a work horse or a show horse. I'm sure everyone can find a favorite American politician somewhere in that list. Why shouldn't we want to know these things? It is bound to affect the way public business gets done.

And yet, it is said, when we attempt to pay attention to the personal characteristics of candidates we are ignoring "the issues": where they

stand on nuclear disarmament and budget deficits and trade balances and so forth.

I think it is interesting to find out where politicians stand on issues, but the fact is many politicians -- especially those who run for president as members of the same party -- stand just about in the same place on most issues as many other politicians. And in some election years, the candidates may be reluctant to talk much about issues except in vague generalities. They may prefer to speak in praise of "competence" or "values" or to lead friendly audiences in pledges of allegiance to the flag. It's enough to make observers nostalgic for those stirring times when we debated important things like the defense of Quemoy and Matsu. And so the real problem for ordinary voters may be how hard it is to make inferences about what sort of Presidency candidates can actually deliver.

To figure that out, I believe we have to know about a third category of information -- and in this category it seems to me the media could be stronger. This is the record of performance that prospective candidates have made as public officials. I should say immediately that so far as I am concerned, if a candidate has no prior record as a public official, and therefore if elected would be taken completely by surprise by the work that has to be done, that candidate ought not to be taken seriously as a prospective President of the United States. Such people should hold some other public office first, in order to find out whether they can do any public job.

But as for the candidates who have such a record, I offer two alternative approaches. In one case, we count up the votes or the public stands on various issues and figure out who has the profile that most agrees with our preferences. I call this the eighth grade report card, and I recommend that citizens use this approach sparingly -- because, as I have mentioned, it says nothing about whether the candidate can deliver on his promises and nothing about how practical any of his proposals is.

The alternative is the kindergarten report card. I want to know, and I think the American people should want to know, how well the candidate gets along with the other children. The American constitution says that governing is a cooperative enterprise in the United States -- most notably between the President and Congress. I weigh very heavily -- as I think all Americans should -- the fact that some candidates have the support and the high esteem of their colleagues -- people who have worked with them -- and some clearly do not. Some candidates may have held important jobs but nobody can point to any actual accomplishments in those jobs and some have actually done things. Some take more credit for accomplishments than they are entitled to.

Far from being too intrusive and too inquisitive I should say that the news media are too tentative and too timid in dealing with this set of concerns. They don't tell us enough about performance in public office. We can ask ourselves, for example, what we learned in our very long campaign about George Bush's actual work as CIA Director, Ambassador to the UN and to China, chairman of the Republican National Committee or member of

Congress.

The reason it is necessary to tax the news media with this responsibility, which after all is actually our responsibility as citizens to inform ourselves is simply this: for most of the people who vote in primary and in general elections, they have nowhere else to turn in order to inform themselves and thereby to make even a minimally informed choice.

It seems to me there is a significant short circuit in the system: the fact that we know a candidate's name does not necessarily go hand in hand with the possession of relevant information about performance. Yet name recognition is what produces big numbers in the public opinion polls. Favorable publicity can produce a powerful bounce. These polls, when they are conscientiously done, are faithful samples of some significant population. Who turns out to a caucus or to vote in a primary may not be, indeed almost certainly will not be, a faithful sample, however. It is important to stress this point because in some simple-minded versions of democratic theory the mere fact that large numbers of people appear at polling places is sufficient to sanctify a nomination process.

In other versions of democratic theory, the fact that voting takes place is not enough. If the people who turn out are an unrepresentative subset of the relevant electorate, which in the case of a party nomination would be all rank and file party identifiers, then it is important to ask: who is voting? And what do their votes mean? The meaning of an election may be hard to fathom: if the alternatives on offer are very numerous, as is

generally true at the beginning of the nomination process, and each voter has only a single, nontransferable vote, then the results of the election may be extremely difficult to interpret. Suppose, for example, a George Wallace, or some other extremist who is the strong first preference of 30 percent of the party electorate, comes out ahead of the six other more moderate candidates in the race? Does democratic theory demand that he be declared the nominee even if he is the last choice of the 70 percent of the voters who spread their votes among the other six? Run-off elections have been devised to attempt to deal with this problem. But there are no run-off primary elections.

In a system where most of the delegates to national party conventions are selected by candidates themselves, pursuant to popular caucuses and primary election results, winning for a candidate means, as I have said, coming out of these primary elections and caucuses ahead of the others, not winning a majority of votes. Thus candidates mobilize their factions of first-choice voters, and ignore building a majority coalition. The eventual nominee is the candidate with the biggest and most faithful faction. He may never have to come to terms with the rest of his party at all to get the nomination. So there is a lot of incentive for primary candidates to speak ill of one another. Recall also that the general election campaign -- the one between the nominees of the two major parties -- is entirely subsidized by the federal treasury, which means that the nominee never has to ask for financial support from anybody, and is free to ignore the raising of so-called soft money for party-building and turnout generating purposes while running a general election campaign that bypasses

party alliances and goes straight to the population at large with television ads featuring flag factories and other key images of modern American life.

As many people now realize, this is not a set of rules or political structures that strengthens political parties. State party leaders, who news media people insist on calling "party bosses" even though very few of them even remotely meet that description, have, by and large, been excluded from the party Presidential nominating process. And we therefore have to do our best to sort out the candidates on our own.

At least, in the general election, voters have the aid of the party label to guide them. The party label, as it happens, is for perhaps three-quarters of American voters a useful guide. The rest do the best they can by attending to media advertising or news coverage or such events as our televised so-called debates. From none of these, regrettably, are we likely to receive the information we need to make intelligent inferences about the sort of Presidency a candidate is likely to give us.

But there are clues to be garnered from the background and long-term record of public service that an incoming President carries with him into the Presidency, and from the earliest appointments he makes to leadership positions in his administration.²⁰ Watching new presidents put together their cabinets is a good index of long-term presidential intentions and prospects for governing and may also say something eloquent about the factional structure of the president's party. We must remember

that American cabinets have absolutely no collective responsibility or power. When they meet en masse with the president it is nowadays usually for ceremonial purposes only. The title "member of the cabinet" simply applies to appointed -- not elected -- heads of major executive departments of the American national government and to a small number of presidentially designated White House staff members.

Devoted cabinet-watchers have noticed that over any given president's term of office, cabinet members appointed early in the game are on average more qualified by personal and ideological compatibility with the President, less qualified by technical capacity or subject matter knowledge than those appointed later in the term. Early appointments may be a better signal of what presidents wish to do, or to appear to be doing, than of what they can actually accomplish. Toward the end of the last two presidencies, presidents made symbolic gestures in their cabinet appointments as ways of mobilizing support for the upcoming election. Thus Jimmy Carter belatedly reached out to make alliances with the grand coalition of Democrats that he had sorely neglected for most of his term of office in his appointments to cabinet positions of the mayor of New Orleans, the mayor of Portland, Oregon, and a prominent Chicago Jewish business leader. Ronald Reagan appointed a Hispanic American Secretary of Education plus two friends and supporters of George Bush to his lame duck cabinet.

These maneuvers hint at the variety of populations from which Presidents draw cabinet members. Cabinet members have responsibilities upward to the President, downward to their own bureaucracies -- some of which include sizeable groups of professionals with their own norms and beliefs about the

right way to do things -- and outward to the clientele served by their agencies.

At least five different pools of talent exist for Presidents to draw upon:

(1) Members of the President's own entourage. These are likely to be loyal to the President but may not operate successfully in the rarified air of national government. John Kennedy's Massachusetts mafia, with a few exceptions, learned to adapt. Jimmy Carter's Georgians, with exceptions, did not. Nor did most of Ronald Reagan's cabinet-level Californians leave Washington with enhanced reputations.

(2) Old Washington hands. These provide a set of advantages and disadvantages complementary to presidential friends. They bring to an administration general knowledge of how the government works and operational skills, but how loyal are they? How loyal was David Stockman? Not as loyal to Reagan, clearly, as Lloyd Cutler was, and is, to Jimmy Carter.

(3) Members of interest groups whose inclusion at the cabinet level sends a symbolic signal that enhances political support for the administration. The Reagan administration tended to relegate women and blacks -- two categories of Americans who must appear somewhere in a President's cabinet -- to posts where they were not expected to accomplish very much. Symbolic appointees may lack competence or may act with great, and embarrassing, independence, two risks for Presidents as they pursue this strategy of appointment.

(4) Technical and subject matter specialists are frequently appointed to the State, Treasury or Defense Departments, to the Office of Management and Budget, and the Council of Economic Advisors. Specialists are not as interchangeable in their subject matter as old Washington hands, but rather tend to have served an earlier apprenticeship as assistant secretaries in their respective departments. These appointees tend to know where the bodies are buried in their departments and may even get along well with Congress. They are likely to have strong professional views about the substance of policy. Presidents thus do well to make sure these views are compatible with what the President wants.

Finally, (5) each department and each party serves interest group clientele who may offer up candidates for cabinet posts: environmental preservationists for Democratic Secretaries of the Interior, let us say, or advocates of environmental development on the Republican side. Republican bankers like Treasury Secretary-designate Nicholas Brady and stock brokers sometimes enter public service by this route, as do liberal Democratic lawyers. Defeated politicians or political leaders at the state and local level who are appointed to the cabinet frequently are appointed because they have strong alliances with sectionally important interest groups, such as mid-west dairy farmers or people in the oil business.

Most Presidents draw from all five pools in picking leading members of

their administration. If they are lucky, they can get a few appointees who overlap two or even three categories -- as Bush's close friend James Baker now does after eight years as a Washington figure in the Reagan Administration. How adroitly the President elect manages the mixture will tell a great deal not only about the character of the program he will put together but also about the prospects that this program will receive adequate political support in Congress and in the country.

So far, what signals is George Bush sending? I am just old enough to remember 1948 when everyone was sure that Harry Truman was going to lose the election. Some of the magazines began putting out stories about the probable Thomas E. Dewey Presidential staff and cabinet.²¹ Of course it never happened -- until now. Dewey was the Republican Governor of New York, with strong Wall Street legal and eastern establishment connections. George Bush has spent many years in an ill-fitting disguise as an adopted Texan, in spite of body language, clothing, education, speech patterns, and family background that proclaim him even more than Dewey a quintessentially northeastern upper-class WASP.²² He is the second son of the late Prescott Bush, a New York investment banker in the firm of Brown Brothers, Harriman -- who in the years George was growing up was moderator of the representative town meeting of Greenwich, Connecticut and after that became a U.S. Senator from Connecticut. Prescott Bush was the son of a Columbus, Ohio steel manufacturer. Unlike the vast bulk of American teen-agers, he went away to boarding school, to St. George's, in Newport, Rhode Island, and thereafter to Yale, where he played baseball and golf, joined the honorific secret society Skull and Bones, and sang bass with the Whiffenpoofs. This foreshadows George Bush's early life rather well:

George Bush in his turn went to Greenwich Country Day School, Andover and Yale, where, like his father, he played baseball and joined Skull and Bones. Prescott Bush served in World War I; George Bush served, with distinction, in World War II.²³ After marrying a northeastern member of his own class and graduating from Yale he moved to Texas, and with a sizeable stake of capital from the New York investment banking community with which his family was connected, he entered the oil business. His siblings stayed mostly in the northeast and he and his family always summered at his mother's family retreat in Kennebunkport, Maine, among -- as they say in that neck of the woods -- his own kind. As soon as he made a modest fortune in Permian Basin oil he moved to Houston, and ran for Congress. His closest Texas friends are evidently Ivy Leaguers and prep school graduates.

It is interesting to recount these details of President-elect Bush's social identity in part because he has striven so long to de-emphasize the north-east and accentuate the Texas in his background. Membership in the American social elite does not confer great advantages in electoral politics. But it may nevertheless play an important role in supplying the intellectual influences that have formed the President-elect's character and his basic political outlook.

One never knows with certainty about these things, but I'll bet George Bush grew up reading the old New York Herald Tribune, and that on the Herald Tribune editorial page of the 1940s and '50s we can find his center of intellectual gravity even today: in international affairs, Anglophile,

Eurocentric, oriented to east-west concerns rather than north-south concerns; in domestic affairs charitable but parsimonious, full of noblesse oblige and public spiritedness, paternalistic, mindful of excessive expenditures, but comfortable with capital formation and economic boosterism. Not a Main Street Republican but a Wall Street Republican, who would care, therefore, what foreign capital markets think of the President and who may take rather for granted the concerns of ordinary Americans except as they can be satisfied with symbolic gestures of leadership.

His first cluster of top appointments include his old friend James Baker, a Texan who was educated at the Hill School in Pennsylvania and went to college at Princeton; Nicholas Brady, a native New Yorker, a graduate of St. Mark's School, and of the Yale class of '52, and head of the New York investment firm of Dillon-Read; former Pennsylvania governor and assistant attorney general Richard Thornburgh, Yale '54; Lauro Cavazos, a Hispanic Texan; and a couple of Washington technicians: Richard Darman and Brent Scowcroft. About the selection of Dan Quayle as Vice President I have one vagrant thought: Bush reminds me of one or two of the prep school teachers I have known, and Quayle of one or two of the attractive, friendly, docile, athletic, intellectually lazy, and gritless prep school students whom prep school teachers of a rather conventional sort liked. Like Prescott Bush, Dan Quayle is an avid golfer. He even belongs to the same college fraternity -- Delta Kappa Epsilon -- as George Bush.

Right away we can discern a sharp difference between Bush and his predecessor. Bush is an old Washington hand and is comfortable with and

respectful of prevailing Washington wisdom on a wide range of public policies; Reagan was capable of obliviousness to received knowledge when it conflicted with ideology or with wishful thinking. Reagan's personal entourage came with him from California; Bush's staff is already in Washington, and many of his long-term personal connections are with Washington people.

If any of these observations turn out to be true and significant we can guess that rather soon we shall be hearing complaints from the right wing of the Republican party that the policy equivalents of right-wing Texas pork rinds have been banished from the White House. If political expediency requires lip service to right wing social issues, or even more than lip service, Bush seems to me acquiescent enough to make some efforts in that direction. But I do not believe any more than right wing Republicans believe that his heart is in star wars, abortion prevention or school prayer.

In fact, right wing Republicans may make quite a lot of noise, but the really severe pressures on the Bush Presidency will initially come from another quarter altogether: the Democratic-controlled Congress. Bush must find ways of working out with Congress the four big policies on the top of the national agenda. All four of them are linked together: deficit reduction, taxes, entitlements and defense expenditures, and Congress and the President must negotiate not only substantive measures to deal with them all, but also timing and the phased allocation of credit and blame. All this will loom very large as President Bush begins his administration

and will amply exercise his talents for compromise and conciliation.

Let me close by thanking you for your patience and your interest in hearing a few of my conjectures on the process, the results and the aftermath of the 1988 edition of the amazing electoral process that we Americans have contrived for ourselves., And, as our friends abroad properly remind us, not for ourselves alone.

NOTES

1. United States Constitution, Twelfth Amendment.
2. George Gallup, Jr. and Alec Gallup, "Post-Election Poll Examines Factors Leading to Bush Victory," Gallup Poll press release, November 20, 1988. See "Poll Shows Quayle Cost Bush Many Votes," San Francisco Chronicle, November 16, 1988, p. A 17.
3. A thorough round-up of all these results can be found in Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report 46 (November 12, 1988.)
4. See, for example, Ben Wattenberg, "The Curse of Jesse," New Republic (December 5, 1988), pp. 20-21.
5. See, for example, Robert Kuttner, "Incompetent Ideology," *ibid*, pp. 24-25.
6. Here is how Americans have identified themselves ideologically over the last two decades or so:

	Year							
	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	19	21	16	20	17	15	18	18
Middle of road	27	26	25	27	20	22	23	28
Conservative	27	26	25	28	28	27	29	28
Don't know	28	27	33	27	36	36	30	25
Number of respondents	2155	2478	2839	2284	1565	1400	2229	2170

Based on answers to the question: "We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?" "Liberal" = "extremely liberal" + "liberal" + "slightly liberal"; "Conservative" = "extremely conservative" + "conservative" + "slightly conservative."

Warren E. Miller, et al, American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook, 1952-1978 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 95; Center for Political Studies, The American National Election Study, 1980, Vol. 1: Pre and Post Election Surveys, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1982), pp. 150-151; Center for Political Studies, American National Election Study, 1982: Post-Election Survey File, 1st ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1983), pp. 219-220; Center for Political Studies, American National Election Study, 1984: Pre-and Post-election Survey File, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1986), pp. 186-187; Center for Political Studies, American National Election Study, 1986:

Post-election Survey, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1987), pp. 189-190.

This sort of information is quite sensitive to the wording of the question, and may not translate easily into specifics, as the next footnote illustrates.

7. For example, here are recent Gallup figures on a number of issues generally thought to array themselves along a left-right dimension:

Spending for Government Programs

	Increased	Kept the same	Reduced, eliminated	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
Medical, health care	67	24	4	5
Public education	66	22	7	5
Food programs	44	35	15	6
Space programs	26	41	24	9
Defense, military	17	42	35	6

From The Gallup Poll, no. 273 (July 1988), p. 4. Interviewing dates: June 24-26, 1988.

For more on elite leadership of public opinion, see John R. Zaller, "The Role of Elites in Shaping Public Opinion," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1983.

8. Ray C. Fair, "The Effect of Economic Events on Votes for President: 1984 Update," Political Behavior, vol. 10, no.2 (1988), pp. 168-179; Larry Bartels, "Economic Consequences of Retrospective Voting," (July 1988) unpublished manuscript; Alan Abramowitz, "An Improved Model for Predicting Presidential Election Outcomes," P.S. (forthcoming).

9. Jerry Roberts, "What Dukakis Did Wrong," San Francisco Chronicle, November 10, 1988, p. A 3.

10. Steven W. Colford, "Ailes: What He wants Next: Bush Adman Aims Attack at Madison Ave.," Advertising Age, November 14, 1988, pp. 1, 67.

11. William Schneider, "Tough Liberals Win, Weak Liberals Lose," New Republic (December 5, 1988), p. 12.

David Shribman and James M. Perry report:

Last August, as Republicans were starting to batter Michael Dukakis over the Pledge of Allegiance, Dukakis media adviser Scott Miller suggested having Sen. John Glenn, the war hero and astronaut, make a commercial answering the charges. Sen. Glenn was eager to do it.

The idea was rejected reportedly by Mr. Dukakis himself.

A few weeks later, Mr. Dukakis' aides planned an economic-populism offensive to portray Vice President George Bush as the candidate of privilege.

Gov. Dukakis not only rejected the idea but also angrily told his advisers never to put the phrase "country club" into a speech again....

As Dukakis insiders re-examine the governor's 19-month odyssey, the images that linger are of a candidate possessed of little understanding of the voters or the election and, more important, of a candidate offering no compelling message or rationale for his campaign. Mr. Dukakis:

--Resisted every effort to get him to leave the relative security of his State House office in August to campaign outside Massachusetts at a time when the Republicans were on the offensive.

--Sternly lectured his aides that he would not engage in negative campaigning even as his lead was seeping away, and rejected response after response to Mr. Bush's attacks.

--Delayed for months the important defense speeches that might have inoculated the candidate from charges that he wasn't fit to be commander in chief.

--And failed to resolve a struggle among powerful aides that paralyzed the campaign at crucial moments....

Aides say Mr. Dukakis, apparently content with the case he had made in Atlanta about his competence being the most important factor in the campaign, believed that the attacks were so patently wrong that they wouldn't stick to him. Kirk O'Donnell, who joined the campaign in the summer, wrote riposte after riposte, only to have each rejected. The Dukakis camp produced television commercials on the failures of the federal prison-furlough program -- commercials explicitly designed to counter GOP attacks on Mr. Dukakis over Willie Horton, the convicted murderer who brutalized a Maryland couple while on a furlough from a Massachusetts prison. But Mr. Dukakis wouldn't allow the spots to be aired.

"Dukakis's Campaign Was Marred by a Series of Lost Opportunities," Wall Street Journal, November 8, 1988, pp. A1, A8.

12. Nelson W. Polsby, Consequences of Party Reform, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

13. See Larry Bartels, Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).

14. See Gary R. Orren and Nelson W. Polsby, (eds) Media and Momentum: The New Hampshire Primary and Nomination Politics (Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House, 1987).
15. Much of the following is taken from my essay "The Iowa Caucuses in a Front-Loaded System: A Few Historical Lessons," to be published in Peverill Squire (ed) First in the Nation, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, Forthcoming).
16. R. W. Apple, Jr., "Carter Defeats Bayh by 2-1 in Iowa Vote," New York Times, January 20, 1976, p.1.
17. Elizabeth Drew, American Journal: The Events of 1976 (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 16.
18. Monica Langley, "In Pre-New Hampshire Flurry, Images Prevail, and TV Coverage May Be Pivotal to Candidates," Wall Street Journal, February 16, 1988, p. 64.
19. Henry Brady and Richard Johnston, "What's the Primary Message: Horse Race or Issue Journalism?" in Orren and Polsby (eds) Media and Momentum, pp. 127-186.
20. An earlier discussion of some of these issues is my "Presidential Cabinet Making: Lessons for the Political System," Political Science Quarterly, vol. 93 (Spring 1978), pp. 15-25.
21. For examples see "Albany Provides Preview of Dewey Administration," Life (September 13, 1948), pp. 42-43; Helen Fuller, "Dewey's Brisk Young Men Move In," New Republic (July 5, 1948), pp. 15-19; Alden Hatch, "The Men Around Dewey," Harper's Magazine, vol. 197 (October 1948) pp. 38-46.
22. A fine recent discussion of this group of Americans, full of sympathy and insight, is Nelson W. Aldrich Old Money: The Mythology of America's Upper Class (New York: Knopf, 1988).
23. Aldrich is most interesting on the institutionalized role of "ordeals" in the lives of American upper class males: school, "outdoors," and "under fire," all of which were an intimate part of Bush's life experiences. pp. 141-190.

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