

The 2012 U.S. Presidential Election and the Future of American Politics: A Continued Revolt of the Moderates

Putting things into perspective:

New Deal Democratic majority:

- The South, traditionally Democratic since the Civil War.
- Roman Catholic/ethnics brought into the Democratic party, given their recognition with the presidential nomination of Al Smith. Mobilized ethnic women.
- Economic collapse/Great Depression, 24% unemployment, hence many “poor.”

Coalition maintained by voters coming of age and participating.

Changing base of American politics brought about by the end of WWII:

- Rapid expansion of higher education—population 18-years old and older who are college graduates: 1960, 15.5%; 1970, 21.6%; 1980, 32.9%; 1990, 42.8%; 2000, 51.4%; 2004, 55.5%.

College enrollments—1940, 1M; 1950, 2M; 1960, 4M; 1970, 8M; 1980, 12M; 1990, 14M; 2000, 15M; 2006, 18M (est.).

- Redistribution of income (1968 constant dollars) —

	<u>1956</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1980</u>
Under \$10,000	82.0%	60.0%	39.0%
\$15,000 plus	05.0%	15.0%	34.0%

- Creation of a “new middle class” based on consumption, a movement from scarcity to abundance—by the mid-1970s:
 - fossil fuel consumption 1 ½ times the rest of American history;
 - leisure time 5 times to \$45 billion; in 1992 dollars the expenditures on recreation in 1980, \$159 billion; in 1990, \$292 billion;
 - toys, 500%;
 - TV sets, from 1/10th of 1% to 97.1% being watched 30% of one’s waking hours; by 1990 over 90% were color sets and 1992, 60%+ had cable television.

Demographic groups and the political parties

1. Both political parties contained substantial numbers of “poor” and “well off” though conventional wisdom...
 - a) By 1956, Republicans **and Democrats** competing equally for the votes of the “Above Average.”
 - b) By 1964, Republicans **and Democrats** competing equally for the votes of the “college educated.”
 - c) By 1964, Republicans **and Democrats** competing equally for the votes of “professionals” by occupation.
2. Suburban movement of the 1950s, of today—
 - a) Initially projected by writers of the time to benefit Republicans, but...
 - b) Middle class became the home of the Democrats, the principal architects of the current economic policies with national government regulation; the “new middle class” grew up with the regulated economy and were the principal beneficiaries of it, hence....
3. New Deal conflict was one between Catholics and Protestants, but, today....
 - a) Catholics moved up the economic ladder, became part of the “new middle class.”
 - b) Political attachments of Catholics were holding, but...
 - Generally, 60% of the Catholics considered themselves Democrats since the New Deal, but that attachment dropped to 51% in 1968 and further to 47% in 1972, the subsequent gains being among the category “independent” though there was a bounce back to 53% in 1976!
 - In terms of votes, though, Catholics began to desert Democratic presidential candidates in 1952 (51% R) ... 1956 and 1972 (56% R).
4. Partisan conflict shifted from religion to race—blacks v. whites—with the nationalization of the race issue WITHIN the Democratic Party, especially by the mid-1960s with the Civil Rights Acts and Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Focus on the South:

Civil War + Agricultural Economic Base = Democratic TRADITION, but...

— Civil War relegated to the dust bin of history; a new Republican respectability emerged with the 1964 Goldwater presidential campaign.

— Region moved from agriculture to INDUSTRY, from rural farm to METROPOLITAN, hence....

— abandonment of the central cities by the more affluent, both white AND black.

— Only an ever weakening TRADITION helps maintain a strong STATE Democratic party/elected officials

SOUTH (partisan identification)

	'37	'40	'44	'48	'52	'56	'60	'64	'68	'72	'76	'80
Dem	76	76	71	74	69	59	55	56	43	44	57	41
Rep	16	15	21	16	17	26	27	22	22	23	16	24
ind	08	08	08	10	14	15	18	23	35	33	28	35

— Analogy of partisanship to religion!

— Impact of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with respect to voter registration in the 11 states of the South; focus on blacks, but, in reality, 5 whites were registered for every 1 black, beginning in 1966!

— With respect to the Electoral College, the South steadily has increased its proportion from 31% in the 1960s, to 32% in the 1970s, to 37% in the 1980s, to 39% in the 1990s, to 41% of the necessary (270 votes to win) in the 2000s as shown in Table 1 below. It is now the STRONGEST region for the Republican Party in presidential politics.

— The South has moved from the strongest region of support for the Democratic party and its candidates to the STRONGEST REGION OF SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND ITS CANDIDATES while the Northeast has moved to the STRONGEST REGION OF SUPPORT FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND ITS CANDIDATES.

5. **Race AND religion.** While race remains a source of political conflict, religion re-emerged as a source of political conflict in late-1980s/early-1990s, but now it is among Protestants, Mainline versus Fundamentalist, the latter being the most loyal supporters of the Republican Party and its candidates.

6. **CONCLUSION: *The future of American Politics.***

Cycles of political control — “critical” elections theory TIED TO ECONOMICS

Table 1. Shift in Partisan Control, Major Political Offices, 1994 and 1995/6

	<u>1994</u>			<u>1995/6</u>		
	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Other</u>
President/1992 and 1996						
% of vote	43.0	37.4	18.9	49.2	40.7	8.4
Electoral College	370	168	0	379	159	0
Congress						
House						
% of vote*	50.9	45.5	3.6	45.4	52.4	2.2
Number of seats	258	176	1	197	236	1
Senate						
Number of seats	57	43	0	46	53	0
Governors	30	18	2	18	31	1
State Legislatures						
Lower House						
Number of seats	3186	2223	0	2817	2603	0
% of seats	58.9	41.1		51.9	48.1	
Upper House						
Number of seats	1132	799	0	1021	905	0
% of seats	58.6	41.4		53.0	47.0	

*Number of votes cast in 1992 was 96,239,000 and 1994 was 69,770,000.

Source: Calculated from statistics presented in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1996* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 270-280.

Table 2. Shift in Partisan Control, Major Political Offices, 2004/6 and 2007/8

	<u>2004/6</u>			<u>2007/8</u>		
	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Other</u>
President/2004 and 2008						
% of vote	48.3	50.7	1.0	52.6	46.1	1.3
Electoral College	251	286	0	364	174	0
Congress						
House						
% of vote**	46.6	49.2	4.2	52.2	44.3	3.5
Number of seats	202	232	0	233	202	0
Senate						
Number of seats	45	55	0	51*	49	0
Governors	22	28	0	28	22	0
State Legislatures						
Lower House						
Number of seats	2702	2675	34	2971	2422	18
% of seats	49.9	49.4	0.6	54.9	44.8	0.3
Upper House						
Number of seats	952	964	6	1010	909	3
% of seats	49.5	50.1	0.3	52.5	47.3	0.2

*Includes Independent Lieberman (CT) and Socialist Sanders (VT), both of whom organize with the Democrats, bringing that total to 51 seats.

**Number of votes cast in 2004 was 113,192,000, and in 2006 it was 80,568,000.

Sources: Calculated from statistics presented in U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2008* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), pp. 245, 249, 250, 252, and 253.

Table 3. National Exit Poll (in percentages), 2006

Voters	Demographic Characteristic	Democrats	Republicans
100%	All Voters	54%	46%
52	Women	56	44
48	Men	52	48
79	White	48	52
10	Black	89	11
08	Hispanic	70	30
02	Asian	62	38
12	Age 18 to 29	61	39
24	Age 30 to 44	54	46
34	Age 45 to 59	54	46
29	Age 60 and older	52	48
03	Did not complete high school	64	36
21	High school graduate	56	44
31	Some college education	52	48
27	College graduate	50	50
18	Postgraduate education	59	41
55	All Protestants	45	55
43	White Protestants	38	62
26	All Catholics	56	44
19	White Catholics	51	49
02	Jewish	88	12
24	White evangelical, born-again Christian	29	71
07	Family income under \$15,000	69	31
12	\$15,000 to 29,999	63	37
21	\$30,000 to 49,999	57	43
22	\$50,000 to 74,999	51	49
16	\$75,000 to 99,999	52	48
23	\$100,000 and over	48	52
36	Republican	08	92
25	Independent	59	41
39	Democrat	93	07
22	East	64	36
27	Midwest	53	47
30	South	46	54
21	West	56	44
20	Liberal	87	11
47	Moderate	60	38
32	Conservative	20	78

Table 4. Political Party Regional Strongholds with States Won by Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton and State Electoral College Votes, 2008

Democratic Stronghold		Swing States		Republican Stronghold	
Northeast	EC	Midwest	EC	South	EC
<i>Connecticut</i>	7	<i>Illinois</i>	21	<i>Alabama</i>	9
<i>Delaware</i>	3	Indiana	11	Arkansas	6
<i>Maine</i>	4	<i>Iowa</i>	7	Florida**	27
<i>Maryland</i>	10	Kentucky	8	<i>Georgia</i>	15
Massachusetts	12	Michigan**	17	<i>Louisiana</i>	9
New Hampshire	4	<i>Minnesota</i>	10	<i>Mississippi</i>	6
New Jersey	15	Missouri*	11	<i>North Carolina</i>	15
New York	31	Ohio	20	<i>South Carolina</i>	8
Pennsylvania	21	West Virginia	5	Tennessee	11
Rhode Island	4	<i>Wisconsin</i>	10	<i>Texas</i>	34
<i>Vermont</i>	3		120	<i>Virginia</i>	13
<i>Washington, DC</i>	3				153
	117			Mountains/ Plains	
Pacific Coast				Arizona	10
<i>Alaska</i>	3			<i>Colorado</i>	9
California	55			<i>Idaho</i>	4
<i>Hawaii</i>	4			<i>Kansas</i>	6
<i>Oregon</i>	7			<i>Montana</i>	3
<i>Washington</i>	11			<i>Nebraska</i>	5
	80			<i>Nevada</i>	5
				New Mexico	5
				<i>North Dakota</i>	3
				Oklahoma	7
				South Dakota	3
				<i>Utah</i>	5
				<i>Wyoming</i>	3
					68
Grand Total	<u>197</u>		<u>120</u>		<u>221</u>
EC Deficit	(73)				(49)

Source: Earl Black and Merle Black, *Divided America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007)

Compiled from "Democratic Delegate Counts - Election Guide 2008 - Dem. Delegates," <http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/delegates/index.html>, accessed June 4, 2008. *Italics*=won by Obama; Normal=won by Clinton; *tie; **no delegates for violation of primary scheduling rules; restored to half delegations by the Democratic National Committee, May 31, 2008.

Table 5. Political Party Regional Strongholds by Electoral College (EC) Vote, 2008

Democratic Stronghold		Swing States		Republican Stronghold	
Northeast	EC	Midwest	EC	South	EC
Connecticut	7	Illinois	21	Alabama	9
Delaware	3	Indiana	11	Arkansas	6
Maine	4	Iowa	7	Florida	27
Maryland	10	Kentucky	8	Georgia	15
Massachusetts	12	Michigan	17	Louisiana	9
New Hampshire	4	Minnesota	10	Mississippi	6
New Jersey	15	Missouri	11	North Carolina	15
New York	31	Ohio	20	South Carolina	8
Pennsylvania	21	West Virginia	5	Tennessee	11
Rhode Island	4	Wisconsin	10	Texas	34
Vermont	3		120	Virginia	13
Washington, DC	3				153
	117			Mountains/ Plains	
Pacific Coast				Arizona	10
Alaska	3			Colorado	9
California	55			Idaho	4
Hawaii	4			Kansas	6
Oregon	7			Montana	3
Washington	11			Nebraska*	5
	80			Nevada	5
				New Mexico	5
				North Dakota	3
				Oklahoma	7
				South Dakota	3
				Utah	5
				Wyoming	3
					68
Obama	194		96		74
McCain	3		24		147

Source: Earl Black and Merle Black, *Divided America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007, 2008)

Compiled from “After the Vote: State by State,” *The New York Times*, Section P, November 8, 2008, pp. P10-P20; “2008 General Election,” North Carolina State Board of Elections, <http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/content.aspx?id=69/results.enr.clarityelections.com/NC/7937/13362/en/summary.html>, accessed November 10, 2008; “Statewide Races,” Missouri Secretary of State, <http://www.sos.mo.gov/enrweb>, accessed November 10, 2008. **Blue**=Obama (365); **Red**=McCain (173).
*Obama received one (1) Electoral College vote from the Omaha, Nebraska, congressional district.

Table 6. National Exit Poll for President, 2008 (in percentages).

<u>Voters</u>	<u>Demographic Characteristic</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>McCain</u>	<u>Other/NA</u>
100%	All Voters	53%	47%	0%
53	Women	56	43	1
47	Men	49	48	3
74	White	43	55	2
13	Black	95	4	1
9	Hispanic	67	31	2
2	Asian	62	35	3
3	Other	66	31	3
18	Age 18-29	66	32	2
29	Age 30-44	52	46	2
37	Age 45-64	5	49	1
23	Age 60 and older	47	51	2
4	No High School	63	35	2
20	High School Graduate	52	46	2
31	Some College	51	47	2
28	College Graduate	50	48	2
17	Postgraduate	58	40	2
54	All Protestants	45	54	1
42	White Protestants	34	65	1
27	All Catholics	54	45	1
2	Jewish	78	21	1
38	Evangelical, Born Again Christian	41	57	1
39	Democrat	89	10	1
29	Independent	52	44	4
32	Republican	9	90	1
22	Liberal	89	10	1
44	Moderate	60	39	1
34	Conservative	20	78	2
Is This the First Year You Ever Voted?				
11	Yes	69	30	1
89	No	50	48	2

Source: "Dissecting the Changing Electorate," *The New York Times*, November 9, 2008, Week in Review Section, p. 5; For detailed income categories "President - Election Center 2008 - Elections & Politics from CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1>, accessed November 8, 2008. N=17,836.

Table 7. Political Party Regional Strongholds by Electoral College (EC) Vote, 2012

Democratic Stronghold		Swing States		Republican Stronghold	
Northeast	EC	Midwest	EC	South	EC
Connecticut	7	Illinois	20	Alabama	9
Delaware	3	Indiana	11	Arkansas	6
Maine	4	Iowa**	6	Florida**	29
Maryland	10	Kentucky	8	Georgia	16
Massachusetts	11	Michigan	16	Louisiana	8
New Hampshire**	4	Minnesota	10	Mississippi	6
New Jersey	14	Missouri	10	North Carolina**	15
New York	29	Ohio**	18	South Carolina	9
Pennsylvania	20	West Virginia	5	Tennessee	11
Rhode Island	4	Wisconsin**	10	Texas	38
Vermont	3		114	Virginia**	13
Washington, DC	3				160
	112			Mountains/ Plains	
Pacific Coast				Arizona	11
Alaska	3			Colorado**	9
California	55			Idaho	4
Hawaii	4			Kansas	6
Oregon	7			Montana	3
Washington	12			Nebraska	5
	81			Nevada**	6
				New Mexico	5
				North Dakota	3
				Oklahoma	7
				South Dakota	3
				Utah	6
				Wyoming	3
					71
Obama	190		80		62
Romney	3		34		169

Source: Earl Black and Merle Black, *Divided America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007, 2008)

**“Battleground” states.

Compiled from “How the States Voted,” *The New York Times*, Section P, November 8, 2012, p. P11; for the Florida results see Real Clear Politics, “Florida: Romney v. Obama,” accessed November 14, 2012 at http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2012/president/fl/florida_romney_vs_obama-1883.html. Obama won Florida with 50.0% of the vote to Romney’s 49.1%. Blue=Obama (332); Red=Romney (206).

Table 8. National Exit Poll for President, 2012 (in percentages).

Voters	Demographic Characteristic	Obama	Romney	Other/NA
100%	All Voters	51%	48%	1%
53	Women	55	44	1
47	Men	45	52	3
72	White	39	59	2
13	Black	93	06	1
10	Hispanic	71	27	2
3	Asian	73	26	1
2	Other	58	38	4
19	Age 18-29	60	37	3
27	Age 30-44	52	45	3
38	Age 45-64	47	51	2
16	Age 60 and older	44	56	0
03	No High School	64	35	1
21	High School Graduate	51	48	1
29	Some College	49	48	3
29	College Graduate	47	51	2
18	Postgraduate	55	42	3
53	Protestant/Other Christian	45	54	1
25	Catholic	54	45	1
02	Jewish	78	21	1
07	Something Else	74	23	3
12	None	70	26	4
39	White Protestant/Other Christian	30	69	1
26	Evangelical, Born Again Christian	21	78	1
38	Democrat	92	07	1
29	Independent	45	50	5
32	Republican	06	93	1
25	Liberal	86	11	3
41	Moderate	56	41	3
35	Conservative	17	82	1

Source: CBS News, National Exit Poll for President, <http://www.cbsnews.com/election-results-2012/exit.shtml?state=P&jurisdiction=0&party=R&tag=contentBody:exitLink>, accessed November 14, 2012. N=26,565

Table 9. Classification of Presidential Elections

<u>Election Date</u>	<u>Interval in years</u>	<u>Critical Election Classification</u>	<u>Party in Control</u>
1836	**	Converting	Democrat
1864	28	Realigning	Republican
1892/96	28(32)	Converting	Republican
1928/32	36	Realigning	Democrat
1960/64	32	Converting	Democrat
1994/96	34 (32)	Realigning	Republican

The Future and 2028

Basic Sources for “Critical Elections” in American Politics

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